

A NOTE TO PARENTS

September is not the start of the Church year, but it is the time when, in most parishes, the regular program begins again after a break for the summer. Vacation schedules, travel, and recreation may have meant that church attendance has been infrequent for many of us in the months just passed. Today's readings from the Bible can help you to reflect with your child about why we come to church and what happens there.

In today's Gospel (Matthew 18:15-20) Jesus tells his followers what to do when they have been wronged by another member of the Christian community. They are to speak to the offender alone; if that does not work, they are to bring another member or two and try to work out the problem. As a last resort, the conflict becomes the business of the whole church. These directives are connected with extravagant promises about God's response to our prayer "if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask;" for, says Jesus, "where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

Jesus does not imagine individuals or even families believing in him in isolation. He envisions a community. The New Testament has various names for this community—the Church, the Body of Christ, the Kingdom of God, the new Jerusalem. But it always maintains that God's power operates most freely in the presence of a fellowship of believers knit together by love as well as faith. Thus one of the great expressions of God's love in our lives, the Eucharist or Holy Communion, is only available to us in the company of the Church—of "two or three, gathered in his name."

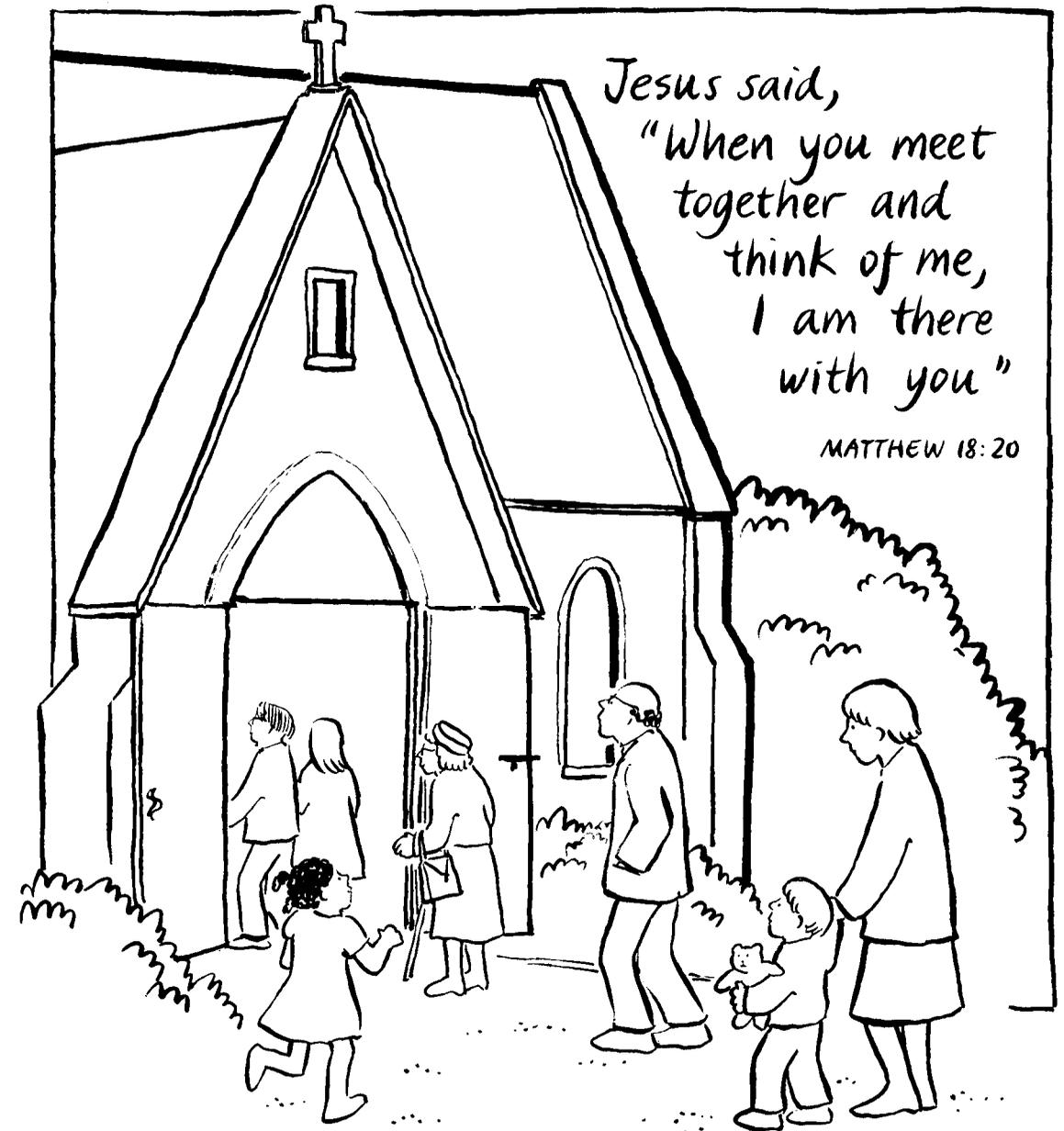
Jesus' words about "two or three" gathered in his name are featured in a classic prayer from the Book of Common Prayer, the "Prayer of St. Chrysostom" that concludes Morning Prayer (Prayer Book, pages 59 and 102). This would be a good prayer to read and learn with your child. You might also write out the verse from Matthew, have your child decorate it, and hang it where it will remind you of Jesus' constant presence with those who follow him in love.

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Year A
PROPER 18
TRACKS 1 and 2



Jesus had friends.
He loved them very
much.



He helped them learn
to love each other.



Jesus is our friend, too.
He loves us very much.

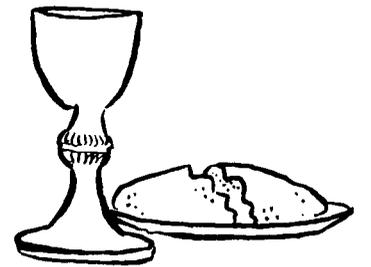
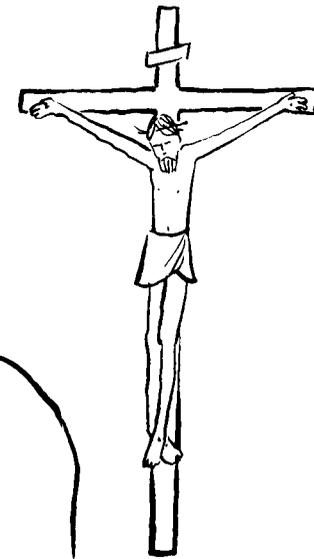
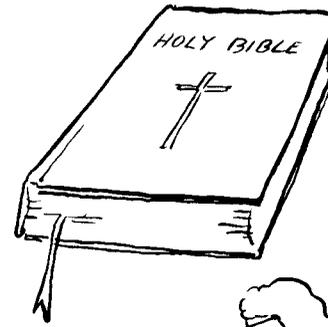


He helps us learn to
love each other.



Jesus had special friends. They could see him
and touch him and talk with him.
That was a long time ago.

Jesus is still alive. We are his friends. But
we can't see or touch him in quite the
same way. We learn to feel close to him
in different ways.



Which of these ways of being close to Jesus do you
have at your house? Which do you have at your church?