

# **DIOCESE OF CALIFORNIA**

## **Lenten Stewardship Curriculum**

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# **Diocese of California**

## **Lenten Stewardship Curriculum**

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### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

#### **A. Introduction**

The purpose of this curriculum is to enable participants to enter more deeply into the theology of stewardship through experiencing and reflecting in community on some key images from the Holy Week Gospels.

The curriculum is designed to be used during the five weeks in Lent, in sessions of 45 minute to one hour. It can be used intergenerationally or with age-specific groups. Suggestions for liturgical elements (collects, hymns, a Prayers of the People format) are provided; these can be used during the sessions themselves or on the Sundays of Lent, in order to unify the congregation's experience of study and worship.

The curriculum is designed to be led by laity or clergy. Extensive academic background in Scripture, theology or Stewardship is not required of leaders, rather a willingness to engage with the curriculum materials and to enable participants to do the same. An introductory section of general theological background, plus specific introductory paragraphs for each session have been provided for leaders to use in their preparation and reflection. As with all education classes, we recommend that a team of two or more people serve as leaders.

Training sessions for those who will lead groups through the curriculum will be offered throughout the Diocese during Advent and Epiphany.

The complete listing from the Diocesan Stewardship Library is provided at the end of this curriculum as a Resource for further reading, reflection and education.

#### **B. Theological Background**

God's first and last word is love. St. Augustine of Hippo even uses love as a metaphor for understanding the essential nature of the Trinity, writing of Lover, Beloved and the bonding Spirit of Love between them.

God's first word of love was the act of Creation, in which, as Genesis puts it, God found pleasure. He crowned it with Humankind, made "in His own image", so that Creation might have the capacity

to offer a responding love. God's last word of love is the heavenly city, the new Jerusalem, where all are gathered in a joyful banquet around the table of the One "who makes all things new".

Whether it is in Eden, the primordial garden of innocence, or the new Jerusalem, the heavenly city, Scripture reflects the abundance which God provides for His creatures; an abundance of which we are intended to be responsible stewards.

What lies between God's first and last words? The fundamental answer, of course, is that God's love is not occasional - here yesterday or tomorrow but not today. One must always speak of God in the present progressive tense: God is loving now and always, today as much as in other times, "at all times and in all places".

But History is the story of Humankind's response to God's love as well. When God created us "in His image", He took a risk, the risk that we might abuse the capacities inherent in our humanity; that we might choose not to love rather than to love.

Scripture reflects the belief that time and again from the very beginning Humankind has chosen not to love. Seeking knowledge beyond God's intent and refusing to accept accountability for their disobedience, Adam and Eve forfeited the Edenic life of abundance. In a jealous rage, Cain murdered Abel and was sent into exile. Later generations sought to build a tower reaching to heaven, only to be scattered to the four winds in a babel of misunderstanding and disunity.

Humankind's story has continued to reflect a tragic repetition of alienation and injustice leading to exile in one form or another - Egypt and Babylons, ghettos and refugee camps, prisons of concrete and pathology. Some would like to blame it all on God, but, in Pogo's immortal words, "We have met the enemy and he is us!". And so profound is the pit in which we find ourselves that the Apostle Paul could cry out, "Who will deliver me from this state of death?".

Yet God's love never stops being poured out. Scripture suggests that even times of exile are a sign of God's correcting love. And time and again new life has come out of exile – deliverance from Pharaoh's slavery or Babylon's captivity, restoration to one's homeland, the tearing down of ghetto walls, walking free from the prisons which have held us captive.

So it is that God's love is always "the last word" because it is more powerful than our distortions and denials of it. And it is there in the midst of all those distortions and denials. "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." "The light shines in the darkness..." "God so loved the world..." John Chrysostom, in his famous Easter homily, proclaimed, "Forgiveness rises from the grave!" The Apostle Paul wrote, "Death no longer has dominion over us!"

This understanding of God's continuing love, in the midst of an uncomprehending or reluctant Humankind, furnishes the context in which we may understand ourselves as stewards in the deepest sense:

- God's love is the first, continuing and last word: to love back in gratitude is to give Him the most precious gift of all.
- Made in God's image, we have the capacity to be co-creators, co-redeemers, co-sustainers with God, capable of wonderful acts of love and called to enact them, responsibly and compassionately.
- We are also sinners, capable of frightening acts of abuse and injustice, of hoarding God's abundance for ourselves and creating poverty and destruction where none need exist.
- We are recipients of a love which will not let us settle for that deadly existence, but which will continue to call us into the new life in Christ over and over again, despite our stubborn efforts to resist.
- We are persons raised from the dead, restored as stewards of "all that we are, have and do" - of ourselves, our neighbor, our church, our community.
- As Church, we are Christ's Body, called to be the visible sign and instrument of God's reconciling love, "forgiveness raised from the grave," living lives in which stewardship is but another name for our caring for each other in gratitude as God has cared for us.

### **C. Leader's Personal Notes:**

## THE CURRICULUM

### A. Overview

Each week a similar structure of experience and reflection has been provided. The group will hear the **Scripture** for the week read, then take part in a “**living sculpture**” exercise to explore the central images in the reading. **Reflection questions** are provided to use after the “living sculpture” exercise; these vary in their level of abstraction so that they can be used with groups of all ages. **Hands-on activities** for each week are suggested, together with an ongoing, large-group project that continues through all five weeks of the class and which can be used during Holy Week in the congregation. Finally, **Liturgical Resources** are provided to be used as part of closing worship.

Please note that a great deal more material is provided than will fit into a one-hour session. Leaders will have to select those questions and activities that they feel would work best, or be most challenging, for their congregations. If a longer (possibly mid-week) block of time is available, more of the activities and reflection questions can be used.

Also note that if a congregation plans to use the ongoing hands-on activity of making a large cross (and we highly recommend that they do!) some advance planning will be needed. Materials will need to be purchased and pre-cut, and the use of the finished cross in the liturgies of Holy Week discussed with the clergy.

