

A NOTE TO PARENTS

When I was a child, I loved to read the stories of how Jesus went from place to place, healing people, restoring the dead to life, imparting forgiveness and hope, and sometimes doing real world-class wonders like stilling storms and walking on the water. But I was somewhat unimpressed, and rather baffled, by today's story—the feeding of the five thousand. The editors of Bibles for children seem to share my feelings, for there we find a generous selection of healing stories, while the story of bread in the wilderness may be entirely missing. But for the early Church, the community that assembled the New Testament, this story was of crucial importance. It is one of only a handful of episodes that are told in all four Gospels; it is even told twice in the gospels of Matthew and Mark. And once it has been told, the narrators keep referring back to it. “The disciples did not understand what Jesus meant,” they will say, “because they had forgotten about the loaves and fishes.” The miracle of the loaves somehow defines who the Messiah is in a crucial and unique way.

Perhaps one reason why the image of Jesus feeding his people did not touch my heart deeply as a child is that I had no experience of the Eucharist. Our family did not attend church regularly, and, of course, if we had, I would at that time have been kept from receiving the bread and wine until I was twelve or thirteen and had been confirmed. Today, however, children are coming to the Table at earlier and earlier ages, and more and more parishes are beginning to take seriously the Church's evident intent that no baptized person, of whatever age or mental ability, is to be denied access to the saving life of the Messiah in bread and wine. We are also rediscovering the reality of Jesus' healing grace through a new awareness of the sacrament of healing; but it is in the Eucharist that the life of the Kingdom flows most directly, most regularly, most constantly, through the veins of the Body of Christ. Children for whom the Bread of Life, the Cup of Salvation, are a weekly reality from before they can remember, have a precious privilege: to grow in faith from babyhood with the direct, “hands-on” experience of Christ's miraculous, nourishing love.

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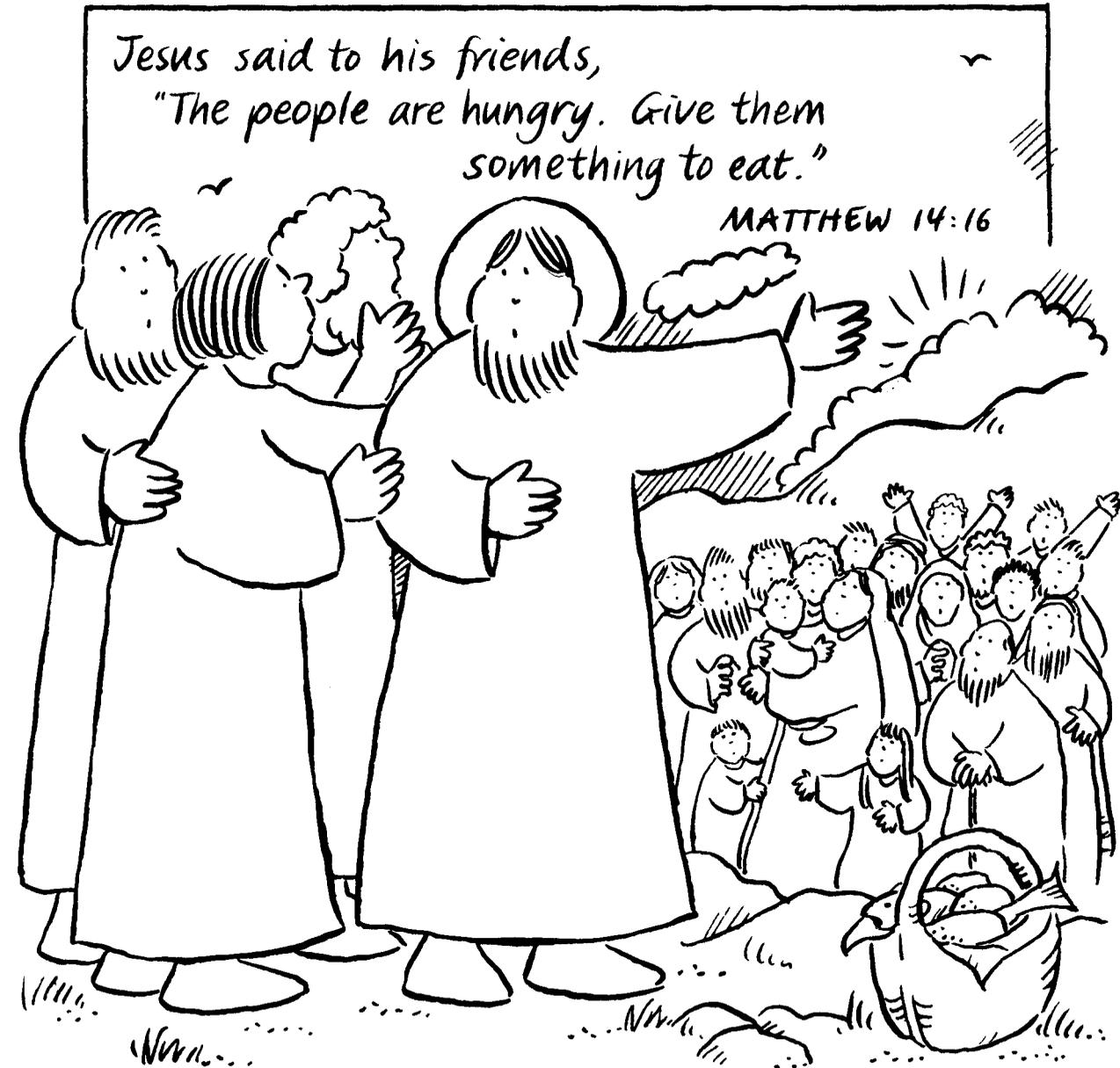
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Year A
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TRACKS 1 and 2



JESUS AND HIS FRIENDS WENT ACROSS THE LAKE.

Jesus was looking for a quiet place to pray. But a big crowd was waiting for him.



He talked to them, and healed the sick people who were among them.



The people were hungry. The only food that Jesus's friends had was two fish and five little loaves of bread.



Jesus took the food and blessed it... and there was plenty for everyone!



Jesus didn't just talk about God's Kingdom. He made it begin to happen. He did things that showed what God's Kingdom is like. He did things that only God can do. People began to say, "God has come to be with us!"



Draw the people who are sharing Jesus's bread and God's love.