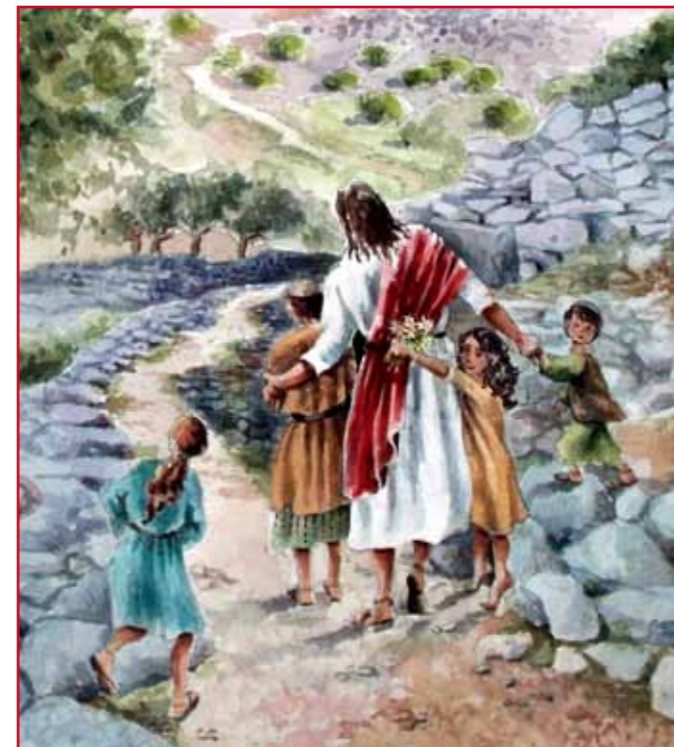




# Friendship with *Jesus*

Pope Benedict XVI Talks  
to First Communion Children



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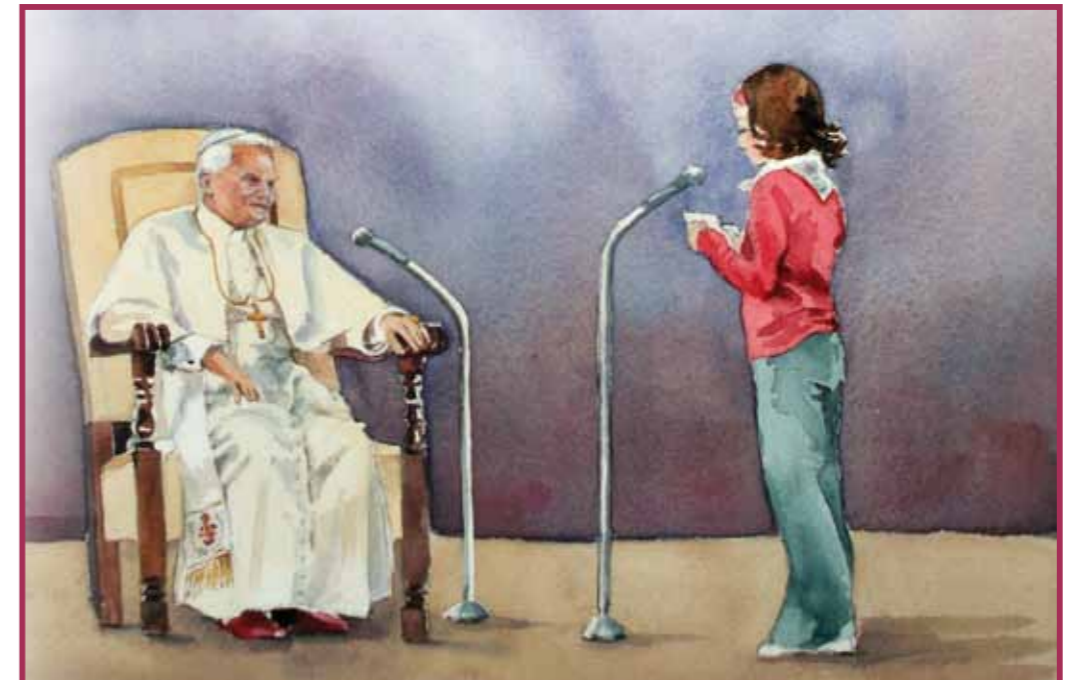
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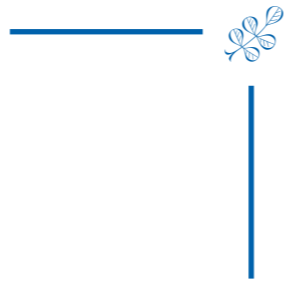
**O**n a sunny afternoon, some children went to visit Pope Benedict XVI in Rome.