A typical outline of a weekly class might be:

- Gather, read the week’s Scripture (5 mins)
- “Living Sculpture” exercise (15 - 20 mins)
- Reflection questions (10 minutes)
- Hands-on activity (15 - 20 minutes)
- Closing worship (5 minutes)

## B. Directions for the “Living Sculpture” weekly activity

- Read the assigned Gospel aloud and highlight the two focal points to be portrayed.
- Decide who will be the first sculptor.
- Then divide the rest of the group into “the clay” (clay never talks) and “admiring observers.”
- The sculptor then molds the clay into a representation of the first focal point in the Gospel reading.
- The admirers observe the sculptor’s actions and, when the sculpted tableau is complete, comment on what they have seen and appreciated.
- Then the sculptor asks the admirers if anyone would like to make a change to the tableau. After additional admiring, other changes may be made until everyone is satisfied with the final sculpture.
- Then choose another sculptor, redivide the group into “clay” and “admiring observers” and repeat the whole process with the second focal point in the Gospel reading.
- Finally, invite reflections from the whole group on the entire experience. This is the point at which the “clay” gets to speak as well as the sculptors and admiring observers.

If this exercise is done with a large crowd, people can be divided up in groups of 12-15.

## C. Directions for the use of Reflection Questions

These questions should be used following the “living sculpture” exercise each week. They are also appropriate for use at a separate time, by a conventional Bible Study group in the congregation, if desired. Each week’s Gospel story has been provided with a graded series of questions: the first few are intergenerational and concrete, the later ones are abstract and more suitable for an all-adult group. Scripture references for all the occurrences of each Gospel story are given; the version recommended for use is found in bold type.

## CLASS SESSIONS

### Week One – The Anointing at Bethany



**Scripture:** John 12:1-7, (Matthew 26: 6-13, Mark 14: 3-9)



#### Theological Background

Who is the faithful steward here? Is it not Mary in her act of caring for Jesus? God's love is the first, continuing and last word; to love back in gratitude is to give Him the most precious gift of all. How fitting then that Mary chose to anoint Jesus with her precious ointment as an expression of her gratitude for his caring for Lazarus, her brother, and for her. There is a tenderness here which reminds us not only of the quality of Mary's love but also of Jesus' vulnerability. Love does open us to that, even as it opens for us the possibility of a responding love such as Mary's.



#### Living Sculpture Exercise

The “living sculpture” exercise should first express the reaction of Jesus to Mary’s anointing and then contrast this with the reaction of Judas and others



#### Reflection Questions

- Tell about a time when you saw someone give away a really big gift.
- Tell about a time you gave a really big gift.
- Tell about a time when you disapproved of a gift that another gave.
- Tell about a time when other people disapproved of a gift that you gave.
- Tell about a time when it was hard for you to give something away.
- How does it feel to receive a lavish gift, an extravagance of love, in public?
- C S Lewis writes in Mere Christianity that the level of our charitable giving should hamper us; it should mean that there are some things common among people at our income level that we cannot do or have because of what we give away. How do you feel about giving this lavishly?
- Have there been times when you’ve shared Judas’ point of view?
- What is our motivation for giving? Do we give out of a sense of scarcity or abundance?



#### Hands-on Activities

Either the large-group Cross project, or an activity suggested for this particular session (see suggestions below).

## Week Two – The Last Supper



**Scripture:** Matthew 26: 26-29, Luke 22: 14-23, Mark 14: 17-25 (All three Gospel accounts are equally usable)



### Theological Background

What kind of community are we as Church? Augustine of Hippo, referring to the breaking of the Bread at Holy Communion, wrote, "Be what you see; receive who you are!" Jesus and the disciples, meeting for their last meal together, meet in the impending darkness of his death. In Jesus' willingness to enter into that darkness, God's love is revealed once again. So we, as Church, as the Body of Christ, are called into communion with God and with one another precisely where human sinfulness has the darkest consequences. In all our own brokenness, we are called to be stewards in union not only with one another, but with those whose lives are also broken, whoever and wherever they may be.



### Living Sculpture Exercise

The "living sculpture" exercise should first focus on Jesus forming community to be broken for the world, and then contrast this with Judas breaking community as he leaves the group.



### Reflection Questions

- What is it like for you when you have communion? (if children do not receive communion in your congregation, omit this question if they are present)
- What are some other ways that you remember Jesus?
- How would have felt if you had been at the table with the disciples?
- What do you think about Judas? What was he afraid of?
- What do you think about the other disciples not stopping him?
- Who was the betrayer?
- What did the disciples have to do to be part of the new community Jesus was forming?
- Compare this newly-constituted Eucharistic community with our own.
- How are we like Judas? (This is a challenging question! Participants may prefer to think about it and write their answers on paper, to be put in a box and shared anonymously.)
- "Is it I?" asked the disciples. Where are we at this table?
- What does it mean to take the cup (God's gifts) and share it among ourselves?
- How do we re-member Jesus? How do our lives and ministries help to form the kind of community Jesus was forming among the disciples, that community that is his Body?
- How is money like the bread in this story?



### Hands-on Activities

Either the large-group Cross project, or an activity suggested for this particular session (see suggestions below).

### Week Three – The Foot washing



**Scripture: John 13: 1-17** (This story is to be found only in John's Gospel.)



#### Theological Background

What does it really mean to "serve" our neighbor? There is both a humility and an intimacy required from which we are apt to recoil. In the foot-washing we see humility in Jesus' relinquishing status, the God who empties himself of his prerogatives to become one of us, as Paul wrote – and we see intimacy in his tender cleansing of the feet of those he loved, with whose care God had entrusted him. We do well to take to heart the implications of Jesus' action. It is easy for us to salve our conscience by giving money for people living at a safe distance from us. But, as important as that kind of help may be, it should not render us insensitive to our closer neighbor whose way of life we may find distasteful or abhorrent, to whom we may feel somehow superior. To be a steward here means to forego arrogance and see the true equality every human being has before God simply by being human; and it means to take our energies and talents to where they are and place them in their service.



