

STEP UP CLOSE *to Jesus*



Stations of the Cross *for Young People*

by Sister Mary Terese Donze, A.S.C.

1. *Jesus Is* **Condemned to Death**

Look at the man sitting. He is Pontius Pilate. He is a Roman judge. The angry people standing around have told

lies about Jesus, and they want Pilate to kill Him. Pilate knows Jesus is a good man. He knows Jesus should not be killed. But Pilate is afraid. He wants the angry people to like him, to be his friends, or he might lose his job. So he tells them, “Go ahead and kill Jesus.”

Step up close to Jesus. See how hard and fast He is breathing. He is afraid. Yes, He could stop these men if He wanted because He is the Son of God. But then who would make up for our sins? So Jesus is going to let it happen because He loves us. He wants to save us and win heaven for us. Still, He’s afraid. Put your hand in His. Let Him know you care. Whisper in your heart, “Jesus, I’m here. I’ll stay with You.”

Dear Jesus... please make me brave so I can do what is right even when it’s hard to do...and don’t let me be afraid to stand up for somebody when others are telling lies about that person.



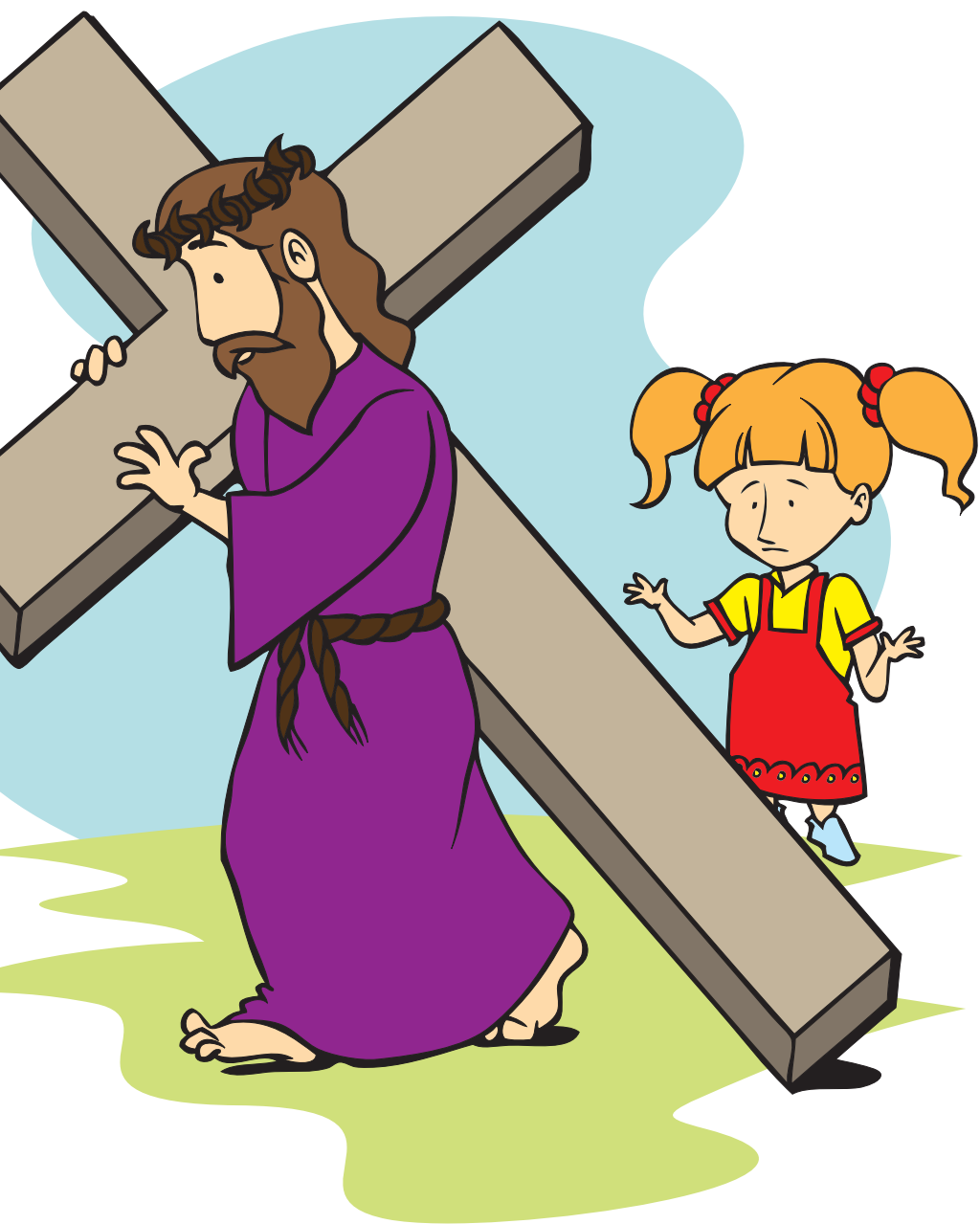
2. Jesus Takes His Cross

Look at the quiet way Jesus does what they tell Him. He doesn't fight with the men who push the heavy wooden cross