Not just a few - hundreds came, with their mums and dads, sisters, brothers and grandparents.

They rode buses and underground. They walked down the narrow winding streets of Rome to Vatican City, where the Holy Father lives. Talking, laughing and singing, they went to the great piazza in front of St Peter's Basilica.

In this spot, so close to where the first pope, St Peter, had given his life for Jesus, the children waited. They had all received their Communion for the first time during the year. They had come to celebrate with the Holy Father, who walks in St Peter's shoes today.





It was a great day! Pope Benedict, dressed in the white robes the Pope always wears, came to spend time with the children. They prayed and sang together. They did something else, too:

They talked!

The children had questions for the Holy Father. They wanted to know about his First Communion. They wanted to know more about how Jesus comes to them in Communion. They had a lot of good questions.

So several of the children sat with the Holy Father, and they started to have a conversation.





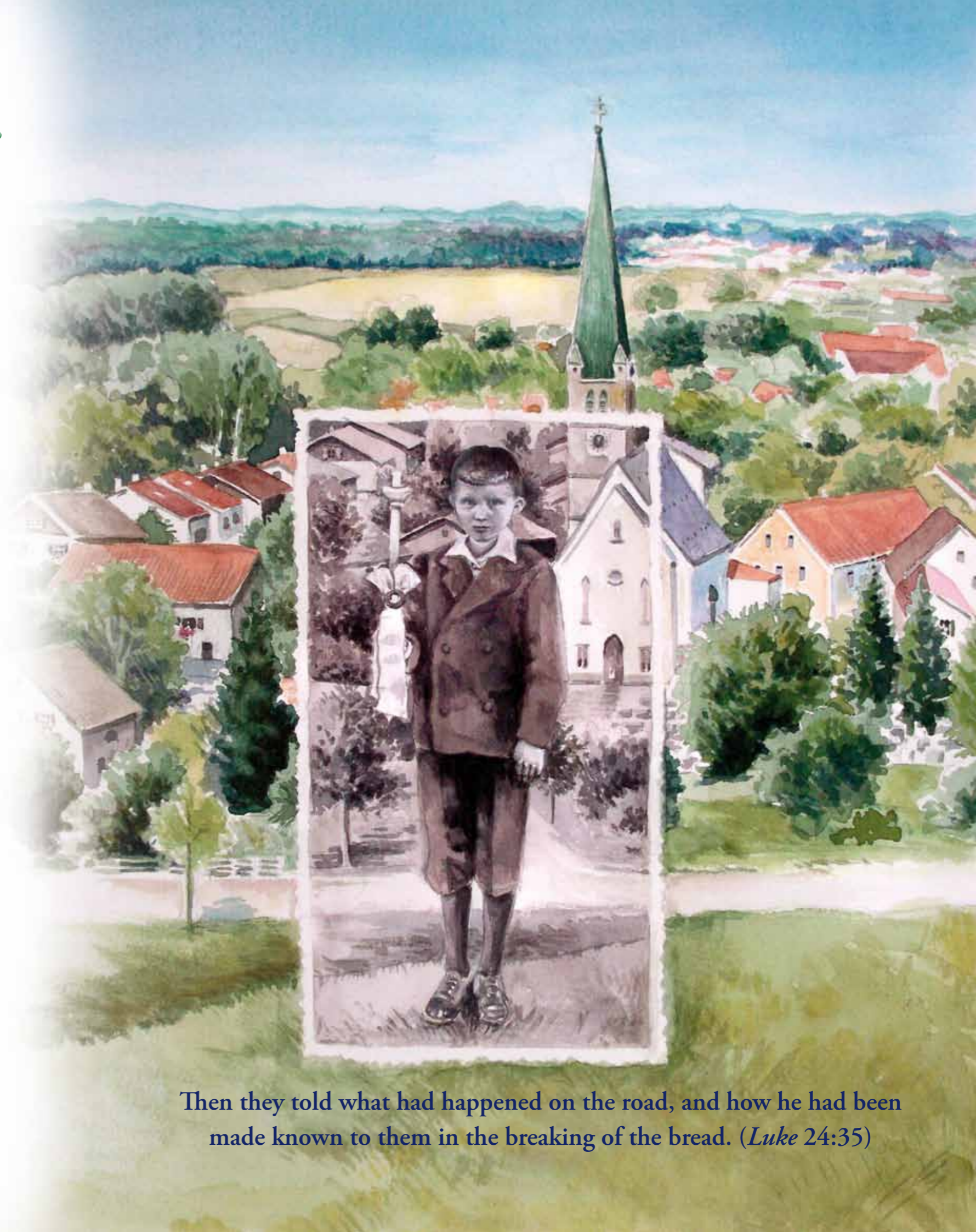
*Andrea received his First Communion not so long ago. Pope Benedict was once a little child too, so he asked:*

“Dear Pope, what are your memories of your First Communion day?”

