



NEW BEGINNINGS

By Marilyn Sharpe

Yes, I am the new writer for Positive Parenting in the Metro Lutheran! What a privilege and honor ... and daunting enterprise ... to follow my colleague, mentor and friend, Dick Hardel, in writing this column. Dick's wisdom and wit and deep faithfulness have been a guiding light for so many families. Many have found their own stories in those Dick told of his family and friends. Thank you, Dick, for entrusting this column to me. I have the gift of continuing to work with Dick at The Youth & Family Institute and gather his wisdom to share with you.

So, who am I? I am a parent of three, a grandparent of one (oh, you don't want to get me started!), and a wife. I grew up in a family. As a Certified Family Life Educator and parent educator in my Lutheran congregation, I have had the privilege of working with families for 26 years. I believe that families are the classroom for teaching all that is most important, the crucible for refining the best in each of us, and a safe harbor from life's storms. A confirmation teacher and director for 23 years, I have a passion for passing on faith.

I look forward to this journey with you.

This is the beginning of a new year. Is your year a clean slate, a fresh, new beginning? Is your family's life filled with promise and dreams and hope and gratitude?

Or is the new year already crammed with "oughts" and regrets and disappointments and fears? Did you make new year's resolutions that already make you feel like a failure. Is guilt hanging over you like a cloud?

In I Corinthians 5:17, Paul declared

So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!

What does this mean for our families and for our life together?

Let us offer one another a new beginning. Let us practice God's gift of unconditional love, undergirded with forgiveness. Let us regard mistakes as opportunities to apologize, receive and accept forgiveness, make it right, learn from it, and move on.

Quite simply, we are claiming God's promises to us in baptism – to wash away our sins, to be reborn children of God, declared by God to be loved and forgiven.

Family Activities for New Beginnings:

1. With a bowl of water on the table, invite each family member to wash their hands, as in baptism, God washes our sins away.
2. Plant seeds in small pots, remembering that God is planting seeds in each of you. Put the pots on the table and name the "seeds" you see sprouting in each other.
3. Serve your family a dinner of all hors d'oeuvres, reminding your family that God is always serving new beginnings. Name the beginnings in your family.
4. Take a walk and notice the changes in nature, in your neighborhood, around your home.
5. At bedtime, make the sign of the cross on foreheads, saying, "God loves you and begins new things in you."