



So, River, Maze, Kenny, Klaire, Stella, Summer, and Hunter: congratulations, you are in! Now, the truth is, you have already been in your whole life. From the beginning, you have been in God's most loving care. You have been in God's most tender embrace. You have been with God, who will never ever let you go. It's just today, you get a different perspective on what God's love looks like. You're getting invited to a view on what God is hoping for not just with each of you, and everyone who comes forward for Communion, but what God hopes we

do after we finish this precious meal.

Now, I don't know how many of you have been part of larger family gatherings in which there are designated areas where you will eat for dinner: that sometimes there are these smaller tables, sometimes lower to the ground for the younger people of the crowd, sometimes put off to the corner, as if they're trying to keep you away from whatever cool conversations the supposedly more mature adults are having in the middle of everything. And sometimes they may not even allow you to eat the same food as the supposedly stronger stomachs or the more advanced tastebuds can handle. And if you have ever experienced that, it can be a rather big deal to finally make it to that big kid's table; as if you finally made it to a level of acceptance and maybe even coolness for some.

So, I suppose, in a sense, today, you are being invited to the big kids' table, yes. But the problem with actually being part of the big kids' table is that it often comes with the dreaded word of *responsibility*. Now, I'm sure even when you eat from the smaller table off in the corner, you're still expected with helping bring plates to the kitchen, and maybe even washing them, but with most of the people around the larger tables, higher off the ground, they also have other things they'll need to take care of once they're done with their food. They have other children to get back to, entire houses and yards that need attention and cleaning, and plenty of other things that you may not need to worry about just yet. But I do like to think, that as much as this is an incredibly special day for you to come forward for your first Communion meal, God is hoping you can take on some additional responsibilities.

Because, the truth is, as you come up to this big kids' table of sorts, the most important parts will not be the bread or the wine or grape juice; it will be the love that is further given to you. It will be the kindness that God further gives you. It will be yet another reminder of the promise God made to you from the beginning: that absolutely nothing will ever happen in your life to stop God from being with you. So, yes, all of that today is for you. And yes, you have already had that from God all along, but you get a little more up-close-and-personal view of just how much God truly means it for you. But, again, because you're coming to the big kids' table, God is hoping that you would be willing to take on some additional responsibilities.

Because God doesn't want you to keep all of this to yourself. Yes, it should make you feel good. It should make you feel special. It should help you believe how much God cares about you and always will. But there are other people out there, who are not so sure that any of that is meant for them. Maybe you already know of some: some of whom you've had the big family meals with: some who ate at tables off in the corner, or some around the big kids' tables too, maybe some you know at school, maybe completely other places. What God is hoping from this table for each of you today: as you feel a little more love, a little more kindness, a little more belief that this God thoroughly cherishes you; that all of that makes you feel so much a part of something so incredibly special, that you cannot help but share it with someone else who

needs a little more love and a little more kindness and a little more belief that God cherishes them too.

But, if you're not ready for that just yet, that is okay. Hopefully the day will come when you can, but regardless, this day is still for you. And part of the promise made to you today is that no matter how long it is between the times you make it up to this table, you will always have a seat at this table. No matter what happens to you, you will always have a seat at this table. No matter what, you will always be loved by God, and that is the most important ingredient that God uses in making this bread and this wine and this grape juice to be the very best of what Jesus Christ has to offer, not just for the supposedly mature adults in the room, but for you, too. So, River, Maze, Kenny, Klaire, Stella, Summer, and Hunter: congratulations, you are in. You've been in the whole time, yes, but today, you get up-close-and-personal in seeing that all of this is for you, too, and will never ever be taken away from you. So, for that Greatest News for all of us, we most certainly give thanks to God, indeed! Amen!