on Him. He doesn't hate them and say rough words to them. If they had known He was dying for them and for all of us, they would have acted differently. So Jesus forgives them. He thinks only of how He loves them and us. Then He takes up the cross and in His heart asks His heavenly Father to help Him carry it bravely.

Step up close to Jesus. See what a hard time He has getting the cross onto His shoulder. It is clumsy and heavy. And His shoulder is already sore because they have whipped Him long and hard. There are thorns around His head too. Sometimes the cross hits these thorns. They go into Jesus' head like sharp nails. Whisper in your heart, "Jesus, make me brave like You."

Dear Jesus...when something's hard for me to do, help me remember how You took the cross without fussing about it...and help me to be good and kind to others even when it isn't easy.



3. *Jesus* Falls the First Time

Look at how Jesus is walking along. The cross is crushing His shoulder, and the sharp stones in the road cut His bare feet.

All around Him people are shouting and pushing, and the Roman soldiers who have been ordered to crucify Him want Him to hurry. Jesus tries as hard as He can to move faster, but He stumbles and falls.

Step up close to Jesus. See Him trying to get up. He wants to keep carrying His cross. Everybody around Him is yelling and poking at Him. But Jesus does not get angry. He offers all this hurting to His heavenly Father for us because He loves us. Then He pulls Himself to His feet and walks forward. Imagine that you put your arms around Him. Whisper to Him in your heart, “Jesus, teach me to be loving like You.”

Dear Jesus...if something hurts me today, remind me to offer my hurt to God...and don't let me be mean to anybody who gets hurt or to anybody who makes mistakes or is different from me.



4. Jesus Meets His Mother

Look at that beautiful lady reaching out to Jesus from the crowd. She is His mother, Mary. She comes close. She puts her

arms around Jesus, and her face is full of tears. Tears are on Jesus' cheeks too. You can tell how much they love each other. But Mary is not allowed to stay close to Jesus to say kind and loving words to Him. They make her go away.

Step up close to Jesus. He feels sad to have His mother see Him all bruised and beaten. He knows it makes her unhappy. But she is brave like Him. She knows that He chose to carry the cross. And if that's what God had planned for Jesus, she wants Jesus to do it. They both want to do what God wants them to do because they know that what God wants is always good for us.

Dear Jesus...when I have to be away from someone I love, help me offer my lonely feelings to You...and help me to do what God wants me to do today.



