

## A NOTE TO PARENTS

In our culture, "Christmas" is over by about 4 p.m. on Christmas Day. The "Christmas season" means the season that leads up to Christmas—the season in which we do the shopping and make the preparations and (most significantly of course) spend the money. Once the last present is opened, the holiday is over.

In contrast, the Church celebrates Christmas for twelve days. The Church does not recognize the "post-Christmas let-down," but enjoins us to feast and rejoice till Twelfth Night. This may be easier to bring off in your family if you save a few small presents for the days following Christmas. They can be hidden, like Easter eggs, to add excitement to their giving. The pre-Christmas rush is over, and there may be more time to do some of the festive holiday activities that were crowded out beforehand ... to listen to recordings of Christmas music ... to go to the theatre together ... to work together on some long-promised project.

The days after Christmas are also the time for writing Thank-You notes. Probably the only way to make this obligation into a pleasure rather than a penance is for you to sit down with your children and read, suggest, support, and praise as they struggle to commit their thoughts to paper. Preschoolers can dictate for you to write; they can draw pictures. Do your children receive gifts from relatives and family friends whom they have never met or scarcely know? How does it feel to get a present from someone you have never seen? How can you tell that they love and care for you? Do they know what you like? What can you say to them to show that you feel their love through their gift?

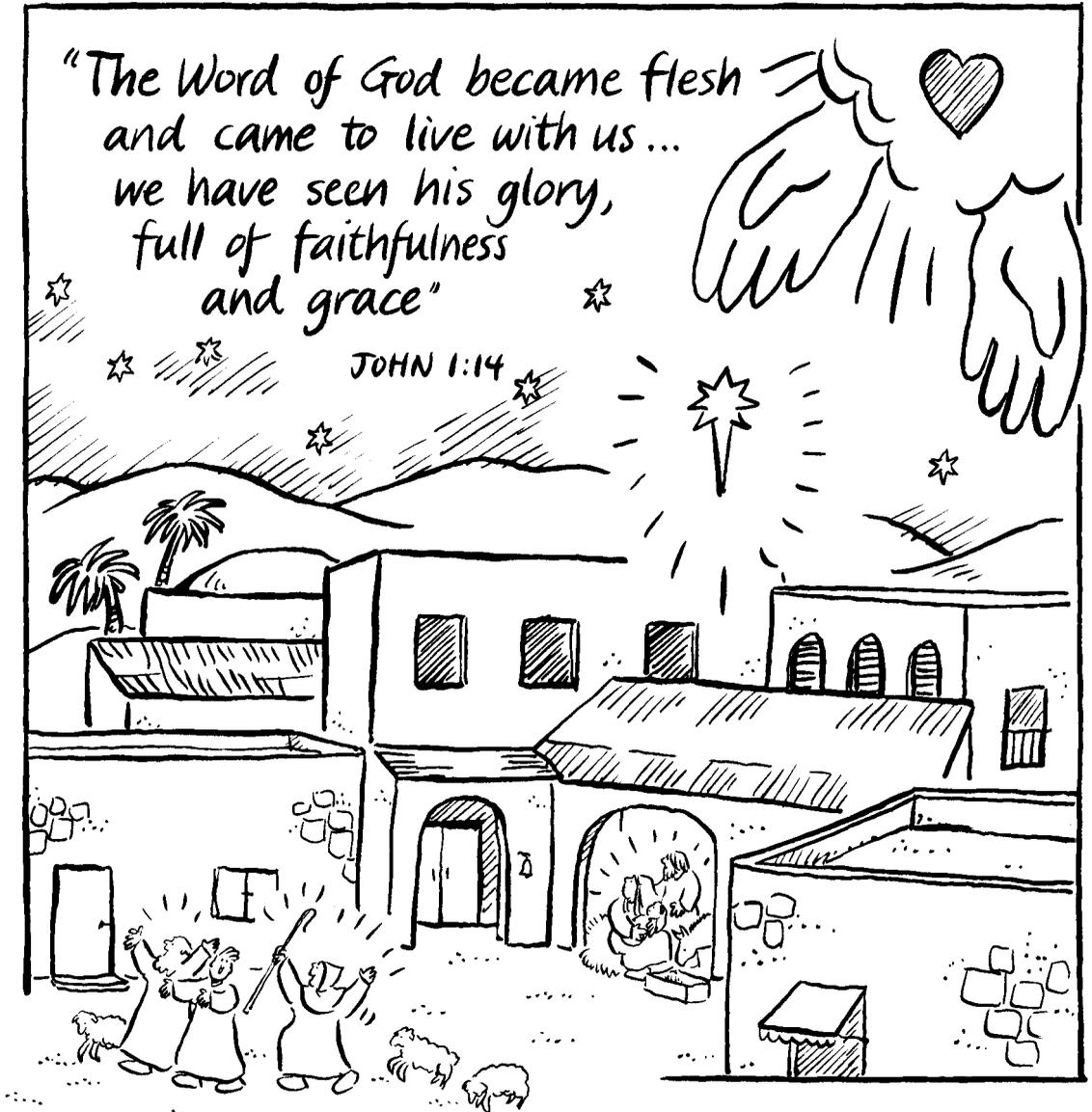
"No one has seen God at any time," says John in today's Gospel; but God has given us presents that show his knowledge and love of us. Suggest to your children that they write thank-you notes to God. Remind your child that the prayer at the Eucharist is called the "Great Thanksgiving." Help your child to listen to this prayer in church week by week. How many of God's presents to us does it mention? How does it say "thank you"?

