

FOLLOW ME

A Scriptural Way of the Cross

Weddington Methodist Church
Self-Guided Prayer Journey

Why Walk A Scriptural Way of the Cross?

This is a powerful way to contemplate and pray about Jesus' gift of himself to us. Many of us are familiar with hearing the phrase "Stations of the Cross." The word "station" comes from the Latin word that means "to stand." Contemplating and experiencing Christ's passion through scripture and personal prayer is an experience for all people. Standing, reflecting and praying at each station, either in person or virtually, allows us to connect with God and honor him at each place where specific incidents happened as Jesus went to Calvary. Experiencing Christ's walk this way allows us to face life's dark side in ourselves and our world, yet also experience the hope that we have in Jesus Christ.

The Journey

A Scriptural Way of the Cross is a journey of prayer. It is not an intellectual journey; it is about your relationship with God. Each point along the way is an invitation to reflect upon who Jesus is and your relationship with him. We should open our hearts to be touched. We express our response in prayer.

We allow for the opportunity of Christ's sacrifice, made on our behalf, to touch our hearts deeply while experiencing A Scriptural Way of the Cross. This journey points to scripture telling us that Christ was made to carry the instrument of his death from the place where he was condemned to die, to Calvary where he died, was taken down, and laid in a tomb. These stations allow us to pause, reflect and pray about the meaning of his passion and death.

This journey should lead us to have grateful hearts. Our hearts are so important to God. This journey will also lead us into a sense of solidarity with all our brothers and sisters. It allows us to spiritually connect and pray about the terrible suffering of real people in our world. By accompanying Jesus on his journey to the cross, we gain his courageous patience and learn to trust in God.

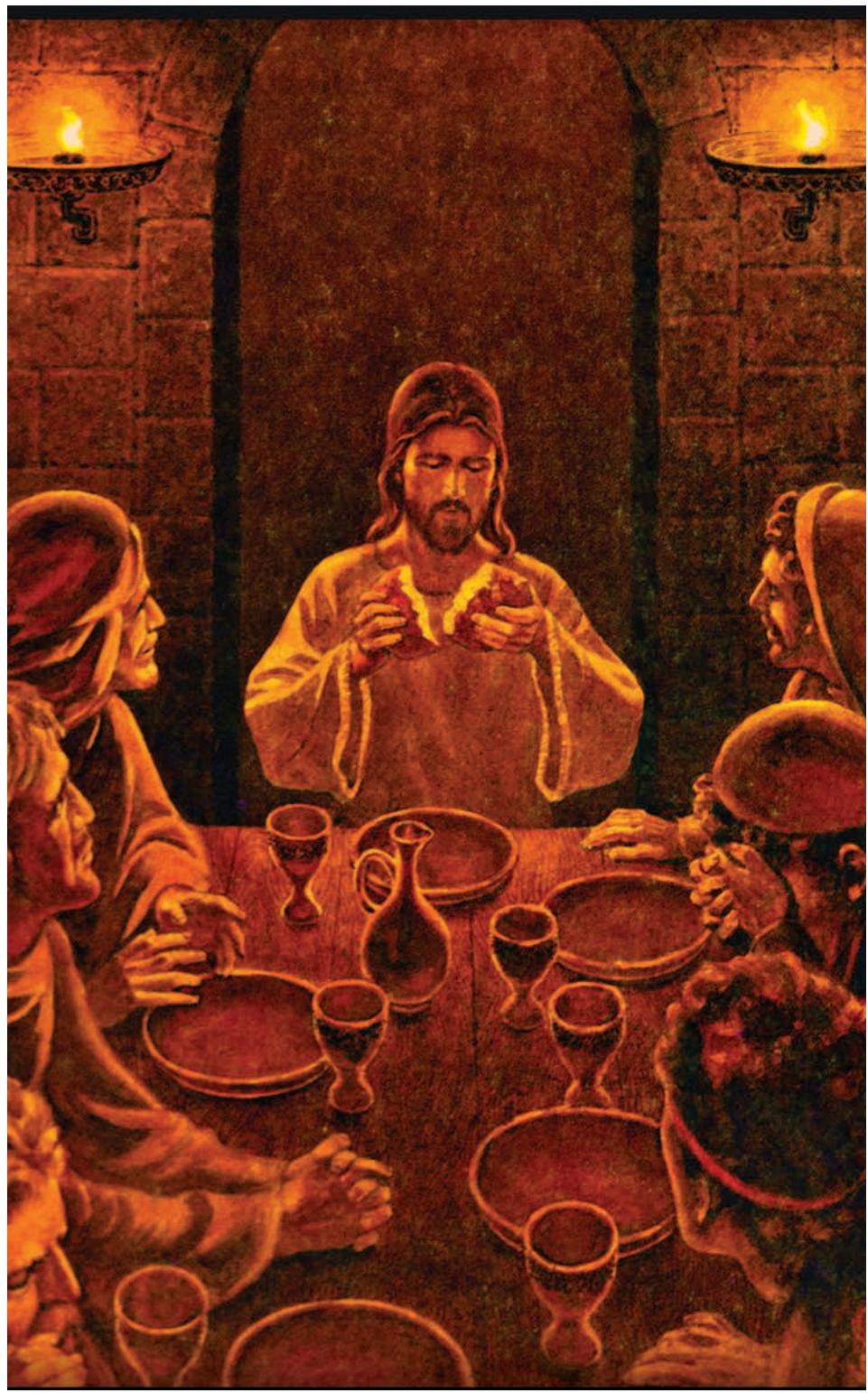
Follow Me

A SCRIPTURAL WAY OF THE CROSS

INTRODUCTION

Early Christian pilgrims to Jerusalem were the ones who first began the practice of visiting places associated with Jesus. A devotion quickly developed which traced the steps of Jesus from the Garden of Gethsemane to the tomb where he was buried. The pilgrims would stop along the way to meditate and pray about the events in the passion and death of Jesus. In time, not only the route of the walk, but also the subject of the meditations became fixed. From Jerusalem, pilgrims brought this practice to their own towns and villages. While it was not possible for everyone to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, it was possible to meditate on the passion and death of Jesus at the local church or even at home.

Through meditating on the Way of the Cross, the pilgrims developed a greater appreciation of the saving work of Jesus. It is our prayer that following this Scriptural Way of the Cross will help increase your faith and deepen your hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.



The First Station

THE LAST SUPPER

Scripture Reading:

While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, *“Take, eat; this is my body.”* Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, *“Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”*

