

WE WORSHIP



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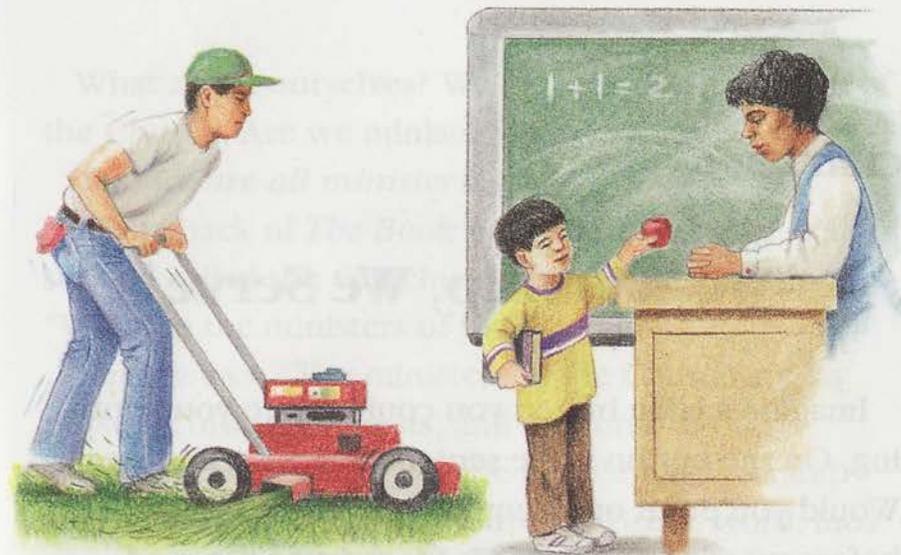
Cross Year—Primary, Unit III
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Christians are ministers in everything they do.



We serve the Lord when we serve other people.

CHAPTER 1

We Worship, We Serve

Imagine a large button you could pin to your clothing. On the button is the sentence, “I am a minister.” Would you put it on? Many people might hesitate before wearing those words for everyone to read.

If you did wear such a button, you would probably have to answer a lot of questions about what it meant.

The word “minister” is both a name and an action. It is the name for a servant—someone who does jobs when asked, or who goes where help is needed. It is the action of “serving”—looking after the wants and needs of others.

In many countries, persons are named to be ministers for different parts of their government. They are like the secretaries and managers in the government of the United States.

But mostly we think of ministers as servants in the Church. The priest in a congregation is called a minister. So are the deacons. The bishop of the diocese is a chief minister.

What about ourselves? We are baptized members of the Church. Are we ministers, too?

Yes. *We are all ministers.*

In the back of *The Book of Common Prayer* is a section called the Catechism. Turn to the question, “Who are the ministers of the Church?”

The answer: “The ministers of the Church are lay persons, bishops, priests, and deacons.”

“Lay persons” means all the people who worship and serve God. “Lay” comes from a Greek word, *laos* (pronounced LAY-ahs). It means people.

As baptized persons, we represent Jesus Christ. At home, at school, at work, at play—we are called to serve as Christ’s ministers.

As ministers, we are called to treat everyone fairly and in loving ways.

As ministers, we are asked to use our talents and gifts wisely for the good of other people.

And, as Christ’s ministers in the Church, we are invited to join in worship, to perform acts of service, and to give our money for accomplishing God’s work.

We can offer our support to the bishops, priests, and deacons who lead us.

So, you do not have to wear a button that says, “I am a minister.” As a believer in Jesus Christ, that is just what you *are*.



Bishops ordain the Church's priests.

CHAPTER 2

Bishops Are Like Shepherds

The twelve Apostles were the Church's first leaders. They served Jesus, the Good Shepherd, by teaching, preaching, leading in prayers, and by caring for people's needs. They, too, were like shepherds. Jesus had said to Peter, after his resurrection, "Feed my sheep." He meant, "Take care of my people."

The apostles, in turn, chose their helpers. They would put their hands on the heads of these persons and pray that the Holy Spirit would fill them with power to be good servants in the Church.

As the Church grew and spread into other lands, every area needed a leader to look after the congregations and help them to remain faithful to their Lord. The one who was chosen for this special ministry was called a "bishop." The word means shepherd, or overseer.