#### Living Sculpture Exercise

Before the exercise, the leader should put the story in context: a house slave would have done this job in the culture of the time.

The "living sculpture" exercise should focus first on Jesus' action, and then on Peter's reaction



#### Reflection Questions

- Tell about a time when someone washed you.
- Jesus asks "Do you know what I have done for you?" What has Jesus done for us?
- How does it feel when others help us?
- Are we more comfortable serving or being served?
- What is it like to do some kind of intimate service for someone?
- What is it like to receive that kind of service?
- Where did you learn that it is difficult, scary, or "unacceptable" to be this intimate in giving and receiving service?



#### Hands-on Activities

Either the large-group Cross project, or an activity suggested for this particular session (see suggestions below).

## Week Four – Peter’s denial



**Scripture:** Luke 22: 54-6, Matthew 26: 69-75, Mark 14: 66-72, John 18: 15-27



### Theological Background

Why do we condemn Peter so strongly for his denial of knowing Jesus? It seems so obvious – he was a coward and a betrayer just when his Master needed him most. He was living down to expectations, once again – hardly "the Rock" upon which God might build his Church! But everywhere in Scripture, it is for us not to judge so much as to put ourselves into the story and find a truth about who we are. So Peter's undoubted cowardice may not feel so foreign to us after all. It is yet another example of how frail and how broken our humanity is. And Jesus' response in simply looking quietly at Peter is eloquent testimony to the undeniable faithfulness of God's love for us in our darkest and most hopeless moments. Peter recognized it rightly as a rebuke, stabbing him to the heart, but it also was for him an integral part of that life-changing three days in which he would know "Forgiveness risen from the grave", and become truly God's Rock, a strong steward of God's flock.



### Living Sculpture Exercise

The “living sculpture” exercise should focus first on Peter’s denial and then on Jesus’ response (he looked at him as the cock crowed).



### Reflection Questions

- Have you ever done something you knew was going to hurt someone you loved?
- How did you feel when you realized you had done it?
- Talk about the difference between what we intend and what we do, what we pray for and what we do.
- Are there some things that we think are too hard for us to do? Have you ever done them anyway?


(All of these are challenging questions! One option would be to simply allow for silent reflection, without sharing.)



### Hands-on Activities

Either the large-group Cross project, or an activity suggested for this particular session (see suggestions below).

## Week Five – Carrying the Cross

 **Scripture:** John 19: 16-22, Matthew 27: 31b-37, **Mark 15: 20b-21**, Luke 23: 26

### **Theological Background**

Must we "carry the Cross" to be good stewards? Could "all have been fulfilled" in and by Jesus if he had not borne the Cross himself? The Good News at its heart is about three days, from supper to arrest, to torture, to Cross, to burial and to Resurrection. How can one remove the Cross from that story? All else is preparation. As Jesus on that Cross shares our sinfulness and brokenness, so what else can his disciples in every age do, but assume it for themselves. Simon of Cyrene comes anonymously out of the crowd and represents the vocation everyone of us shares as part of Christ's Body. Even Jesus' physical weakness, which required Simon's intervention, is a lesson for us. Stewardship is an act of the Church, carrying one another's burdens, shouldering the burdens of the world. The world was changed by Jesus' dying on the Cross. Together we can change the world in our day by sharing in that death, making the Cross our own.

### **Living Sculpture Exercise**

The "living sculpture" exercise should focus first on the cross being laid on Jesus, and then on Simon being forced to carry it.

### **Reflection Questions**

- Has anyone ever told you to help when you didn't want to, or when it was scary? How did that feel?
- Have you ever carried someone else's burden when it was shameful?
- How do you think Simon felt when he was forced to carry Jesus' cross?
- What do you think Simon had to put down or put aside to take up the cross?
- What do we need to put down so we have our hands free to give?
- How has God interrupted our lives?

### **Hands-on Activities**

Either the large-group Cross project, or an activity suggested for this particular session (see suggestions below).



## DIRECTIONS FOR HANDS-ON ACTIVITIES

### A. Large-Group Cross Project

This project involves the group in making a large wooden cross to be used during the congregation's Holy Week liturgies. Directions for making the basic cross are given as a Resource at the end of the curriculum. At the first class session, each participant will be given a wood block. These will be personalized with their names and in other ways during subsequent sessions, and the blocks will be nailed onto the cross at the final session.

The finished cross should be used during the Good Friday liturgy. Then, before Easter, drill many holes all over the blocks of wood using a half-inch augur bit. On Easter Sunday set up the cross in the church or outside, with buckets of flowers for everyone to place in the holes. The "flowering" could also be done in advance, and the transformed cross set up in the sanctuary for Easter morning.

Because flowers are an Easter symbol that is particularly appropriate for use on Easter morning, and because the Easter Vigil already has its own powerful set of symbols (light and darkness, water and fire) we suggest that the cross not be used at the Vigil. It is also much more likely that children will be present at an Easter morning service, an important consideration if making the cross has been an intergenerational project.

**Materials needed:** The large cross and its stand, a block of wood (about 4x2x1 inches) for each participant, sandpaper, awls or other tools to carve, distress and personalize the blocks, cards, raffia, hot glue guns, markers, wood burning irons, 2 inch nails, hammers.

