



STATIONS OF THE CROSS: AN INTRODUCTION

There is an old legend that says, after the death and resurrection of Jesus, his mother Mary would often walk the way her son had walked on his journey to the cross, pausing here and there to recall something that had happened at that spot. From these walks grew the early Christian practice of walking the *Via Dolorosa*, the Way of the Cross, in Jerusalem, a tradition that continues to this day.

When they returned home, those early pilgrims to Jerusalem talked about their experiences, and soon many people began erecting “stations” of the cross on the walls and grounds of their own churches so worshippers could make the journey whenever they wished. The number of stations ranged from as few as seven to as many as thirty. Over time however, the number became fixed at fourteen, including five stations depicting events that are not found in scripture (the three falls of Jesus, the meeting with Mary, and the legend of Veronica’s veil). On Good Friday 1991, Pope John Paul II introduced the fourteen scriptural Stations of the Cross that many Christians now use.

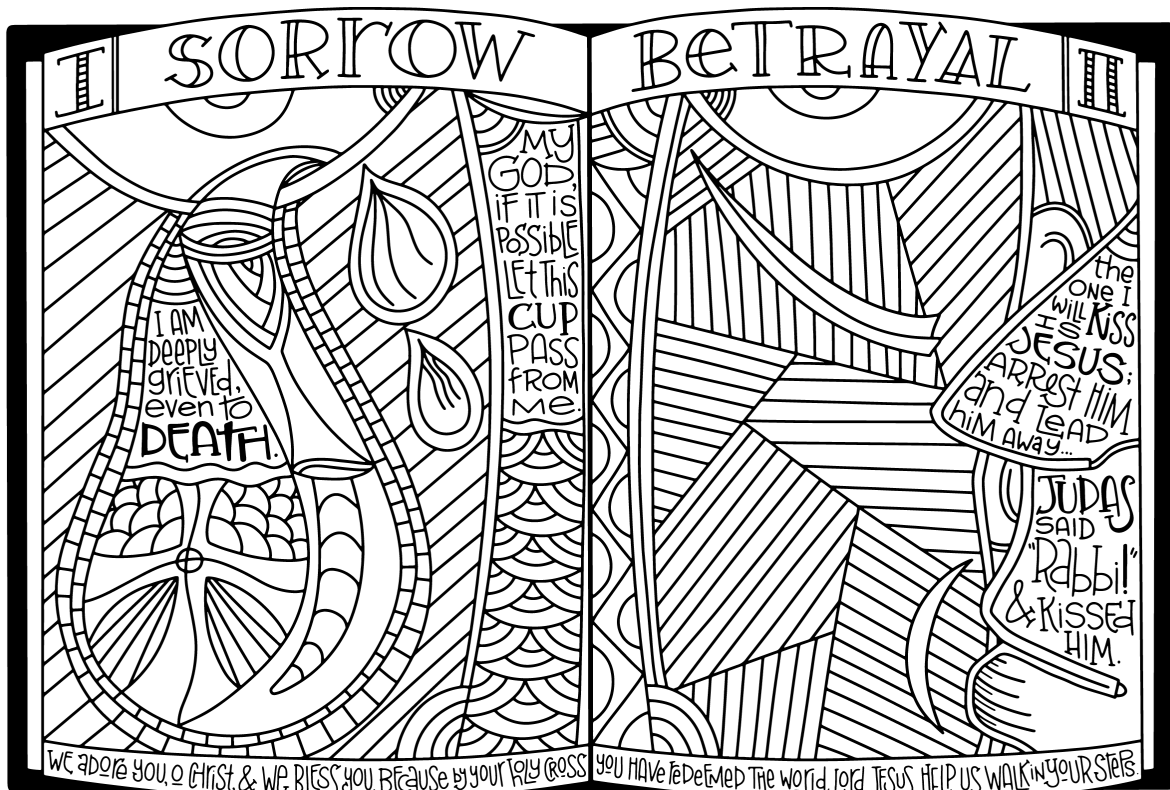
Catholic and Orthodox Christians were the first ones to use the stations in their devotional life. In recent years however, Christians of many traditions have been re-discovering this ancient devotional practice.

The story of Jesus’ final hours, traditionally called the *Passion*, is the central story in each of the four gospels. It is a story we are all familiar with and yet, each gospel writer tells it from a different perspective.

These coloring posters and sheets, along with the accompanying scriptures and devotional materials, use all four gospel accounts to tell the story of Jesus' passion, death and resurrection. If you want to experience this project in a deeper way, you may want to consider reading all four accounts of the Passion, and discussing where you see the similarities and differences.

Jesus' own journey to the cross did not take place down some sacred street. Rather, his journey is what made each step, each cobblestone, sacred and filled with the Divine. At first glance, a large coloring poster might not seem like the most obvious place to meditate on these final hours of Jesus' life. But it is our hope that, by coloring them and talking about them outside of our traditional "sacred spaces", we can recognize that every place is an opportunity for an encounter with Christ along our own journey of faith.

STATIONS 1 & 2



STATION I: SORROW

Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane: Matthew 26:36-41

STATION II: BETRAYAL

Jesus, Betrayed by Judas, is Arrested: Mark 14:43-46

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Station I: SORROW

Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane

SCRIPTURE

Take some time to read and reflect on this week's passage: Matthew 26:36-41.

REFLECTION FOR ADULTS

Many Americans can remember exactly where they were on the morning of September 11, 2001. Huddled around television sets and radios, they watched and listened to the news of terrorist planes flying into the World Trade Center's Twin Towers. And then, as the impact of just how many lives had been lost began to register, a great sorrow gripped the nation and the world.

During a National Day of Prayer just three days later, Billy Graham addressed the sorrow of the nation with these profound words: "The lesson of this event is not only about the mystery of iniquity and evil, but it's also a lesson about our need for one another...A tragedy like this could have torn our country apart, but instead it has united us."

At this first station, in the Garden of Gethsemane, we encounter Jesus in his moment of deepest sorrow and pain. But notice he is not alone. The scriptures say "Jesus went *with* the disciples..." (Matthew 26:36). He then took his most trusted friends - Peter, James, and John - with him as he began the painful journey that would ultimately lead to new life. Although we tend to give them a bad rap for falling asleep three times, it's worth noting that, at least they were present with Jesus in these moments in the garden.

While most of us will not make history-altering decisions in our lifetimes, we all have moments of deep sorrow when we need to be surrounded by the love of our friends, especially those in the community of faith. Take a look at the picture you are coloring. How many tears do you see? As you begin this journey to the cross with Jesus, remember you are not alone. Remember also "at night we may cry, but when morning comes we will celebrate" (Psalm 30:5, CEV).

REFLECTION FOR CHILDREN

Jesus spent the night before he died with his friends at the Last Supper. He was very sad because he knew that one of his friends, Judas Iscariot, would tell lies about him, and then turn him over to be arrested. After dinner, Jesus took his three closest friends – Peter, James, and John – with him to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray. But Peter, James, and John couldn't even stay awake with Jesus while he prayed.

DISCUSSION WITH CHILDREN

- Was there a time when you cried because you were very sad about something?
- Who can you ask for comfort when you feel sad?

GOING DEEPER

- When have you faced a crisis and needed to turn to others for support or prayer?
- How did it make you feel to have to rely on them?



Station II: BETRAYAL

Jesus, Betrayed by Judas, is Arrested

SCRIPTURE

Take some time to read and reflect on this week's passage: Mark 14:43-46.