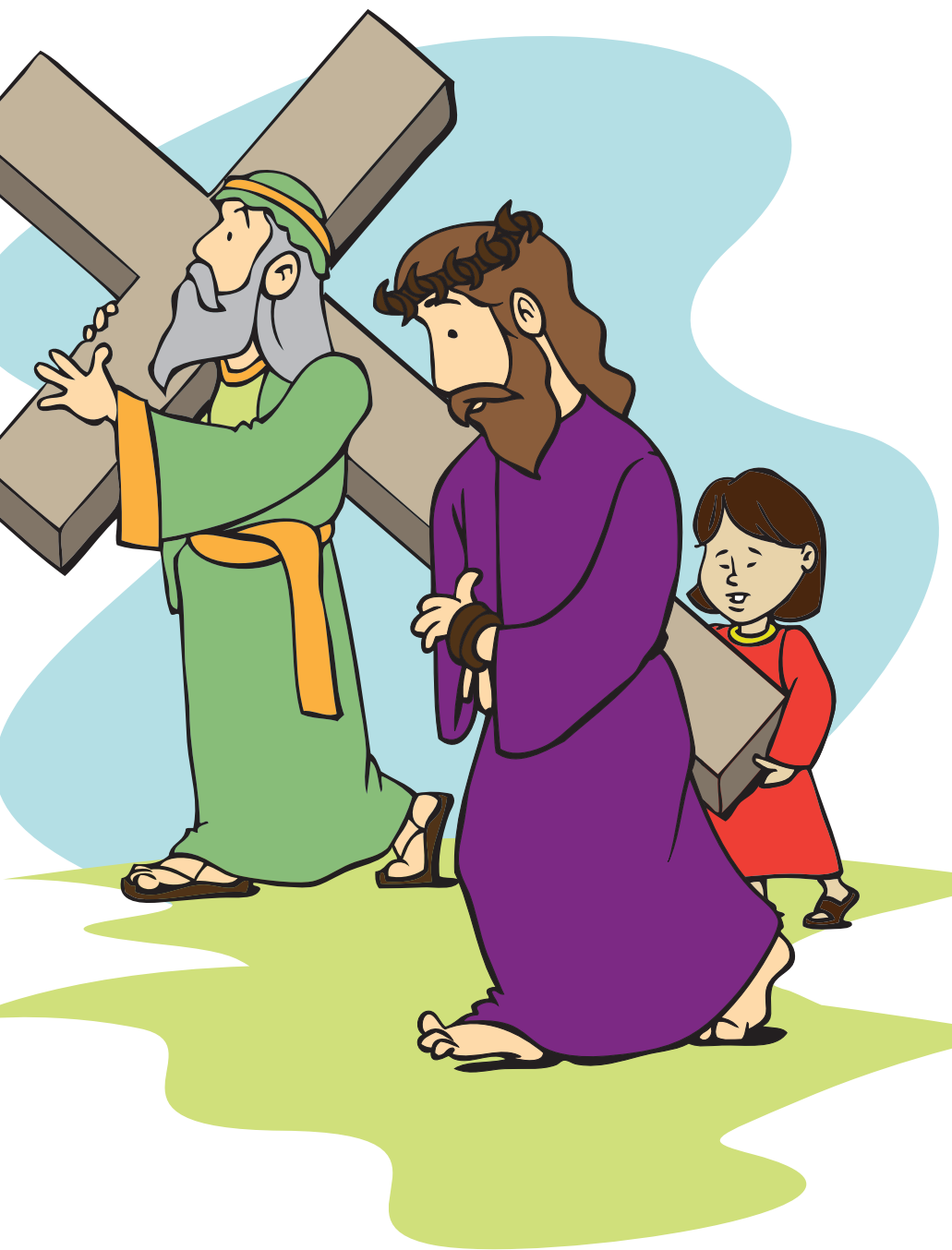
5. *Simon Helps* **Jesus Carry His Cross**

Look at that man helping Jesus carry the cross. His name is Simon. He was on his way home from

work when he was stopped and told to help carry Jesus' cross. At first Simon did not like to do it because he did not know Jesus. But later, when he found out who Jesus was, he was proud that he had helped carry the cross.

Step up close to Jesus. See how Simon is trying to get hold of the cross and carry it for Jesus. Simon is strong, but the cross is heavy, yet not too heavy. Jesus never asks us to do something we can't do. Sometimes when you have hard things to do, it is Jesus asking you—as He asked Simon—to carry the cross. Try to think then that Jesus is making you strong. Whisper to Him in your heart, “Jesus, I want to be proud like Simon that I helped You with Your cross.”

Dear Jesus...make me strong when I have to do something hard...and when I don't like to do something, such as making my bed, don't let me push it off on somebody else.



6. Veronica Wipes *Jesus' Face*

Look at that woman kneeling before Jesus.

We call her Veronica. She has pushed her way through the crowd to get to Jesus. That was a brave thing to do with all those rough people around to scare her. But she doesn't think of them. She thinks only of how she wants to give Jesus a handkerchief to wipe His face. When Jesus gives it back, there is a picture of His face on Veronica's handkerchief. It was Jesus' way of thanking her.

Step up close to Jesus. Think how, if boys can be proud because Simon, a man, helped Jesus, girls can be proud because Veronica, a woman, helped Jesus too. It doesn't matter who we are. What's important to God is what's in our hearts. If our hearts are good and kind, that is the best and most important thing. Whisper in your heart, "Jesus, print Your face on my mind and heart so I learn to be more and more like You."

Dear Jesus... let me be thankful to people who help me when I need help...and help me do kind things for other people even if I don't get any reward.