Through the centuries of the Church's history, the office of bishop has been very important. The bishop represents Christ and his Church, just as the Apostles did. Bishops ordain all the priests and deacons.

Today the Church is divided into areas called dioceses. Each diocese has one bishop. In larger dioceses, other bishops may serve as assistants.

The bishops are priests who have been elected and ordained as “chief priests.” They are good friends and helpers to all the Church’s priests, deacons, and lay persons. They meet with many committees and groups to make important decisions about the work of Christ’s people.

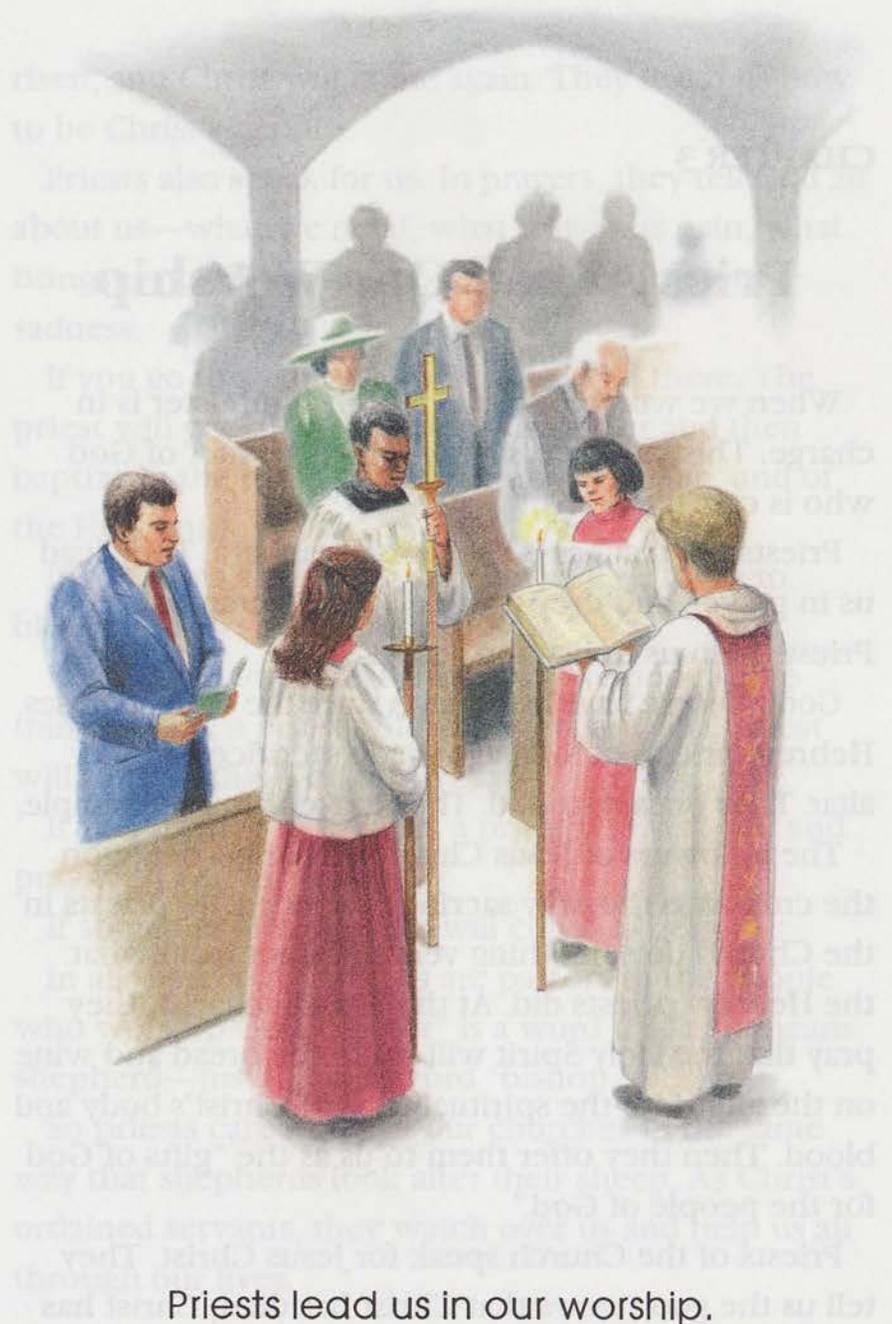
Bishops visit all the congregations. Their special ministry is to confirm baptized people. At a Service of Confirmation, the bishop lays hands on the heads of persons being confirmed—and prays that they will be given strength from the Holy Spirit.