REFLECTION FOR ADULTS

Et tu Brute? Even if you're not a Shakespeare fan, chances are you're familiar with this line from *Julius Caesar*. About a century before the betrayal of Jesus in Jerusalem, another betrayal occurred in the city of Rome. On the Ides of March, Julius Caesar made his way to the floor of the Senate where, to his great surprise, he found himself surrounded by assassins. An even greater surprise came when he realized one of them was his good friend and protégé, Marcus Brutus. In crafting this dramatic scene, Shakespeare puts into Julius Caesar's mouth these legendary words: "*Et tu Brute? You too, Brutus?*"

Someone once said that "the saddest thing about betrayal is that it never comes from your enemies." And so it was with Jesus and Judas. The scriptures are quick to point out that Judas was "one of the twelve" (Mark 14:43). It could even be argued that he was one of the more influential members of the inner circle. After all, he was the treasurer who made sure there was enough money to carry on the mission of building the kingdom. And yet, it was this "one of the twelve" who betrayed Jesus, setting in motion events that would ultimately lead to Jesus' crucifixion.

We will never know why Judas betrayed Jesus. Some people believe it was because he had no choice...it was all part of God's preordained plan. Others think it was because, like Brutus, Judas was hungry for power and control of the group. Whatever his motives, his betrayal ultimately cost Jesus his life.

Take a look at the picture you are coloring. Close to the betrayer's lips is an object that looks oddly like a crescent moon. In John's account of the Last Supper, after Judas gets up from the table to betray Jesus to the chief priests, John writes, "and it was night" (John 13:30).

Betrayal, especially by those who are closest to us, always feels as if a great darkness has descended. But take another look. Is this crescent a waxing one or a waning one? Is the picture getting darker or lighter? We alone have the power to choose what we do with a friend's betrayal.

REFLECTION FOR CHILDREN

When you betray a friend you hurt them by telling a lie about them. Judas was one of the twelve apostles, and one of Jesus' friends. But he also betrayed Jesus by lying to the priests and police about who Jesus was. The priests gave Judas thirty pieces of silver to in return for betraying Jesus. While Jesus was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, Judas showed the soldiers where he was. Because Judas told lies about Jesus, Jesus was arrested.

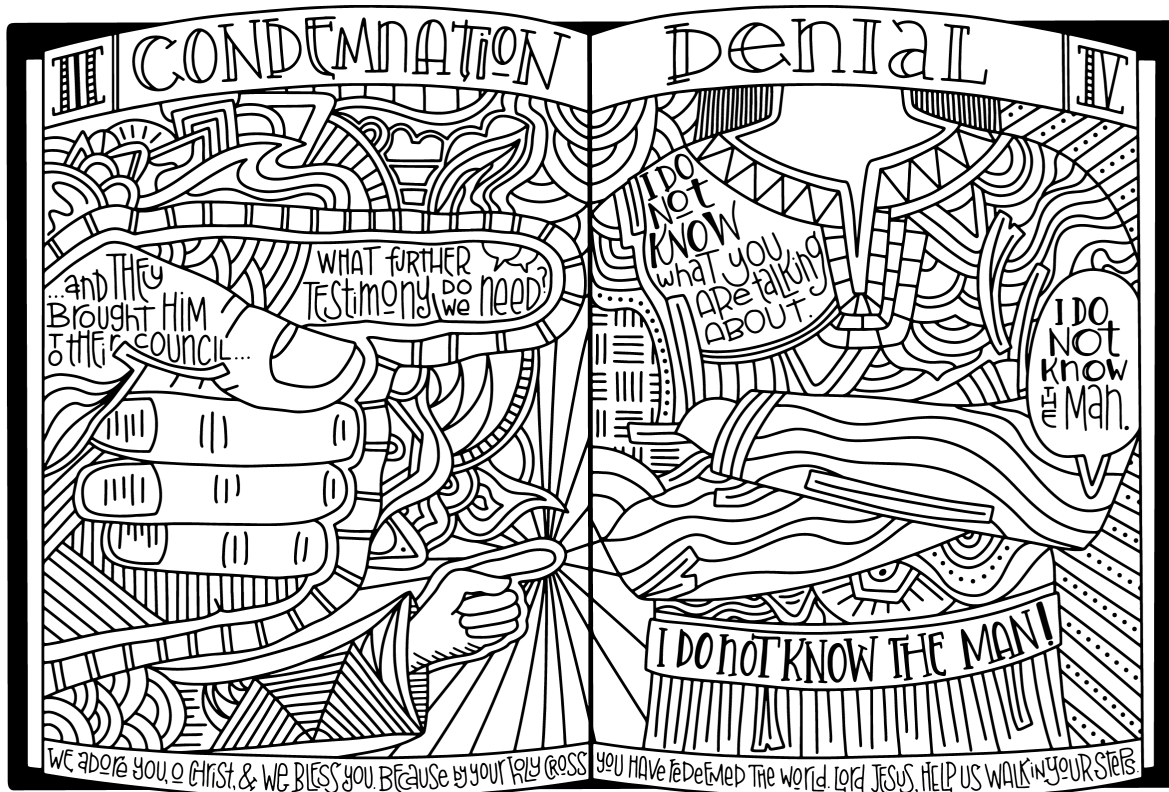
DISCUSSION WITH CHILDREN

- Have you ever told a lie about someone you cared for?
- How do you think it made them feel to know you had betrayed them?

GOING DEEPER

- When have you used your own position of trust to betray someone close to you?
- Have you ever been let down by a close friend or family member?
- How did you choose to deal with your feelings?

STATIONS 3 & 4



STATION III: CONDEMNATION

Jesus is Condemned by the Sanhedrin: Luke 22:66-71

STATION IV: DENIAL

Jesus is Denied by Peter: Matthew 26:69-75

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Station III: CONDEMNATION

Jesus is Condemned by the Sanhedrin

SCRIPTURE

Take some time to read and reflect on this week's passage: Luke 22:66-71.

REFLECTION FOR ADULTS

Davontae Sanford was only 14 years old when his life changed forever. While standing in his pajamas in his front yard, police arrested him for a quadruple homicide. He was taken to the police station, interrogated for 24 hours, and denied the right to see his parents or have an attorney present. Under the strain of those circumstances he confessed to the murders, was tried as an adult, and sentenced to 39 to 92 years in prison. The problem? Davontae did not commit the murders. Another man came forward and confessed. But the state would not relent. Thanks to the advocacy of the Center on Wrongful Convictions at Northwestern University, Davontae Sanford was exonerated in 2016, after serving nine years.¹

According to the *National Registry of Exonerations*, since 1989 in the United States there have been 1,966 innocent people exonerated for crimes they never committed. For many of them their only "crime" is their poverty or race. They are simply unable to afford exceptional legal representation. And because of the color of their skin, many juries sadly find it difficult to believe they did not commit the crime. So they are quick to condemn.

As we arrive at this third station with Jesus, it is worth remembering that it was not "evil" people who condemned him. The people who passed false judgment were the "good" ones, the religious leaders, the ones who knew the law. Yet, in one of the saddest mockeries of justice in history, they sentenced Jesus to death. But not before they asked him this question: "Are you...the Son of God" (Luke 22:70)? Then, even after Jesus answered in the affirmative, they condemned the Son of God to death. How many people could be saved from wrongful

¹ "Davontae Sanford." Davontae Sanford, Center on Wrongful Convictions: Bluhm Legal Clinic, Northwestern Pritzker School of Law. Web. 18 Feb. 2017.

condemnation in our own courts of law if we simply acknowledged this truth: like Jesus, we are *all* sons and daughters of God!