*N.B. If this project is to be used with an intergenerational group, children should be very carefully supervised and only permitted to use sharp or hot tools when working one-on-one with an adult. Doing this will provide excellent opportunities for conversations between the generations about the themes of the curriculum.*

- **Week 1** – Give the wood blocks to the participants as a wrapped gift at the end of the session and explain how they will be used throughout the course.
- **Week 2** – Participants start to sand/distress/finish their blocks, beginning to turn them into unique representations of themselves. Each person should attach a representation of a personal gift they bring to the community to their block, using a card tied on with raffia or attached using hot glue guns.
- **Week 3** – Participants continue to personalize their blocks. Each person should attach a representation of a service they have given to another, using a card tied on with raffia or attached using hot glue guns.
- **Week 4** – Participants put their names on their blocks, using wood-burning irons/markers/carving.
- **Week 5** – Each participant nails their block to the large cross, which is then set up in its stand. It is best to do this in a quiet, focussed, prayerful way without too many words, perhaps with background music playing, or with the whole group singing some of the Holy Week hymns; the symbolism of the action is powerful enough in itself. Adults should help children and young people, but allow them to do as much of the nailing themselves as possible. After all the blocks are nailed on, participants may be invited to share their feelings, and the session should close with prayer.

## **B. Other Ongoing Activities**

**Journalling** might be offered as an activity option each week. Participants should be provided with a book or binder and a variety of pens and art materials in order to respond to the “living sculpture” exercises and reflection questions.

An **art reflection activity** can be provided as an option each week. A search of books and the Internet will need to be done for prints and pictures illustrating each week’s Gospel story. The allwalls.com web site is a good source for downloadable pictures, which could be used in a PowerPoint presentation or made into prints. Public libraries are a good source for art books. After the “living sculpture” exercise the pictures can be shown to the whole group to stimulate discussion in conjunction with the reflection questions.

## **C. Self-Contained Activities for each Class Session**

### **Week 1 – The Anointing at Bethany**

- 1) Make scented oil (using olive oil and essential flower essences), for use in the home and congregation; bless the oil and use it in an anointing ritual during the class session. (See the prayers on p. 455 of the Book of Common Prayer.) The oil could also be taken by the clergy to the Chrism Mass on Maundy Thursday to be blessed by the Bishop for use as Chrism or with the sick.
- 2) Invite participants to give each other foot massages (possibly using the scented oil).

### **Week 2 – The Last Supper**

- 1) Play the “Judas” game: This is the game that is usually called Assassin or Killer. It is played sitting in a circle. You will need one playing card for each player. One of the cards (the ace of spades or any card so designated in advance) is the Judas card. The cards are shuffled and each player takes one without showing it to anyone else. The player who has drawn the Judas card is the betrayer. He or she eliminates the other players, one at a time, by winking at them. The object of the game for Judas is to eliminate the other players without being identified. The object of the game for everyone else is to identify Judas prior to being eliminated. If a player incorrectly guesses the identity of Judas, he and the one so identified are both eliminated. If Judas winks at a player, that player must turn in his card, saying “I’m dead.” He or she may wait up to a minute before turning in the card, in order to help keep the identity of Judas a secret. This game will produce feelings of insecurity and distrust of others. After playing the game, the group should discuss how it felt to be Judas, as well as how it feels to have an unknown betrayer in a group.
- 2) Do an instructed Eucharist (if the program isn’t happening on a Sunday).
- 3) Take instant or digital pictures of all the participants and use them to form a collage of the Body of Christ. A large outline will be needed with head, hands and feet, and the pictures are used to fill in the body.

**Week 3 – The Foot Washing**

- 1) Trace the outlines of participants' feet, cut out and mount on a large sheet of poster board. Brainstorm and write on cards ways we follow Jesus, then mount the cards on the poster board.
- 2) Make footprints of participants' bare feet using washable paint, mount on a background of blue water made from tissue or textured paper. Wash each other's feet afterwards.
- 3) Wash each other's feet, and talk about the congregation's Maundy Thursday practices and customs.

**Week 4 – Peter's Denial**

- 1) Participants write/draw their failures (privately) on cards or paper, then burn them as a group (possibly using the same method as the congregation uses to kindle the new fire at the Easter Vigil). The ashes might then be used in a brief liturgy as a mark of the journey towards reconciliation, echoing the Ash Wednesday Imposition of Ashes and using some of the same prayers.
- 2) Make roosters, using card outlines with tissue paper or feather tails. Or use Model Magic (a Crayola product) to model roosters.

**Week 5 – Carrying the Cross**

- 1) Make small twig crosses to take home.
- 2) Make a set of Stations of the Cross for the congregation to use during Holy Week. The Stations could effectively be made with simple black marker drawings, or with collages of contemporary magazine pictures, or with textured paper collages. They should be mounted for hanging in the church.
- 3) Make palm crosses for handing out to the congregation on Palm Sunday.
- 4) Do the Stations of the Cross liturgy as a group. If your group is doing the project with the large cross, use it to pick up and carry corporately from station to station. A contemporary form of the Stations of the Cross liturgy that is especially appropriate to use with children is attached as a Resource at the end of the curriculum; the traditional form can be found in the Book of Occasional Service.

## **LITURGICAL MATERIALS**

### **Collects:**

#### **Week 1: Anointing at Bethany**

Almighty God, you have filled the world with an abundance of beauty. Open our eyes to behold your gracious hand in all your works, and with Mary of Bethany, inspire us to give extravagantly of ourselves in response to your presence. All this we pray in the name of Him through whom all things were made, your Son our Savior Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

#### **Week 2: The Last Supper**

Gracious Father, whose blessed Son Jesus Christ came down from heaven to be the true bread which gives life to the world: Evermore give us this bread, that he may live in us, and we in him; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

*(Collect for the 4th Sunday of Lent)*

#### **Week 3: The Footwashing**

O God, most merciful Father, we praise you for sending your Son Jesus Christ, who took on himself the form of a servant, and humbled himself, becoming obedient even to death on the cross. We praise you that you have highly exalted him, and made him Lord of all; and that, through him, we know that whoever would be great must be servant of all. As your Son came not to be served but to serve, may we share in Christ's service, and come to the unending glory of him who, with you and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