It was a lovely Sunday in March 1936, 69 years ago. It was a sunny day, the church looked very beautiful, there was music... There were so many beautiful things that I remember. There were about 30 of us, boys and girls from my little village of no more than 500 inhabitants.

But at the heart of my joyful and beautiful memories is this one... I understood that Jesus had entered my heart, he had actually visited me. And with Jesus, God himself was with me. And I realized that this is a gift of love that is truly worth more than all the other things that life can give.

*What do you think you will remember about your First Communion day?*



Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread. (*Luke 24:35*)



*Livia asked:*

“Holy Father, before the day of my First Communion I went to confession. I have also been to confession on other occasions. I wanted to ask you: Do I have to go to confession every time I receive Communion, even when I have committed the same sins? Because I realize that they are always the same.”



Our sins are always the same, but we clean our homes, our rooms, at least once a week, even if the dirt is always the same; in order to live in cleanliness, in order to start again. Otherwise, the dirt might not be seen but it builds up.

Something similar can be said about the soul, for me myself: if I never go to confession, my soul is neglected and in the end I am always pleased with myself and no longer understand that I must always work hard to improve, that I must make progress.

*How do you feel after your sins are forgiven in Confession?*





*Andrea asked:*

“In preparing me for my First Communion day, my catechist told me that Jesus is present in the Eucharist. But how? I can't see him!”

No, we cannot see him, but there are many things that we do not see but they exist and are essential... Nor do we see an electric current, for example, yet we see that it exists; we see this microphone, that it is working, and we see lights. Therefore, we do not see the very deepest things, those that really sustain life and the world, but we can see and feel their effects. This is also true for electricity; we do not see the electric current but we see the light.

So it is with the Risen Lord: we do not see him with our eyes but we see that wherever Jesus is, people change, they improve...



Therefore, we do not see the Lord himself but we see the effects of the Lord: so we can understand that Jesus is present. And as I said, it is precisely the invisible things that are the most profound, the most important. So let us go to meet this invisible but powerful Lord who helps us to live well.

*What do you say to Jesus after you receive Him in Communion?*





Giulia asked:



“Your Holiness, everyone tells us that it is important to go to Mass on Sunday. We would gladly go to it, but often our parents do not take us because on Sundays they sleep. The parents of a friend of mine work in a shop, and we often go to the country to visit our grandparents. Could you say something to them, to make them understand that it is important to go to Mass together on Sundays?”

I would think so, of course, with great love and great respect for your parents, because they certainly have a lot to do. However, with a daughter’s respect and love, you could say to them: “Dear Mommy, dear Daddy, it is so important for us all, even for you, to meet Jesus. This encounter enriches us. It is an important element in our lives. Let’s find a little time together, we can find an opportunity.

*How can you help your family be glad about meeting Jesus in the Eucharist at Mass?*



‘Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.’ (Luke 18:16)

Jesus Christ is Lord! (Ph 2:11)



*Alessandro asked:*

“What good does it do for our everyday life to go to holy Mass and receive Communion?”

It centres life. We live amid so many things. And the people who do not go to church, do not know that it is precisely Jesus they lack. But they feel that something is missing in their lives. If God is absent from my life, if Jesus is absent from my life, a guide, an essential friend is missing, even an important joy for life, the strength to grow as a man, to overcome my vices and mature as a human being.

*How does Jesus' friendship help you every day?*



*Anna asked:*



“Dear Pope, can you explain to us what Jesus meant when he said to the people who were following him: ‘I am the bread of life?’”

If Jesus says: “I am the bread of life”, it means that Jesus himself is the nourishment we need for our soul, for our inner self, because the soul also needs food. And technical things do not suffice, although they are so important. We really need God’s friendship, which helps us to make the right decisions. We need to mature as human beings. In other words: Jesus nourishes us so that we can truly become mature people and our lives become good.

*In what part of your life do you need the special nourishment of Jesus, the Bread of Life?*



‘I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.’ (John 6:35)



After the children and the Holy Father finished their talk, Eucharistic Adoration would begin.