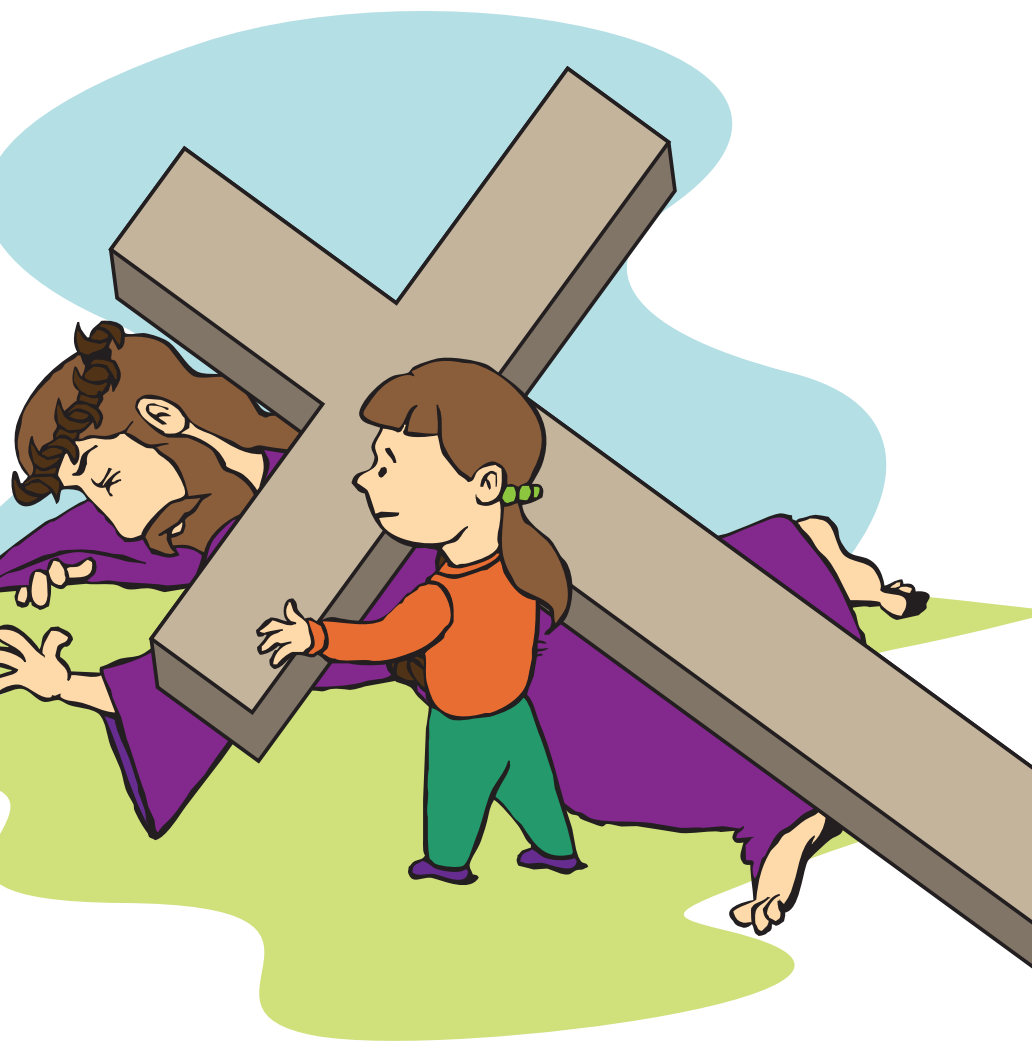
7. *Jesus* Falls the Second Time

Look at how hard it is for Jesus to walk. He feels weak and shaky. He has had no breakfast, and He hurts

all over. But the soldiers won't let Him stop and rest. They keep poking at Him to walk faster. He tries, but again He falls down in the dirty street, and the heavy, wooden cross falls on top of Him.

Step up close to Jesus. Stoop down to where He has fallen in the street. He is out of breath and very tired. It would help if He could lie there just a minute. But He gets up and tries walking again. You were not there when all this happened; but remember, what you do or say to Jesus now counts as if you had been there. So whisper in your heart, "Jesus, thank You for showing me how always to get up and keep going."

Dear Jesus...when I try to do something and mess it up, help me to start over again as You did...and if somebody falls down or gets hurt, let me feel sorry for them and help them if I can.