*(Adapted from prayers for the Ordination of a Deacon)*

#### **Week 4: Peter's Denial**

Almighty and everlasting God, you have made and forgiven the sins of all who are penitent: Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of you, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

*(Collect for Ash Wednesday)*

#### **Week 5: Carrying the Cross**

Almighty God, whose most dear Son went not up to joy but first he suffered pain, and entered not into glory before he was crucified: Mercifully grant that we, walking in the way of the cross, may find it none other than the way of life and peace; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

*(Collect for Monday of Holy Week)*

**Music Suggestions:****Week 1:**

Hymnal #503 Come, Holy Ghost  
 Hymnal#554 'Tis the Gift to be Simple  
 Hymnal #508 Breathe on me, Breath of God

**Week 2:**

Hymnal #321 My God, thy Table now is Spread  
 Hymnal #325 Let Us Break Bread Together  
 Hymnal #343 Shepherd of Souls  
 Taize Chant "Eat This Bread"

**Week 3:**

Hymnal #602 Jesu, Jesu  
 Wonder, Love and Praise #729 As in that Upper Room  
 Wonder, Love and Praise #831 Ubi Caritas

**Week 4:**

Wonder, Love and Praise #797 It's Me, O Lord  
 Wonder, Love and Praise #826 Stay With Me  
 Wonder, Love and Praise # 757 Will You Come and Follow Me?  
 Taize Chant "Jesus, Remember Me"

**Week 5:**

Hymnal #473 Lift High the Cross  
 Hymnal #474 When I Survey the Wondrous Cross  
 Hymnal #441 In the Cross of Christ I Glory  
 Hymnal #172 Were You there?  
 "Two Views": Moments of meditation on scenes from scripture.

**Resources for Meditations:**

"Thought balloons" (such as you might see expressing a character's inner reflections in a comic strip) are provided for two persons in each of the biblical vignettes. They may be used following the reading of the Scripture passage at the beginning of the session, in conjunction with the "living sculpture" exercise, or as part of the closing worship. Participants might be asked to say with whom they identify, or to make up similar "thought balloons" for other characters. The group may create a "thought balloon" for Jesus in each situation, asking themselves what might have been going through his mind during each of these moments.

### **Week 1: The Anointing at Bethany**

Mary: I feel so bad for him. He looks so hunted and sad. Why are people so against him? I wish I could make him happy or at least *do* something for him. What is the best thing I can give him? It has to be something wonderful, something really special—I know, my flask of nard. It’s the best thing I have. I love the fragrance and the feel of it. I always feel special when I use it. Maybe he will too.

Judas: What on earth is she doing? What a waste! How could anybody use up a whole jug of that stuff at one time? And on someone else? Maybe if I’d had a really bad day I’d use of load of it on myself, but this kind of behavior, never! And think what it would bring on the open market. We could get some real money out of it. Maybe even do something “useful” with it.

### **Week 2: The Last Supper**

A disciple: I’m so happy everyone could be here for this. I love the times we all get together, especially the meals. Even the food seems to taste better when we’re all around the table. I wish he wouldn’t say things like “last time” and “betrayal.” They make me nervous. I want us all to stay together just as we are. I remember when my brother moved away with his wife’s family. It was awful to have them gone. We all talked about them. Come to think of it, our talking made it almost seem like they were there. We sure felt still part of each other. Maybe sharing really important things can keep us connected even when moves and hard stuff happens.

Judas: “Betrayer!” I don’t think so. Everybody’s got to do what he’s got to do, what he thinks best. All this togetherness is a little overboard. What do I owe him, or any of them? In this world nobody’s going to look out for you but you. Hanging out with this crowd was fine for a while, but it doesn’t work for me anymore. I’ll just slip away. Well, maybe I’ll take a little something with me. They’re on their own. I’ve got other connections now. I can get more out of them. I’ll be doing fine.

### **Week 3: The Foot Washing**

Peter (before): Oh gross! What does he think he’s doing, washing everybody’s feet? That’s just too weird. I’m not letting him do that to me! Nobody messes with my feet. They’re ugly and they probably smell. I’d die of embarrassment to have *him* do it. He’s so above me. He’s bound to think less of me. How can I get out of it? I know, I’ll call his bluff, “Hey, while you’re at it, wash all of me!”

Peter (after): I can’t believe I let him do that. I can’t believe he wanted to. Mostly I can’t believe that it was o.k. I feel closer to him now. We’ve shared something. I guess it really wasn’t about feet . . . or about one-upmanship. It was about breaking down barriers. It was about getting out of the roles we’ve been stuck in. It was about what friendship really is. I wonder if I *could* be that way toward others? Maybe there *is* a way that giving and getting could become lost in sharing. Maybe I don’t have to keep score anymore.

#### **Week 4: Peter's Denial**

Peter: OK., I've just got to be really careful now. If I can just keep cool and avoid notice I can see what's happening to him. Maybe we can do something. It all depends on my not being identified. "Who me? No Way. I have no idea who he is. What's happening anyway?" That's it—stay safe. It's best that way. Uh-oh there he is. Watch it now. Aagh—the rooster! Oh no, I did exactly what he said. How did he know? How will I ever face him again? It's all over now for me.

A servant girl: Did you see that look?! Those two must have been closer than I thought. Why did he keep denying it? What was he afraid of? And why wasn't that prisoner man angry? I'd be furious if one of my friends cut me like that. He just looked sad and understanding, even like he still loved him. No wonder the man started crying. I would, too, if I knew I'd hurt my friend so bad. Maybe I'd feel even worse when I realized he wasn't going to punish me. I think I'd try much harder to be brave and stick by him no matter what.

