

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.



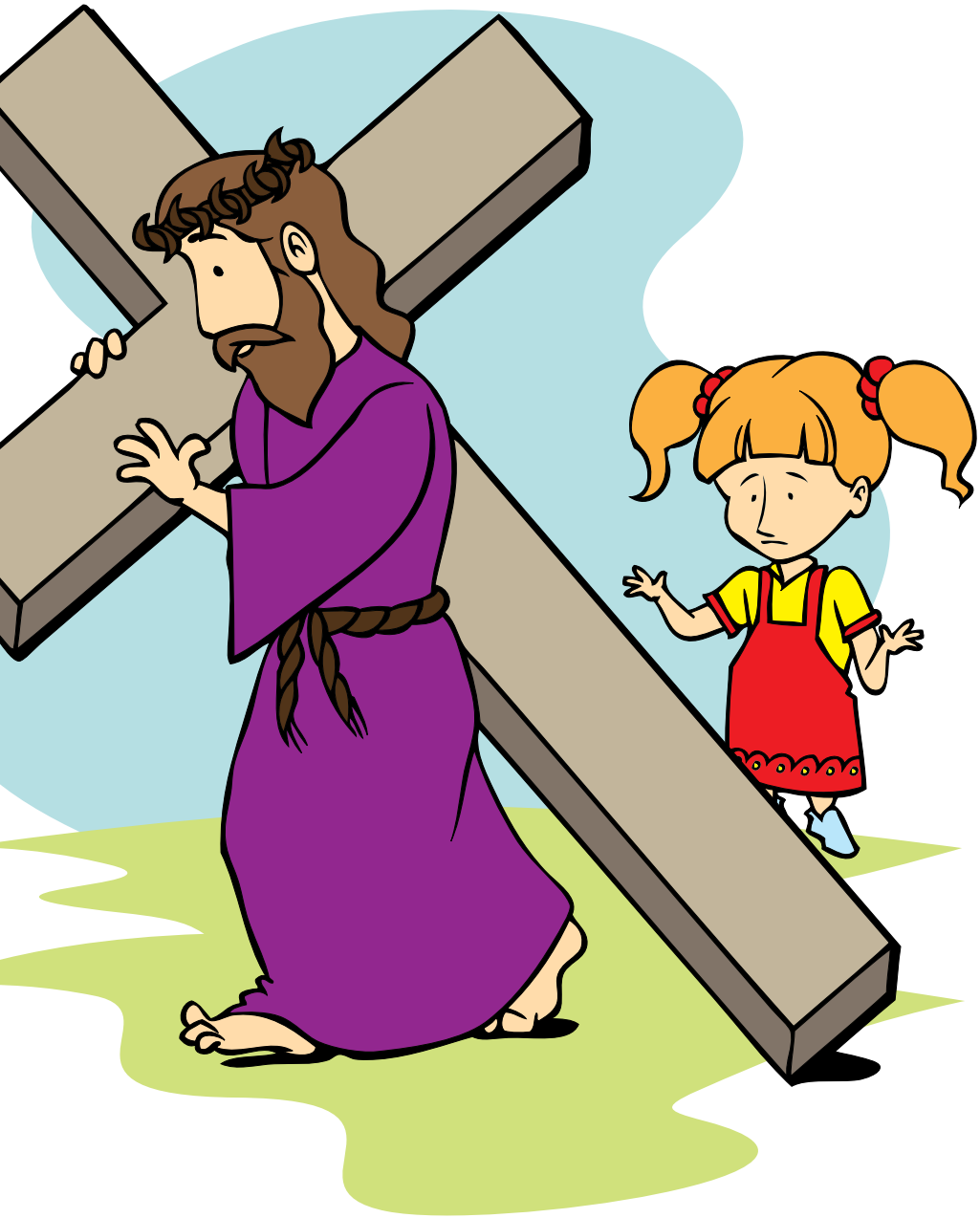
2. Jesus Takes His *Cross*

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.



