

A NOTE TO PARENTS

The weeks between All Saints' Day and Advent form a kind of mini-season of the Church Year, a Pre-Advent that focuses on Jesus' return in glory to be our king and judge—and on the gift of everlasting life that is ours through his cross and resurrection. The hope of everlasting life is a crucial teaching (many, throughout history, would say *the* crucial teaching) of our faith, but one about which the Church has recently been curiously coy, especially with young children. So instead of the Church's historic teaching on "life after death," many young Christians are growing up with a distorted piety handed down from Victorian folk religion.

The Church does not teach—the Bible does not teach—a doctrine of "survival," or "the immortality of the soul." It does not promise that we will "go to heaven" when we die—that an immortal part of us will shed this mortal flesh and, liberated from the body, depart to enjoy a purer and deathless life. Most of all, it does not teach that the primary attraction of such a life will be a reunion with departed loved ones. (Nor, of course, does the Bible suggest reincarnation—a series of lives in successive bodies with successive identities.) The hope of Israel, the hope of the Church, is *the resurrection of the body*. Our God will not remove us to a changeless spiritual plane, but will restore us to a new and glorious wholeness, in a renewed and healed creation.

We will be at one with each other—with those we have dearly loved in this life and with all the thousands upon thousands of saints who share Christ's Body with us—but overshadowing this unity and love will be our oneness with our Lord. The Scriptures tell us that each of us will be his bride; whatever loves have enriched our lives until now will be re-ordered to give place to that supreme, life-giving love. We cannot imagine this consummation, any more than children can imagine the rapture of mature sexual love. Jesus tells us not to let that worry us, and above all not to let it threaten our faith in his promise. He is preparing for us joys that pass understanding, and, like children, we can be content to wait, till we grow up and can begin to taste them.

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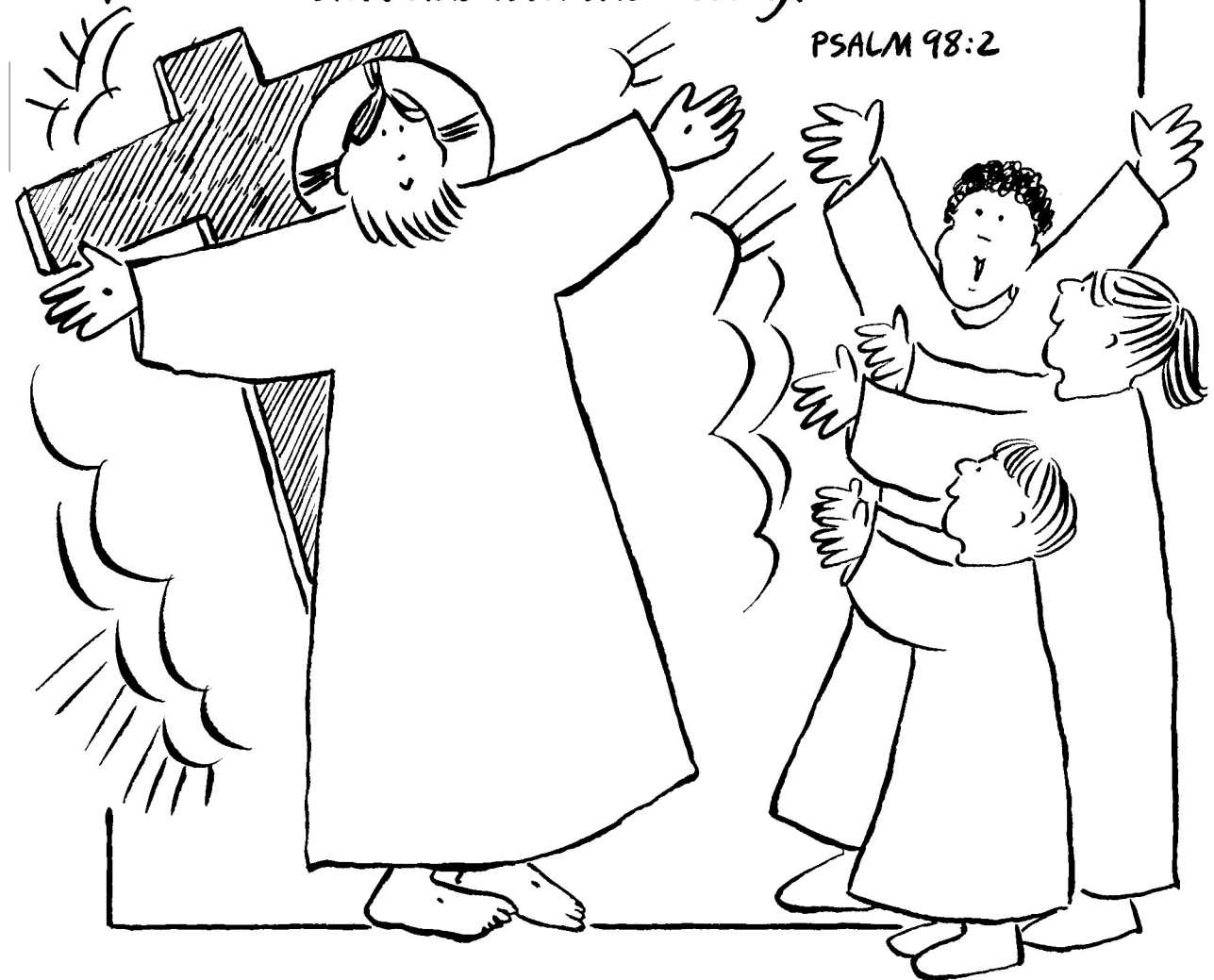