#### **Week 5: Carrying the Cross**

A soldier: I don't think this guy's strong enough to carry this thing. Too bad, he gets to do it anyway. It's his cross. That's what he gets for . . . what did he do? Whatever it was, he's paying for it now. Strange though, he doesn't look like a criminal type. I ought to know. I've seen enough of them. Do you suppose he was framed? Maybe he's taking the rap for somebody else. And he's not even trying to get out of it. That's dumb. You'd never catch me doing that. What in heaven would make him go through this if it's not his fault?

Simon: Hey what? Carry that?! I didn't do anything. I just happened to be watching. Man, it's heavy. My back hurts. Whose is this thing anyway? Oh, him. He looks pretty weak. Probably kept falling down and they were tired of picking him up. I'm much stronger than he is. He looks kind of, well, dreamy or something, like his head is somewhere else. I wonder where my head would be if I was about to die. I don't even know the guy, but I like his face. Maybe it's not such a bad thing to help him. I can handle it. God forbid, if it was one of my boys, I'd want someone to help them. I guess we've all got to pitch in where we can.

# **RESOURCE MATERIALS**

- 1. Directions for the large cross project**
- 2. Stations of the Cross liturgy**

## CROSS INSTRUCTIONS

### Materials

One 2"x 4"x10' of soft wood such as pine or redwood with no large knots  
One 1"x 4"x8' Douglas Fir with no large knots  
Two flat head wood screws #10 x 3"  
Two flat head wood screws #10 x 1 ¼" or #10 x 2 ½" (see below)  
Four flat head wood screws #10 x 1 ¼"  
Four flat head wood screws #10 x 1 ½"  
Quarter inch hardware cloth 3' x 8' optional (see below)  
White glue

### Tools required

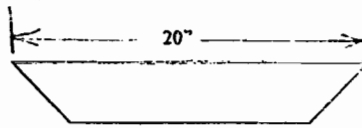
Saw (hand crosscut saw, table saw, circular saw, etc.)  
Square  
Tape  
Screw driver  
Hammer  
Drill  
Drill bits 9/64", 7/32", and 3/8" or a countersink  
Tin Snips optional (see below)  
Wood Chisel optional

Note: Nails may be used if a drill is not available but screws are preferred. If nails are used be careful not to split boards if near end of board.

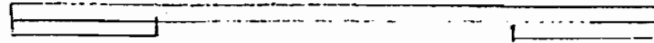
### Instructions

The cross is made from the 2x4. The stand is the type used on Christmas trees and is made from the 1x4. A brace is also made from the 1x4.

1. Cut the 2x4 into 2 pieces. One 4' long and one 6'. Be sure ends are square.
2. If a power saw is available a more finished cross is recommended. Cut a notch in each piece. One centered 2' from one end of the 6' 2x4 and the other centered at the center of the 4' 2x4. The notch length should be the width of the 2x4 (about 3 ½"). To do this—Make saw cuts halfway through 2" thickness of the board on each side of the notch. These outer cuts for the notch should be square. Make additional cuts between the outer cuts about every 1/8". Knock out the remaining wood and smooth bottom of notch with chisel.
3. Assemble the cross. If the 2x4's have been notched put glue in the notch and put notches together. (If you are not using notches, center small 2x4 on large 2x4 two feet from one end of the large 2x4 at right angles. Put glue between and use #10 x 2 ½" screws.) Use two #10 x 1 ¼" screws if you are using the notched boards— Make sure 2x4's are square and drill two 9/64" holes at the junction. The depth should be the same as the screw length. Then use the 7/32 drill to increase the hole size just through the top board. Finally Use the 3/8" drill or a counter sink to make a chamfer at the top of the hole just deep enough to make the head of the screw flush with the surface of the board. Install the screws.
4. Cut pieces for the stand. Out of the 1x4 board cut two pieces 30" long and two 6" long. Make square cuts. From the remaining piece cut one end off at 45 degrees and the other end also at 45 degrees so that the board is a trapezoid 20" long not a parallelogram (see below).



5. Attach the two 6" pieces one on each end of one of the 30" pieces. Both on the same side parallel to the 30" piece. Use glue and two #10 x 1 1/4" screws for each piece. Drill holes as specified in step 3. See below.



6. Assemble the stand and attach to cross. Put the cross on a table with the bottom over the edge. Center the two 30" pieces (stand pieces) on each other at right angles with the 6" pieces on the same side as the second 30" piece. Hold the stand centered against the bottom of the cross with the piece with the two 6" pieces attached parallel to the 4 inch dimension of the 2x4. Drill two 9/64" holes through the stand pieces into the bottom of the cross. Remove the stand pieces and continue drilling the holes in the bottom of the cross until 1 1/2" deep. Enlarge the holes in the stand pieces to 7/32" and countersink the holes in bottom piece. At this time one must decide whether to use glue now or later. The syllabus says to attach stand during the series; so the cross can be laid down to nail wood onto it. It would be best to use the glue now and assemble the stand permanently. The cross can be laid on a sturdy table for nailing or it can be vertical and a second hammer can be held on the back side of the cross during nailing. If the stand is not to be attached permanently now, continue assembly without the glue. (Four of the screws can be removed to detach the stand and then be reinstalled when the stand is reattached. Glue can be added then.) Attach the stand to the cross using the two #10 x 3" screws in the holes just drilled.

7. Attach the remaining piece as a brace. Make sure the cross is square with the stand. Place the brace against the side of the cross and the piece of the stand extending to the rear. Drill two holes into the end of the brace then on into the cross and two holes at the other end of the brace then on into the stand piece. Drill holes as specified in step 3. Install the remaining four screws. Do not over tighten them as it could cause splitting.

8. The syllabus says to drill a lot of 1/2" holes for flowers into the attached wood. This may be difficult if the wood is not soft or the wood is not attached very securely. An alternative which is probably easier is to use the optional hardware cloth mentioned above. Cut appropriate sized pieces with the tin snips and wrap around the cross. Put flower stems through the hardware cloth,

# **Stations of the Cross**

**Text by**

**The. Rev. Lani Nelson  
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THE FIRST STATION: Jesus is condemned to death.

