

PASSION (PALM) SUNDAY WITH FIRST COMMUNION | APRIL 13, 2025
ISAIAH 43:16-21 | PSALM 126 | PHILIPPIANS 3:4B-14 | LUKE 23:1-49

This is just for Colin, Lillian, Audrey, and Saoirse. But if the rest of you want to stay here, that's fine. If not, you need to be back in eight minutes.

Colin, Lillian, Audrey, and Saoirse, this is an important day. It's an important day because it's Palm Sunday, of course. And it's an important day because it's the beginning of Holy Week, the most important time of the year for Christians. But it's also important because today is your first communion.

During Lent, Jenna has been working with you to explain the significance of communion. Both the big questions like why it matters—it builds us up in faith—and what it means—it means Christ is present with us—as well as the practical questions like how to hold your hands—left over right—and what boxed wine tastes like—not great.

But today, I want to give you just one more way of thinking about what communion is.

Imagine, for a moment, that you're at a party. You're meeting someone new and chatting. And then they ask, "So where is home for you?"

Some people have an easy answer to that question. They've lived their whole lives in the same state or the same city or maybe even the same house. If that's you, you answer this question without a second thought.

But for others of us, it's a question that us think. We scratch our heads and say, "Well, it's kind of a long story." I've lost count of how many times I've moved. Probably somewhere between eight and a dozen. Some of those were major moves. Like load-up-a-U-Haul-and-drive-across-a-dozen-states moves. And some of those were just moves to a new neighborhood that we did in a day.

But each of those moves has made that question harder to answer. It's easy to tell someone where you live. *My current address is...* But when we talk about "home," we usually mean something more than that. Home is where you feel at ease. Home is where everybody knows you. Home is where you never have to explain yourself.

The truth is, there will be many times in your life where you won't feel at home. When you won't feel at ease. When no one will know you. When you'll need to explain yourself.

Maybe you'll be away at sleepaway camp or abroad somewhere. Maybe your family will move. Maybe a friendship will end or your family will change. Maybe you'll change careers or transfer schools. Maybe you'll be at a new church. The world will seem unfamiliar and strange in a somewhat disconcerting way. You may come to realize that you can't really go home again.

I would wager that every adult in this room has felt that way at some point in their lives. If someone asked us where home is, we might just shrug. I don't know anymore. We might even be tempted to say that we don't really have a home.

But here's the thing. Even though you may feel that way sometimes, it won't really be true. You always have a home. You always have a place to come back to. You always have a place where they're saving you a seat.

In Robert Frost's poem "The Death of the Hired Man," a farmer muses that "Home is the place where, when you have to go there, / They have to take you in." Home is the place where they have to take you in.

It's not a bad way to think about communion. This is the place where Christ always welcomes you. This is the place where you're always taken in. No matter where you came from, no matter what baggage you bring with you, no matter what questions you are wrestling with, the body of Christ is still given for you. And not you in general. But given for you, Colin. Given for you, Lillian. Given for you, Saoirse. Given for you, Audrey.

So no matter where you are in the world—Bloomington or Burnsville, Bosnia or Burkina Faso—you are at home when you are at Christ's table. No matter what is going on in your life—relationships beginning or ending, families changing, life getting complicated—you are at home when you are at Christ's table. No matter where you are on your faith journey—doubting, overwhelmed, courageous, at peace—you are at home when you are at Christ's table.

Today with our congregation and with the church around the world, we celebrate as you join us at Christ's table. Feast on God's generosity. Drink deeply from God's wisdom. And give yourself away as bread for the hungry.

No matter where you are in life, Jesus says, "Welcome home."

Joseph Schattauer Paillé, Pastor