A NOTE TO PARENTS

Jesus once again uses a wedding to represent the coming of God's Kingdom in its fullness. In Jewish weddings at that time, the bride and her bridesmaids gathered at her house at dusk. Then as the groom approached, they all went out to meet him with lamps lit, forming a procession to the groom's house, where the ceremony was held. In Jesus's story, five of the bridesmaids have brought extra oil to be sure they can do their part in the celebration even if the groom is late. The others are caught unprepared.

Every child knows the panicky feeling of being unable to keep up, when everyone else is ready and in a hurry—the feeling that comes when we yell, "Wait for me!" and nobody waits. The broad strokes that Jesus uses to sketch the story ("five of them were wise, and five of them were foolish"), combined with the intensity with which children can feel the distress of the "foolish" bridesmaids, make this a vivid and memorable Gospel for them. It is one that might be scary, except that the foolish bridesmaids are so very foolish—even a three-year-old can feel superior to them. Of course you should bring extra oil; the whole party depends on your lamp being lit! Of course we should be ready for Jesus to come again! He is what we long for; waiting for him is what has brought us together; his arrival is what the party is all about! And what do we do to be ready? We keep our lights ready to shine, of course—we keep Jesus' love alive in our hearts.

Faith in Jesus' coming again is not the property of End Times preachers and blockbuster movies about the Rapture. It is the hope of the universal Church. Think how often we speak of it in our worship: "Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again;" "he will come again, in glory, to judge the living and the dead." This hope is very real to children: without it, the world really would be a scary place. As Advent draws near, take time to celebrate our hope with your children, by singing Advent hymns that look forward with joy and excitement to Jesus' coming again. It's too bad our hymnals include the powerful spiritual based on this parable, "Keep your lamps trimmed and burning," but you can find a recording and learn it by ear with your children.

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Year A
PROPER 27
TRACKS 1 and 2



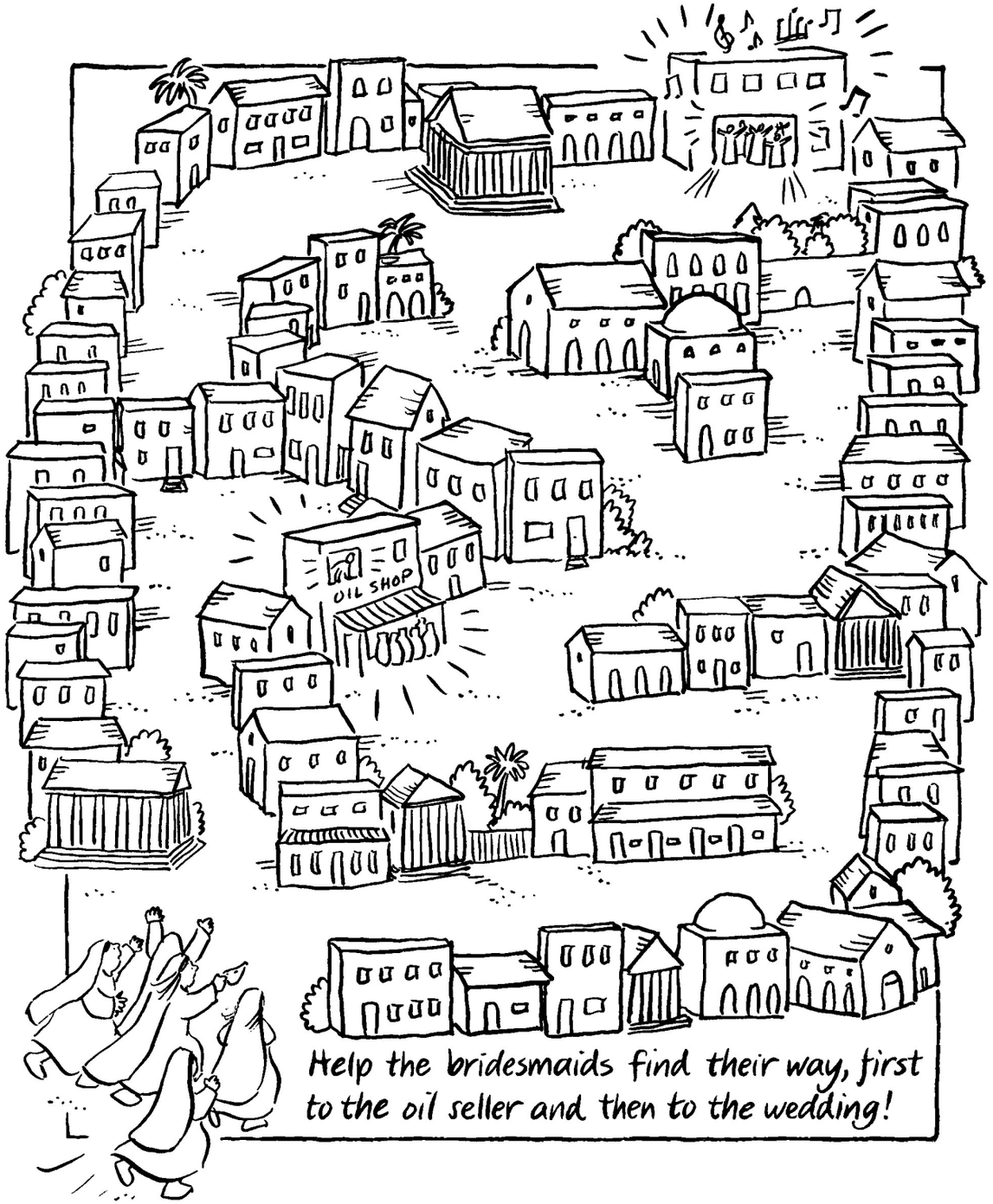
JESUS TOLD THIS STORY:

Ten bridesmaids were waiting at a wedding. The groom was late, and they all fell asleep.

At midnight, they heard the groom coming. But they had used up all the oil in their lamps!

Five bridesmaids had extra oil. The rest had to run and buy some.

When they got back, it was too late!



Help the bridesmaids find their way, first to the oil seller and then to the wedding!