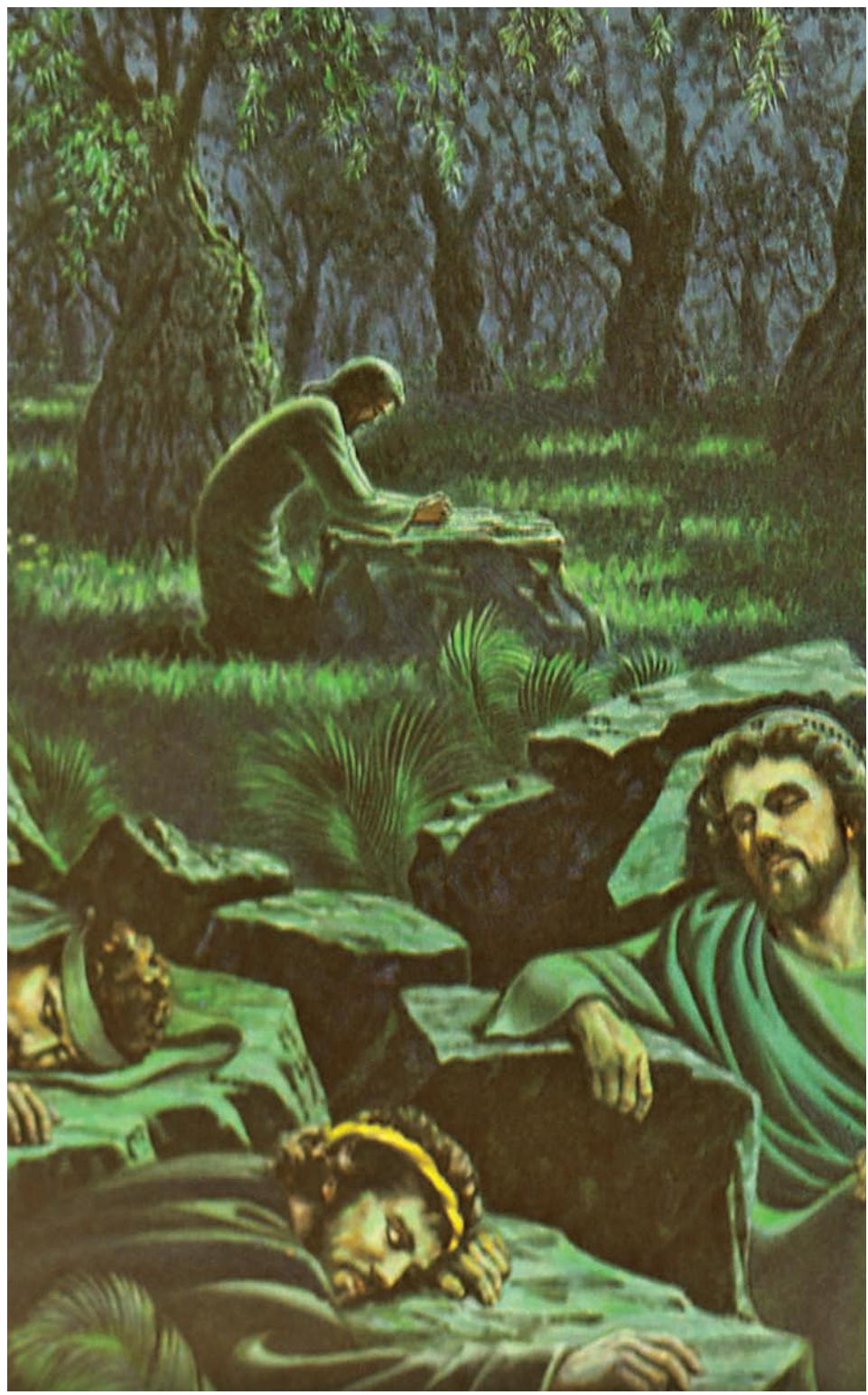
Matthew 26:26-29 (NRSV)

Prayer Response:

Heavenly Father, we will never understand all that Jesus has done for us. As he gathered with his disciples for the last time before he died, he washed their feet to teach us that we must serve each other. And then while at table, breaking bread and sharing the cup, Jesus offered the gift of himself to his disciples - and to us.

In the midst of the problems and pains of our lives, it is easy to forget that we must serve as Jesus did. As he gives himself to us in the Eucharist, nourish and sustain us that we might share his life and his love with others.

We ask this in the name of Jesus, Amen.



The Second Station

JESUS PRAYS ON THE MOUNT OF OLIVES

Scripture Reading:

He came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples followed him. When he reached the place, he said to them, *“Pray that you may not come into the time of trial.”* Then he withdrew from them about a stone’s throw, knelt down, and prayed, *“Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but yours be done.”* Then an angel from heaven appeared to him and gave him strength. In his anguish he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground. When he got up from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping because of grief, and he said to them, *“Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you may not come into the time of trial.”*

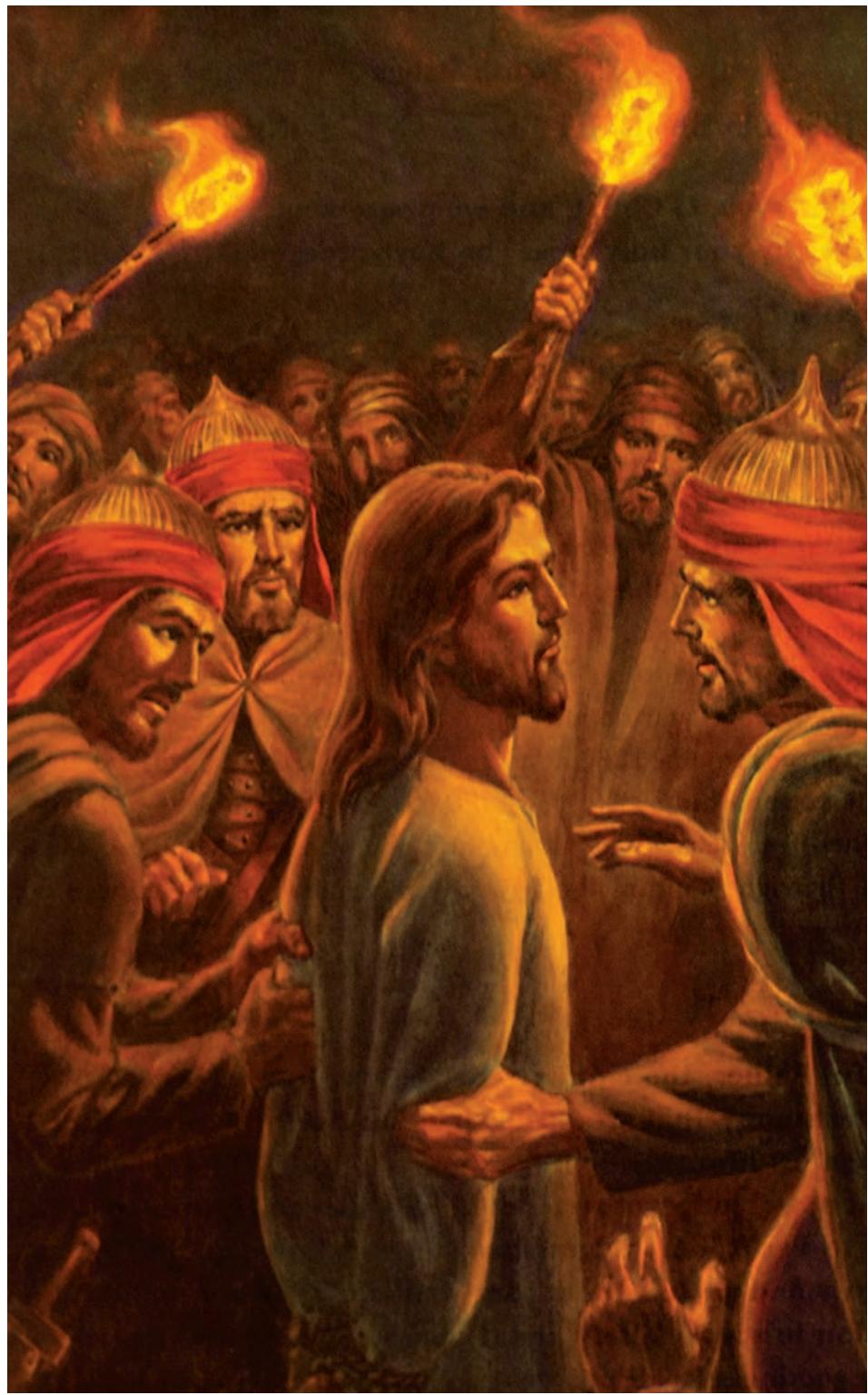
Luke 22:39-46 (NRSV)

Prayer Response:

Gracious God, while the disciples slept, Jesus, alone and in anguish, prayed for deliverance from death. You did not turn a deaf ear to his plea, but through his resurrection, made him victorious over death.

Our future can sometimes be frightful and difficult to accept. We pray for deliverance from pain, from sickness, and from the loneliness that seems to separate us even from you. Listen to our prayers. Send your Spirit to comfort us and to help us trust in your will.

We ask this in the name of Jesus, Amen.



The Third Station

JESUS IS BETRAYED AND ARRESTED

Scripture Reading:

While he was still speaking, suddenly a crowd came, and the one called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He approached Jesus to kiss him; but Jesus said to him, *“Judas, is it with a kiss that you are betraying the Son of Man?”* They led him away under arrest and brought him to the house of the high priest, while Peter followed at a distance.

Then Jesus said to the chief priests, the officers of the temple police, and the elders who had come for him, *“Have you come out with swords and clubs as if I were a bandit? When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness!”* Then they seized him and led him away, bringing him into the high priest's house. But Peter was following at a distance.