Like the Apostles long ago, a bishop helps people to follow the Scriptures in their lives.

A bishop works to help the Church’s people live in peace with one another.

A bishop meets with leaders in the community to speak out for what is right and good.

Most of all, bishops want the members of every congregation to be faithful worshipers of God. Each time we meet for prayers and the Holy Eucharist, we pray for our bishop. We ask God to help all bishops and ministers to be faithful servants of Christ.



Priests lead us in our worship.

CHAPTER 3

Priests Lead Our Worship

When we worship in the church, a minister is in charge. This minister is an ordained servant of God who is called a priest.

Priests are teachers. They are preachers. They lead us in prayer, and they preside at the sacraments. Priests help us to do God's work.

God's people have had priests since the time of Moses. Hebrew priests of long ago made sacrifices on the altar. They prayed to God. They looked after the temple.

The followers of Jesus Christ believe his death on the cross was the only sacrifice we need. So priests in the Church do something very different from what the Hebrew priests did. At the Holy Eucharist, they pray that the Holy Spirit will make the bread and wine on the altar into the spiritual food of Christ's body and blood. Then they offer them to us as the "gifts of God for the people of God."

Priests of the Church speak for Jesus Christ. They tell us the good news that Christ has died, Christ has

risen, and Christ will come again. They teach us how to be Christ's people.

Priests also speak for us. In prayers, they tell God all about us—what we need, what causes us pain, what brings us joy. They share our happiness and our sadness.

If you go to a baptism, a priest will be there. The priest will give God thanks for the water and then baptize in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

If you go to a wedding, a priest will be there to bless the man and the woman.

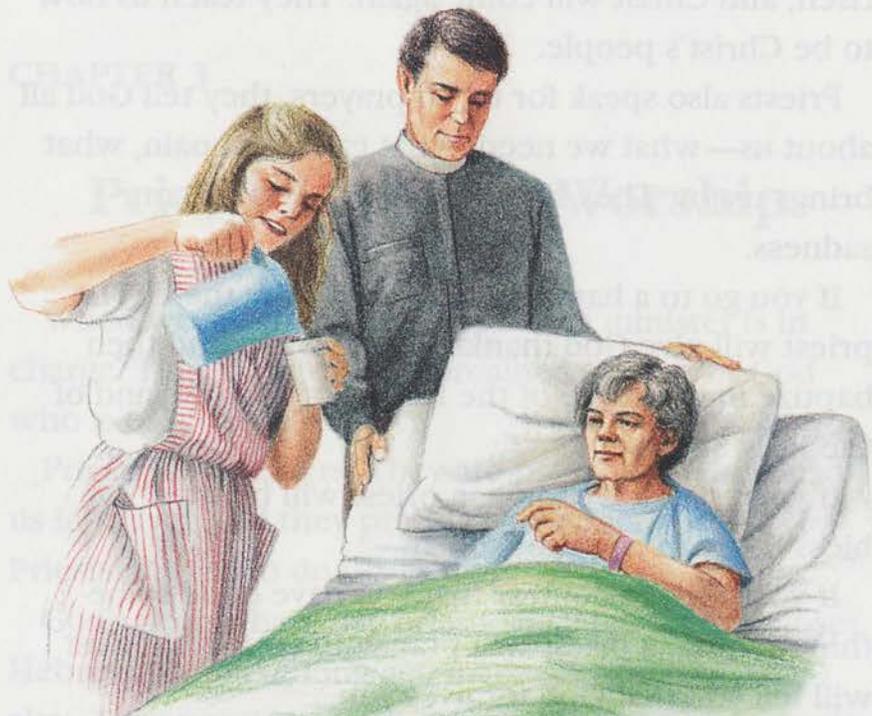
If you need to confess that you have done something wrong, a priest will pray with you. The priest will tell you that God forgives you.

If you are sick or injured, a priest will visit you and pray with you for healing.

If someone dies, a priest will come to help.