At some point in our lives, most of us have heard this proverb: when you point a finger at someone, there are three more pointing back at you. Take a look at the picture you are coloring. Notice all the fingers. Who are they pointing at? Are they your fingers?

REFLECTION FOR CHILDREN

After Jesus was arrested, he was taken to the Roman governor, a man named Pontius Pilate. When the people brought Jesus to Pilate, they said all kinds of unkind things about him. Pilate asked Jesus if he was really the "Son of God." Jesus said, "Yes, I am." But Pilate did not believe Jesus. Instead, he decided to believe the unkind and untrue things the people said about Jesus. And so he sentenced Jesus to die on the cross.

DISCUSSION WITH CHILDREN

- Have you ever said something untrue or unkind about a person just because they weren't like you?
- What would you do if you heard someone saying something untrue or unkind about your friend?

GOING DEEPER

- When have you been guilty of condemning someone based on false externals?
- Have you ever hid behind the veneer of your own religious beliefs in an attempt to justify your prejudice?



Station IV: DENIAL

Jesus is Denied by Peter

SCRIPTURE

Take some time to read and reflect on this week's passage: Matthew 26:69-75.

REFLECTION FOR ADULTS

In the autumn of 1934, the Detroit Tigers were in the middle of their first pennant race in 25 years. Hank Greenberg was one of the team's first baseman, and one of the greatest sluggers of all time, with a batting average of .339. The Tigers needed him in their game against the New York Yankees. But Greenberg, a Jewish-American, was torn about whether he should play the game that day. It was September 1...Yom Kippur. After consulting with his rabbi and family, Greenberg made the decision to not play. With American anti-Semitism on the rise, Greenberg's decision was not popular. Fans shouted, "Rosh Hashanah comes every year but the Tigers haven't won the pennant since 1909!" But Greenberg remained true to his convictions, attending synagogue services that day, rather than denying his faith by playing a game of baseball on the Day of Atonement, the holiest day of the Jewish year.²

It is not always easy to be true to our religious convictions when forces from all sides are asking us to deny the very things that give us life. Peter found this out in the courtyard as he watched Jesus being led away to trial. Just weeks before, Peter had mustered up the courage to profess that Jesus was "the Messiah, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 13:15). But now, when questioned, he denied he even knew his friend and Savior. Who knows what would have happened if Peter had the courage of his convictions at that moment? Would the questioning servant-girl have come to believe in Jesus? Would Peter's testimony have been able to save Jesus from death?

² Halberstam, David J. "While Koufax Is Rightly Lauded, Yom Kippur Example Set by Hank Greenberg." USA Today. Gannett Satellite Information Network, 17 Sept. 2015. Web. 18 Feb. 2017.

The Tigers lost to the Yankees that day. Who knows whether or not Hank Greenberg's decision to not play had anything to do with the results of the game? But what we do know is, in a small way, his decision to not deny his faith helped pave the way for a more tolerant baseball league and society.

Take a look at the picture you are coloring. Is the person with folded arms a defiant Peter? Or could it be a defiant Jesus, saying to us, "no matter how many times you deny me, I will always love you!"

REFLECTION FOR CHILDREN

Peter was Jesus' closest friend, and the leader of the disciples. The night Jesus was arrested however, Peter was afraid for his own life and ran away from Jesus. Some people in the courtyard recognized him, and began to ask him if he was a disciple of Jesus. Peter got angry, and said that he had never even seen Jesus. He denied Jesus. Even though Peter denied Jesus three times that night, Jesus loved Peter very much. After Jesus rose from the dead, he forgave Peter for denying him.

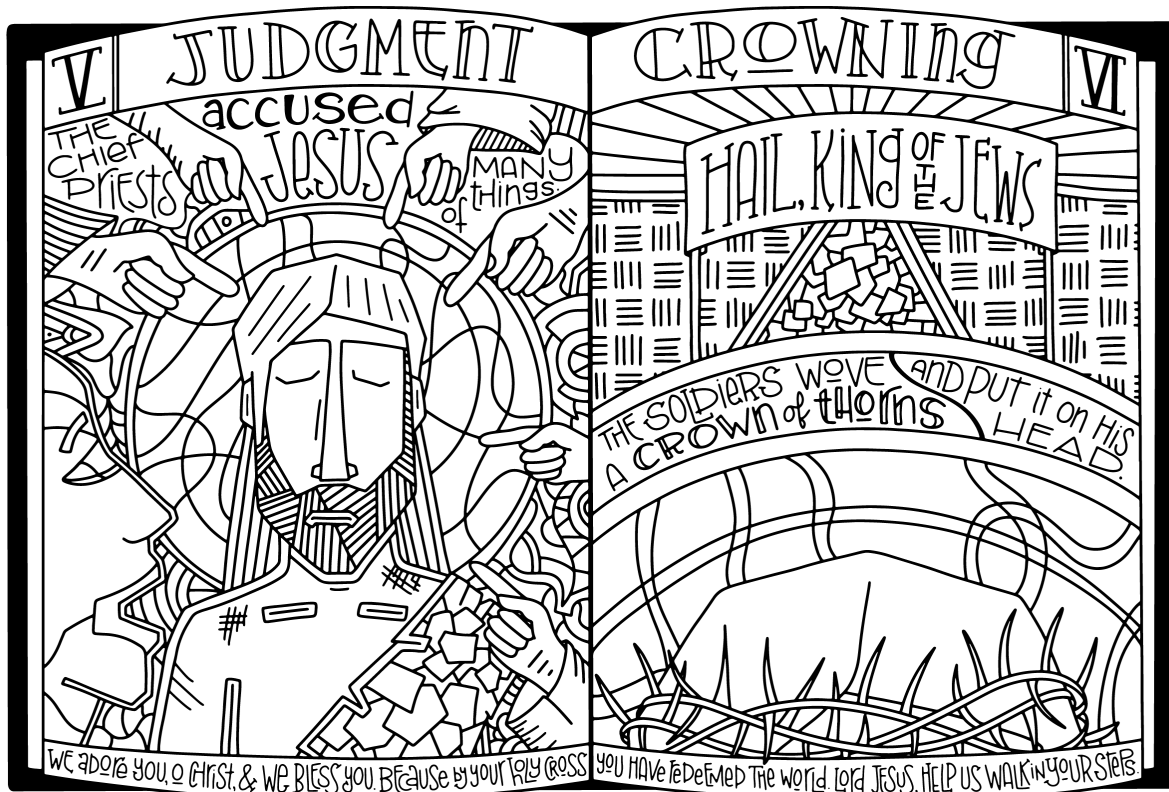
DISCUSSION WITH CHILDREN

- Have you ever told someone you weren't a Christian because you were embarrassed?
- Do you think there is anything you could do that would make Jesus stop loving you?

GOING DEEPER

- Has there ever been a time that you have denied your faith, or your belief in Jesus, in order to fit in? Was it worth it?
- Have you ever experienced God's forgiveness after thinking you had done something that was unforgivable?

STATIONS 5 & 6



STATION V: JUDGMENT

Jesus is Judged by Pilate: Mark 15:1-5, 15

STATION VI: CROWNING

Jesus is Scourged and Crowned with Thorns: John 19:1-3

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Station V: JUDGMENT

Jesus is Judged by Pilate

SCRIPTURE

Take some time to read and reflect on this week's passage: Mark 15:1-5, 15.