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PROPER 27
TRACK 1

"With his right hand, and his holy arm,
God has won the victory."

PSALM 98:2



Long, long ago, God chose his people. He set them free, and gave his laws to their leader, Moses.



Later, new leaders, called **PROPHETS**, told the people, "God promises that we will be his forever, even after we are dead."



Some people said, "Moses came first. We will believe all the laws, but not the prophets' promises."



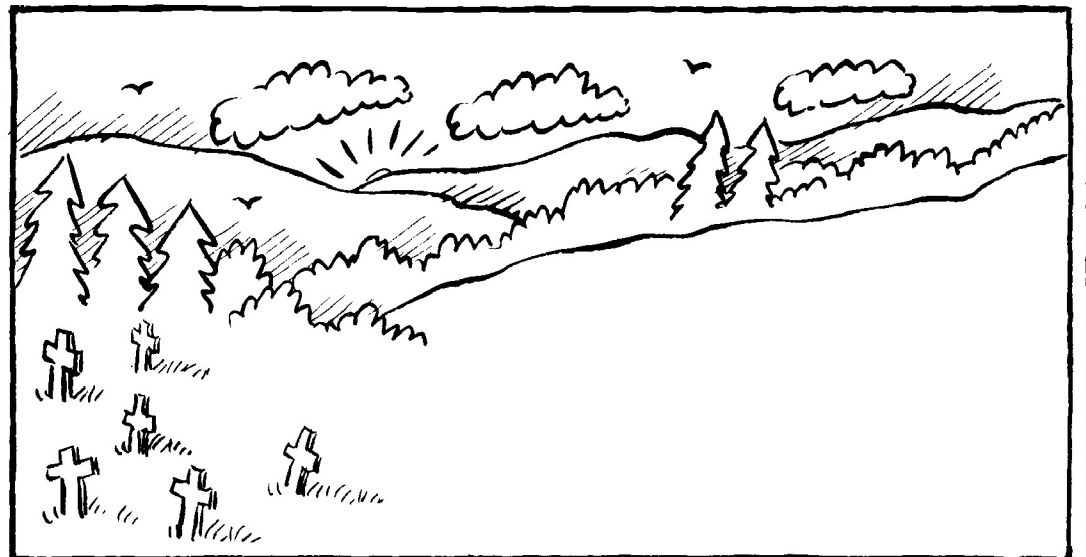
But Jesus said, "The promises are true. God is stronger than death. He will give you new life."



When Jesus died and rose again, he helped us see that God's promises are true. Some day we will rise to new life, like him.

Some people thought the whole idea was silly. They asked Jesus, "What would happen if someone had been married more than once? Who would they be married to when they got to Heaven?"

Jesus said, "Don't worry about what your new life will be like. You can't imagine it. But trust God's promises."



Add more crosses to this picture. These people died with faith, believing God's promise.