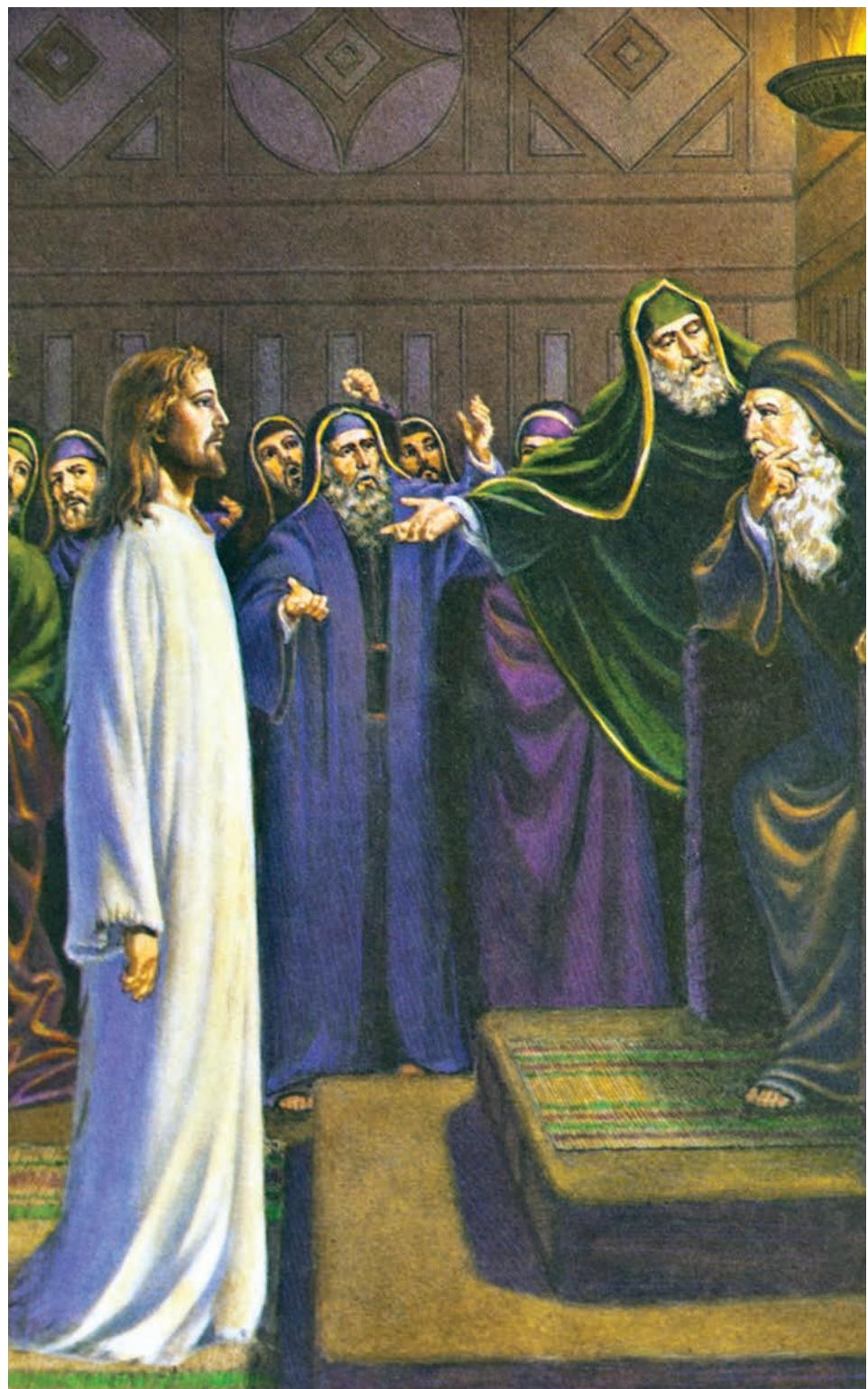
Luke 22:47-48,52-54 (NRSV)

Prayer Response:

Father in heaven, because they were afraid of his power and message, they came armed with swords and clubs to arrest Jesus. The disciples, fearful that they too would be arrested, abandoned Jesus and fled into the darkness.

Armed with hatred, prejudice, and suspicion, we often reject those who are different from us because of their color, nationality or opinions. Our lack of acceptance and understanding betrays Jesus and his command to love, while our fears imprison us and each other. Dispel the darkness from our eyes that we may recognize your presence in the people around us.

We ask this in the name of Jesus, Amen.



The Fourth Station

JESUS IS BROUGHT BEFORE THE SANHEDRIN

Scripture Reading:

Now the chief priests and the whole council were looking for testimony against Jesus to put him to death; but they found none. For many gave false testimony against him, and their testimony did not agree. Some stood up and gave false testimony against him, saying, “We heard him say, *‘I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands.’*” But even on this point their testimony did not agree. Then the high priest stood up before them and asked Jesus, “Have you no answer? What is it that they testify against you?” But he was silent and did not answer. Again the high priest asked him, “Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?” Jesus said, *“I am; and ‘you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power,’ and ‘coming with the clouds of heaven.’”*

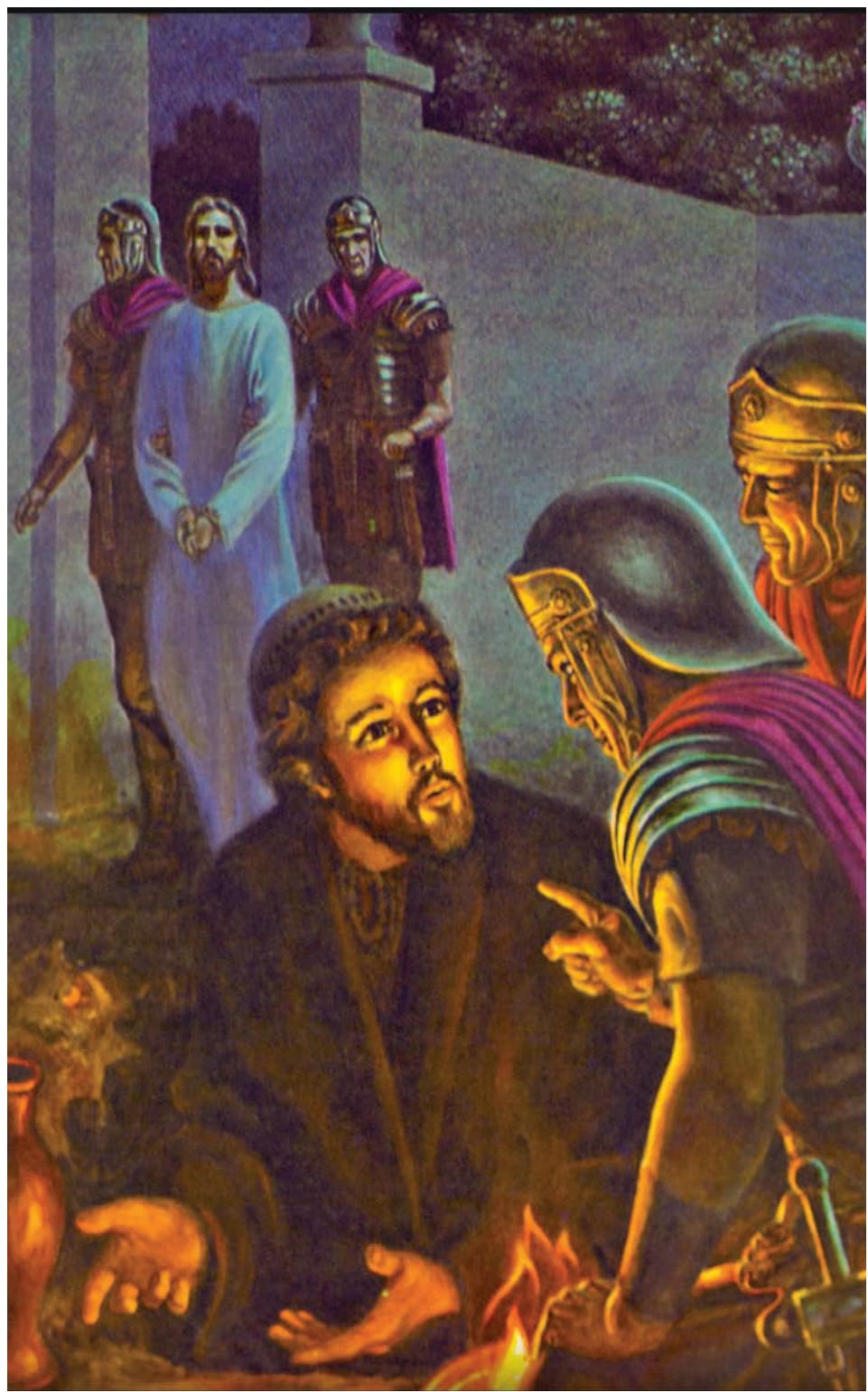
Mark 14:55-62 (NRSV)

Prayer Response:

Merciful Father, the chief priests, having judged Jesus and found him guilty, sought testimony that would lead to his death. Many testified falsely against him.