REFLECTION FOR ADULTS

Chances are you have probably never heard of Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu. That's because we know her by another name: Mother Teresa. By the age of eighteen, she answered God's call to move to India, and joined a religious order of nuns who had a commitment to helping the poorest of the poor in that country. Later this "Saint of the Gutter", as Teresa was sometimes known, founded her own religious order, the Missionaries of Charity, and dedicated the rest of her life to serving those whom society had judged as unworthy of love. Where others saw only the dregs of humanity, Mother Teresa saw children of God. Where others judged people based on their position in society, Mother Teresa judged them based on their position in the reign of God. In fact, she is quoted as saying, "If you judge people, you have no time to love them."

At this fifth station, we find ourselves standing with Jesus in Pilate's judgement hall. He is tired and dirty from a sleepless night, humiliated by the spitting, and hurting from the slaps of those who wish to mock him. His clothes are ragged and torn. And he is hungry. "Then the chief priests accused him of many things" (Mark 15:3).

Most of us have probably encountered someone on a street corner, or a bus stop, or the train platform holding their hand out, asking for assistance of some kind. Many of the people we encounter in these situations look tired...and dirty...and hungry. And we began to judge. And in our judgment of them, we found we had no time to love them.

After the chief priests judged Jesus, Pilate handed him over to be crucified. Sadly, this is also what happens when we judge others, rather than loving them. Our judgment condemns them to the death of hopelessness. Take a look at the picture you are coloring. Notice all the fingers

pointing in judgment. What if instead they were all extended with a handshake of solidarity for the person judged wrongly? Fingers pointed in judgment will never find time to love.

REFLECTION FOR CHILDREN

Imagine what it must have felt like for Jesus on the night he was arrested. He was not given anything to eat, he was not allowed to sleep, and he had to walk from place to place all over Jerusalem. The soldiers spit on him, and called him names. And then the chief priests accused him of many untrue things. But Jesus did not hate them. Instead, he loved them the same way God loves us when we are unkind, and treat others with disrespect. Sometimes the things we do make Jesus very sad. But just like Jesus loved the people who had treated him wrongly, God loves us and always wants us to try better to follow God's ways.

DISCUSSION WITH CHILDREN

- Have you ever thought less of someone because they didn't have nice clothes or a beautiful house?
- How do you think it would feel to be that person?

GOING DEEPER

- How might you focus more on loving others rather than judging them?
- What concrete actions could you take to love someone whom others think is unlovable?



Station VI: CROWNING

Jesus is Scourged and Crowned with Thorns

SCRIPTURE

Take some time to read and reflect on this week's passage: John 19:1-3.

REFLECTION FOR ADULTS

There is a contemporary icon, *Madonna of the Holocaust*, which shows Mary, dressed in the clothes of an early 20th century Eastern European Jewish woman, holding Jesus on her lap. They are surrounded by barbed wire and the names of horrific places like Auschwitz, Birkenau, Dachau, and Bergen-Belsen. There is a large yellow Star of David sewn onto Mary's clothes, and a dove in Jesus' hands. The imagery used in this icon is a stark reminder that Jesus and Mary were both Jews, and had they been living in Hitler's world, would have been forced into a concentration camp because of their faith.

At this sixth station, we see the agents of the state forcing Jesus to wear a crown of thorns and a purple robe to identify him as the "King of the Jews" (John 19:2). The phrase "the Jews" is sprinkled liberally throughout John's account of the Passion and, unfortunately, Christians have often used this as an excuse for anti-Semitism and mistreatment of our Jewish brothers and sisters. Many biblical scholars believe that a more accurate translation of the Greek word *Ioudaioi* would be "Judeans" (referring to a region), rather than "Jews" (referring to an entire religion). When it comes to religion and how we treat one another, words *do* matter!

Whether Jesus lived in 1st century Jerusalem or 20th century Germany, he will always be found with the marginalized, the oppressed, and the forgotten. Take a look at the picture you are coloring. Notice the triangle in the middle. It seems to have broken pieces of glass or rock strewn on it. As you color in the shapes, be mindful of all the lives that have been broken over the centuries because of religious prejudice and the careless misuse of language.

REFLECTION FOR CHILDREN

After Pilate sentenced Jesus to die, the Roman soldiers made a crown out of thorns and placed it on Jesus' head. Then they knelt in front of him saying, "Hail, the King of the Jews!" But they didn't really mean what they were saying. Jesus was a Jew, and the Romans did not like Jewish people. So they used their words to make fun of Jesus.

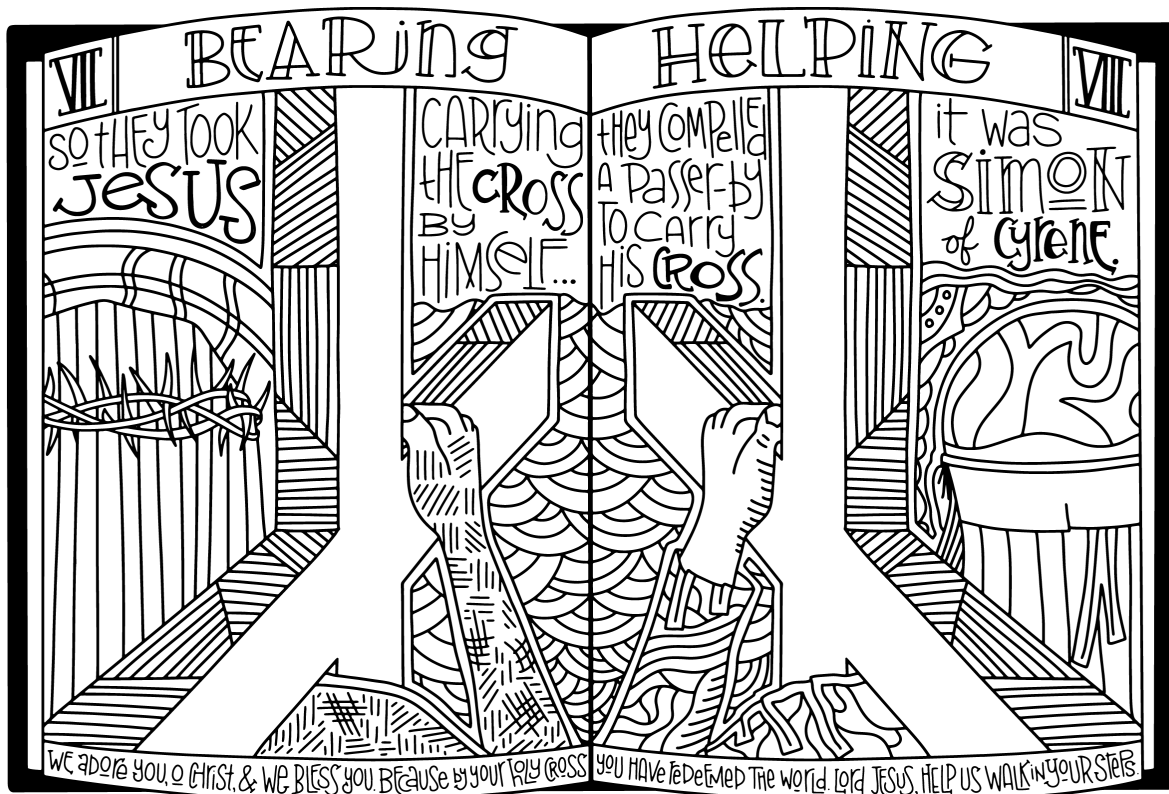
DISCUSSION WITH CHILDREN

- How do you think Jesus wants you to treat people of different religions?
- What could you do to learn something about the Jewish religion?

GOING DEEPER

- Is it strange to think of Jesus as a Jew, rather than a Christian?
- What implications might that have for your own relationships with people of other faiths?