8. Jesus Meets the Weeping *Women*

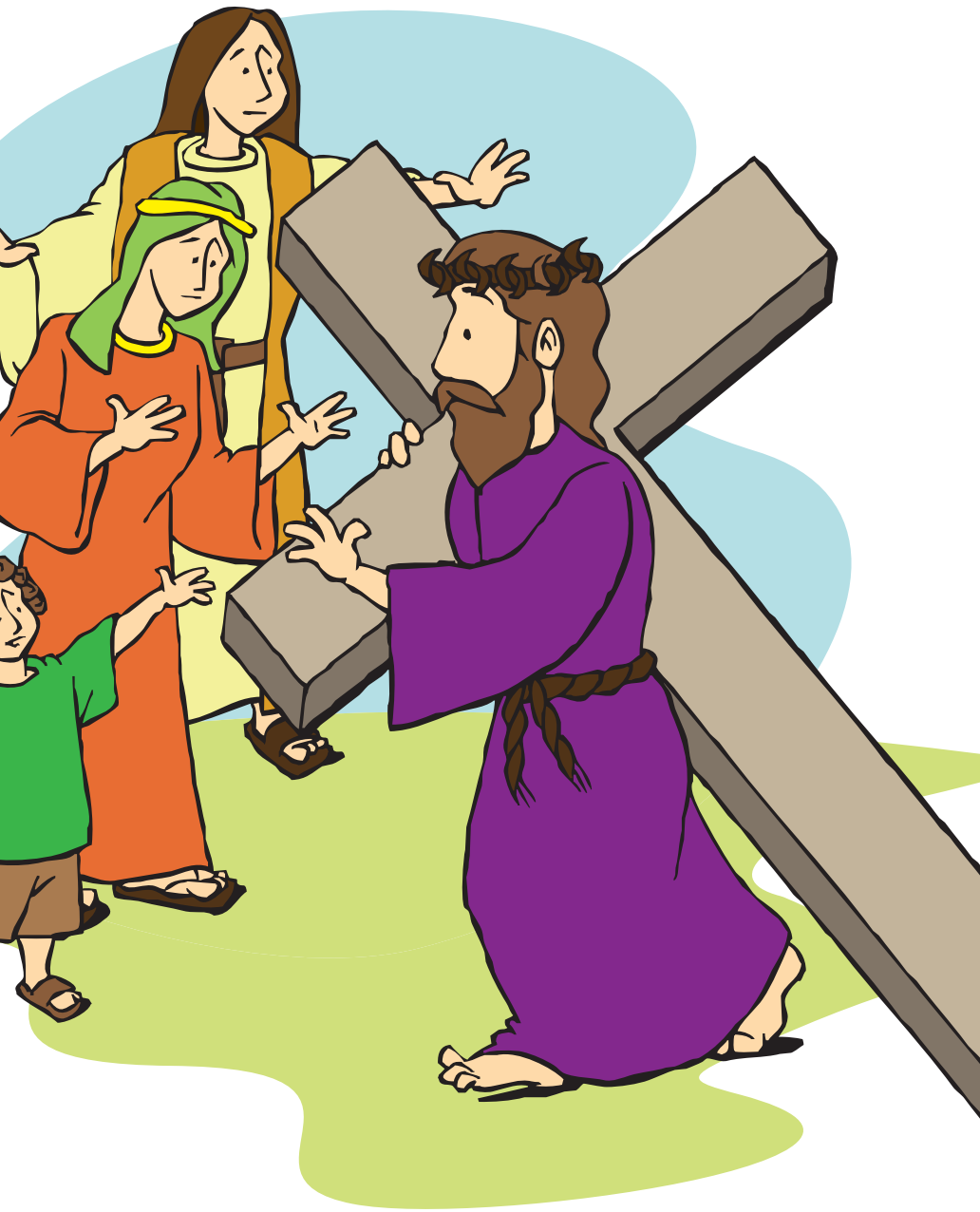
Look at the women of Jerusalem who are standing at the corner of the street where Jesus is passing. They

feel sorry for Him and say loving words to Him. Jesus tells them that He will feel better if He knows they will always be kind and gentle toward everyone for love of Him and if they will teach their children to do that. They are good women. They will do what Jesus asks.

Step up close to Jesus. Listen when He talks to these women. It is hard to behave well when you are sick or feeling bad. It takes much courage to be unselfish like that. But Jesus does not think of Himself. He thinks only of being kind to these women. Whisper in your heart, “Jesus, help me to be thoughtful of others as You are.”

Dear Jesus...show me how I can help others and make them happy...and teach me to share what I have with others and not always try to keep the best of everything just for myself.





9. *Jesus* Falls the Third Time

Look at Jesus now. He is walking slower and slower. The soldiers wish He would hurry. They are afraid all the excited

people watching Jesus and yelling at Him may cause a riot. Jesus is packed in so close He can hardly breathe. He takes several more steps and then falls down in the dirty street for the third time.

Step up close to Jesus. He is flat on the ground. It is hard for Jesus to move, but He gets to His knees and pushes Himself up again. He knows He has to go on. Jesus does not like all this pain—He would like to be rid of it. But He can't stop now if He wants to do what will help us. And He wants to. He started this way of the cross for God and for us, and He wants to finish it. Whisper in your heart, "Jesus, You are a hero!"

Dear Jesus...if I am slow and people rush me, help me not to get mad...and help me to be kind to everybody because every one of us needs help sometimes.