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# THE SUNDAY PAPER JUNIOR

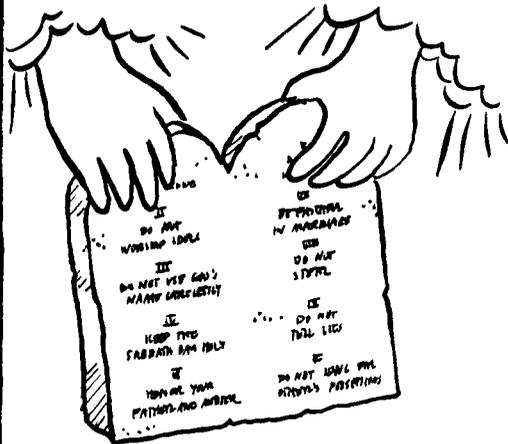
1st SUNDAY  
after  
CHRISTMAS



God made the world.  
He made us to live in it.  
He gave us life.



God gave us his law to  
show us how to live.



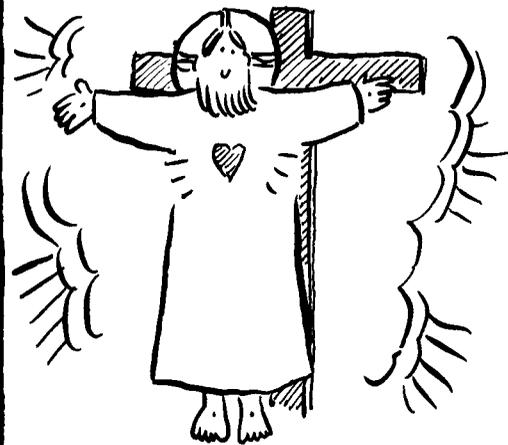
But we did not obey it.

Then God gave us his  
Son, Jesus.



When Jesus grew up,  
he obeyed God's law.

Jesus gave up his life for  
us. Now he gives us love,  
freedom and new life!



We have finished waiting for Christmas.  
Christmas has come. We have opened our  
presents, and had a good time. But Christmas  
is not over yet. God has given us such a special  
present that the church is still celebrating!



How many of these presents from God do you recognize?  
Under the tree, add other presents that God has given you.