So often we judge others, and like the chief priests, seek reasons to verify our judgments. Remove from our hearts the desire to stand in judgment, and banish from our minds the temptation to speak falsely about others. Give us the wisdom to seek the goodness in all people.

We ask this in the name of Jesus, Amen.



The Fifth Station

PETER DENIES JESUS

Scripture Reading:

Then they seized him and led him away, bringing him into the high priest's house. But Peter was following at a distance. When they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat among them. Then a servant-girl, seeing him in the firelight, stared at him and said, "This man also was with him." But he denied it, saying, "Woman, I do not know him." A little later someone else, on seeing him, said, "You also are one of them." But Peter said, "Man, I am not!" Then about an hour later still another kept insisting, "Surely this man also was with him; for he is a Galilean." But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are talking about!" At that moment, while he was still speaking, the cock crowed. The Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said to him, "*Before the cock crows today, you will deny me three times.*" And he went out and wept bitterly.

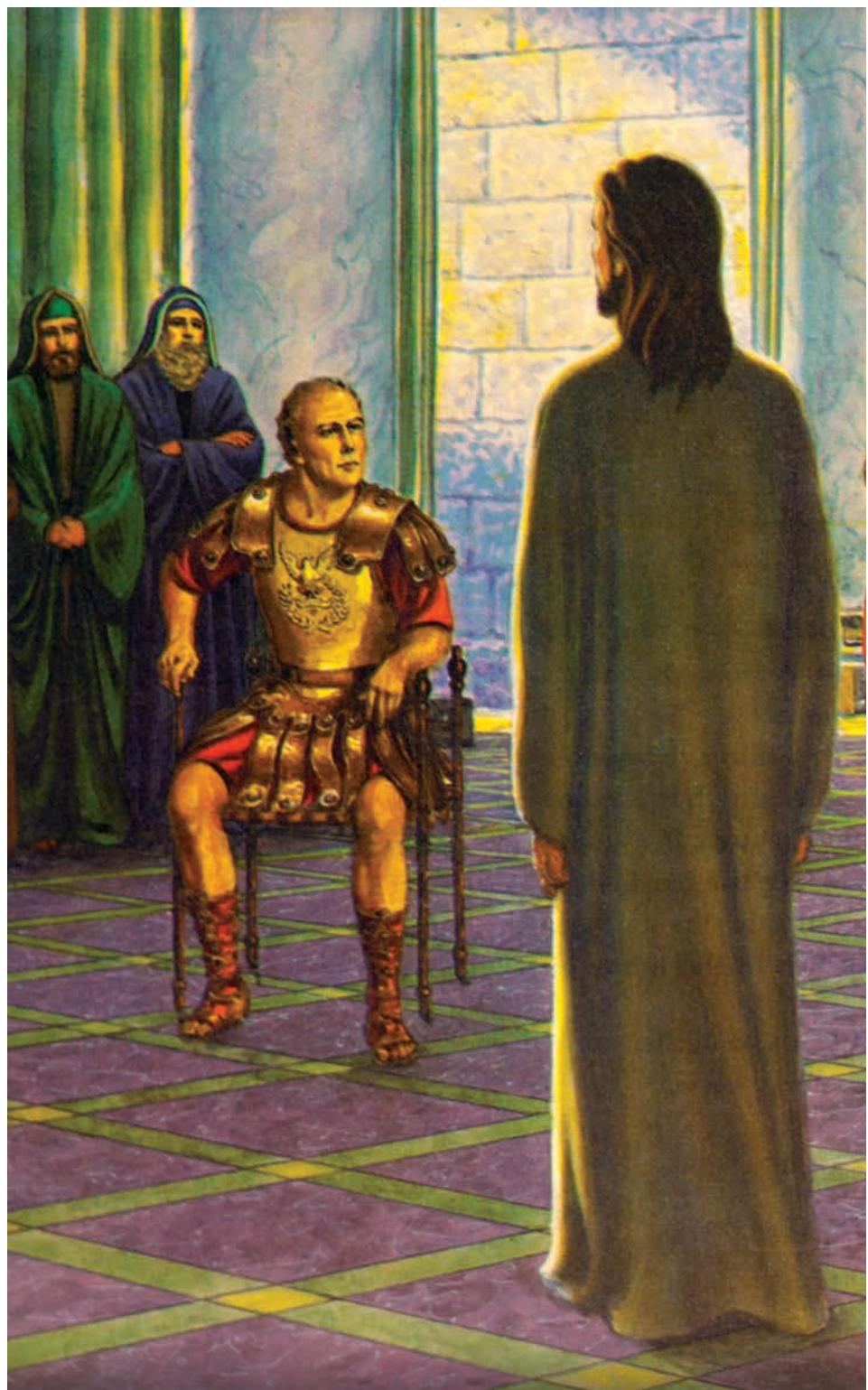
Luke 22:54-62 (NRSV)

Prayer Response:

Lord God, not wishing to abandon his teacher, Peter followed the crowd from a distance and entered the courtyard. But out of fear that he would be arrested or called upon to testify against Jesus, Peter denied ever knowing him.

How often, through our words and actions, we also deny knowing Jesus and his way of love. Fearful of not being accepted, we speak and act in ways contrary to his teaching. Give us the courage to follow Jesus no matter how difficult the journey may be. May all our words and actions proclaim our faith in him.

We ask this in the name of Jesus, Amen.



The Sixth Station

JESUS IS BROUGHT BEFORE PILATE

Scripture Reading:

Then the assembly rose as a body and brought Jesus before Pilate. They began to accuse him, saying, “We found this man perverting our nation, forbidding us to pay taxes to the emperor, and saying that he himself is the Messiah, a king.” Then Pilate asked him, “Are you the king of the Jews?” He answered, “You say so.” Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, “I find no basis for an accusation against this man.” But they were insistent and said, “He stirs up the people by teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee where he began even to this place.”

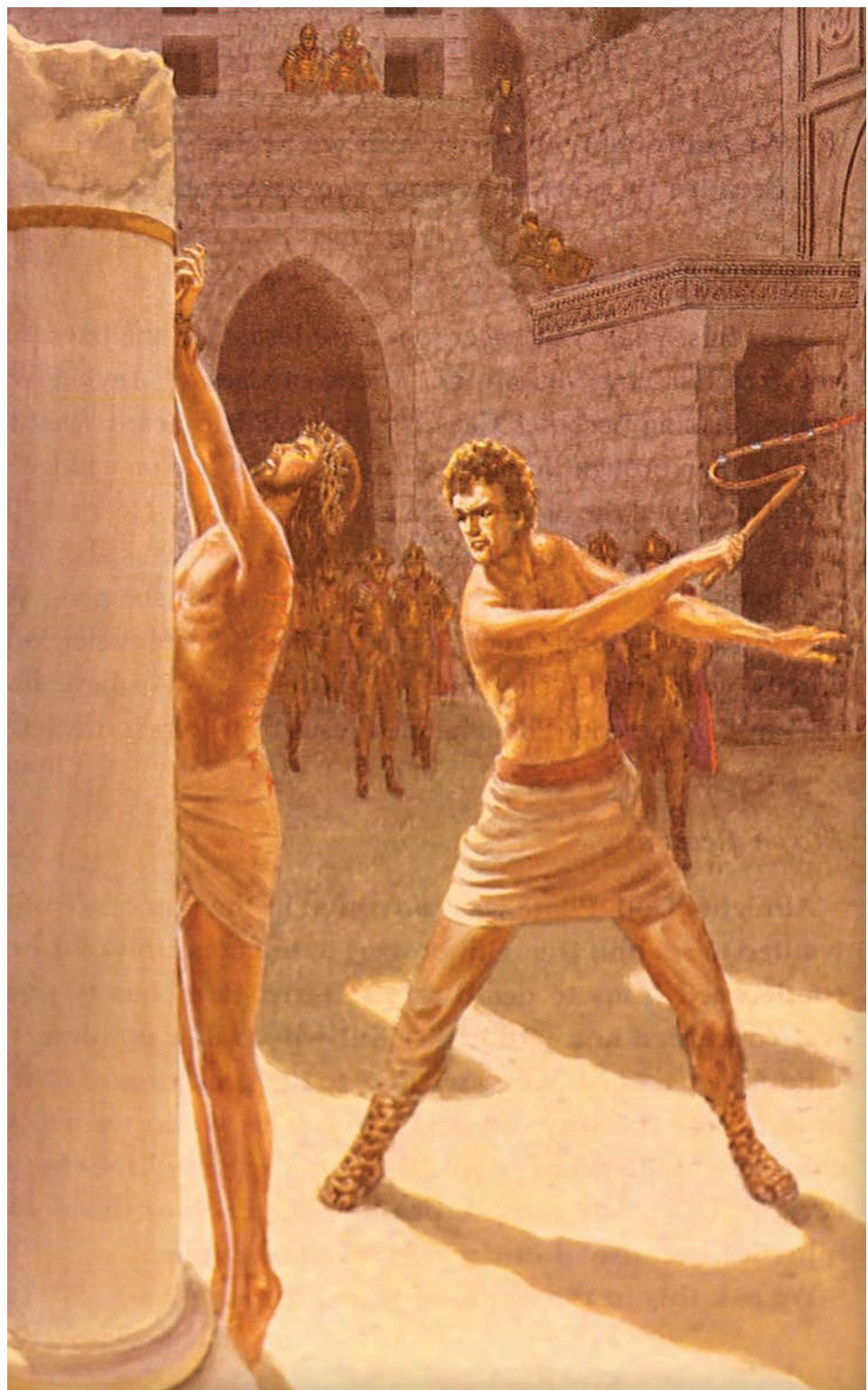
Luke 23:1-5 (NRSV)