STATIONS 7 & 8



STATION VII: BEARING

Jesus Bears the Cross: John 19:6, 15-17

STATION VIII: HELPING

Jesus is Helped by Simon the Cyrenian to Carry the Cross: Mark 15:21

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Station VII: BEARING

Jesus Bears the Cross

SCRIPTURE

Take some time to read and reflect on this week's passage: John 19:6, 15-17.

REFLECTION FOR ADULTS

The permanent collection of Pacific Lutheran University (PLU) in Tacoma, Washington, houses a sculpture by Howard Dale titled *The Burden*. Crafted in bronze, the cross already has a weightiness about it as Jesus drags it behind him. But it is what is on the cross that makes it seem even heavier. Sculpted into the cross is two centuries worth of humanity, beginning with Adam and Eve at the bottom, and ending with modern-day firefighters at the top. In a very powerful way, it visually demonstrates the cosmic consequences of Jesus' decision to take up his cross, and carry it all the way to Calvary.

This seventh station seems to be a very lonely one. John puts it this way: "...and carrying the cross by himself, Jesus went out..." (John 19:17). Christians have argued for centuries over whether or not Jesus had to die. We have debated about the meaning of his death. And we have disagreed about its consequences. But what we *do* agree on is that somehow his solitary decision to take up the cross changed the course of history, and had eternal consequences for all of humanity.

The Orthodox tradition has long held that Adam and Eve had been waiting for centuries in their graves for the coming of the One who would rescue them from sin and death. Perhaps as Jesus dragged his cross through the city streets that day, it began to rip apart the hardened earth where Adam and Eve lay waiting for resurrection. And perhaps Jesus' decision to carry his cross right into the face of death that day is what inspires people like the firefighter in Dale's sculpture to walk into burning buildings to save others.

Take a look at the picture you are coloring. Jesus appears to be carrying his cross resolutely, with precision, to the place of salvation. There is no hesitation. He is not looking back,

because he knows that his lonely decision will save humanity, and inspire countless others to selfless acts of sacrifice.

REFLECTION FOR CHILDREN

Jesus did not want to die. He wanted everyone to believe in God, and love each other. But many people would not listen to him. Because of that, the governor condemned Jesus to die on the cross. Jesus could have complained that people were turning against him. Instead, he picked up his cross to do what God was asking of him. Even though he didn't want to die, God was with Jesus all the way.

DISCUSSION WITH CHILDREN

- When have you been asked to do something for someone else that you thought was really difficult?
- What gave you the strength to do it?

GOING DEEPER

- What do you think about Jesus' decision to carry the cross as having "cosmic consequences?"
- How does Jesus' decision to carry the cross inspire you to engage in acts of selfless love for others?



Station VIII: HELPING

Jesus is Helped by Simon the Cyrenian to Carry the Cross

SCRIPTURE

Take some time to read and reflect on this week's passage: Mark 15:21.

REFLECTION FOR ADULTS

Parents are increasingly making volunteering a regular part of their routine, whether it's delivering meals to the homebound, planting vegetables in a community garden, or spending time with people at the local senior center. And when parents and children engage in these activities together, the results are overwhelming. One study looked at 47,000 children in 5th through 12th grades in public schools across the United States.³ The study results indicated that children who served just one hour or more a week were less likely to be involved in at-risk behaviors than those who are not active in volunteering.

At this eighth station, we encounter Simon of Cyrene, the man whom the soldiers forced to help carry Jesus' heavy cross: "coming in from the country...was Simon...the father of Alexander and Rufus" (Mark 15:21). We don't know much about Alexander and Rufus. We don't know if they were children on the day of Jesus' journey to the cross, but imagine if they were. One tradition says they went on to become missionaries in the early Christian church. Some have even suggested that the Rufus mentioned by Paul in his letter to Rome (Romans 16:13) is Rufus, the son of Simon the Cyrene. Whatever the case, what we do know is that Rufus and his brother, Alexander, saw their father give a helping hand that day to someone in need. And that someone in need just happened to be the Son of God.

We should never underestimate the power of our own example in the lives of children. Whether we have children of our own, nephews and nieces, godchildren, or children of friends...they all look to us for examples of how to be kind and helpful to people most in need. Ralph Waldo Emerson once wrote that "the purpose of life is not to be happy. It is to be

³ Benson, P. L. (1993). *The troubled journey: A portrait of 6th-12th grade youth*. Minneapolis, MN: Search Institute.

useful, to be honorable, to be compassionate, to have it make some difference that you have lived and lived well.” Alexander and Rufus learned these traits from Simon.

Take a look at the picture you are coloring, and notice all the lines that intersect. As you color them in, imagine all the lives that have intersected with yours over the years because of your kindness. Maybe you can write some of their names on the lines in the cross.

REFLECTION FOR CHILDREN

Jesus was very weak when the soldiers forced him to carry his own cross through the streets. As he walked toward the place where he would die, Jesus got very tired and couldn't carry his cross alone anymore. So the soldiers forced a man named Simon to help Jesus carry the cross the rest of the way. Simon's two sons, Alexander and Rufus, had to watch as their father helped Jesus.

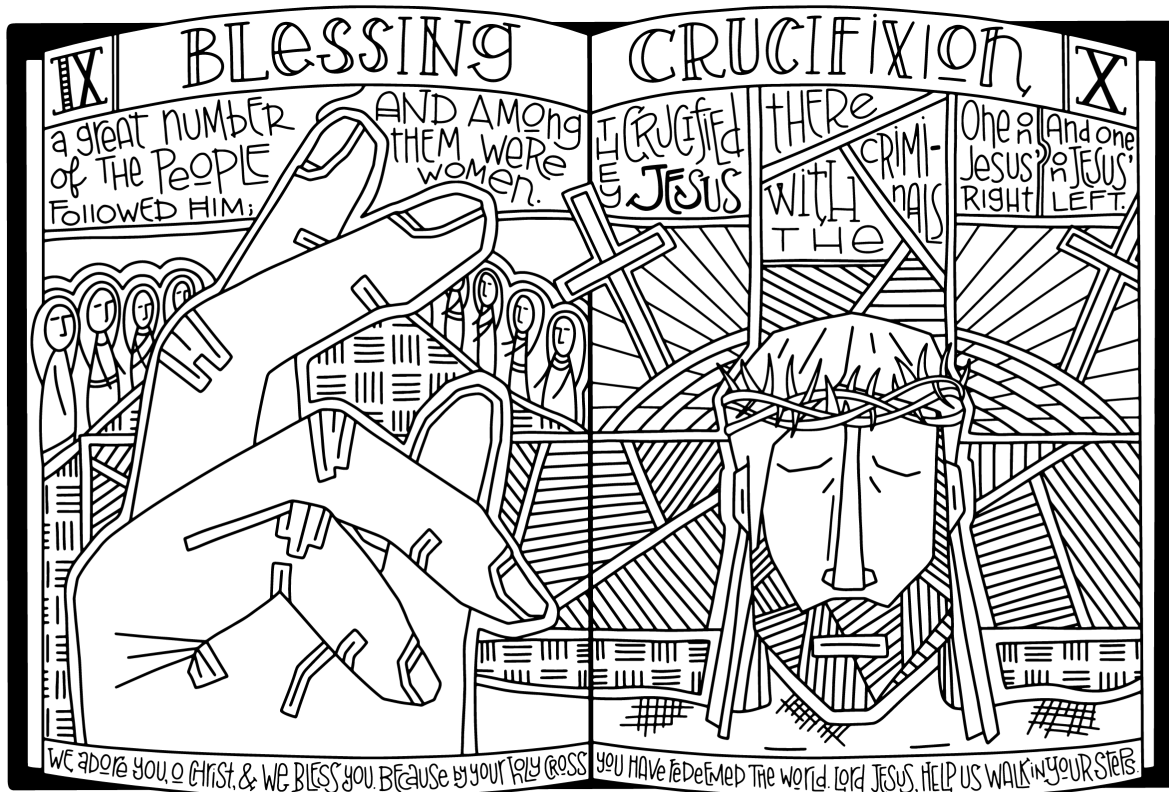
DISCUSSION WITH CHILDREN

- How have the adults in your life given you examples of how you should care for others?
- What is one way that you could help someone today?