In all these ways, priests are pastors to the people who worship God. "Pastor" is a word that also means shepherd—just like the word "bishop."

So priests care for us in our churches in the same way that shepherds look after their sheep. As Christ's ordained servants, they watch over us and help us all through our lives.



Deacons visit the sick.

CHAPTER 4

Deacons Also Serve

Another kind of ordained minister in the Church is called a deacon. “Deacon” comes from a Greek word that means servant.

It may be that the seven men chosen by Jesus’ Apostles to help them in the early Church were the very first deacons. One of them was Stephen. (We can read that story in *The Acts of the Apostles, chapter 6.*) The apostle Paul mentioned deacons in his letters.

As the Church grew and spread, more deacons were needed. They helped poor people and visited the sick.

We can read stories about deacons at worship in the early Christian churches. They carried the Gospel book and read the Gospel lessons. They prepared the gifts of bread and wine for Holy Eucharist, and they helped to serve the people.

Deacons are ordained by bishops. In today’s Church, many deacons are later ordained as priests. Some deacons choose not to become priests, so they hold their offices for life.

In larger churches, there may be both priests and deacons who help to lead the people in worship. Sometimes, when a church is quite small and does not have a priest, a deacon will be in charge.

If you visit a church that has both priests and deacons, how can you tell the difference between them during the service of Holy Eucharist?

You can tell partly by their stoles. The deacon's stole goes over the left shoulder and is tied on the right at the waist. The priest's stole hangs down in front and is even on both sides.

You can also tell the difference by what deacons do. They read the Gospel lesson, and they prepare the gifts on the Holy Table. They stand at the right of the priest during the service.

During the week, deacons visit sick and needy people. They serve all persons who suffer and ask for help.

Priests who used to be deacons do not stop doing what deacons do.

Bishops who used to be priests and deacons still serve in those same ways.

All these ordained people, along with lay persons, are God's ministers. With our different gifts, we all worship and praise God together. We all give thanks for the good news of Jesus Christ who called us into his Church.

CHAPTER 5

Others Serve at Worship

Ordained ministers lead our worship. They are bishops, priests, and deacons of the Church.

Lay persons also have important jobs to do at a service. We can see them at work from the time we arrive until we go home. Here are some of these servants of Christ:

Choirs and musicians. Choirs are groups of singers who help the congregation to praise God with their voices. Many larger churches have choirs for children, young people, and adults. The director of a choir and the organist may be the same person. Many kinds of musicians play their instruments in the churches.

Lay Readers. These persons receive licenses from the bishop. They read the Old Testament and Epistle lessons, and they lead in the Prayers of the People.

Acolytes. This name is pronounced ACK-o-lite. It comes from a Greek word that means "helper." Many acolytes are children and youth. They light candles on the Altar, and may hold candles as the Gospel is read.



Lay persons do important jobs at church.

They help with the collection of the offerings. They may carry the cross in a procession. (The person who carries the cross may be called a “crucifer.”)

In some churches you will see someone carrying a container with burning incense. This person is called a “thurifer,” and the container is called a “thurible.”

Ushers. The ushers greet people as they arrive and offer them copies of the church’s service folder (or bulletin). They may help people to their seats in the pews. They collect the offerings of money.

Altar Guild. The members of this group make sure the Altar hangings are the right color. They clean and polish the vessels used for Holy Communion. They wash and iron the linens. They arrange and care for the flowers, and they prepare the church building for weddings, funerals, and other services.

Lay Eucharistic Ministers. Lay persons may help the ordained ministers to serve the people at Holy Eucharist. They are asked to study and be trained. The bishop of the diocese gives them a license that permits them to serve. In some churches, these lay ministers also deliver Communion to sick persons who cannot leave their homes.

CHAPTER 6

We Have a Calendar for Worship

In our worship in the Church, we follow a calendar. It is different from the regular calendars used by everyone. The Church Calendar begins on the Sunday nearest November 30. This is the first Sunday of the season of *Advent*, which lasts four weeks.

Then comes *Christmas*. We celebrate Jesus' birth on December 25. That is the first of the twelve days of Christmas. The next important feast is Epiphany, on January 6. On that day we remember the Wise Men who came to worship the Christ Child.

The weeks of *Epiphany* end at Ash Wednesday, which is the first day of Lent.