Prayer Response:

Father in heaven, because they feared the power of Jesus and wanted him destroyed, they took him to Pilate to be condemned to death. Innocent, Jesus stood silent, not even defending himself against their false testimony.

The world stands in judgment of your ways, O Lord. The values of our society conflict with the values Jesus taught. Strengthen our resolve to follow you, O Lord, so that our lives may always give testimony to the faith we have in you.

We ask this in the name of Jesus, Amen.



The Seventh Station

JESUS IS FLOGGED AND CROWNED

Scripture Reading:

Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. And the soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and they dressed him in a purple robe. They kept coming up to him, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!” and striking him on the face.

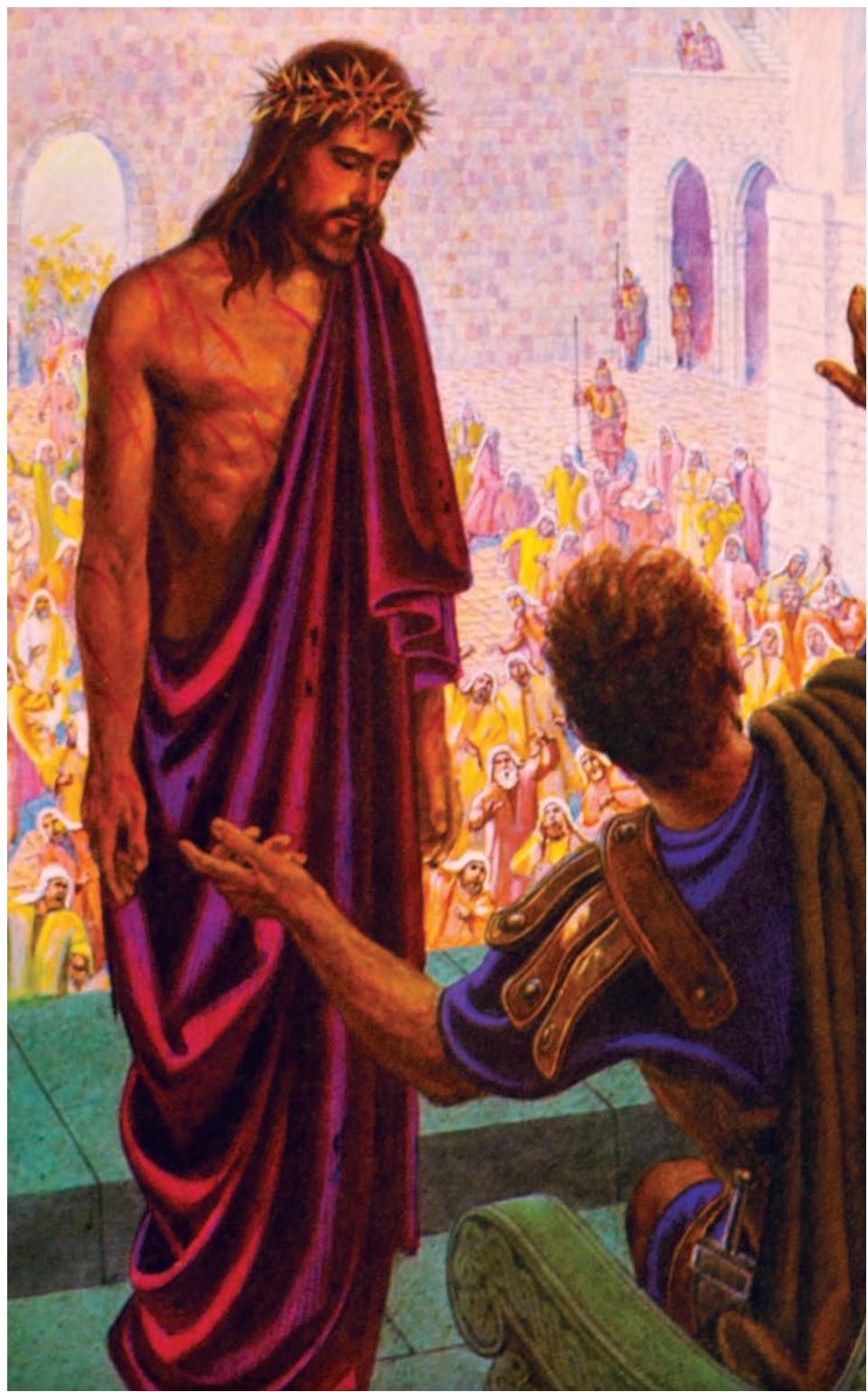
John 19:1-3 (NRSV)

Prayer Response:

Merciful God, though guilty of no crime, Jesus was scourged and crowned with thorns. Our King was whipped and mocked. It was to free us from sin and death that Jesus suffered the cruelties of his passion.

Heavenly Father, through our baptism you have chosen us as your people and have made us a royal nation, heirs of your kingdom. Through the sufferings of our Lord Jesus, give us the courage to face the hardships and pains of our lives. Help us to see the effect of our sins and grant us your forgiveness.

We ask this in the name of Jesus, Amen.



The Eighth Station

JESUS IS CONDEMNED TO DEATH

Scripture Reading:

From then on Pilate tried to release him, but the Jews cried out, “If you release this man, you are no friend of the emperor. Everyone who claims to be a king sets himself against the emperor.”

When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus outside and sat on the judge’s bench at a place called The Stone Pavement, or in Hebrew Gabbatha. Now it was the day of Preparation for the Passover; and it was about noon. He said to the Jews, “Here is your King!” They cried out, “Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him!” Pilate asked them, “Shall I crucify your King?” The chief priests answered, “We have no king but the emperor.” Then he handed him over to them to be crucified.

