

A NOTE TO PARENTS

Re-tellings of the Easter story for children often skip the elements of awe, strangeness and fear that appear in every Scriptural account, and suggest that the disciples' joy was based on "having Jesus back with them"—that the Resurrection essentially undid the Crucifixion and brought back the happy, familiar conditions the disciples had known before that terrible blow fell across their lives. On this view, the Crucifixion becomes just a temporary setback—a bad dream that fades away with the light of dawn—a terrible, scary thing that threatens to destroy our happiness but then turns out not to have really happened after all.

This version of the story is unscriptural in two ways. On the one hand, it encourages false hopes for children who are experiencing loss or grief: it suggests that God may act by magically removing the pain, turning back the clock, making everything OK again. On the other hand, it misses the point of Jesus' victory over death.

We find that God does not, in fact, "bring back" those we love, as he brought back Jesus. So are we supposed to go to church at Easter and rejoice, because some grownups long ago and far away got back their dead friend and were able to dry their tears and smile again? We may be sincerely and generously glad for *them*, but how is this good news for *us*? Why should this one happy ending convince us that love is stronger than death?

The truth of the Easter story is more subtle, more complex, harder to put into words but on a wordless level deeply satisfying. Jesus has not "come back;" he has been transformed through the Cross into something completely new. His friends have met him again, not as the friend and teacher they knew and loved, but as the First-Begotten of the Dead: the Lord of Life, known more surely in the Word of God and the Breaking of Bread than in the old familiar face, voice, and mannerisms. The clock has not turned back. Rather, we are pushed forward, with dizzying suddenness, onto a whole new road: we are to follow our Master who has passed through the grave and gate of death into the new life of the Kingdom.

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Year A
3rd SUNDAY
of EASTER



IT WAS THE THIRD DAY AFTER JESUS HAD DIED.

Some of Jesus's friends said they had seen him alive. The others wondered what to think.



Two of them were walking home, when a stranger caught up with them. They talked together.



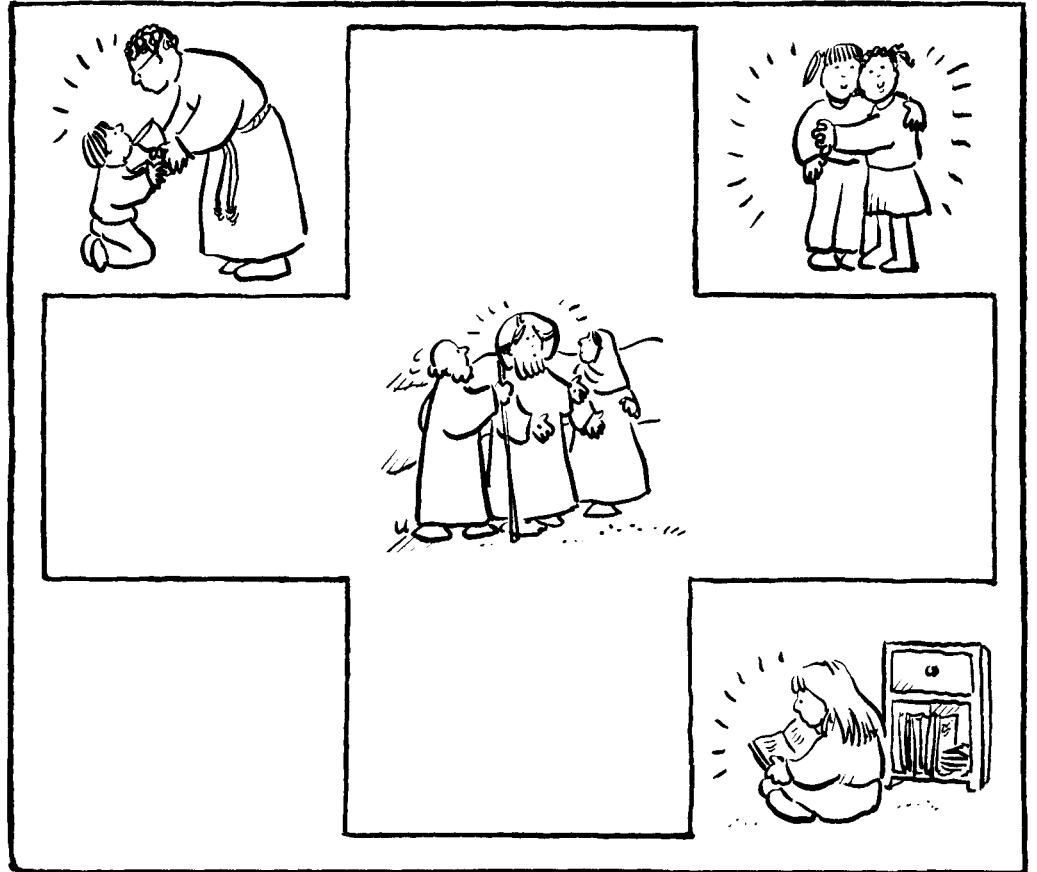
The stranger said, "Don't you see? The Bible says the Messiah would die and rise again."



They invited the stranger to eat with them. When he broke the bread, they recognized him. He was Jesus.



When Jesus rose from the dead, God gave him a new and wonderful kind of life, that can never die again. He shares this life with us when we love him and learn from him and break bread together.



In the blank corner, draw yourself, getting to know and love Jesus. Then decorate the cross.