Lent is forty weekdays and six Sundays. It ends with Easter. The word "Lent" comes from an old English word that means "lengthen." In Lent the days are getting longer, and springtime is just ahead.

During Lent we remember the forty days Jesus spent in the desert. He had nothing to eat or drink.

Three times he was tempted. The devil asked him to turn away from God and think only about himself. But Jesus did not give in to the temptations. He told the devil that he would serve only God. The devil left, and angels came to care for him. (We can read this story in *Matthew 4:1-11* and *Luke 4:1-13*.)

In the season of Lent, the Church all around the world is getting ready to baptize new Christians at Easter. These persons are being taught and prepared for the sacrament of Holy Baptism.

The service of Holy Eucharist is different in Lent. We do not sing "Glory to God in the highest" and other joyous songs of praise. Our music and our prayers cause us to ask questions: Am I keeping the promises made at baptism? Am I sharing Christ's love with others? How can I be a better servant of the Lord?

The church looks different inside during the weeks of Lent. The color of the hangings and the ministers' vestments is purple. Flowers are absent.

Lent is a quiet time for prayer and learning. It is a time to ask God to forgive us for any wrong we have done. All through these forty days, we look forward to *Easter* and *Pentecost*.

CHAPTER 7

Our Lord Suffered, Died, and Was Buried

Each time we worship in the church, we see the cross near the Altar. It may be made of wood, of shining metal, or of stone. It is there to remind us how Jesus' life on earth came to an end.

Every time we join in the prayer called The Great Thanksgiving at the Holy Eucharist, we recall Jesus' death on a cross. But we tell the story in a special way during the last days of Lent. These seven days are called Holy Week.

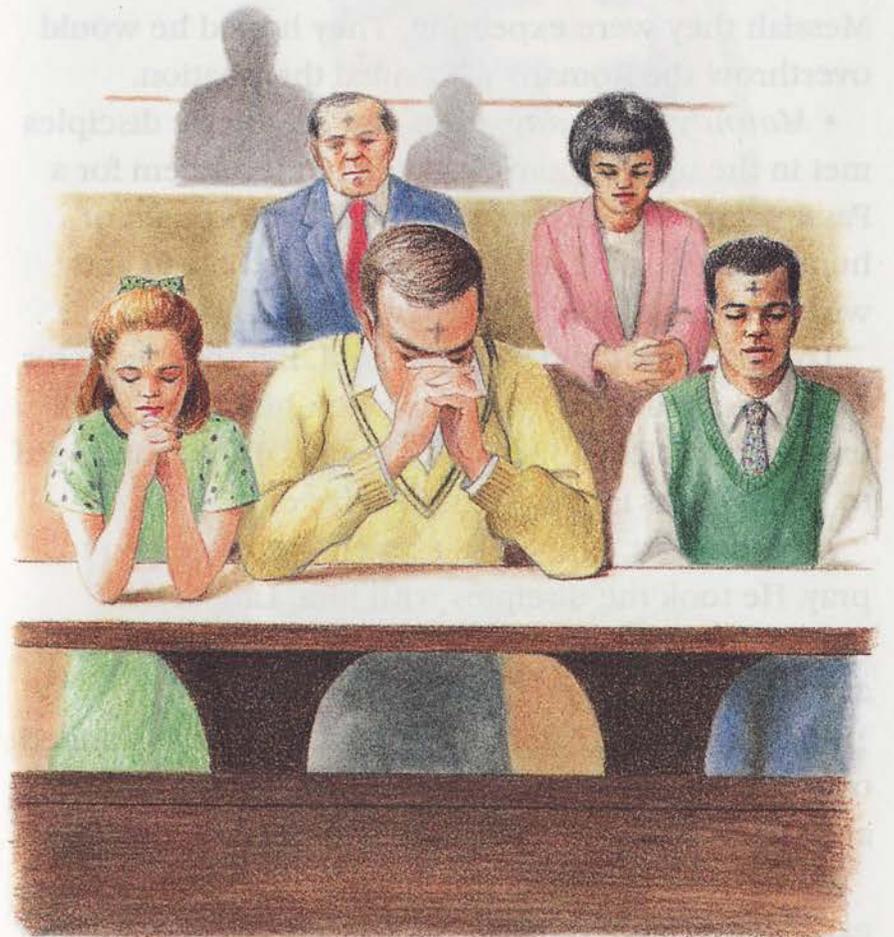
Three of the days have names. They are:

- *Palm Sunday*. Jesus and his disciples went to Jerusalem for the Jewish Passover feast.