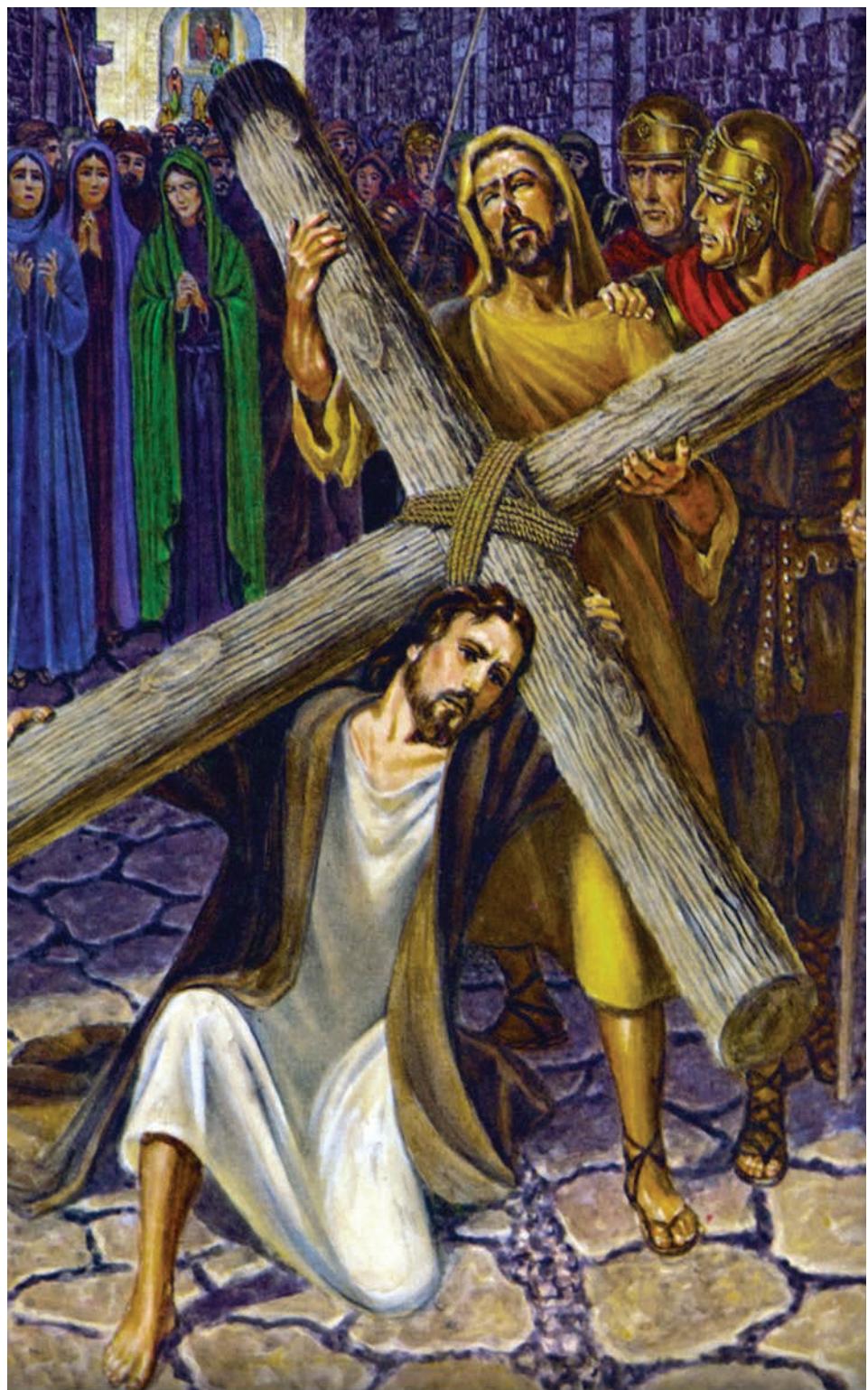
John 19:12-16 (NRSV)

Prayer Response:

Almighty God, Pilate was convinced of the innocence of Jesus and wanted to set him free. But bowing to the pressures of the crowd, he condemned Jesus to death and released Barabbas to them. Pilate was concerned not with justice but with public opinion.

Forgive us, Lord, when we bow to the pressures of others rather than follow the way of Jesus. Forgive us when we become more concerned with what people think of us than with what we know is right. Open our eyes and ears to the cries of those who suffer injustice because of our words, deeds or silence.

We ask this in the name of Jesus, Amen.



The Ninth Station

JESUS MEETS SIMON AND THE WOMEN OF JERUSALEM

Scripture Reading:

As they led him away, they seized a man, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming from the country, and they laid the cross on him, and made him carry it behind Jesus. A great number of the people followed him, and among them were women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him. But Jesus turned to them and said, *“Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.”*

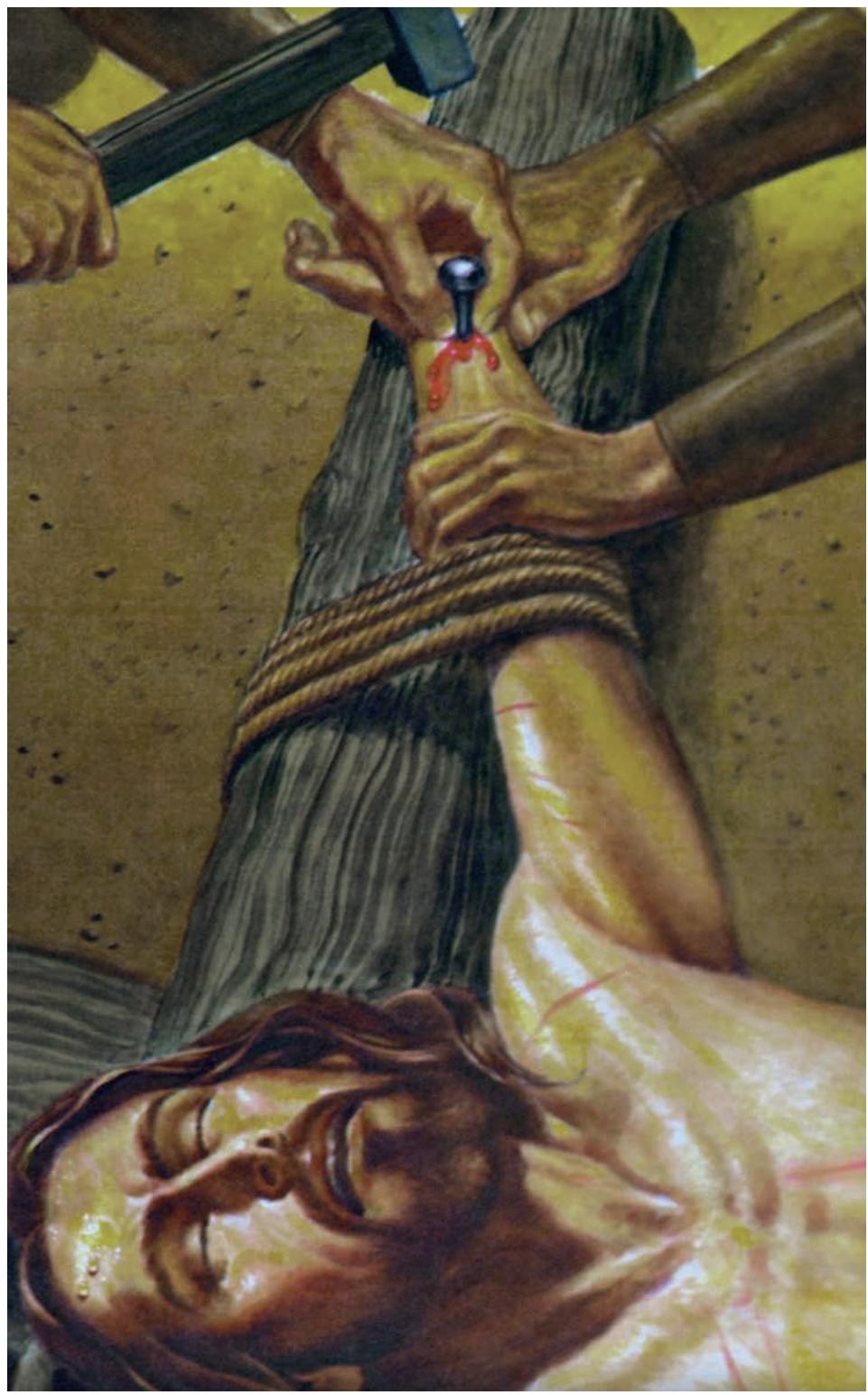
Luke 23:26-28 (NRSV)

Prayer Response:

Heavenly Father, how heavy the cross must have been, especially for someone who had been scourged and maltreated. Not wishing to have Jesus die under the weight of his cross, the soldiers forced Simon to shoulder this burden.

Father, sometimes the burdens of our lives seem to be too heavy for us to carry alone. Give us the strength and courage to shoulder our cross. And how many times do we encounter others who need assistance in carrying the burdens of their lives? Enable us to respond eagerly to the fullest of our ability.

