

The Gospel According to the Olympics 4: What World Peace Looks Like
October 6, 2024
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I've shared communion with a lot of folks in a lot of places over the years. It's special to me every time. There are, though, communion moments that stand out in my mind. Stories about:
Church Camp (East Bay)
Children's Moment (FPC)
Installation (FCC)

Every week when we share communion, I remind you that communion is something different for each of us. The memorable communion moments I shared probably gave you a clue about what communion means to me. To me, communion allows us a glimpse of the world the Holy has called us to create. It is a world where we make room at all kinds of tables for everyone. It is a world where resources are shared and everyone has what they need. Everyone feels safe and has a sense of belonging.

I don't think it is an accident that as we eat the bread and drink the juice we are called to remember our dependence on the earth. And I don't think it is an accident that some of us feel closer to the Holy and one another when we gather at the table. Communion is about relationships. Gathering at the table, eating the bread and drinking the juice, telling the story of Jesus and his friends...these are all things people have been doing for generations. There is something holy in that for me. World Communion Sunday reminds us that the ritual of communion has been holding God's beloved together for a very long time.

There is a tradition practiced by the Masai people in Kenya and Tanzania that highlights this sense of being held together as we break the bread and drink from the cup. During worship, the people pass the peace by passing a handful of grass from one to another. If anyone among them refuses to accept the grass and the peace that is offered, the worshiping body does not celebrate communion that day. If we aren't all at peace, none of us are. If we all can't celebrate, nobody celebrates.

That's why I appreciate our tradition of the open communion table. Everyone should be included or no one. It is something we all do together. This doesn't mean we all believe the same things. That isn't what communion means. The word communion means *shared life*. We come to the table as a sign that we want to share our lives, even when it's complicated, even when it would be less messy not to.

For the last few weeks, we've been learning from some of the highlights of the 2024 Olympic Games. Each Olympics I find myself in awe of the things the athletes can make their bodies do. The hard work and commitment they represent is almost beyond comprehension. It is truly incredible. But what I love the most are the

moments when people all over the world witness the communion between the athletes. They don't just meet up at the Olympics every four years. They compete with one another all over the world, all year long, every year. They know each other. Many of them are truly friends. And though they are competitors, they hold each other in high esteem. We saw this on full display at the medal ceremony in the women's floor exercise. U.S. gymnasts, Simon Biles and Jordan Chiles earned the silver and bronze medals. As the medals were presented, Biles and Chiles turned toward Brazil's gold medalist, Rebeca Andrade, and bowed, showing her their respect. If God does indeed smile, that must have made God smile.

Our lives are filled with moments like that...sometimes we just forget to notice. Let today inspire us to keep looking for and creating glimpses of communion, little pockets of shared life together. That is what will bring about the world I imagine God dreams about, and the world we dream of for us, for our neighbors, and for all of our children. That dream will never be made real with our smart bombs and war strategies. That dream will not be made real with a fiery speech or perfectly crafted sermon. A pithy social media post or bestselling book will not make the dream a reality either. This dream we share will come true a little bit at a time through our relationships, by loving our neighbors and passing along the peace we find in knowing we are loved. Loving is always complicated and messy, but it is always worth it. Amen.