

A NOTE TO PARENTS

As it often does, the Lectionary (the church's schedule of Scripture readings for the Sundays of the church year) requires us to take up with our children a portion of Scripture that we might otherwise skip over as unsuitable. Today's Gospel is scary: "Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth: I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. ... Whoever does not take the cross and follow me is not worthy of me." (Matthew 10:34-38).

This passage is in striking contrast to the messages about faith and Jesus and God that children's Bibles and most Sunday School curriculums give to children, particularly small children. Portrayed under a smiling blue sky, the Jesus of our juvenile religious materials goes about solving problems and fixing things. He makes sick people feel better; and after meeting him, troubled or disabled or unhappy people become normal and nice. It's a very appealing image, and much of it is Scriptural and wonderful and true—genuine Good News. But it isn't the whole story, and we cheat our children if we present it as the whole story, for it is not reconcilable with life as they know and experience it, or with the life of faith as they grow and explore it. Sharing only the immediately appealing Good News with children is an act of adult wishful thinking, and it leads children to regard faith itself as a form of wishful thinking, or at best, a fantasy—a visionary escape world to which we retreat in hard times, or which we desperately project onto the real world, knowing that the world in fact does not conform to it.

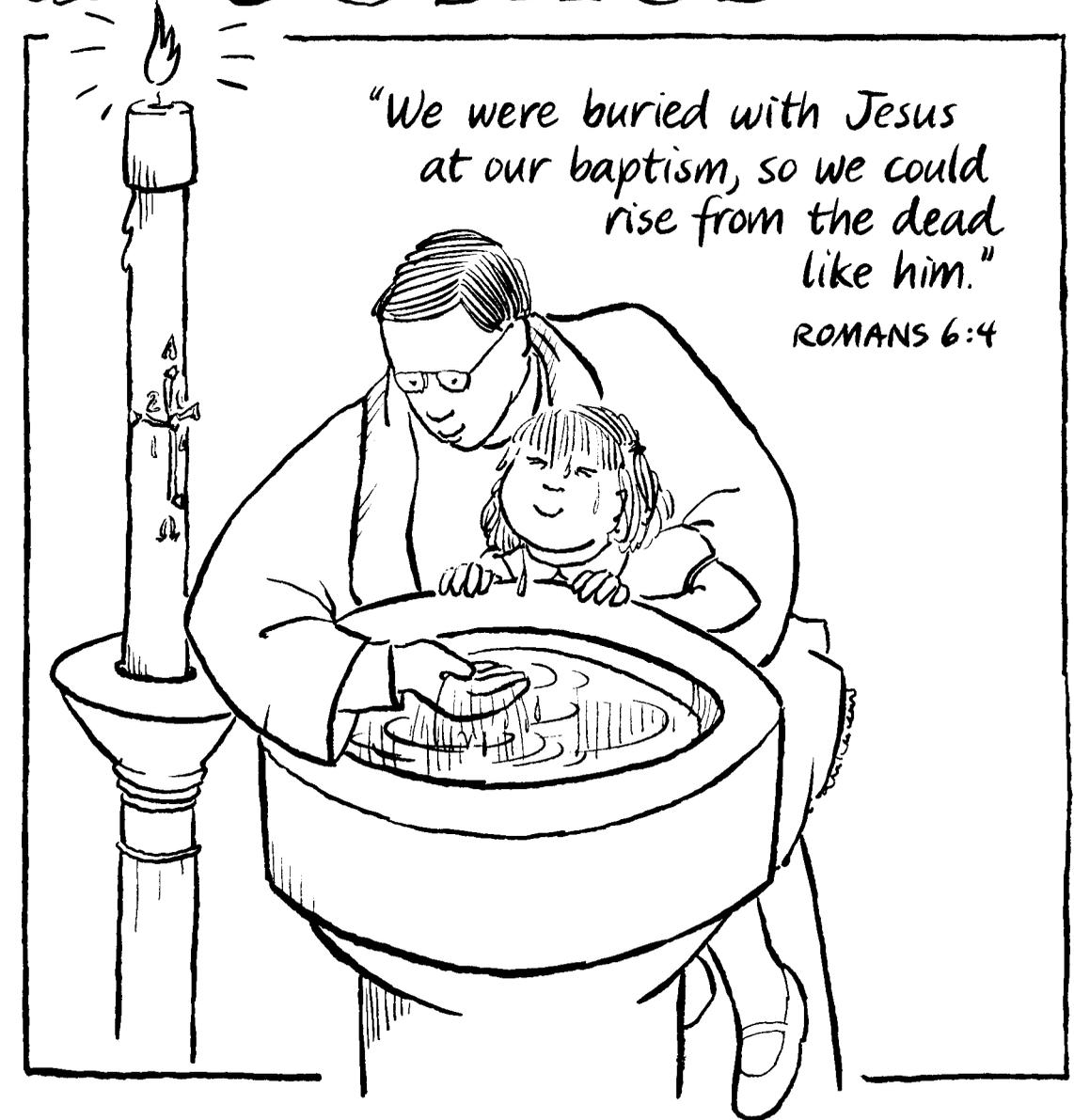
Jesus healed and helped people; he also went to the Cross. He calls us to be healed and helped, and to heal and help others ... and also to go with him to the Cross—whatever form that Cross may take in our lives. On the other side of the Cross, he offers us the deepest, most solid, most awesome and wonderful Good News: new life out of death. When we engrave this pattern on ourselves in Baptism, we are not projecting a wishful fantasy onto our lives. We are taking his hand to walk with him through the grave and gate of death and out the other side, that the costly and glorious and real Good News may take hold of our lives and make them new.

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Year A
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TRACKS 1 and 2



JESUS WANTS US TO LOVE HIM BEST OF ALL.

Jesus said, "Pick up the cross and follow me."

That means we try to be like Jesus, even if it's hard or if it hurts.

MATTHEW 10:38



We show we want to do this by being baptized. We ask Jesus to live in us and make us new.

Jesus's new life grows in us to help us love him and do his work.



Belonging to Jesus means that we love him and try to be like him. Belonging to Jesus also means we know that he loves us, and makes his special life grow in us. Then, together, we can help his kingdom grow.



Draw a heart around the cross. Then draw a bigger heart around the first heart. Keep on drawing each new heart around the one before, until your design fills the whole space.