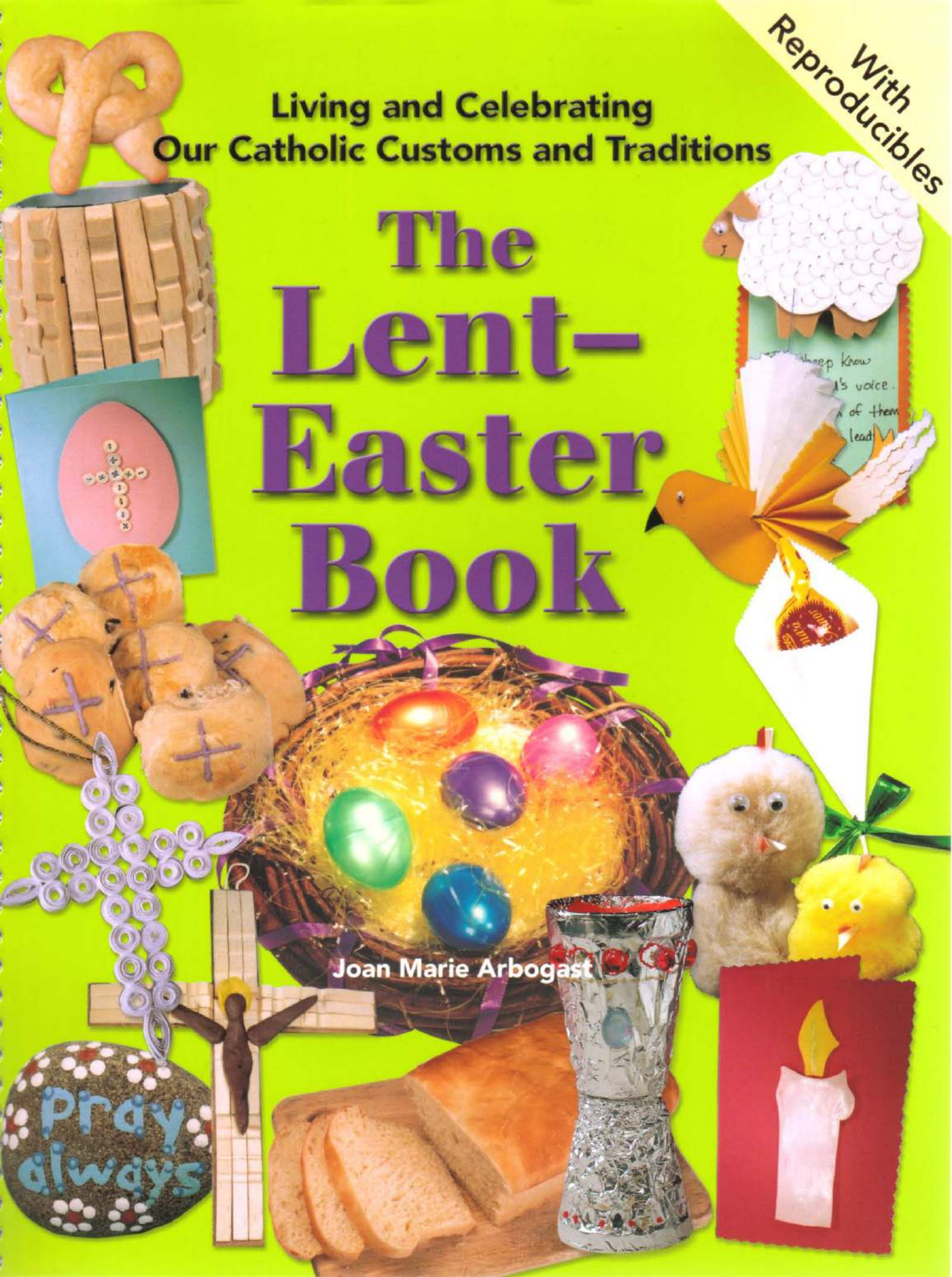


Living and Celebrating
Our Catholic Customs and Traditions

With
Reproducibles

The Lent- Easter Book

Joan Marie Arbogast



How to Use This Book

The *Lent-Easter Book* is designed for use by teachers, DREs, parents, and anyone interested in passing on to children our faith traditions and symbols. It is versatile enough to be used with children at school or at home during the Lenten-Easter seasons. Lent begins on Ash Wednesday and ends on the evening of Holy Thursday with the Mass of the Lord's Supper. The Sacred Triduum begins with the Mass of the Lord's Supper and ends on the night of Holy Saturday at the Easter Vigil Mass. There is a chapter for each week of Lent, and one for Palm Sunday and Holy Week. The chapter for Easter includes the entire season, which lasts seven weeks—from Easter Sunday to Pentecost. It also includes several important feasts that we celebrate during the season: Divine Mercy Sunday, Good Shepherd Sunday, and the Ascension.

From the contents, you will see that the material for Lent is divided by **major themes of the season**: prayer; love and mercy; Reconciliation and peace; Baptism; the cross, death, and resurrection. If your religious education program is lectionary based, the beginning of each chapter indicates to which Sunday of Lent it corresponds.

The **reproducible section** (beginning on page 137) contains material that you can use throughout the Lenten-Easter season. Children can put together a reproducible guide for the sacrament of Reconciliation. Scenes from the Way of the Cross may be used as dramatized prayers, discussion starters, or class plays. Two versions of the Way of the Cross booklets

(one for younger children, one for older children) are provided.

Every chapter begins with a **Week-at-a-Glance**, a handy tool for helping teachers and parents get an overview of the week's activities. Glancing through the week's activities ahead of time will alert you to any advance preparation that needs to be done. Each week includes a **story** from *My Friend: The Catholic Magazine for Kids*, **discussion starters** for both younger children and older children, **crafts and activities** related to the chapter's theme, **Family Take-Home Pages**, and **Family Customs and Traditions**.

The stories taken from *My Friend* can be read aloud to the children for discussion or left in a learning center for the children to read and to journal their reflections later. The stories may be photocopied for easier use in the classroom. In fact, any pages with a copyright symbol [©] at the bottom of the page may be photocopied. Simply make sure that the copyright symbol and reprint permission line are on the photocopy.

