

# A Different Sort Of Homecoming

Before I publish my vacation diary, I would like to say a few words about some unexpected feelings I encountered upon returning home. Ending a vacation is always a chore, and for an in-the-process-of-being-reformed-worrywart like me, it's easy to get caught up in dreading the negatives that accompany getting back to normal life; ie, returning to a cold climate, laundry, unpacking, etc. Thanks to my growing relationship with God, I've been learning to embrace positives more easily, and I could not be more grateful for the opportunity for such a wonderful vacation and for the fact that we made it there and back safely.

But when we did return home, the welcome committee seemed a bit small. The greetings of family members left behind (read: pets) seemed to be missing something, and the house seemed more empty than I had remembered it. Then it hit me: this was the first homecoming we've had since our family dog passed away last year.

I had noticed it on vacation, and in Florida it was actually an unexpectedly freeing feeling to not worry about a loved one left behind. Don't get me wrong; I love the pets we still have, but no one will ever take Charity's place. I used to feel such a hole in my heart when we went on vacation and left her behind that it gave me an extra motivation to hurry home. But this time, our homecoming celebration was short-lived: we greeted pets and they greeted us, and there was no one around to hold a grudge like Charity used to do when we left her behind. No one was miffed about getting left behind, in fact, I wonder if the dogs even really noticed...

It's been over a year since the last time I saw her, and I still miss her a lot.