

Substitute

by [Sarah Gordon](#) in the [June 2024](#) issue

Published on May 21, 2024

—*for Lois*

Placing your foot in the circle  
without touching the line,  
you're a part of the game:

a teacher filling in, an under-  
study backstage called forward,  
taking the lead, speaking

those words you'd practiced  
fervently before the mirror.  
You're a part of the play.

You're the pinch hitter, why yes,  
moving toward home plate,  
swinging that bat, nervous

maybe, yet proud. The one  
who comes before, or after,  
you're it. Standing next to

the light, all right, but  
surely casting its shadow.  
The priest came to anoint

the sick man, forgot his  
oil. You, the sick man's wife,  
ever at his side, retrieved

canola from your pantry,  
the priest prayed over it,  
and lo and behold