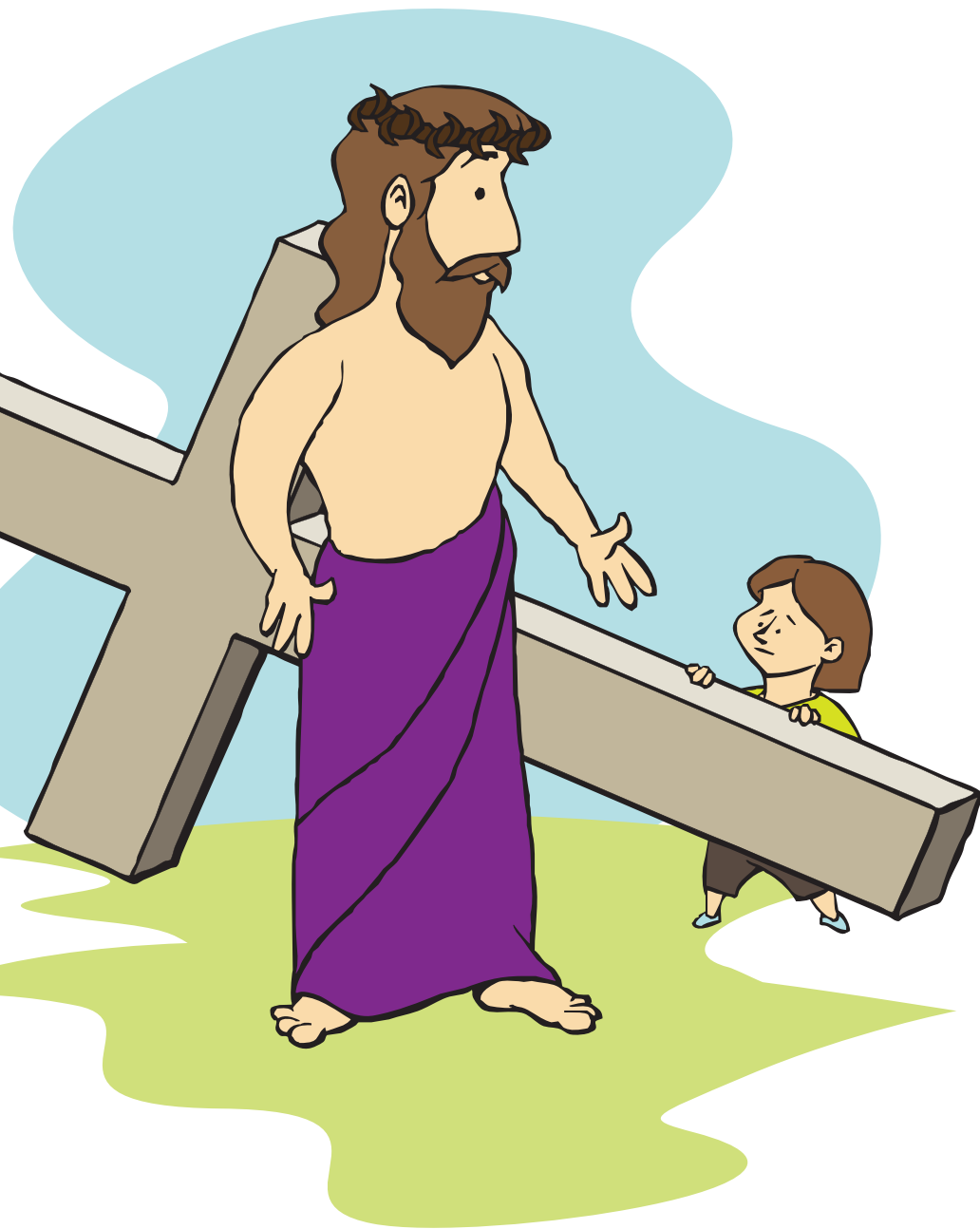
10. *Jesus' Clothes* **Are Taken Away**

Look at Jesus. He is outside the city of Jerusalem now and

standing on a hill called Calvary. The soldiers are going to crucify Him here. One of them is pulling off Jesus' clothes. The clothes are sticking to Jesus' sore back. It hurts when they are pulled off just as it hurts when somebody pulls a Band-Aid off a sore on your knee.

Step up close to Jesus. He stands there without His clothes. He is like a wrestler or boxer who takes off his ordinary clothes so he can fight better. Jesus is getting ready for a fight too. He is fighting against death and sin. He wants to win the fight. He wants to make it possible for all of us to have a life that lasts forever in heaven. We are on Jesus' side and want Him to win. Whisper in your heart, "Jesus, I'm cheering for You."