GOING DEEPER

- How have you set an example of kindness for the children in your life?
- How would it change the way you helped people if every time you extended a helping hand to someone you imagined that they were Jesus?

STATIONS 9 & 10



STATION IX: BLESSING

Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem: Luke 23:27-31

STATION X: CRUCIFIXION

Jesus is Crucified: Luke 23:33-34

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Station IX: BLESSING

Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem

SCRIPTURE

Take some time to read and reflect on this week's passage: Luke 23:27-31.

REFLECTION FOR ADULTS

As Christians, we are keenly aware of the power of gesture in our communal life. The pouring of water, the breaking of bread, the washing of feet...all of these have deep meaning. But there is a gesture that may get overlooked from time to time. It is the gesture of raising one's hands in blessing. In more liturgical churches, the priest or minister blesses the congregation with the sign of the cross at the end of worship. Take a look at the picture you are coloring. The way Jesus' hand is raised in blessing looks much like the way some ministers bless the congregation. It is the way Lutherans, Catholic, and Episcopalians bless themselves...two fingers up, and three fingers down. Orthodox Christians place three fingers up, and two down. Either way, there is profound symbolism in this gesture. The three fingers together represent the Trinity, while the other two symbolize the divine and human nature of Jesus Christ.

An ancient saying says *lex orandi, lex credendi* - as the church worships, so the church believes. Look around next time you are in worship. The gestures your congregation uses will give you a little insight into what your congregation believes. The fingers used in blessing remind us that God, in the person of Jesus, became a human so that we, through the death of Christ, might share in the divine life of God.

At this ninth station, Jesus encounters the women of Jerusalem, and we hear strange words: "Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore..." (Luke 23:29). Exactly the opposite of what we hear at the beginning of Luke's gospel when Gabriel announces to Mary that she will give birth to Jesus: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb" (Luke 1:42). Perhaps the words in Luke's account of the Passion are a reminder to us

that every moment of our lives, even those places that seem the most forsaken (*especially* those places), can we be places of God's blessing. And it is precisely those most human of conditions that Jesus wishes to bless, to transform, and to take up into the divine life.

Take another look at the picture you are coloring. It looks as if Jesus' hand is covered in bandages. We are most effective as agents of blessing to others when we have been wounded ourselves. Our own hurt makes us more empathetic to the pain of others. Hold your own hand up, positioning like the hand in the picture. Who needs your blessing today?

REFLECTION FOR CHILDREN

While Jesus was carrying his cross, he met some women from Jerusalem who were crying. They were very sad because they knew that Jesus was good person and did not deserve to die. Even though he was in incredible pain himself, Jesus stopped to comfort them and bless them.

DISCUSSION WITH CHILDREN

- What do you think it means when someone says, "God bless you?"
- Can you think of some times in church when the minister gives a blessing? How does that make you feel?

GOING DEEPER

- How can the pain you have experienced in your own life be a source of blessing for others?
- How have you been affected by the use of gesture in worship?



Station X: CRUCIFIXION

Jesus is Crucified

SCRIPTURE

Take some time to read and reflect on this week's passage: Luke 23:33-34.

REFLECTION FOR ADULTS

The image of the cross has become so commonplace that we tend to forget how truly revolutionary it is. In 1949 the communist regime in Poland began work on Nowa Huta, a new town just north of Kraków. In an effort to crush the Christian spirit of the Polish people, and to reinforce the atheism of the communist party, the government decreed that there would be no church building in Nowa Huta. It was the first Polish city to be intentionally designed without a church. But the people's faith could not be so easily destroyed. They erected a large cross in the middle of the field where they wanted their church to be built. Each time they would put the cross up, the communists would bulldoze it down.

In 1959, the young archbishop of Kraków, Karol Wojtyła, celebrated Christmas Eve Midnight Mass under the cross in the field. Hundreds of people came, standing in a freezing Polish winter night, to defy the government and worship the God who had come to set them free. After each Christmas Eve celebration, the government would again tear the cross down...and the people would again rebuild it. And Archbishop Wojtyła would return each Christmas Eve to celebrate Midnight Mass. Finally, in 1967, the communists issued a permit for a church to be built. One year before he was elected Bishop of Rome, taking the name John Paul II, Archbishop Wojtyła dedicated the new church in Nowa Huta. A central element in the design of the church is a massive steel sculpture of the crucified Christ, made by the steelworkers of the city.

Take a look at the picture you are coloring. On each crossbeam of the cross it appears that ladders are descending and ascending. What makes the crucifixion so revolutionary is the truth that God, in the person of Jesus, descended to humanity, took on all the sufferings of

the world, and died for the salvation of all people so that we might ascend to the heights for which we were created. The vertical beam, plunged into the dark earth, also reaches up to the highest heaven, spanning the gulf between God and humanity. And the horizontal beam reaches from the criminal on Jesus' right to the criminal on his left, spanning the distance between alienated brothers and sisters.

Once Karol Wojtyła became John Paul, he took this message of the cross he had learned during that time in Nowa Huta to the entire world. For him, the way of the cross was the way to peace. The mercy extended by Christ at Calvary was the mercy we should extend to all people. And he knew that suffering and oppression will not last forever, because all has been redeemed through the life and death of Jesus Christ.

REFLECTION FOR CHILDREN

Jesus came to teach us about God's love. Jesus wanted us to listen to him and follow his way. Some people did not like what Jesus was teaching them, and so they decided to crucify him on the cross. But even on the cross, Jesus continued to teach us about God's love. Because Jesus was crucified, we can now share eternal life with God.

