

Confirmation Sermon

Easter 6

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2017 Confirmand

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From the Pulpit

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Good Morning! Today marks a new beginning for those of us who are being Confirmed. Things can happen on Journeys, some are good things, and some are bad things, but we can always learn about ourselves, others and the world from those journeys. This morning, I would like to share a little bit about my journey and how that has impacted me on the road to Confirmation.

On Sundays after church, my mom asks my sister and me, what did you think about the sermon? We always talk about the sermon and my mom asks how it relates to our everyday lives. I'm not gonna lie: sometimes these conversations can drag on a little...too...long. Thankfully, my little sister always pays super close attention to the sermons and always has a lot to say. So, thanks Alyssia!

A few weeks ago, Rev. Emily Gave a Sermon about Emmaus. For those who do not know what Emmaus is, I will tell you. In the Gospel of Luke, after Jesus was crucified and resurrected, two disciples were walking from Jerusalem on the road to Emmaus, when Jesus appeared to them. I think Emmaus seems to simply represent relief. Basically, it's a pretty chill place or state of mind. Rev. Emily talked about how people find and *experience* Emmaus in different people, activities and different things. On the day of the Emmaus sermon, when church was over, my mom was deep in thought

about the sermon. (SMILE) I thought I was off the hook for the “post sermon debrief.” Soooooooo like a normal teenager, I picked up my phone. Unfortunately for me, that got my mother’s attention. she snapped, “Alexander! You’re not going to find Emmaus in that *phone!*” And then...a *lightbulb* went off, and...my sermon... pretty... much... wrote itself!

But in all seriousness, when my mother said that, it raised a question, where do I find Emmaus?

I then realized that I had been trying to find Emmaus for a very long time. I thought about the last 3 years of middle school and realized right away, that middle school is definitely NOT Emmaus. Can I get an Amen up in here? But I’m lucky because there have been people around me who helped give me a sense of assurance as I’ve walked this road.

Many young teenagers pride themselves on having a certain number of followers or likes on Instagram or a certain score on Snapchat, and we try to find Emmaus there. Honestly, I fall guilty to this sometimes too. Or some of us worry about wearing a certain type of clothes or having certain type of material goods. But what I’ve learned is that Emmaus really is in your family and true friends.

Daniel Vokhgelt was my first friend—we met when we were 4 when I moved to Ohio. We were next door neighbors

and we both were VERY energetic, funny, lively and smart. As we got older, we would have deep talks and we could tell each other anything; his older brothers watched out for us and we included my younger sister in stuff. We became more than friends; we became family. Daniel died from an aggressive Sarcoma Cancer in December 2014, a few months after his 12th birthday. When he was in the hospital, I often went to visit him. I have never seen anyone so brave and so strong and so wise in my life. A couple of weeks before Daniel passed, he told me to focus on the people that were close to me and not so much on materialistic things. He told me not to worry about getting the newest phone, but to keep studying hard and to focus on my family and closest friends. Daniel was the friend in my life that really made me think about how much friendships matter. Daniel passed before he was old enough to celebrate his Bar Mitzvah, and so I want to dedicate this sermon to him. Daniel will always be my brother and he always will be Emmaus for me.

I've also found Emmaus in my love for the performing arts, especially my music. I'm not going to talk about this, though, because... that will take 15 minutes and you probably don't want to listen to that.

Finally, my friends and family, the ones here supporting me now and even the ones that could not be here today, are

kind, caring, smart and extraordinary people. They tell me the truth even when it's hard and they always have my back. They insist that I do my best. They are a huge part of what makes up Emmaus for me.

So, I have a couple things to say to my friends that are here. You guys have made Middle School awesome. I'm so lucky to have found people who respect me and respect diversity in others. Thank you for meeting me halfway. Thank you for making time for me. Thank you for your full presence. Thank you for knowing when something is wrong with me or when I am sad. Thank you for being loyal, even when we're not together. Thank you for valuing my time. Thank you for wanting to be there for me. I hope I do those things for you.

And thank you for being you. I am always grateful to know that I can call you guys genuine friends. Whether we're out shopping for clothes; hanging out playing tag on Saturday night in the neighborhood; complaining about Honors Algebra; doing theatre together; working on Ohio Model United Nations together; playing video games and eating Pringles; having sleepovers; riding our bikes to Five Guys together; laughing about opera at Columbus Symphony, rocking out stage on our electric violins or laughing about 90210 ... or doing nothing at all. To each of you: Thank you

for walking the road to Emmaus with me. I have found Emmaus in each of you.

This has been a very long and exhausting journey for me but it is not over yet, not by a long shot! Some of you might not have listened to every word of my sermon, so I'm going to let you off easy and give you the bottom line: the one thing I want you all to take away is that Emmaus is accessible for everyone. You may have to work for it or you may have to walk a long, lonely road to it or you may have to think hard to find it. But finding your road to Emmaus is in the people who love you and the people that you love. So, Emmaus may be easier and closer to you than you might think. Thank you.

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