

A NOTE TO PARENTS

The Easter season divides into two parts. During the first two weeks after Easter Day, our Gospel readings focus on Jesus' resurrection to new life as that was revealed to his friends during the weeks immediately following his crucifixion. The emphasis is on the joy, and the strangeness and mystery, that the disciples experienced when they met him on the road, at the lakeside, or in the upper room. Then, following "Good Shepherd Sunday," we turn away from these intimate, luminous encounters between the Risen Lord and his chosen friends, and begin to learn to recognize him in a new way: risen and glorified, and dwelling within a constantly growing community whose life is derived from his risen life.

Our focus, then, in this second half of the Easter season, is on the *Church*. We read in Acts about the Church's expansion throughout the Roman world; in the first Epistle of Peter we hear an experienced Christian instruct newly baptized believers about the life of faith; while the Gospel of John describes the way the community is to embody Jesus' new life in its own life together.

With the growth of the Church, the little group of Jesus' friends and followers abruptly found themselves not simply preserving his memory and message, but welcoming into their own fellowship a host of new followers, *who claimed also to have a living and real relationship with him*, though they had never met him before his crucifixion. It is noteworthy how different this is from the sort of experience usually represented by followers of martyred leaders. The Church did not say of Jesus, "His movement lives on." It said, "He is with us always; he will never leave us." It was not, primarily, what Jesus had taught or done that drew new disciples; it was *who he was*—his living presence, overcoming even death itself.

Scripture's name for that presence is the Holy Spirit, whose coming we will celebrate on Pentecost. The Easter season ends with Pentecost, often called the "birthday of the Church;" but as we so often do in the church's year, we have jumped out of strict chronological order in these weeks before Pentecost itself. Easter and Pentecost are a seamless whole: once we have known Jesus risen and glorified, we have also known his Spirit, alive in us, and in his Body, the Church.

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THE SUNDAY PAPER, 19 Colony Road, New Haven, CT 06511, USA

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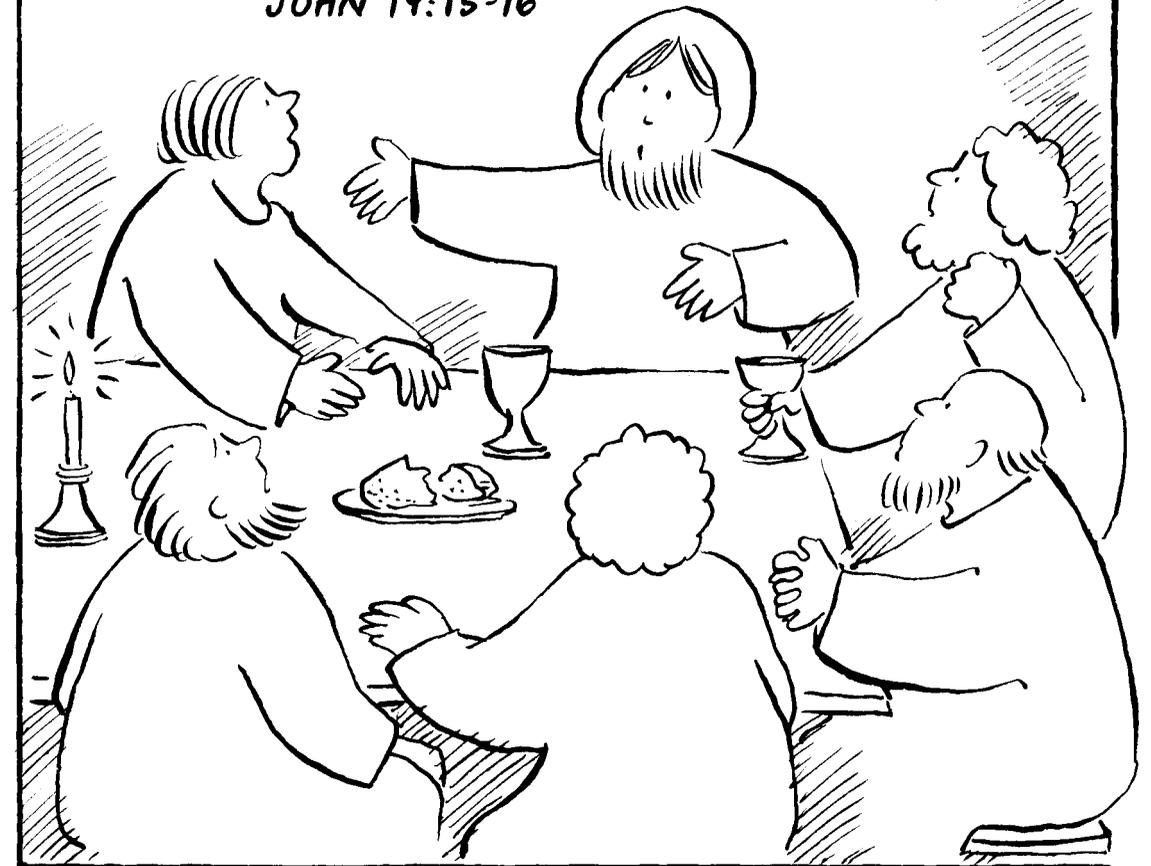