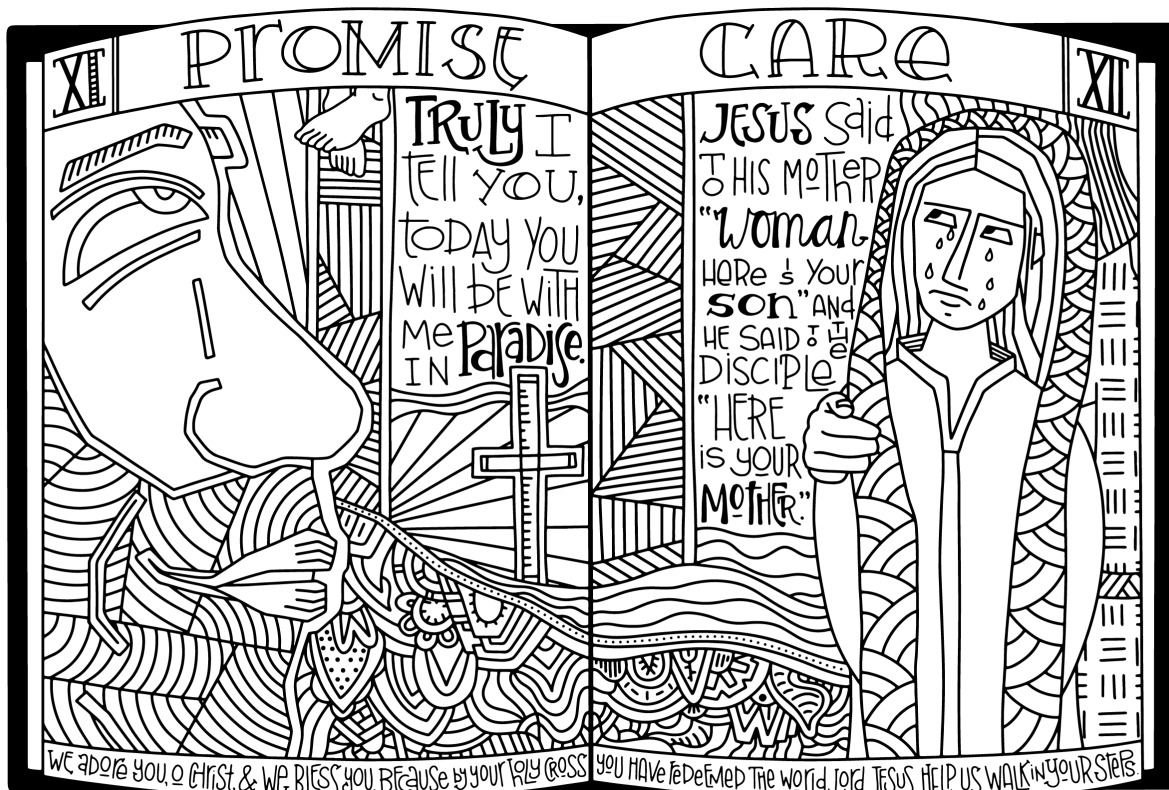
DISCUSSION WITH CHILDREN

- Look at the cross in your church. Some churches have a cross with Jesus on it, and some churches have an empty cross. Which one do you prefer to look at?
- What do you think about when you see Jesus on the cross? What do you think about when you see an empty cross?

GOING DEEPER

- Could you imagine a time when you might use the image of the cross as a sign of protest against oppression?
- The Christmas carol *What Child Is This* contains these lines, "Nails, spear shall pierce him through; the cross be borne for me, for you." Is it odd for you to think of the cross and the manger together?

STATIONS 11 & 12



STATION XI: PROMISE

Jesus Promises His Kingdom to the Good Thief: Luke 23:39-43

STATION XII: CARE

Jesus Speaks to His Mother and the Disciples: John 19:25-27

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Station XI: PROMISE

Jesus Promises His Kingdom to the Good Thief

SCRIPTURE

Take some time to read and reflect on this week's passage: Luke 23:39-43.

REFLECTION FOR ADULTS

The Botanical Gardens just north of Chicago are stunning places of natural beauty. In late fall, the gardens are filled with massive plantings of chrysanthemums in every imaginable hue. In winter, the beautiful twisted limbs and branches of barren trees are on full display against the dark sky. In the spring, tulips, daffodils, and crocus make their way up through the thawing ground. And at the end of summer, the air is perfumed with the scent of roses making their last appearance before fall sets in again. In short, the gardens are a little slice of paradise.

As he hung on the cross dying, Jesus promised the thief next to him, "Today, you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). This word that Jesus uses, a Persian word referring to a "park" or a "garden", only appears two other times in the scriptures. Paul uses it in 2 Corinthians when speaking of a vision he had (2 Corinthians 12:3-4), and John uses it in the book of Revelation to describe the life that awaits those who have been faithful: "To everyone who conquers, I will give permission to eat from the tree of life that is in the paradise of God" (Revelation 2:7). Jesus' words in Revelation are clearly an echo back to the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden. The promise of Jesus is that, in the end, all things will be restored to their perfect state. Paradise.

Take a look at the picture you are coloring. A garden of flowers appears to be emerging from the base of the cross. Paradise seems to be starting to bloom. During the worship of Holy Week, many churches sing the ancient hymn, *Sing, My Tongue, the Glorious Battle*. The last stanza says this: "Faithful cross, true sign of triumph, be for all the noblest tree; / none in foliage, none in blossom, none in fruit your equal be; / symbol of the world's redemption, for your burden makes us free."

The message of this eleventh station is that, for those who place their trust in Jesus, paradise begins to blossom...right here, right now. But just like the botanical gardens, there is a creative cycle in the paradise of life. Sometimes things are blooming all around us. Sometimes beauty is lying dormant for a while underneath a frozen earth. And sometimes things must wither and die in order to be renewed and reborn. This is all part of the life of paradise. But the promise of Jesus to the thief, and to us, is that *today* you can live with him there.

REFLECTION FOR CHILDREN

There were two criminals crucified alongside Jesus on the day he died. One of them made fun of Jesus. But the other one knew that Jesus done nothing wrong. Because the man was a criminal, he thought that God didn't love him. But Jesus loved the man very much, and promised him that he would be able to live in paradise with him forever.

DISCUSSION WITH CHILDREN

- What do you think heaven looks like?
- Have you ever wondered what happens to people when they die?

GOING DEEPER

- Jesus promised the criminal that today he would be with him in paradise. What do you think about the idea that paradise begins here and now?
- How might it change the way you practice your Christian faith to believe that we do not have to wait until we die in order to live in paradise with Jesus?



Station XII: CARE

Jesus Speaks to His Mother and the Disciples

SCRIPTURE

Take some time to read and reflect on this week's passage: John 19:25-27.

REFLECTION FOR ADULTS

Around 250CE, a devastating plague swept from Ethiopia across North Africa, then to Italy and the Western Empire. At the height of the plague, which was most likely an outbreak of smallpox, 5,000 people a day were said to be dying in Rome. Many Roman citizens simply abandoned their family and neighbors, tossing them out into the street to die. The early Christians however, went into the streets, caring for the dying, and burying the dead. Almost two hundred years later, around 416CE, the Patriarch of Alexandria in Egypt organized groups of volunteers from the local church to transport and care for the sick. They were called *parabalani*, "the reckless ones," because they ventured into places of sickness and death where others refused to go. Where did these early Christians get the inspiration to be so reckless in their caring, not only for fellow believers, but for all their fellow citizens?

At this twelfth station we find the answer to that question. Jesus, now in his last moments of life, concerns himself not with his own suffering, but with the suffering of his mother and one of his best friends who were gathered at the foot of the cross. Mary, his mother, was most likely a widow at this point in her life. Now, with the death of her eldest son, she would be relegated to the lowest rungs of society with no one to look after her. So Jesus motioned to John, the beloved disciple, and asked him to take Mary into his own care. *Behold your mother.* And then he asked Mary to look after John as if he were her own son. *Behold your son.* There, at the cross, Jesus asked his followers to be reckless in their concern and care for one another. He asked them to strip away the traditional ideas of what constituted a family, and to forge a new family of faith that would care for one another at all costs.

Tertullian (160-220AD), an early Christian leader, once said that when the Romans saw Christians in action, they would exclaim: "See how they love one another!" As Christianity spread, so did the early Christians' love. They went on to establish some of the first hospitals in the world, buried the dead with dignity, and treated all people with care and respect.

Take a look at the picture you are coloring. The beloved disciple's arm is lovingly placed around Mary's shoulder. As you color, spend some time thinking about who is in need of your care at the moment.

REFLECTION FOR CHILDREN

Jesus taught us that we are all part of God's family. When he was dying on the cross, he asked his friend, John, to take care of his mother. And he asked his mother, Mary, to treat John like she would treat her own son. Even when Jesus was dying, he wanted to show us how to love and care for each other.