Each week of Lent begins with a Prayer Experience related to the theme for that particular week. The word "experience" is used because they vary in form, using traditional prayers, readings from Scripture, quiet reflections, and hands-on activities. Each "experience" ends with a two or three-line refrain for the week which can become part of your daily prayer routine.

Many of the craft and activity pages contain Bible verses related to the theme of the

week, providing another opportunity to learn Scripture. Crafts and activities appropriate for younger children are marked “Easy.” Some crafts have alternative directions for younger or older children. To make the templates for an activity a little sturdier, consider using card stock or cardboard. All activities can be adapted for the age of the children, so feel free to be creative with the suggestions given in this book to make them appropriate for your group.

You may want to keep handy some contemporary Christian music CDs—found at any Pauline Books & Media Center, Christian bookstore, or ordered off the internet—to use along with this book. Instrumental music is always useful for creating atmosphere. You will want to have a Bible on hand for many of the discussions with older students. A supplies list indicates what you will need for each craft or activity.

The Family Take-Home Pages in each chapter also strengthens the home-school connection. They provide information for parents and activities for families that support what children are learning in school. Send these pages home at the beginning of the week so that families have time to plan what evenings they will incorporate the suggested activities. The activities and prayer experiences on these pages are multi-age appropriate and are intended to be integrated over time.

The Family Customs and Traditions pages found at the end of each section will help families to rediscover the richness of es-



tablished family traditions and open the possibility of incorporating new customs into their Lenten and Easter observance.

Because Lent is traditionally the time of year when many adults are making the final preparations to enter the Church, some crafts and activities provide opportunities for children to encourage and welcome soon-to-be members of the Church. Additional crafts and activities found in the Easter section encourage children to support the new members as they grow in faith.

Finally, because we want our children to live lives of faith, a variety of activities are included to encourage children to turn their faith into action.