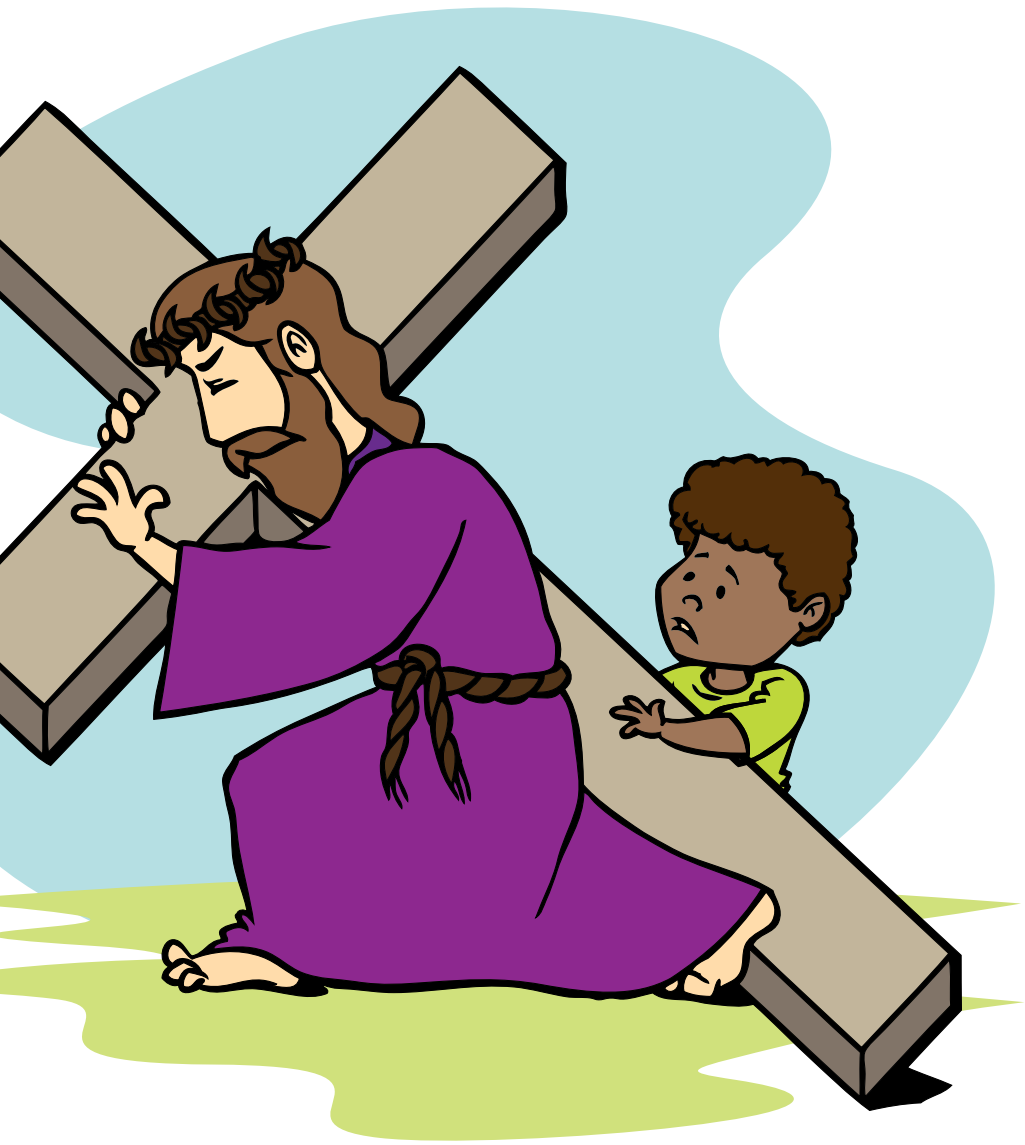
3. *Jesus* Falls the First Time

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.



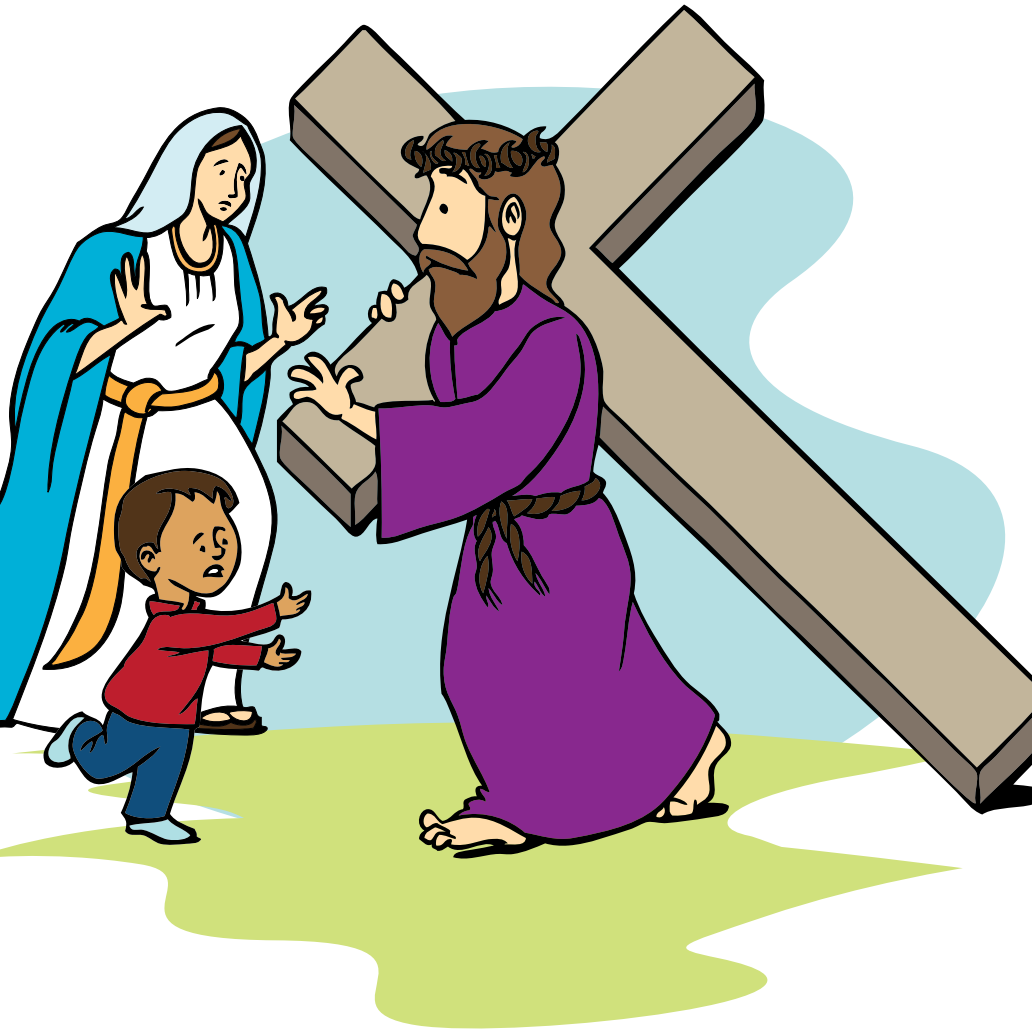
4. Jesus Meets His *Mother*

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.



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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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