THE SUNDAY PAPER JUNIOR

Year A
6th SUNDAY
of EASTER

Jesus said,
"If you love me, keep my commandments,
and God will send you the Holy Spirit."

JOHN 14:15-16



After Jesus rose from the dead, his disciples remembered his promise.

He had promised that he would always be with them.



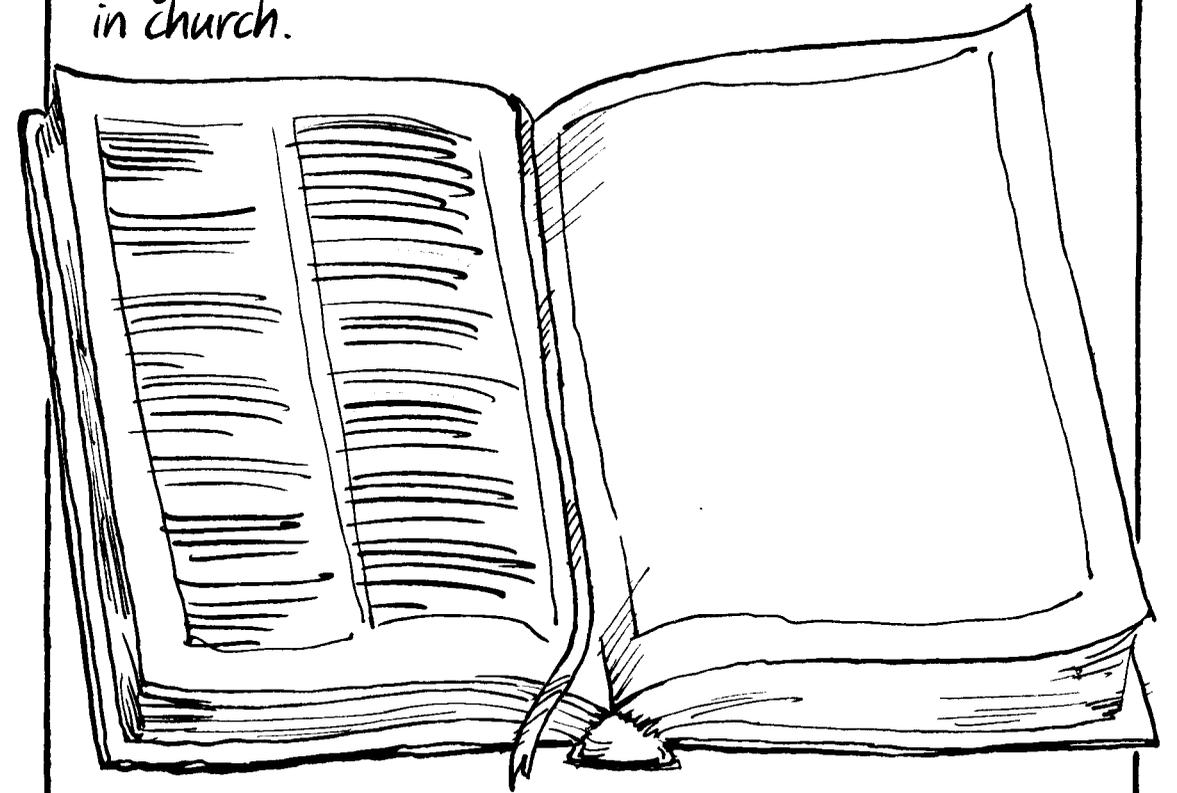
New people came to know and love Jesus.

His followers spread the Good News all over the world!



After Jesus rose from the dead, people came to know him and believe in him even if they had never known him before he died on the cross. He promised to be with everyone who believes in him.

We can know Jesus because we read about him in the Bible. We can come close to him when we pray, and when we share bread and wine in church.



Draw a picture of Jesus on the page of this Bible.