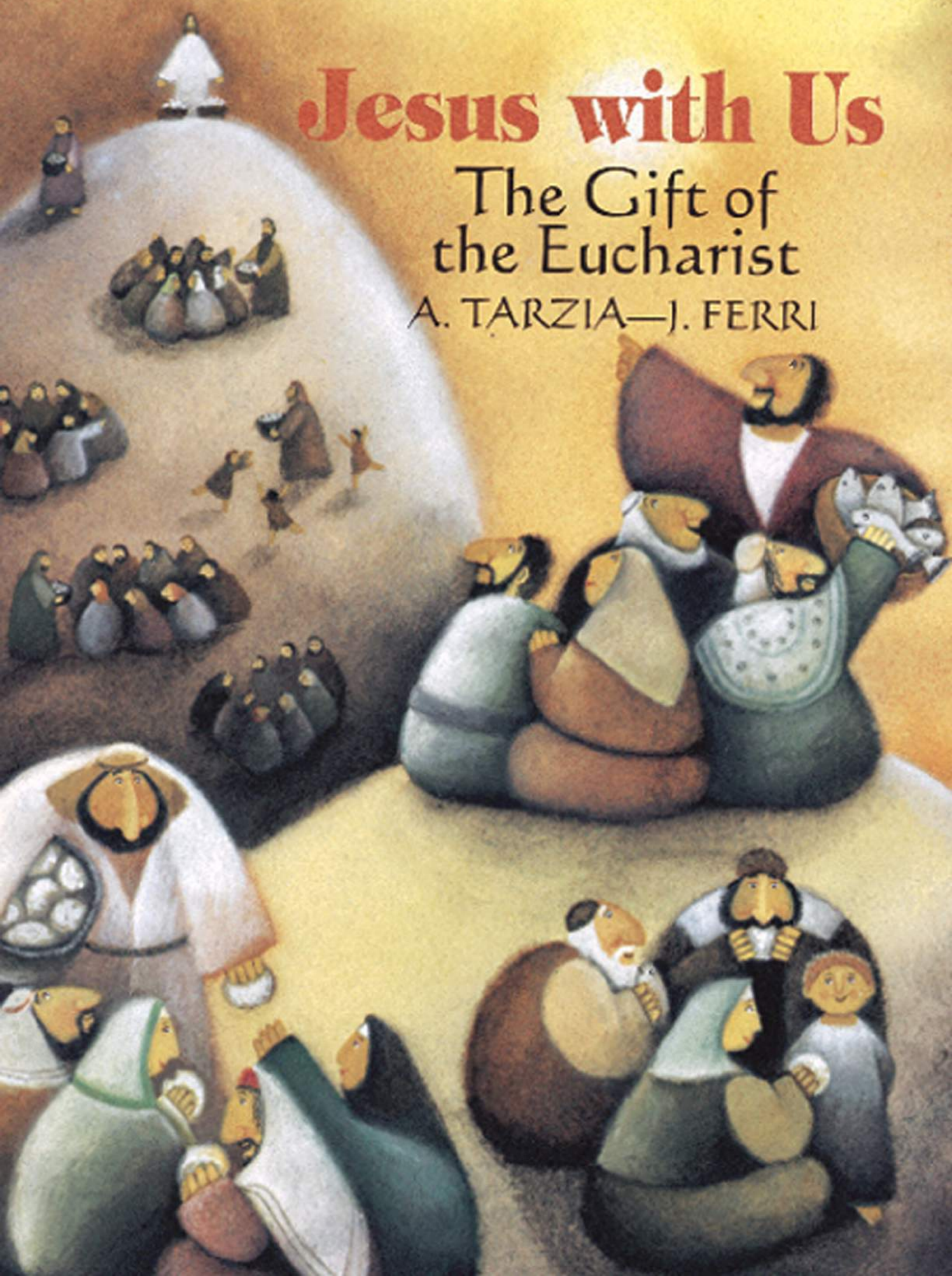


Jesus with Us

The Gift of
the Eucharist

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The Gift of the Eucharist

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Bread and Wine

After God made the world, he told the very first people to take good care of it. God told the people to farm the land, so that it would give good food to eat.¹