We ask this in the name of Jesus, Amen.



The Tenth Station

JESUS IS CRUCIFIED

Scripture Reading:

When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. Then Jesus said, *“Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.”* And they cast lots to divide his clothing. And the people stood by, watching; but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, “He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!” The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine, and saying, “If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!” There was also an inscription over him, “This is the King of the Jews.”

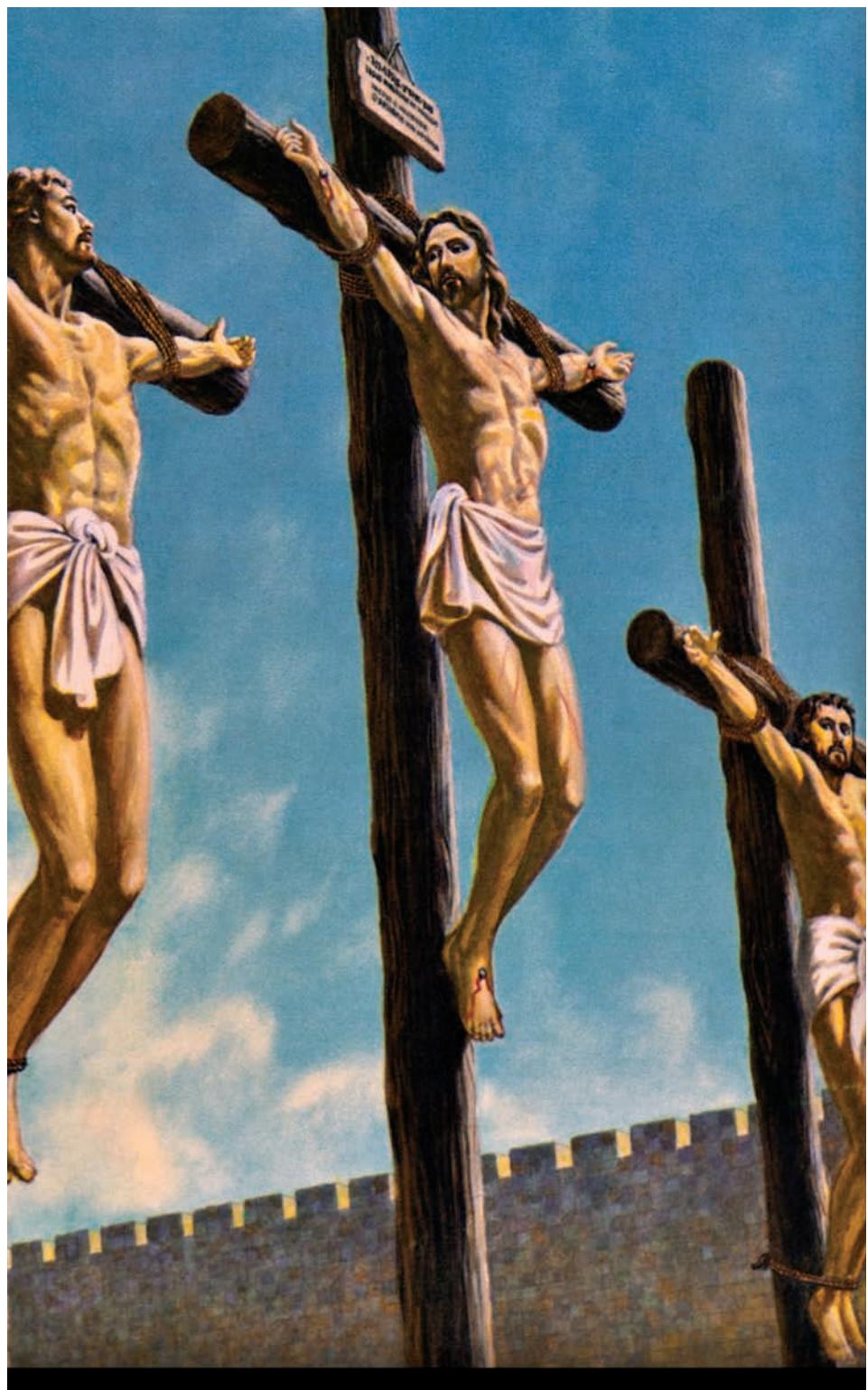
Luke 23:33-38 (NRSV)

Prayer Response:

Merciful and mighty God, it was for our sins that Jesus was nailed to the cross. It was for our sins that Jesus endured the agonies of his passion that we might be free from the slavery of sin and eternal death.

Be with us now. From the depths of our sinfulness and hatred, rescue us. Forgive us our sins, heal our broken hearts, and restore us to new life.

We ask this in the name of Jesus, Amen.



The Eleventh Station

JESUS SPEAKS FROM THE CROSS

Scripture Reading:

One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, “Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!” But the other rebuked him, saying, “Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong.” Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” He replied, *“Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.”*

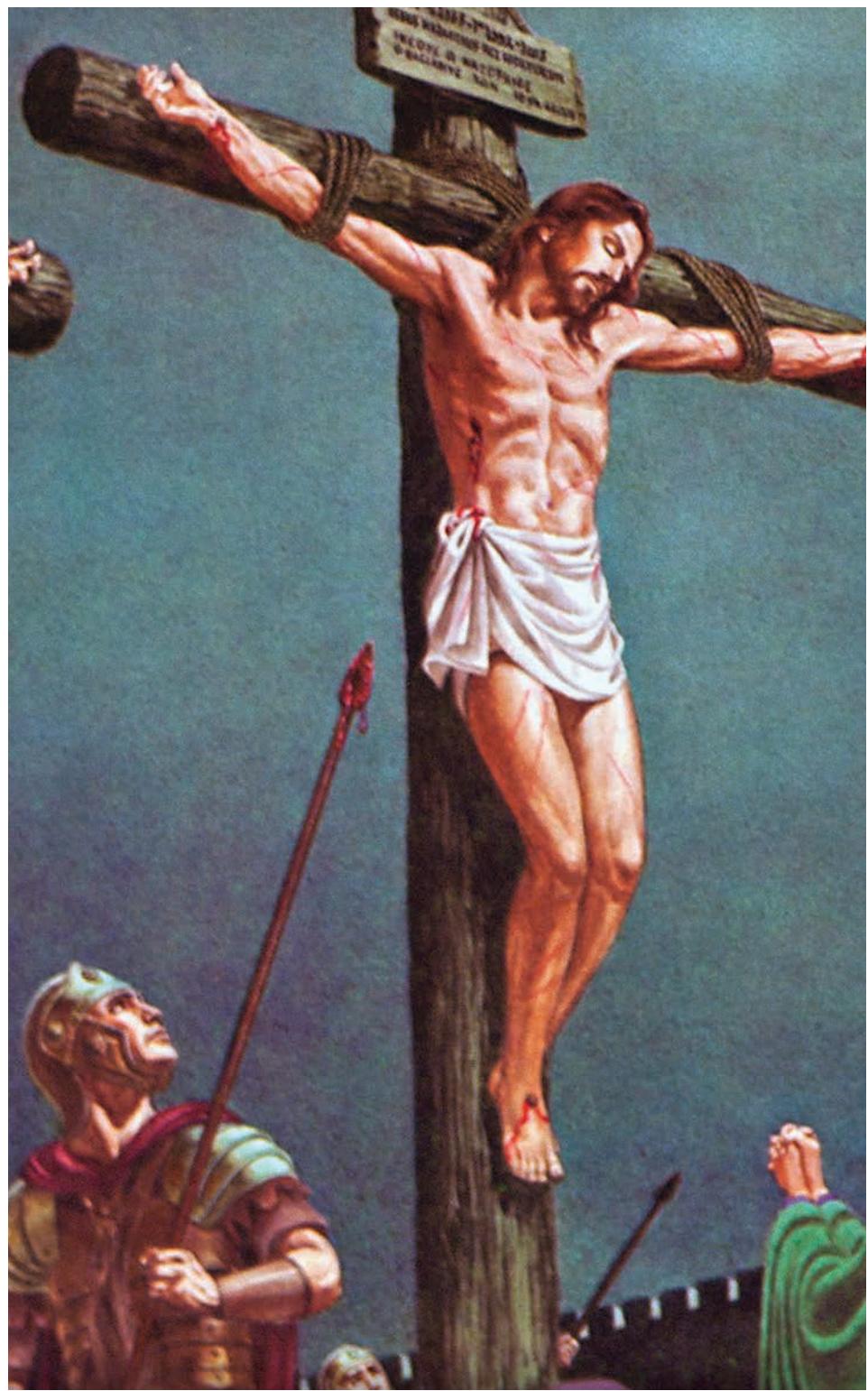
Luke 23:39-43 (NRSV)

Prayer Response:

Eternal God, in an age in which thousands of men and women are called upon to die in the battles of their leaders, we have a King who gave his life in our battle over sin and death. And even in the midst of his pain and agony, Jesus spoke a word of comfort to the Good Thief, forgiving his sins, and welcoming him to the Kingdom.

