

“What you can do, or dream you can, begin it.” I love these words, written by the Irish poet John Anster in his translation of Goethe’s masterpiece “Faust.” There is urgency in these words, a necessity to step forward into a new moment, whatever it may be.



It coincides well with this month of September when students and educators are beginning a new school year. I have a nephew who is not only beginning a new school year, but his freshman year at college! I think of him and all students, young and old, who are setting out on a new adventure.

We all remember the feeling of that first day – be it school, a job, a date or new relationship – with varying degrees of excitement, anticipation and apprehension. At the beginning of the summer, I began a course in pottery. I was so looking forward to learning, but my shyness gave me a pause as I thought about meeting a room full of new people. I had no vocabulary (or skill) yet for pottery and I was worried that I’d be the odd kid out. But, my desire to learn pottery was stronger than my comfortability and I managed to walk into the studio. Things got messy fast! There was a lot of mudslinging, but fortunately that was completely due to our inexperience on the pottery wheel.

The utter ineptitude of a group of novice potters throwing for the first time on a wheel was hilarious, and soon we were all at ease. I welcomed the fun, a perfect antidote to my shyness. I realized everyone else was in the same boat too for one reason or another. We held our fears lightly and forged ahead with our beautifully askew “pots.”

As I reflect on that time, I am grateful. I hope that each of us can remember that lightness and spark of energy in all the new beginnings are ahead of us. I pray that we can each be a source of encouragement for those around us who are about something new, maybe something they always dreamed of!

Julie Vieira, IHM