

A NOTE TO PARENTS

When we use the lectionary, the Church's calendar of weekly readings, as the basis for opening the Scriptures with our children, we find we are required to approach the Bible with them in ways that are quite different from those we have grown used to over the last several generations.

Bible stories for children, and most Sunday School materials, seem to focus on one or both of two major concerns. They may try to introduce children to "the world of the Bible" and the ancient history of the people of Israel, as if there were an automatic religious value in a story simply because it takes place in a world of robes, sandals, and palm trees. Thus, as Gail Ramshaw remarks, children in biblically oriented denominations are asked to memorize the kings of Judah and Israel, "without any imaginative connection made between these kings and Christ the king." Nursery rhymes and songs are rewritten to include "Bible people" and a sort of "Bible atmosphere," without their content actually reflecting the Bible's concerns at all. Or, on the other hand, the Bible is seen chiefly as the source for moral imperatives or religious doctrine. Bible stories are told in order to reach a bottom line, a brief, literally stated lesson. Innumerable Sunday School and VBS materials retell Jesus' parables along the lines of "Chucky Woodchuck learns to forgive," "Wanda the Whale discovers that God loves her," and so on. Or isolated Bible verses or maxims are simply applied to real life stories about getting along in the home and at school.

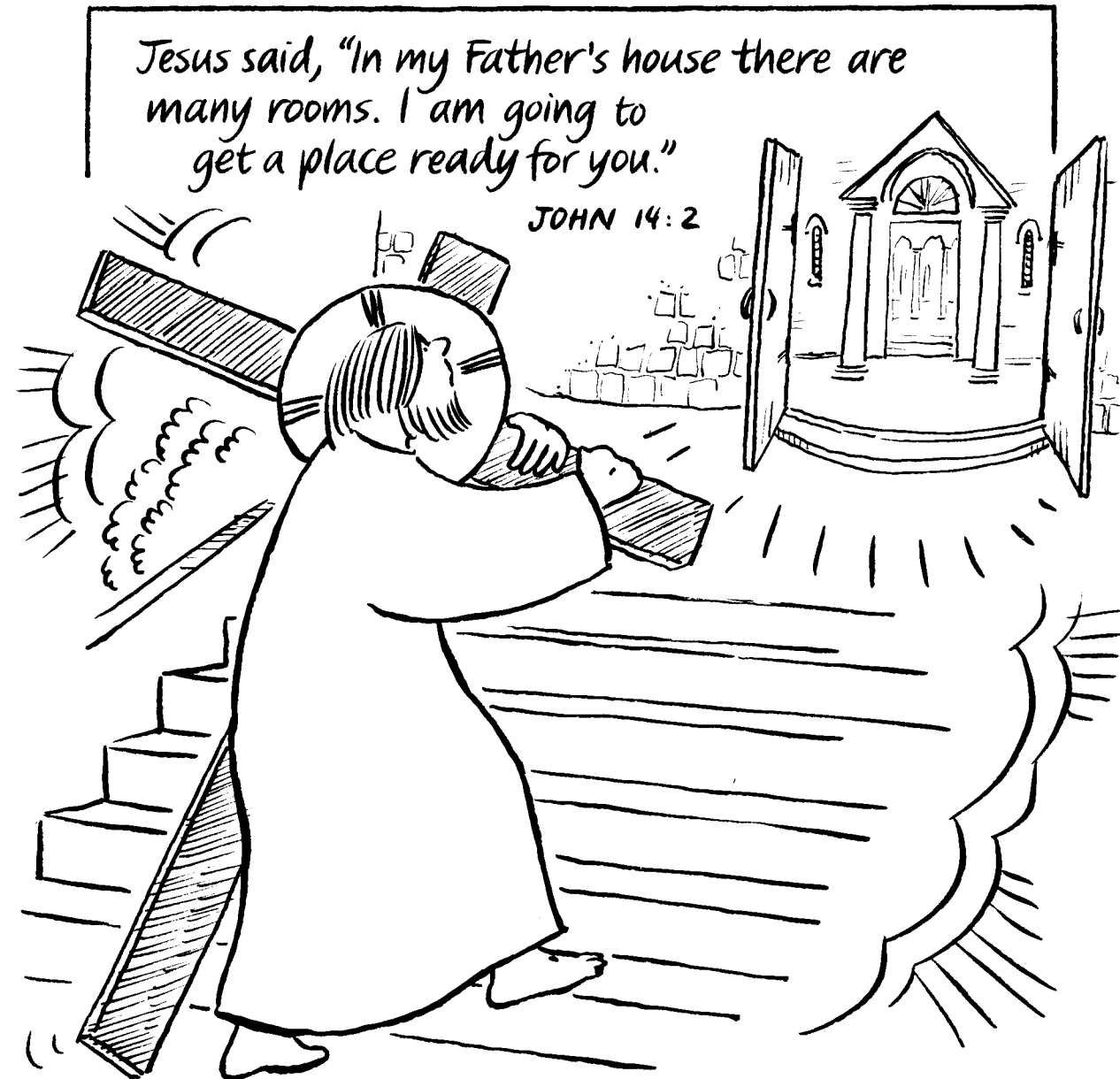
Using the Bible as the lectionary uses it—as the Church uses it in its common life—means we can no longer hide behind our desires, legitimate as they may be, that our children acquire a working knowledge of the Bible as a source of doctrine or lore; or that they learn from it how to get along better in their daily lives. We must confront the Church's often embarrassing assertions such as today's Gospel: "In my Father's house are many mansions—I go to prepare a place for you." We must test our own belief in "the Communion of Saints, the Forgiveness of Sins, the Resurrection of the Body, and the Life Everlasting."