MUSIC: "Jesus, Remember me, when you come into your kingdom.  
Jesus, Remember me, when you come into your kingdom."

NARRATOR: Pilate finally realized he was making no impression and that a riot was breaking out instead. He called for water and washed his hands in front of the crowd, declaring as he did so, "I am innocent of the blood of this just man. The responsibility is yours."

CELEBRANT: *Pilate was a very busy man. He had many responsibilities as a governor, and during the Jewish festivals there were always those who would cause trouble and make more work and worry for him. Obviously he could not waste much time on a petty grievance against a peasant carpenter. He had to dispose of him and get on with things.*

PRAYER: *Jesus, we too, are busy about many things in our daily lives. We pray for the grace never to let things that need to be done become more important than people who need to be loved or else we may miss you when you stand before us in need.*

THE SECOND STATION: Jesus carries his cross.

MUSIC: "Jesus, Remember me, when you come into your kingdom.  
Jesus, Remember me, when you come into your kingdom."

NARRATOR: The procurator's soldiers took Jesus inside the praetorium and collected the whole cohort around him. They stripped off his clothes and wrapped him in a scarlet military cloak. Weaving a crown out of thorns, they fixed it on his head, and stuck a reed in his right hand. Then they began to mock him by dropping to their knees before Jesus and saying, "All hail, king of the Jews!" They also spat at him. Afterward they took hold of the reed and began striking him. Finally, when they had finished making a fool of him, they stripped Jesus of the cloak, dressed him in his own clothes, handed him the cross and lead Jesus away to be crucified.

CELEBRANT: *So it has all come to this. The people find it too hard to deal with a Savior who is all loving, always pouring His life out in service to others. This threatens them. It forces them to see how unloving they themselves are. So Jesus must be eliminated. It hurts Him deeply; but HE loves them even in that.*

PRAYER: *Jesus, we often reject you and fail to live up to the demands of love. We also find our own efforts to love being rejected by other people; and it hurts us as it hurt you. Give us the grace to take up the cross with you, Lord, and go on loving.*

### THE THIRD STATION: Jesus falls.

MUSIC: "Jesus, Remember me, when you come into your kingdom.  
Jesus, Remember me, when you come into your kingdom."

NARRATOR: Those who love their life lose it, while those who hate their life in this world preserve it to life eternal. If any would serve me, let them follow me - these will the father honor. My soul is very troubled now, yet what should I say - father, save me from this hour? But it was for this that I came to this hour.

CELEBRANT: *Not even Jesus can bear the tremendous weight of sin without a great deal of pain and struggle. He was driven to the ground, and must have wondered himself if he could really do what he had to do.*

PRAYER: *Jesus, we find our sinfulness too much to bear. We hate it; we want to get rid of it. Yet it is always with us, even driving us to the ground. Save us from the pride of trying to carry our crosses strictly on our own. In you alone we find the strength to live fully.*

### THE FOURTH STATION: Jesus meets his mother.

MUSIC: "Jesus, Remember me, when you come into your kingdom.  
Jesus, Remember me, when you come into your kingdom."

NARRATOR: *(Very calmly and gently!)* Mary - mothering her son, unable to touch, save with saddened eyes. Jesus - body torn, heart broken, eyes on his mother, comforted and comforting. No word is spoken. None is needed. Jesus meets his mother.

CELEBRANT: *What is she doing here? Hasn't she suffered enough? Yet she knows she must be here, even though she can not fully understand what is happening - even though it tears her apart. No words can express her feelings. She loves, and stands in silent support.*

PRAYER: *Jesus, we are willing to do anything for those we love very much - for our family, for our friends. And we feel so inadequate when we can not help them, when we cannot find the right words in times of sorrow. Lord Jesus, help us realize that we are not their savior. You are. Help us to simply stand in silent support when we need to.*

## THE FIFTH STATION: Simon helps Jesus.

MUSIC: "Jesus, Remember me, when you come into your kingdom.  
Jesus, Remember me, when you come into your kingdom."

NARRATOR: As they led Him away, they laid hold of Simon the Cyrenean (*Sigh-reen-ean*) who was coming in from the fields. They put a crossbeam on Simon's shoulders for him to carry along behind Jesus.

CELEBRANT: *What thoughts must have gone through Simon's mind: "I don't have time for this; my family is waiting for me - they'll be worried. I have work to do!!!! What will my friends think if they see me? I don't mind helping people, But....."*

PRAYER: *Lord Jesus, there are always good reasons - many good reasons - for not getting involved with others, especially when this involves an interruption in whatever we are doing. Give us the grace to see when you are calling us to bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill your law of Love.*

## THE SIXTH STATION: A woman wipes the face of Jesus.

MUSIC: "Jesus, Remember me, when you come into your kingdom.  
Jesus, Remember me, when you come into your kingdom."

NARRATOR: Who would believe what we have heard? To whom has the face of the Lord been revealed? He grew up like a sapling before him, like a shoot from the parched earth. There was in him no stately bearing to make us look at him, nor appearance that would attract us to him. He was spurned and avoided by people, a man of suffering, accustomed to infirmity, one of those from whom people hid their faces, and we held him in no esteem.

*Celebrant: This seems a bit foolish. What did this woman hope to accomplish anyway? Here Jesus is dying, and she offers him a simple towel to wipe his face. But it was all she had - so she gave it, and she gave herself, completely.*

PRAYER: *Jesus, so often we look only for the big things, the heroic things we can do for our brothers and sisters. Help us to be aware of the little things, the day to day things that we can do to communicate your image of love to others.*

**THE SEVENTH STATION: Jesus falls again.**

**MUSIC:** "Jesus, Remember me, when you come into your kingdom.  
Jesus, Remember me, when you come into your kingdom."

**NARRATOR:** We had all gone astray like sheep, each following their own way; but the Lord laid upon him the guilt of us all. Though he was harshly treated, he submitted and opened not his mouth; Like a lamb led to the slaughter or a sheep before the shearers, he was silent and opened not his mouth.