Tough Call

By Sandra Humphrey and illustrated by Ray Morelli



Only Eric could strike out three times in a row and still smile. No wonder all the guys called him a dork. I sneaked a quick peek at the bleachers. Eddie was doing his finger-across-the-throat thing and Frankie was covering his eyes as if he couldn't stand to watch any more of the game.

Instead of going back to the dugout and sitting with the guys, after he struck out, Eric began picking up empty pop cans and tossing them in the recycling bin. He's always doing stuff like that. It's like he thinks he's on a personal mission to save the earth.

As usual, our team, the Wildcats, lost and I watched Eric amble off toward home, still picking up litter.

As I headed to the locker room, I had no idea that my world as I knew it was about to crash and burn.

My friends were already there waiting for me. Andy was laughing so hard, he was just about doubled over, holding his stomach.

"So is this a great idea or is this a great idea?" he finally managed to sputter, while he leaned against his locker to keep from falling over.

Kevin slapped him on the back and grinned. "You're a genius, man. Maybe not in math, but this is a seriously brilliant idea."

Leon gave him a thumbs-up. "Totally cool, bro."

If it was Andy's idea, I knew someone was going to get hurt and all my sensors were sounding a red alert. But I

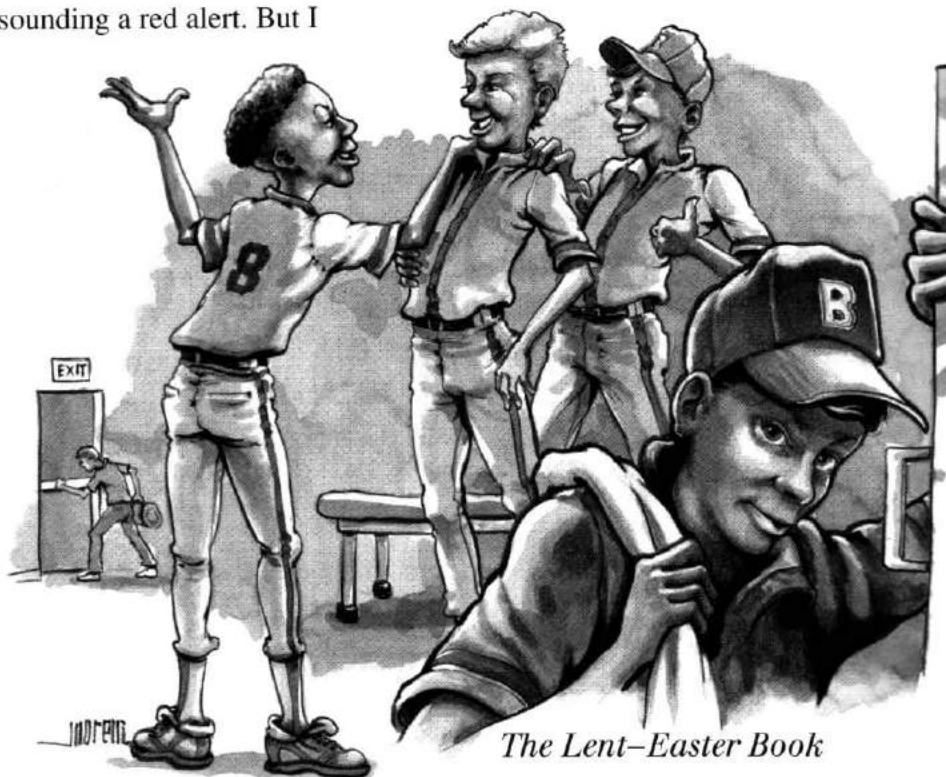
asked anyway. "So what's going on?"

Andy was off on another laughing binge, so Kevin tried to explain.

"You know how Eric invited the four of us to his birthday party next Saturday?"

Then Leon screwed up his face and mimicked Eric's scratchy voice. "Do you think that maybe if you're not doing anything else you might be able to come over to my house on Saturday to help me celebrate my birthday? That is, if you're not already doing something else?"

Then Kevin took over again. "So Andy comes up with



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this really brilliant idea. We're all going to tell Eric we're coming to his party and then none of us are going to show up. Let's roll the video: I can see Eric now. He's pacing back and forth wondering where everyone is. It's getting later and later and still no one shows up."