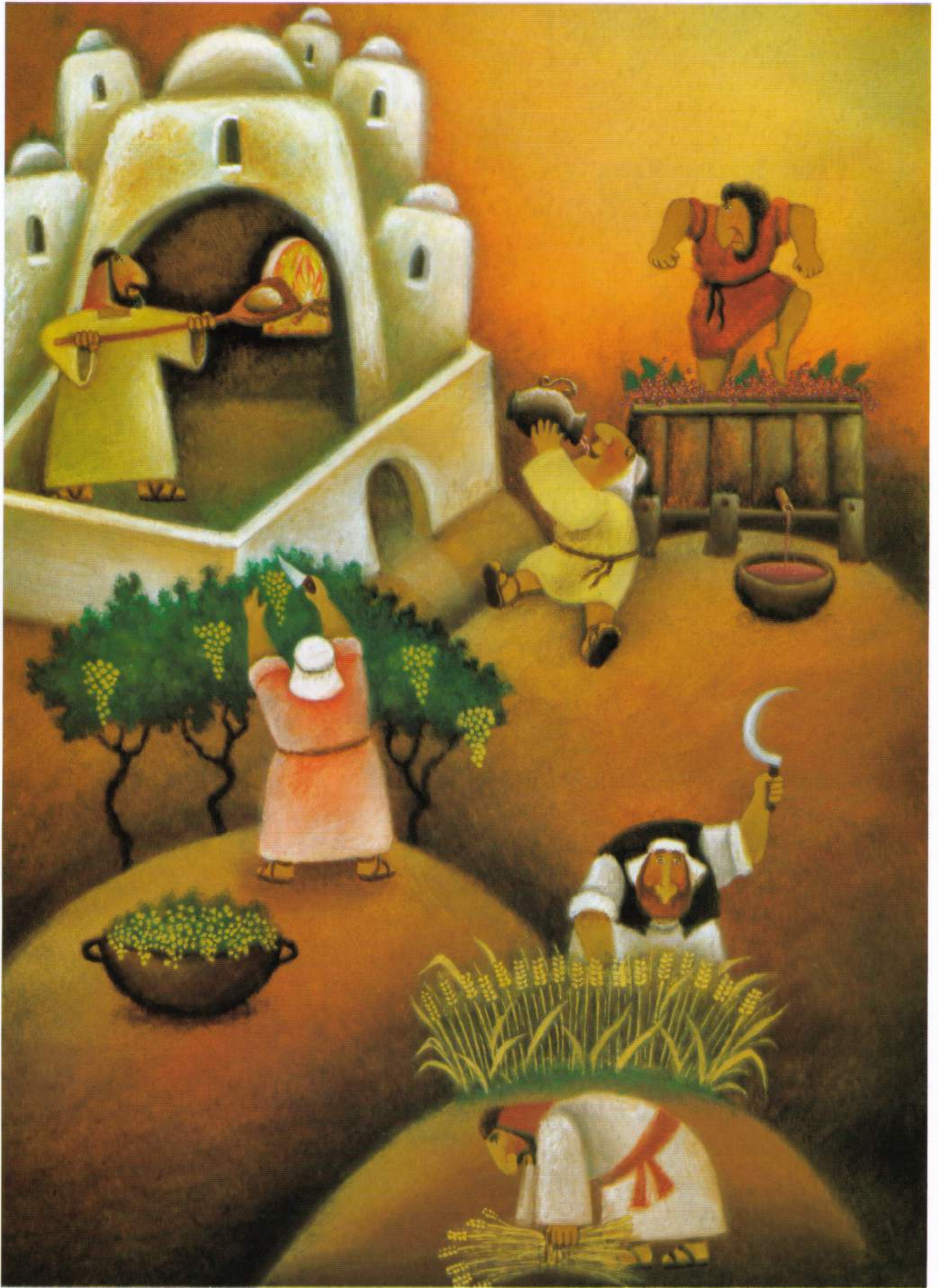
The earth pays farmers back for their hard work. In the summer, golden wheat grows in the fields. In the fall, sweet bunches of grapes grow on grapevines. From wheat, people make bread. From grapes, people make wine.

But it takes hard work to help the wheat and grapes to grow. God told the first people, “You will have to work hard and sweat to make the soil produce anything.”²

But even though work is hard, it makes us happy. We see what we can do. We think of how wonderfully God made us. And God wants us to be happy. The Bible tells us, “Eat your food and be happy; drink your wine and be cheerful.”³

Bread is simple food, but very important. People share bread with each other to show that they are friends. People share bread with guests and with travelers who are hungry and tired. Bread makes travelers feel strong again. Bread makes travelers feel welcome. When people find bread, they feel “at home.”





The Last Supper

On Passover night the Jewish people eat special bread and drink wine. The Passover is an important anniversary. The Jewish people thank God for setting them free from slavery in Egypt.⁸



God did wonderful things to set his people free. That event which happened to the ancestors of the Jewish people becomes an event in their own lives today.

Jesus celebrated the Passover every year. On the night before Jesus died on the cross, he ate his last Passover with his friends. He wanted to celebrate the wonderful things God had done for his people in Egypt. But Jesus wanted to give another meaning to the celebration, too. Jesus wanted to leave us a very special gift.

While Jesus was eating with his friends, he took a large piece of bread. He said a prayer of blessing. Then Jesus broke the bread. He gave it to his disciples. Jesus said: “Take and eat it: *this is my body.*” Next Jesus took the cup. He said another prayer of thanks. Jesus passed the cup to his disciples. He said: “Drink it, all of you: *this is my blood,* which seals God’s covenant, my blood poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”⁹

The friends of Jesus did what he told them to do. Later, they repeated this again and again. Today, through the Church, people still receive the body and blood of Jesus. Jesus’ body and blood look and taste like bread and wine. They are called the sacrament of the Eucharist. (Eucharist means “giving thanks.”) A sacrament is a sign that God is present in a special way to do something in our lives. The Eucharist makes the death of Jesus present today. By his death Jesus gives us his own life. We call that life “grace.”