DISCUSSION WITH CHILDREN

- What are some ways you could show another person you care for them?
- Have you ever thought about the people in your church as your family?

GOING DEEPER

- When have you been "reckless" in your care for another person?
- How might your relationships with people in your congregation or community change if you thought of them as family?

STATIONS 13 & 14



STATION XIII: DARKNESS

Jesus Dies on the Cross: Luke 23:44-46

STATION XIV: BURIAL

Jesus is Placed in the Tomb: Matthew 27:57-60

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Station XIII: DARKNESS

Jesus Dies on the Cross

SCRIPTURE

Take some time to read and reflect on this week's passage: Luke 23:44-46.

REFLECTION FOR ADULTS

On July 1, 1941, the Nazis occupied Riga, Lithuania. Four days later, every synagogue in Riga had been burned to the ground. Every synagogue except one. The Peitav Synagogue was too close to the city center, and the Nazis feared that setting it on fire would put the other city buildings in danger. So they ransacked it and converted it into a warehouse for their evil and dark purposes. If you go into a Jewish synagogue, you will notice that the most central feature of the sanctuary is the ark, the *Aron Kodesh*, where the Torah scrolls are housed. Many arks contain heavy curtains that are pushed aside during worship to reveal the scriptures they contain. Following the war, it was discovered that the eastern wall of the Peitav Synagogue, the wall where the ark was located, was a false one. Christians from the local Reformed Church, led by their pastor, Gustavs Shaurums, had hastily erected the wall to protect the sacred scrolls. Today the synagogue is a flourishing center of Jewish life within the city.

The curtains on the ark in many synagogues recall the ones that originally hung in the Holy of Holies in the Jerusalem Temple, separating the people from the inner sanctum of the sanctuary. Only the high priest was allowed to enter...and only once a year. In the beginning of Luke's gospel, Zechariah, the high priest, is performing his duties behind that curtain when the angel Gabriel appears to him telling him that he will have a son, John the Baptist. After John's birth, Zechariah sings the *Benedictus*, a song known to many Christians. The last lines of that hymn say, "Through the heartfelt mercies of our God, God's Sunrise will break in upon us, shining on those in the darkness, those sitting in the shadow of death" (Luke 1: 78-79, *The Message*).

At this station, we arrive at the end of Luke's gospel. All hope that God's sunrise will appear seems to be lost. Darkness comes over the land, and the sun's light fails. But then, an amazing event happens in the midst of this darkness. The veil in the temple is torn in two. The false wall that had been erected between God and humanity comes crushing down at the death of Jesus. Just as the scrolls that were discovered behind the wall in the Peitav Synagogue gave light to that community, so the tearing of the temple veil at the death of Jesus reveals to us the light that God has always intended for creation.

Take a look at the picture you are coloring. Notice that you are looking from behind the veil to the cross. It's as if we were always on the inside, just waiting for God's sunrise to break upon us. As you color in the images on the veil, be mindful of those who still sit in the shadow of death. How might you rip the veil open for them?

REFLECTION FOR CHILDREN

Jesus worshipped at the Jerusalem Temple many times when he was alive. In that temple was a curtain that separated people from the Holy of Holies, the place where they believed God was present in a very special way. When Jesus died, two amazing things happened: it became very dark all throughout the city, and the curtain in the temple was torn in two. Because of Jesus' death, we can now always be in God's presence.

DISCUSSION WITH CHILDREN

- Can you think of a time when you might have been afraid of the dark?
- What did you do to help you overcome your fear?

GOING DEEPER

- Where are some places in the world where you see people "sitting in the shadow of death?"
- How is God challenging you to bring "God's sunshine" to them?



Station XIV: BURIAL

Jesus is Placed in the Tomb

SCRIPTURE

Take some time to read and reflect on this week's passage: Matthew 27:57-60.

REFLECTION FOR ADULTS

There is a story told in South Africa about some children who threw rocks at a delivery van one day. The army was called, and they opened fire, killing an innocent 10-year-old girl. One of the soldiers was chosen to guard the little girl's body, which was lying in the dust, while they waited for the authorities to arrive. Seeing that the girl's dress was torn and her body exposed, the soldier took off his own shirt to cover the child. Then he stood guard, dressed only in his pants. When one of the other soldiers mocked him and asked why he would do such a thing, the soldier replied, "She is also made in the image of God."⁴

Christians throughout the ages have always given great respect to the human body after death. Whether through washing and anointing, incensing, sprinkling baptismal water, burying it in the earth, or returning a person's ashes to God's creation, Christians have ritually shown their profound belief that our bodies are dwelling places of God's Spirit. Our funeral practices are meant to remind us of the truth found in the opening chapters of the Bible when God said, "Let us make humankind in our own image" (Genesis 1:26).

At this fourteenth station, we meet Joseph of Arimathea, a person of great wealth and merciful compassion. Mary was the widow of a poor carpenter, and Jesus was an itinerant rabbi. In the eyes of many, they were just poor peasants. In the eyes of the state, Jesus was criminal unworthy of a proper burial. But to Joseph, a secret follower of Jesus, Jesus was the very image of God! And, as such, he deserved a respectful burial.

⁴ Carden, John. *A Procession of Prayer: Meditations and Prayers from Around the World*. New York City: Morehouse, 1998. 257.

Take a look at the picture you are coloring. On the front of the stone, there appears to be a seed hanging from the branch of a tree. Around the seed, it looks like things are beginning to emerge and grow. As followers of Jesus, the seed of resurrection life has already been planted in our hearts. And on the day of our own burial, that seed will begin to sprout as we make our way back home to the God in whose image we were created.

Take a closer look at the picture...perhaps what looks like a seed is also a cocoon. At first glance, a cocoon doesn't seem to be a likely image for Easter. But it's what is going on inside that counts. The old caterpillar is being transformed into a beautiful butterfly that will emerge, bright with color, and full of new life. As you finish coloring this station, think about how your own life has been transformed by taking this journey with Jesus this Lenten. "Now we look inside, and what we see is that anyone united with the Messiah gets a fresh start, is created new. The old life is gone; a new life burgeons! Look at it" (2 Corinthians 5:17, *The Message*)!

REFLECTION FOR CHILDREN

After Jesus died on the cross, one of his friends, Joseph of Arimathea, asked Pilate if he could take Jesus' body down from the cross. Along with Mary, Jesus' mother, and some other friends of Jesus, Joseph prepared Jesus' body for burial. Then he buried Jesus in his own tomb.

DISCUSSION WITH CHILDREN

- Have you ever been to a cemetery? How did it make you feel to be around the graves?
- Have you ever seen a butterfly come out of its cocoon? Why do you think the butterfly is one of the symbols people use at Easter?

GOING DEEPER

- How does your own tradition give respect to the body after death?
- What do the funeral rituals of your church teach you about the dignity of the human body?



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

GEOFF DUFFY was raised in the Evangelical Free Church. In his twenties he joined the Roman Catholic Church, and over the past twenty years, has served as the Pastoral Assistant for Liturgy and Music in several Catholic parishes, including congregations both in Seattle and Chicago. Geoff also spent a couple years with the Lutherans and is now enjoying his time as Director of Music and Associate Director for Worship at Winnetka Presbyterian Church (Winnetka, Illinois). Geoff received his B.A. in Pastoral Studies from Southwestern College (KS), and a certificate in Scripture and Leadership Training from Seattle University School of Theology and Ministry. You can learn more about Geoff at his website geoffduffy.com.

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