While Kevin was rolling his imaginary video, Andy grabbed his throat with both hands. Then he stuck out his tongue and looked cross-eyed. "And then maybe he'll finally get it. We don't want to be his friends. So when are we going to be his friends? Never. That's when. When are we going to be his friends?"

The other guys echoed, "Never, that's when."

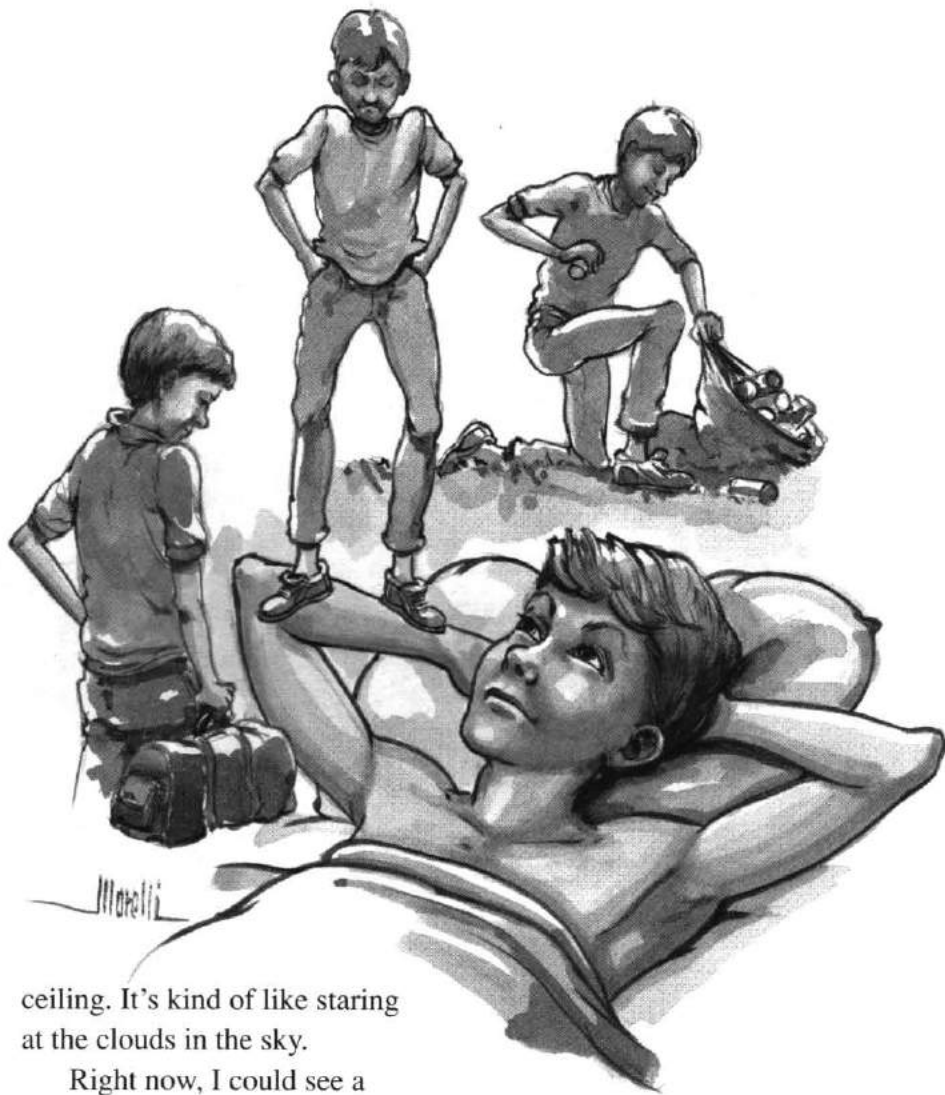
I could feel my face heating up. I knew this was wrong, but I felt helpless.

Kevin pounded me on the back and shot me a grin. "So are you with us?"

I didn't know what else to do, so I just shrugged, which I guess he took for a yes. Boy, did I feel sick to my stomach. Like I was going to throw up.