*Adriano asked:*

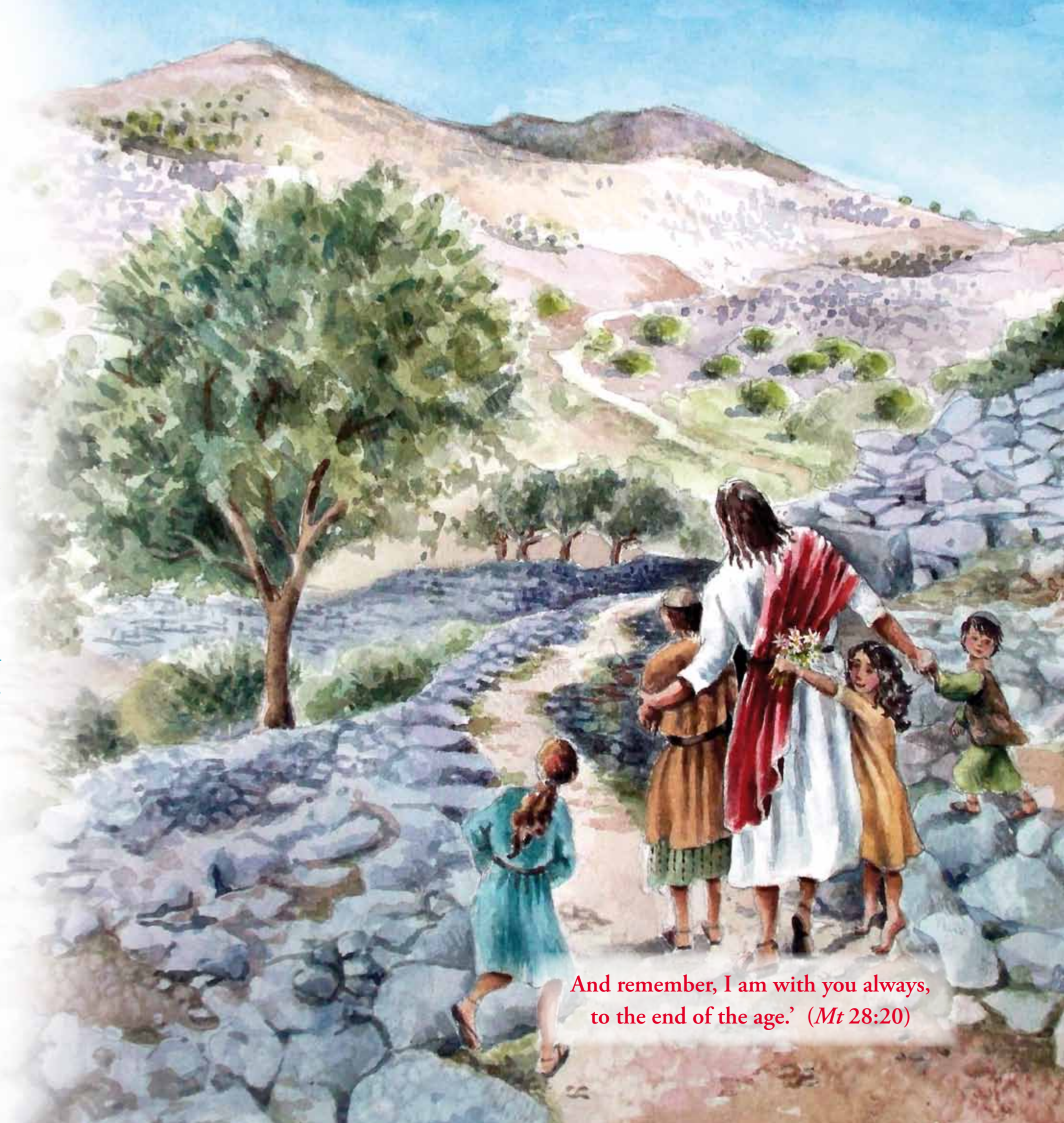
“Holy Father, they’ve told us that today we will have Eucharistic adoration. What is it? How is it done? Can you explain it to us?”

**A**doration is recognising that Jesus is my Lord, that Jesus shows me the way to take, and that I will live well only if I know the road that Jesus points out and I follow the path he shows me...



