

In that second reading, Paul's---the other Paul's---letter to the church at Rome, says, "Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ."

My own life, in at least one respect, has resembled that of the Saint, Paul; my life has been full of missionary journeys, and thus marked by many separations:

In 1974 I left Boston for Zambia, central Africa; I knew no one there; but the Lord was with me; because nothing can separate us from the love of Christ.

A year after I returned to the U.S., I moved to Berkeley CA for six years; I knew one person there; once again alone; but the Lord was with me; because nothing can separate us from the love of Christ.

Then in 1983 I moved to the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana, again knowing only one person there, again alone and having to start anew, but the Lord was with me; because nothing can separate us from the love of Christ.

Five years later, I found myself at Fairfield; same conditions; then in 1993 I moved to Jerusalem for a semester, then to Sydney, Australia for almost a year, again in each place alone and having to start anew, but the Lord was with me; because nothing can separate us from the love of Christ.

The journey, the mission, has taken me to Storrs, to Washington DC, to Philadelphia, and now to Greenwich; each separation from the familiar, from the circle of friends and family that sustained me in a particular place, caused sadness at the losses; again and again alone and having to start anew, but in each new mission the Lord has been with me; because---say it with me--- nothing can separate us from the love of Christ.

That's why you never need fear the future; Jesus is already there.

Some separations we all endure are not geographical, but rather are relocations of relationships, wrenching of our hearts.

When the kids graduate from GCS, they go off to many different high schools and are parted from friends who make different choices; and it can hurt. That repeats when they go to college, marry and inhabit new lives, new narratives.

And separation can come in the form of estrangement, divorce, death. But, in the mercy of God, if we but pay attention, it will dawn upon us that, even in the depths of sadness and love, even when we despair because we feel alone and having to start anew, in the midst of it all the Lord is with us, sharing our tears, holding up our drooping arms, shielding us from the worst of the pain, because nothing can separate us from the love of Christ.

When you find that almost impossible to believe---when you feel only the loss and none of the love, whether the pain is sharp, or has calloused over the chasm of grief---come back here, come back to the place where the Lord is present, in the midst of His people and in the proclamation of His Word, and in the sacred meal of His Body and Blood; come back here, again and again, until you too can proclaim with St. Paul and with the whole Church---nothing can separate us from the love of Christ.

And the people of God said, Amen.

Ordinary A 18, August 2, 2026 Greenwich Children's version

“Not counting the women and children.” Well, here, women and children count!

So are there some children who can join me up here this morning?

In that second reading, St. Paul says, “Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ.”

What he means is that Jesus has chosen each one of you to be his brother or his sister; and nothing can ever change that. So God the Father always holds each of you close to his heart, at every moment, no matter what else is happening to you. Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ.

I want to tell you some of my experiences of that truth, that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ. And I hope your parents will continue that conversation with you when you get home.

In 1974 I left Boston for Zambia, central Africa; I knew no one there; but the Lord was with me; because nothing can separate us from the love of Christ. I even survived two snake attacks and a bout of malaria. But nothing can separate us from the love of Christ.

A year after I returned to the U.S., I moved to Berkeley CA for six years; I knew one person there; once again alone; but the Lord was with me; because nothing can separate us from the love of Christ.

Then in 1983 I moved to the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana, again knowing only one person there, again alone and having to start anew, but the Lord was with me; because nothing can separate us from the love of Christ. And when I walked into the football stadium, I knew it was true. Jesus welcomed me with a big sign! Your dads can explain that one to you later.

Five years later, I found myself at Fairfield University, just up the road from here; same conditions; then in 1993 I moved to Jerusalem for a semester, then to Sydney, Australia for almost a year, again in each place alone and having to start anew, but the Lord was with me; because nothing can separate us from the love of Christ.

The journey, the mission, has taken me to Storrs, to Washington DC, to Philadelphia, and now to Greenwich; each

separation for the familiar, from the circle of friends and family that sustained me in a particular place, caused sadness at the losses; again and again alone and having to start anew, but in each new mission the Lord has been with me; because---parents, say it with me--- nothing can separate us from the love of Christ.

That's why you never need fear the future; Jesus is already there.

You will experience some separations even as kids.

When the kids graduate from GCS, they go off to many different high schools and are parted from friends who make different choices; and it can hurt. That repeats when they go to college, marry and inhabit new lives, new narratives. All that is likely to happen to you.

And there may be some other kinds of separations; maybe your best friend moves away, or some moms and dads get divorced, or someone we love very much dies.

But, in the mercy of God, if we but pay attention, it will dawn upon us that, even in the depths of sadness and love, even when we despair because we feel alone and having to start anew, in the midst of it all the Lord is with us, sharing our tears, holding up our drooping arms, shielding us from the worst of the pain, because nothing can separate us from the love of Christ.

If you ever find it hard to believe, ---if sometime you feel only the loss and none of the love---come back here, come back to the place where the Lord is present, in the midst of His people and in the proclamation of His Word, and in the sacred meal of His Body and Blood; come back here, again and again, where you always know you are the brother, the sister of Jesus, until you too can proclaim with St. Paul and with the whole Church---let's all say it together---nothing can separate us from the love of Christ.

And the people of God said, Amen.

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