As we headed home, the guys were still making plans for Saturday. Roller blading and pizza and no Eric.

That night I plopped down on my bed and stared at the water spots on my ceiling. That's how I relax. Some kids listen to rock or rap, but I relax by staring at the water spots on my



ceiling. It's kind of like staring at the clouds in the sky.

Right now, I could see a bear and a butterfly, or maybe it was a bat. And what looked like part of a guitar. Finally, I couldn't avoid the inevitable any longer. I had to do some serious thinking about Eric.

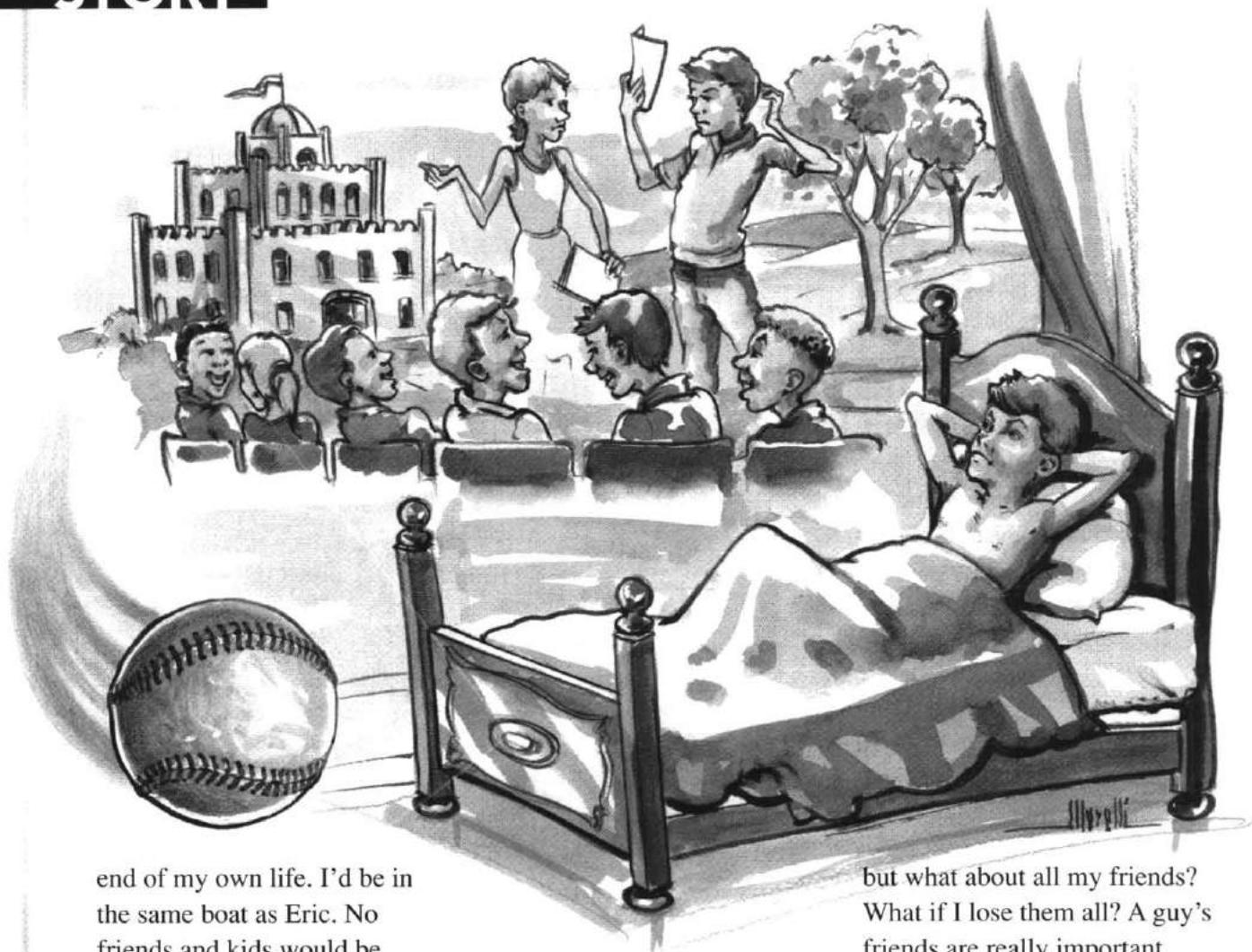
Eric and his jeans. The jeans were too short for him, the jeans with holes. *Real* holes, not holes like the rest of us made in our jeans to look cool.

