

A NOTE TO PARENTS

The season we call *Lent* traces its origin to the ancient church. The church's final preparation and examination of those desiring baptism took place during the forty days before Easter; the baptisms themselves occurred during the Great Vigil on Easter Eve. Those who had fallen away from the church and wished to be readmitted were also set apart during this time, to perform special acts of repentance. As the church became the established religion, its new members joined it through baptism shortly after birth, and there were no more adult converts to prepare during Lent. The character of the season changed. It lost its missionary focus, and its sense of a solemn but joyful preparation for the great once-a-year moment when new members would be born into Christ's Body and all would re-enact his passage from death to life. Its other theme, that of repentance and forgiveness, came to dominate. Today we are rightly rediscovering the season of Lent as a time to "cleanse our hearts, and prepare with joy for the Paschal feast" (Prayer Book, p. 379). But we have also kept its later, more penitential focus. This is most pronounced in Year C of our lectionary cycle, when the Scriptures for Lent concentrate almost exclusively on the themes of sin, repentance, and forgiveness.

Sin is easy for children to misunderstand. Children make many mistakes, and are often scolded for their mistakes. They easily come to believe that any and all kinds of "messing up" are sins. Some Sunday School or worship materials for children actively promote this idea. In an effort to use familiar, mild, and non-threatening language in helping children to ask God's forgiveness, they will say things like, "God forgives us when we forget to be loving," or, "Dear God, we are sorry for our mistakes." But that is not what Scripture means by sin. *Sin means that we choose to do things our way instead of God's way. Sin means that we say to God and to ourselves, "I don't care. I'm going to do it anyway."* Sin takes us far away from God. Our mistakes do not. As parents, we need to be very aware of this difference, and (though we must often correct our children for their mistakes) we should always try to distinguish between "messing up" (of whatever kind) and *sin*.

© 1989 by Gretchen Wolff Pritchard. All rights reserved.

THE SUNDAY PAPER, 19 Colony Road, New Haven, CT 06511, USA

203 - 624-2520 • www.the-sunday-paper.com



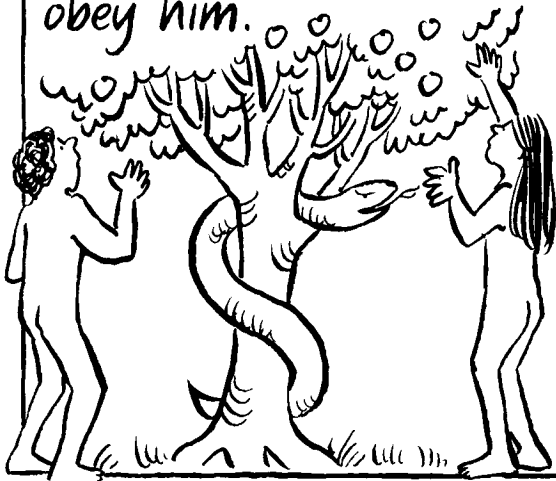
THE SUNDAY PAPER

JUNIOR

Year C
1st SUNDAY
in LENT



God made us to love him and obey him. But we don't always want to obey him.



We don't keep God's law. We do things our own way. Then we feel far away from God.



God sent Jesus to bring us back to him. Jesus did things God's way. He kept God's law.



Jesus loved God. Jesus loves us, too. When we love Jesus, we are close to God.



This is the season of LENT. In Lent, we remember that Jesus could have disobeyed God, just as we do. But he chose not to. He did things God's way, even when it was hard. Jesus was never far away from God.

Jesus is never far away from us. His love brings us back to God. Draw Jesus, reaching between God and this girl, and bringing them together!