When they arrived in the city, crowds gathered around him. They put him on a donkey. They cut branches from trees to wave and spread on the road. They threw down some of their clothing for the donkey to walk over. And the people shouted:

“Hosanna to the Son of David!

Blessed is the one who comes
in the name of the Lord!”



Lent begins on Ash Wednesday.

Jesus was being welcomed like an earthly king. The crowd thought he would tell everyone he was the Messiah they were expecting. They hoped he would overthrow the Romans who ruled their nation.

- *Maundy Thursday.* Jesus and his twelve disciples met in the upper room of a house in Jerusalem for a Passover meal. Jesus washed their feet in an act of humble service. At the table, he blessed bread and wine and called them his body and his blood.

The disciples did not understand. But they were his followers, and they would stay with him. That is, all except Judas. He slipped away because he had arranged to betray Jesus into the hands of his enemies.

After the Last Supper, Jesus went into a garden to pray. He took the disciples with him. Late in the night, Judas and a band of soldiers arrived. Jesus was arrested and led away.

- *Good Friday.* After a hasty trial, Jesus was handed over to be crucified. He was on the cross for six hours, and then he breathed his last. "It is finished," he said.

A man named Joseph of Arimathea provided a garden tomb where Jesus was buried. Evening fell, and the sabbath prayers began for the weekly day of rest. We know it as Holy Saturday. This was a day of deep gloom and sadness for the followers of Jesus. Their Lord was dead. Was there any hope at all?



Holy Week begins on Palm Sunday.

CHAPTER 8

We Worship the Risen Lord

Why do we come together on the first day of every week to worship God? It is because Jesus rose from the dead on a first day of the week. We call it Sunday.

After Jesus died on Good Friday, the Jewish sabbath began. Every seventh day was the Sabbath, a time of rest for everyone.

The next morning was the beginning of a new week. Three women—Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome—were preparing to follow a Jewish burial custom. They would go to anoint Jesus' body with spices.

As they hurried to the garden where Jesus was buried, they wondered who would roll away the heavy stone from the door of the tomb. As they arrived, they were greatly surprised. The tomb was open!

Slowly the women went inside. They were very quiet.

The next surprise was the greatest of all. A young man dressed in a white robe spoke to them. He said, "Do not be amazed. Jesus is risen. Go, tell the disciples and Peter that Jesus is going to Galilee. You will

see him there, just as he told you."

The women ran as fast as their feet would take them. They were trembling all over. They were so afraid they could not say a word to anyone.

We can read this good news of Jesus' resurrection in *Mark 16:1-8*, *Matthew 28:1-10*, *Luke 24:1-12*, and *John 20:1-18*. The story is not exactly the same in all four Gospels, since they were written by four different persons. But one thing is sure: Jesus rose from the dead on the first day of the week.

Jesus had won a victory over sin and death. His resurrection tells us that there is life with God forever. We believe this with all our hearts.

In many, many of the Church's prayers, we hear this line near the end:

"through our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns . . ."