Eric who's so quiet that sometimes I wonder if his lips are stuck together with Velcro. And when he does talk, he talks about how fossil fuels can

cause global warming, while the rest of us are talking baseball and football scores. Besides, Eric's new this year and nobody likes new.

I could feel my stomach twisting into a knot. This was a dark day and getting darker by the second. It looked like this was going to be one of those no-win situations. If I joined the other guys and boycotted Eric's party, I knew I would feel rotten.

But if I did show up at Eric's party, that would be the



end of my own life. I'd be in the same boat as Eric. No friends and kids would be laughing at me behind *my* back.

I know what it's like to have kids laughing at you. That memory is burned into my memory bank forever. Last year my friend Eddie persuaded me to try out for the class play and, against my better judgment, I did. I can still see myself standing alone up there on that huge stage—my face neon red, my knees turning to Jell-O, and my mouth so dry it felt like I'd swallowed my pillow. And I couldn't even read my script because my hand was shaking

so badly. The words just looked like a bunch of Egyptian hieroglyphics.

The other kids were practically rolling in the aisles—they were laughing so hard. Eddie ended up getting a part in the play and I ended up painting scenery.

So what was I going to do about Eric? God, I think I need some help here. I know what Jesus would do. If he promised to do something, he would do it. And I said I would go to the party, so I know I should go,

but what about all my friends? What if I lose them all? A guy's friends are really important.

I think this is one of those tough choices where you know what is right, but it's still hard to do it. I'd still have my friends in my youth group at church, so I guess it's not like I'd be losing all my friends.

Boy, God, this has been a really tough call, but I know what I have to do. I think I'll give Eric a call and see if he wants anything special for his birthday.

And, God? Thanks for listening and always being there for me.

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Discussion Starters for Grades K-3

Think of a time when you had to make a tough decision like the one in this story.

- How did you know what you should do?
- Did you ask Jesus to help you? Why or why not?
- How can prayer help us make good decisions?

Discussion Starters for Grades 4-8

Think of a time when you knew that you should have done something nice for someone else, but you didn't really want to do it.

- What did you finally decide to do? Why?
- Did you specifically ask God to help you? How did prayer help?
- If you didn't actually say a prayer, was there some other quiet urging or voice, for example a verse from the Bible, that helped you come to your decision? If so, the Holy Spirit and the Word of God led you, and that's totally awesome!
- How did the decision you made affect the other person? How did it affect you?
- If you had it to do over again, would you do the same thing or would you respond differently? Why?

Everyone has embarrassing moments. Recall one of yours. What happened?

- Were others around? How did they react? And how did that make you feel?
- Did anyone come to your rescue? What did he/she say or do?
- How did that simple act of kindness make you feel?
- At any time during that whole incident, did you turn to God in prayer?

- If so, when did you pray? What did you say? How did prayer help?
- If that same situation happened today to someone else, how would you react and why?

Now suppose you have a really tough decision to make, and there are no easy answers.

- Who do you turn to for help? Your friends? Your parents? Another trusted adult?
- Do you turn to God? Why? Why not?
- What are the advantages of turning to each of these different sources for help?
- Have you ever asked a friend or your parents to pray for you when you've had a tough decision to make? Why, why not?

Have the children write a letter to God starting with these words: "God, there are so many areas in my life in which I want to grow. I want to trust you with my life. I want to believe that you care about what is going on in my life. I need help forgiving others and need help with my temper. I wish I could accept myself, but often I can't. I sometimes give in to the temptations in my life. Please help me, Jesus, to grow in...." Have the children seal their letters in an envelope and place them on the prayer table. As class starts each day, gather at the prayer table and pray together.