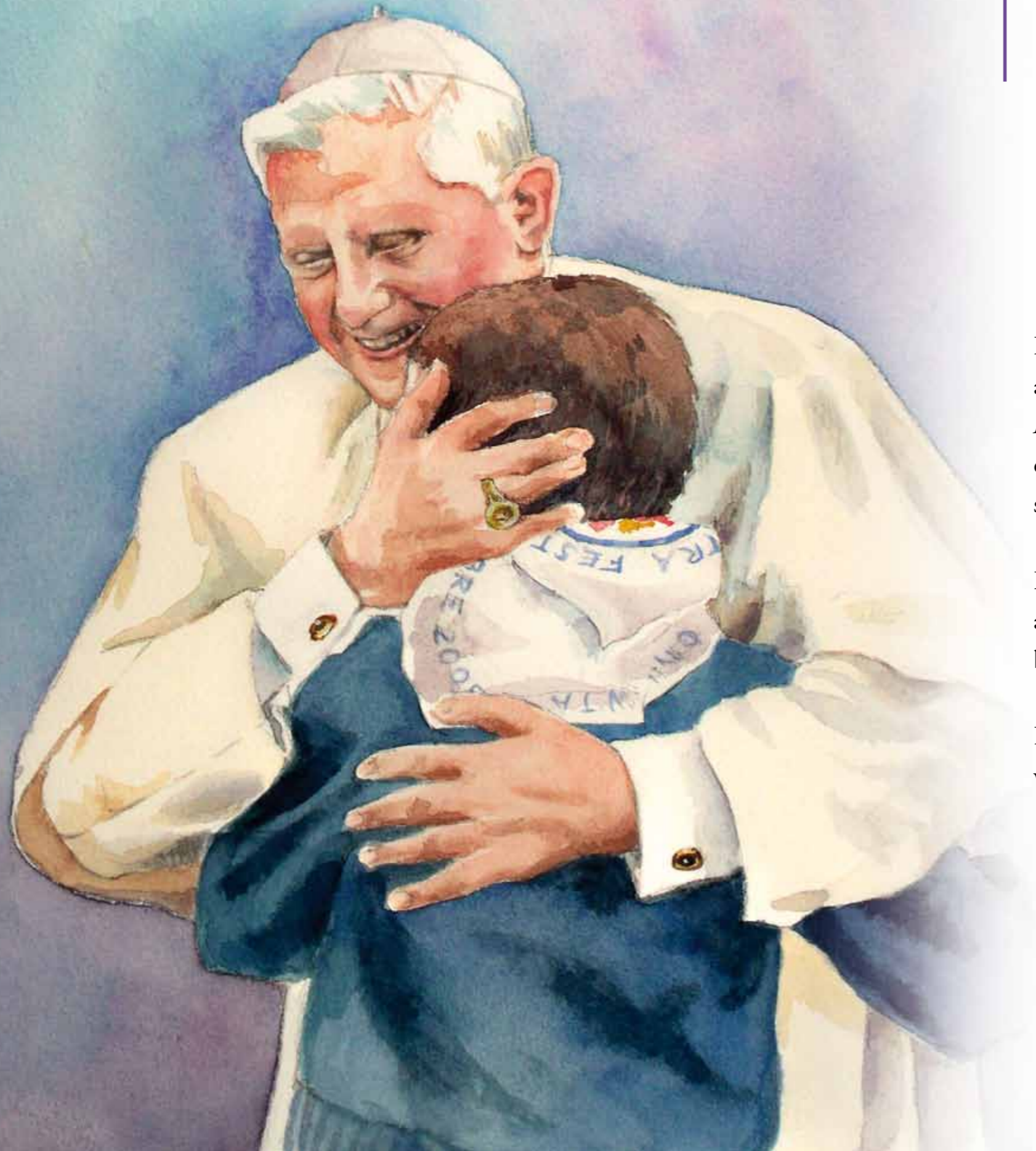
Adoration means saying: “Jesus, I am yours. I will follow you in my life, I never want to lose this friendship, this communion with you”. I could also say that adoration is essentially an embrace with Jesus in which I say to him: “I am yours, and I ask you, please stay with me always”.

*If you were going to pray to Jesus in Eucharist Adoration right now, what would you thank Him for?*



**And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’ (Mt 28:20)**

‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.’ (*John 20:21*)



It had been a wonderful conversation! The children had asked very good questions. Now it was time for Eucharistic Adoration and then, after that, time to take the Good News of Jesus' love out into the world. The Holy Father had some special words of farewell:

I repeat at the end the words of the beginning of every liturgy and I say to you: "Peace be with you"; that is, may the Lord be with you, may joy be with you, and thus, may life be good.

Have a good Sunday, good night and goodbye all together with the Lord.