Dear Jesus...keep me strong in the battles I will have to fight to be good and true to You...and let me never forget that I can pray for Your help when I am at Mass with my family.



11. Jesus Is Nailed to *the Cross*

Look at Jesus. He has been laid flat down on the cross. One soldier takes spikes and hammers them through Jesus'

hands. After Jesus' feet also are nailed, the soldiers fix the cross into a hole so it will stand straight. Everybody stands around and looks at Jesus. The good people feel unhappy because they love Jesus. The people who don't love Him are unhappy too because they have done something bad. It is a sad, sad day—that first Good Friday.

Step up close to Jesus. He hurts all over. His head aches. He is thirsty. But in His heart, He is not sad like the people. He knows that what He chose to do was the right thing. Now He looks down at the men who nailed Him to the cross, and He forgives them. Then He tells Mary to be a mother to all of us and to count us as her children. He keeps thinking of others even when He is dying. Whisper in your heart, "Jesus, I love You."

Dear Jesus...when somebody hurts me, help me to be forgiving...and help me to live so Mary will be proud to count me as her child.



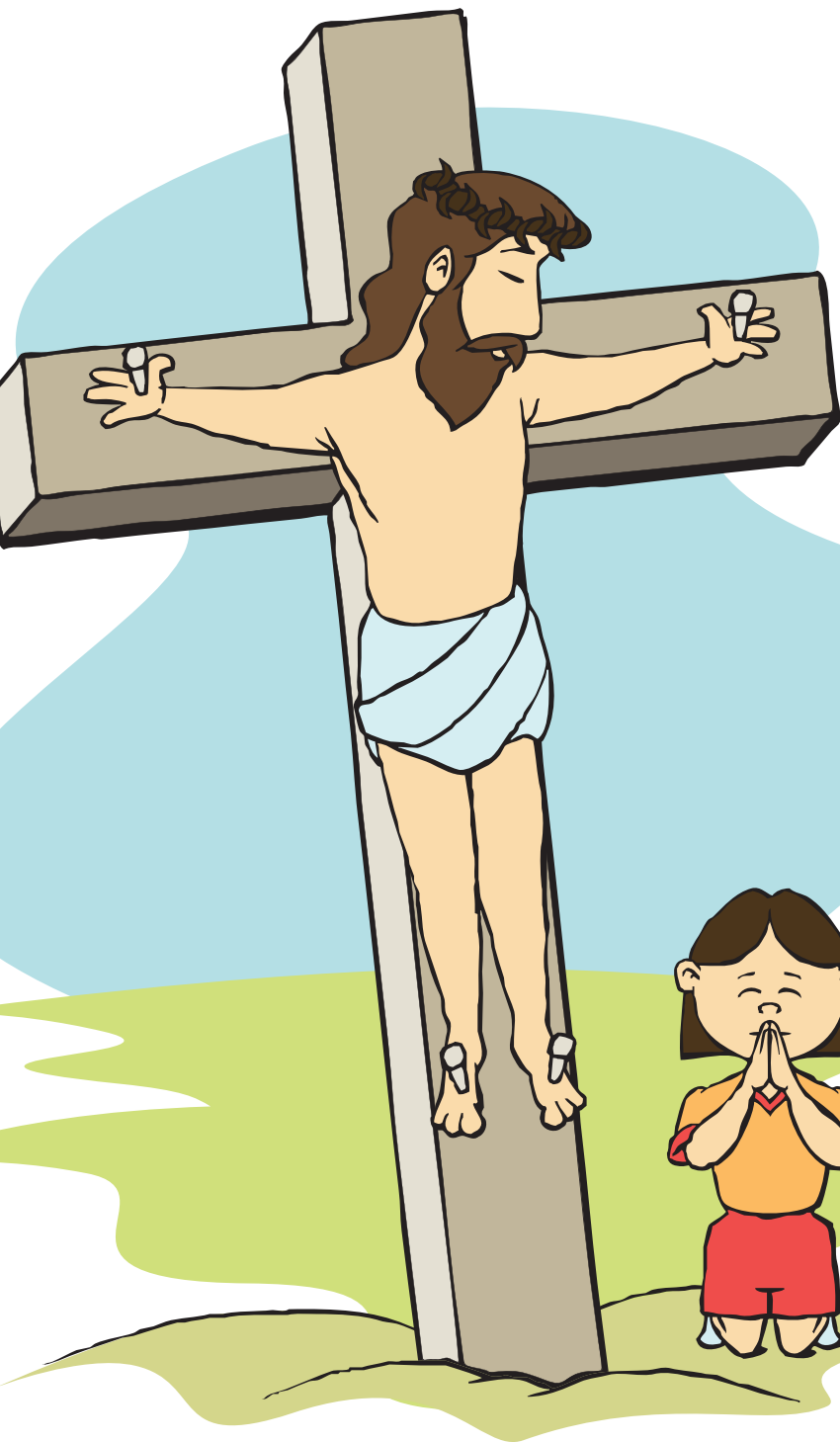
12. Jesus Dies *on* *the Cross*

Look at Jesus hanging on the cross. He has been there

for three hours. He hurts all over. He is still thirsty, but nobody brings Him any water. Jesus does not complain. He prays to His heavenly Father and tells Him that He has finished what had to be done. He bows His head and dies. A soldier runs a spear into Jesus' side. Blood and water come out—a sign that Jesus gave everything.

Step up close to Jesus. He is dead on the cross. He suffered all this because He wanted to put down death and find a way to give life. He has met death and won the fight with it. But it doesn't look that way. He hangs there so still, as if death has Him for good. But it doesn't. Jesus once said He was Life. He told everybody that if they would wait three days after His death, He would show them that Life had won the fight over death. Whisper in your heart, "Jesus, I believe You bring life."

Dear Jesus...no matter where I am, how long I live or what happens to me, let me always be thankful that You died for me.



13. Jesus Is Taken *From the Cross*

Look at Jesus after
His body has been

taken down from the cross and the blood and dirt washed away. The sharp thorns have been taken off too. Now He is lying on His mother's lap. She holds Him lovingly. She keeps saying His name over and over. How she loves Him! Her heart is broken, but she does not cry or give up. She remembers about waiting three days.

Step up close to Jesus. All His enemies are gone now so those who love Him can come near and stay with His mother. If you had been there, you would have done the same. And you would have been proud of Mary's being so brave. You would not have cried either, even though your heart would hurt for Jesus. You would be thinking about the third day. Whisper to Him again, "Jesus, I love You."

