

Beloved Is Where We Begin —
by Rev. Jan Richardson from *Circle of Grace*

If you would enter into the wilderness,
do not begin without a blessing.
Do not leave without hearing who you are:
 Beloved, named by the One
 who has traveled this path before you.
Do not go without letting it echo in your ears,
and if you find it is hard to let it into your heart,
 do not despair.
 That is what this journey is for.
I cannot promise this blessing will free you from danger,
 from fear, from hunger or thirst,
 from the scorching of sun or the fall of the night.
But I can tell you that on this path there will be help.
I can tell you that on this way there will be rest.
 I can tell you that you will know
 the strange graces that come to our aid
 only on a road such as this,
 that fly to meet us bearing comfort and strength,
 that come alongside us for no other cause
 than to lean themselves toward our ear
and with their curious insistence whisper our name:

Beloved.
Beloved.
Beloved.

By Henri Nouwen — from *Life of the Beloved*

Jesus heard a voice when he came out of the Jordan River.
 I want you to hear that voice, too.
 It is a very important voice that says,
 "I have called you by name, from the very beginning.
 You are mine and I am yours.
 You are my Beloved, on you my favor rests.
 You are my beloved child. I love you with an everlasting love.
 I have molded you together in the depths of the earth.
 I have knitted you in your mother's womb.
 I have carved your name in the palm of my hand
 and hidden you safe in the shadow of my embrace.
 I look at you with infinite tenderness and care for you
 with a care more intimate than that of a mother for her child.
 I have counted every hair on your head
 and guided you at every step.
 Wherever you go, I go with you,

and wherever you rest, I keep watch.
You belong to Me and I belong to you.

You are safe where I am.

Don't be afraid.

Trust that you are the beloved.

That is who you truly are.

I want you to hear this intimate voice
that comes from a very deep place.

It is soft and gentle.

Claim it for yourself because that voice speaks the truth,
our truth.

It tells us who we are.

The spiritual life starts with claiming
the voice that calls us the beloved.'