Father, give us the strength to follow the way of Jesus. In the midst of our pains and agonies, help us continue to comfort your people, sharing with them your forgiveness, your healing, and your life. One day may we all be united with you in the Kingdom.

We ask this in the name of Jesus, Amen.



The Twelfth Station

JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS

Scripture Reading:

When Jesus had received the wine, he said, *“It is finished.”* Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

Since it was the day of Preparation, the Jews did not want the bodies left on the cross during the sabbath, especially because that sabbath was a day of great solemnity. So they asked Pilate to have the legs of the crucified men broken and the bodies removed. Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who had been crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out.

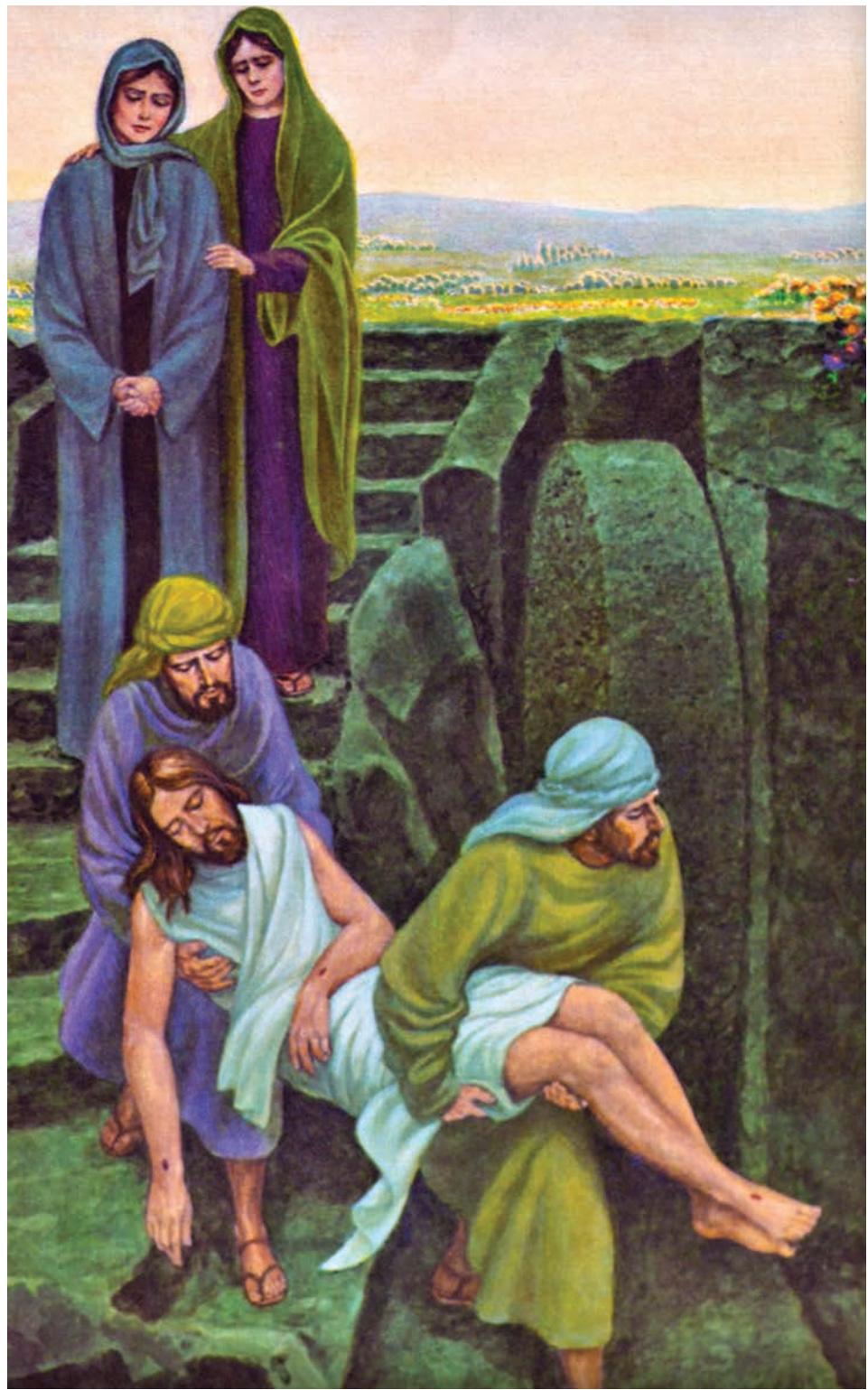
John 19:30-34 (NRSV)

Prayer Response:

Heavenly Father, in your mercy, you did not allow Jesus to endure a long period of suffering on the cross. Weakened by a sleepless night, the scourging and crowning with thorns, and the agonies of the crucifixion, Jesus bowed his head and delivered over his spirit. To rescue us from eternal darkness and despair, Jesus gave up his life.

How can we ever return the love Jesus has shown us? May his Sacred Heart, out of which flowed blood and water, be our continued source of grace and love.

We ask this in the name of Jesus, Amen.



The Thirteenth Station

JESUS IS PLACED IN THE TOMB

Scripture Reading:

Now there was a good and righteous man named Joseph, who, though a member of the council, had not agreed to their plan and action. He came from the Jewish town of Arimathea, and he was waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then he took it down, wrapped it in a linen cloth, and laid it in a rock-hewn tomb where no one had ever been laid. It was the day of Preparation, and the sabbath was beginning. The women who had come with him from Galilee followed, and they saw the tomb and how his body was laid. Then they returned, and prepared spices and ointments.

On the sabbath they rested according to the commandment.

Luke 23:50-56 (NRSV)

Prayer Response:

Almighty God, it was a sad and lonely group who removed the body of Jesus from the cross. Abandoned by most of his disciples and followers, his body was laid to rest in a borrowed tomb.

Father, who would have thought that anyone could give so completely of themselves? To the foolish, his death would seem to be his destruction, but through the eyes of faith, his death and resurrection give birth to the joys of new life. Help us accept the trials and misfortunes of this life, filled with hope in the resurrection and eternal life.

We ask this in the name of Jesus, Amen.



The Fourteenth Station

THE RESURRECTION

Scripture Reading:

When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. They had been saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?” When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, “Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.”

Mark 16:1-7 (NRSV)

Prayer Response:

Ever-living God, our experience tells us that you never cease to surprise us. When the women arrived at the tomb, they were surprised to find the stone already removed. Entering the tomb, they were frightened by the presence of your angel.

The mystery of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus reveals to us that in the midst of darkness you give light, in the midst of sin you give forgiveness, in the midst of death you give life. Continue to surprise us with your presence and your touch in our lives and in our world.

We ask this in the name of Jesus, Amen.

CONCLUDING PRAYER

Scripture Reading:

When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, *“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”*

Matthew 28:17-20 (NRSV)

Prayer Response:

Heavenly Father, may we who have meditated on the death and resurrection of Jesus be filled with the hope and the joy of his life.

Confident of his presence among us and of his power to touch us, to teach us, to heal us, and to forgive us, may we have the strength and the power to bring his love and his peace to all the people we meet.

We ask this in the name of Jesus, who is our Lord for ever and ever, Amen.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Did anything surprise you about this experience?

Has there been a time or a situation in your life when the outlook was bleak, but things improved?

What was something new you learned or thought about during this time of prayer and reflection?

Consider the unique ways Christ brings help and hope to people who are hurt, experiencing hopelessness or in pain. How might this apply to your life or others?

What does it mean that Christ shares his resurrection with us?

How will this time of prayer and reflection influence your relationship with God?



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