Preparing for New Beginnings

While we often think of summertime as a slowing down time, it is also a time of transitions for many. It is a time to prepare for the next adventure that is just around the corner. Stores now have shelves full of back-to-school supplies and sales fliers fill mailboxes with everything one might need to fill a college dorm room.

How do we prepare for transitions in our lives? How might we honor these rites of passage (not including the July Christmas shopping rush)? Through ritual acts, people of all cultures and religious traditions mark life’s course, giving it shared significance and sanctifying it. Rites of passage not only recognize changes that have already happened; they can also effect changes.

Passages from one stage to the next involve three elements:

- Rites of separation name what is being left behind, preparing us for new birth.
- Rites of transition celebrate the past while anticipating the future. They help us pause to begin the (sometimes lengthy) process of accepting and embracing change.
- Rites of reintegration name, sanctify and celebrate one’s new status in the community.

Prayers for Rites of Passage

Christians believe that the Holy Spirit is constantly at work in creation, renewing and nurturing human beings through all stages of life. We have transitions of childhood, young adulthood, midlife, elders, national service, and the departed. Changes: Prayers and Services Honoring Rites of Passage is a collection of prayers and rites to enrich the lives of congregations, families, and individuals.

Let us pray:

Going Away to Camp In the beauty of your world, O God, you show us how great your love is. Be with N. as he goes away to camp. Open his eyes to the wonder of creation and, in it, let him draw nearer to you. Let his play be joyful. Let him encounter wonder and surprise as he learns. Let his rest be peaceful. Keep N. well and safe, in the knowledge that he is deeply loved by you and by us, who hold him dear in our hearts for
ever. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

**Going to College** Gracious God, your Holy Spirit instructs our hearts in the ways of life. In going to college, your child N., has set aside a time of learning and preparation for her life’s work. Through all the years ahead, make her hungry for wisdom tempered with love. Help her discern the truth in all that she learns, in the people she meets, and in the choices she must face each day. Keep her mind alert for the rigors of study and exams. Keep her body safe and well. Give her a heart bold to question, yet alive to your wonders. And assure her always of your love and ours, through Christ, your Wisdom made flesh. Amen.

**For the Family Separated During Military Service** God the fountain of all mercy, your love is made known to us in the love of others: Surround this family with the support and care of our community as they watch and wait for N.’s return; grant them patience, hope, and quiet confidence, until the time of reunion; through Christ, we pray. Amen.

Find many more prayers including those for becoming a reader, going on a pilgrimage, beginning or ending a job, healing after divorce, taking care of elderly parents, stages of grief, celebrating a significant event, and more can be found in *Changes: Prayers and Services Honoring Rites of Passage* (New York: Church Publishing, 2007).