Dear Jesus...when somebody dies, help me to remember that You have given new life and that I can see that person in heaven... and let me be kind and helpful if someone in my family is sad.



14. *Jesus Is* **Put Into the Tomb**

Look at how Jesus' friends have put clean clothes on His body and sprinkled Him with a sweet-smelling perfume. Now they are putting His body into

a tomb. The tomb is a small cavelike room cut out of a big rock. After they lay Him inside, they leave the tomb and roll a giant stone in front of the doorway. It is so large that it takes several big men to roll it into place. Then they all go home.

Step up close to Jesus. You can't get very close to Jesus because He is still inside the tomb. It is Saturday, the next day. Pontius Pilate, the bad judge who let Jesus be killed, sends soldiers to guard the tomb so that nobody would steal the body of Jesus. The soldiers sit by the tomb all day and all night. Imagine that you, too, sit there and that you watch and pray and remember the promise of the third day. Whisper in your heart, "Jesus, I'm waiting for You."



Dear Jesus... teach me how to wait when I can't have what I want right away...and help me to pray even when You don't seem very near to me.



15. *Jesus Rises* From the Dead

It is Easter morning.

People who come to visit Jesus' tomb find

no body. They worry at first, but then they remember: This is the Third Day! Later, some see Jesus walking around alive. Everybody who knew and followed Him is full of joy. "Jesus is risen! Jesus is alive!"

Imagine that you are there—and you, too, are very, very happy.



Dear Jesus...your death on the cross gave us eternal life.
Thank you for this wonderful sacrifice.

Usually there are 14 Stations, but some people add a 15th Station to remind us that Jesus rose from the dead and won out over all His suffering. This book has 15 Stations.



STEP UP CLOSE *to Jesus*

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Each year the Church sets aside 40 days as a special time we call **LENT**. In Lent we try often to think of how Jesus carried a heavy cross and died for us. Jesus lived more than 30 years on earth without suffering special pains and sorrows, but just before He died, He suffered much because He wanted to bring new life to all men and women—and He knew there was no way to do that without pain.



One special Lenten prayer to help us remember what Jesus did and to show Him we are thankful is **The Stations of the Cross**. Ever since Jesus died, people have been going to Jerusalem and walking down the same street where Jesus carried his cross. This is how the Stations got started.

You weren't there when Jesus died. If you had been, you would have said kind words to Him. You can say those kind words to Him today. You can imagine that you **STEP UP CLOSE TO JESUS** and tell Him how you feel. And He will count it as if you had really been there the day He died.

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Most Reverend Edward J. O'Donnell • Archdiocese of St. Louis

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