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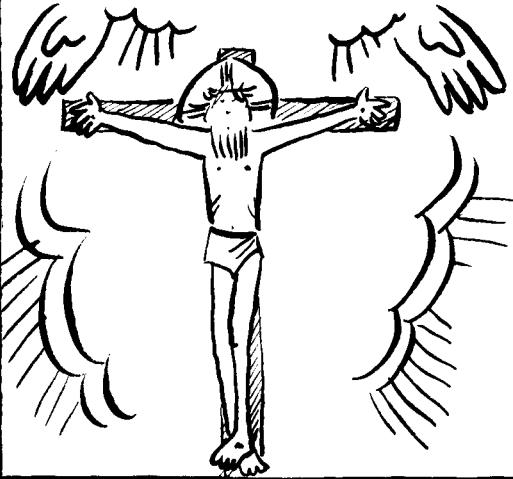
Year A
5th SUNDAY
of EASTER



On the night before he died, Jesus tried to help his friends understand how he would win new life for us all.



Jesus said that by dying on the cross, he would be GLORIFIED.



God would raise him from the dead, and give him new life to share with us.

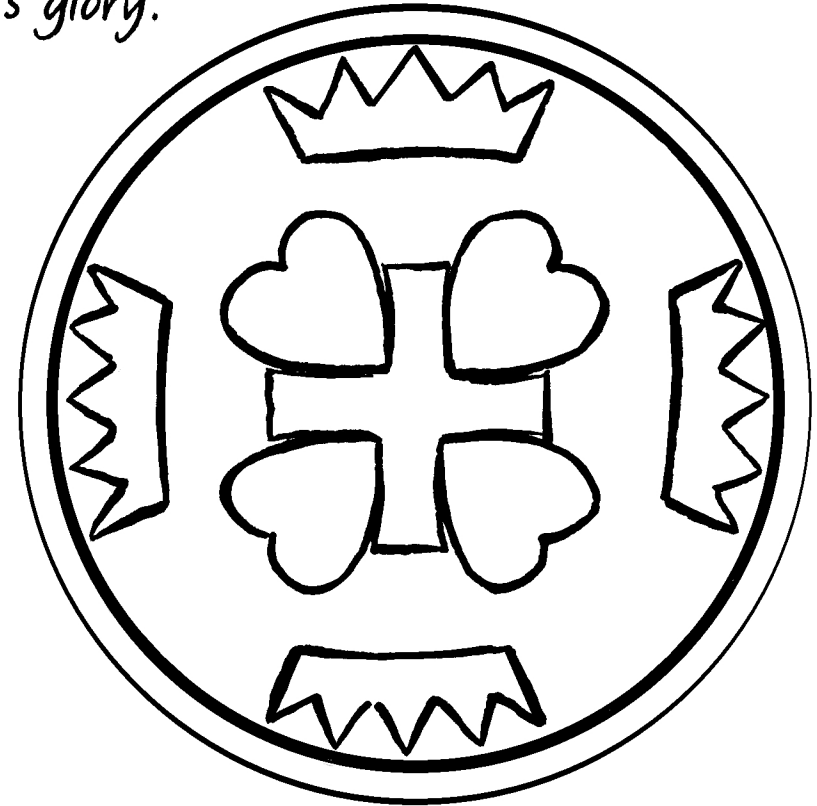


Jesus said, "Because of me, you can come to God. I am the WAY, the TRUTH, and the LIFE."



When Jesus said, "My Father's house," he meant what we call Heaven: the place where God's people share his life and glory forever. When Jesus died for us, he opened the way for us to become part of that glory.

We sometimes call a church "God's house," too. We make our churches beautiful, to remind us of God's glory.



Finish the stained-glass window, and color it in beautiful colors.