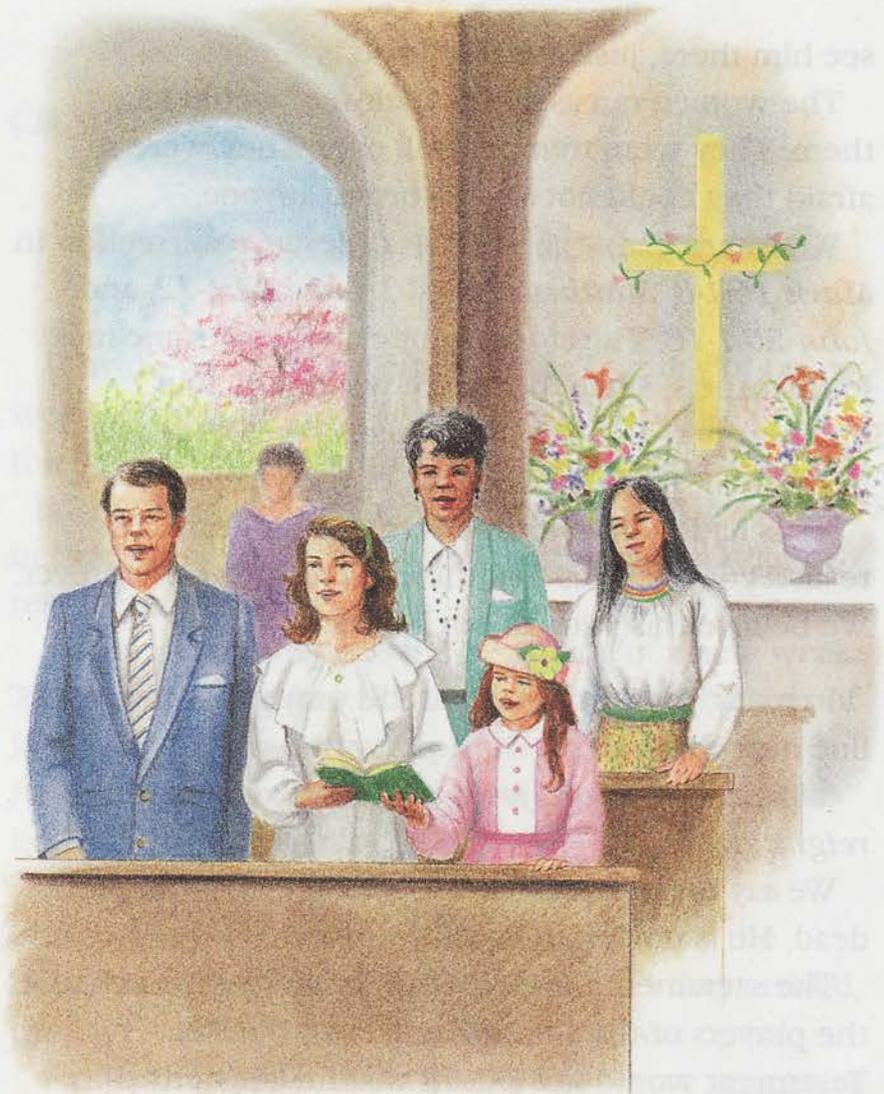
We say these words because Jesus rose from the dead. He is our living Lord.

The sacraments of Holy Baptism and Holy Eucharist, the prayers of the Church, and even the New Testament would not exist if that first Easter had not happened. So we sing:

"He is risen, he is risen!

Tell it out with joyful voice: . . .

Christ has won the victory."



Easter Day is full of joy.



We worship the risen Christ all year long.

CHAPTER 9

Fifty Days and Forever!

Easter Day is the Church's greatest feast. We celebrate the resurrection of Jesus with glorious singing and services.

But the joyous announcement is not for one Sunday only. On the Church Calendar, Easter lasts fifty days and does not end until the Day of Pentecost.

Each time we worship at Holy Eucharist during the season of Easter, the priest says again, "Alleluia. Christ is risen." The people answer, "The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia."

After Jesus' resurrection, he appeared many times to the Apostles and others. They knew he was truly alive. But they were unsure about what they were supposed to do.

Jesus said, "Stay in Jerusalem. Wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit."

Forty days went by. The apostles came together, and they asked their risen Lord, "Is this the time when the kingdom will come?" (Perhaps they were remembering that Jesus had taught them to pray, "Your kingdom

come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.")

Jesus answered: "This is not something you are to know. God knows the time. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. You will tell others about me all over the earth."

As Jesus finished speaking, the apostles had their eyes fixed on him. At that moment, Jesus was lifted up. A cloud took him out of their sight.

They stood there, gazing upward.

Suddenly two men in white robes joined them. They said, "Why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

We call this the story of Jesus' ascension (rising up). It is found in *The Acts of the Apostles, chapter 1*. On the fortieth day of Easter each year, we tell the story again at the Church's celebration of Ascension Day.

Just ten days after the ascension, the great Day of Pentecost arrived. The Holy Spirit came upon the apostles, as Jesus had promised. The Church of Jesus Christ was beginning.

Every Sunday all year long, we rejoice and pray together, giving thanks that Jesus Christ rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, and will come again. Easter is forever.