*CELEBRANT: Just when things seemed to be easing up, oppression returns with a vengeance. The momentary relief given by Simon, the simple, loving gesture of Veronica, all is wiped out by a crushing return to the cruelty of the passion.*

*PRAYER: Jesus, why do things have to fall apart just at the time they seem to be coming together? We work hard to conquer a particular failing; and just when we think it is overcome, we fall again. May we never forget our constant need of your grace.*

**THE EIGHTH STATION: Jesus comforts the women.**

**MUSIC:** "Jesus, Remember me, when you come into your kingdom.  
Jesus, Remember me, when you come into your kingdom."

**NARRATOR:** A great crowd of people followed him, including women who beat their breasts and lamented over him. Jesus turned to them and said: "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me. Weep for yourselves and for your children."

*CELEBRANT: These words of Jesus don't seem comforting at all, but very sharp. Jesus was trying to say to them that even tears can be a way of hiding from responsibility; at times we need to be confronted by the reality of the situation. Jesus loved them enough to speak the truth.*

*PRAYER: Lord Jesus, what you said was not, perhaps, what the women wanted to hear. But it certainly was what they needed to hear. Your words of love to us in our lives are not always easy to hear; but help us be open to that word, so we may follow you and live, and give us the grace, as you did, to always speak the truth in love.*

**THE NINTH STATION:** Jesus falls a third time.

**MUSIC:** "Jesus, Remember me, when you come into your kingdom.  
Jesus, Remember me, when you come into your kingdom."

**NARRATOR:** (*Incredibly slowly!!! Pause at each comma.*) Jesus, nearing the limit of his endurance, tired beyond tired, barely hanging on to consciousness, falls, for the third time.

**CELEBRANT:** *This has to be the end. There is no way Jesus is going to make it up the hill! He has been beaten all night, whipped and prodded through the streets of the city, and now he lies exhausted on the ground. ... Yet somehow he will get to the top of Calvary.*

**PRAYER:** *Jesus, there are times in our lives when the situation seems absolutely hopeless. There is no way to turn; and all that is ahead is darkness. These times are terrifying, Lord. Give us the grace to hope. Your love will get us to Calvary - and to the Resurrection.*

**THE TENTH STATION:** Jesus is stripped of his clothes.

**MUSIC:** "Jesus, Remember me, when you come into your kingdom.  
Jesus, Remember me, when you come into your kingdom."

**NARRATOR:** After the soldiers had stripped Jesus, they took his garments and divided them four ways, one for each soldier. There was also his tunic, but this tunic was woven in one piece from top to bottom and it had no seam. They said to one another, "We should not tear it. Let us throw dice to see who gets it." (The purpose of this was to have the scripture fulfilled: "They divided my clothes among them; for my clothing they cast lots.") And this is what the soldiers did.

**CELEBRANT:** *Even though broken and exhausted, Jesus proves to be aggravating to the soldiers; He does not cower at their callousness. They realize they can't manipulate him, and so they take out their frustrations by stripping him of his clothes and gambling for them.*

**PRAYER:** *Lord Jesus, You are not ashamed to stand naked before the crowds; for you have stood before them in absolute openness and honesty all your life. Such openness frightens us, Lord. We have so many little ways of hiding our true feelings, of keeping up phony fronts and false appearances. Strip us of these things, Lord, that we may be free to mount the cross with you.*

**THE ELEVENTH STATION: Jesus is nailed to the cross.**

**MUSIC:** "Jesus, Remember me, when you come into your kingdom.  
Jesus, Remember me, when you come into your kingdom."

**NARRATOR:** (*Very very slowly!!!*) It was about nine in the morning when they crucified him. (*Pause... Count to 5*) The inscription proclaiming his offense read: "The king of the Jews"

**CELEBRANT:** *No one can be so inhuman as to nail someone to a tree. That is something done to animal hides, not to a person. Yet, it was done; and no one seemed to raise a cry.*

**PRAYER:** *Jesus, we are shocked at the amount of human cruelty people daily inflict on one another. We are terrified of the evil which lurks in our very own hearts. May we never ignore and deny this evil, but work actively against it in whatever ways we can.*

**THE TWELFTH STATION: Jesus dies on the cross.**

**MUSIC:** "Jesus, Remember me, when you come into your kingdom.  
Jesus, Remember me, when you come into your kingdom."

**NARRATOR:** And Jesus replied, "I assure you, this day you will be with me in paradise." It was now around midday, and darkness came over the whole land until midafternoon with an eclipse of the sun. The curtain in the sanctuary was torn in two. Jesus uttered a loud cry and said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." After he said this, he expired. The Centurion, upon seeing what happened, gave glory to God, saying, "Surely this was an innocent man."

**CELEBRANT:** *This is the greatest, yet most horrible moment in all history. In this one death, all death is forever destroyed. In this absolute failure is found ultimate victory. In this depth of despair is found the source of all hope.*

**PRAYER:** *Lord Jesus, there is no way we can understand your death without participating in it. But we are afraid, Lord. We don't know what it will mean for our lives if we really do die with you. Give us the grace and peace to say yes to the cross, and by that yes, to find true freedom and life.*

THE THIRTEENTH STATION: Jesus is taken down from the cross.

MUSIC: "Jesus, Remember me, when you come into your kingdom.  
Jesus, Remember me, when you come into your kingdom."

NARRATOR: There was a man named Joseph, an upright and holy member of the sanhedrin, who had not been associated with their plan or their action. He was from Arimathea (*Air-y-ma-thee-a*), a Jewish town, and he looked expectantly for the reign of God. This man approached Pilate with a request for Jesus' body. He took it down, wrapped it in fine linen, and laid it in a tomb hewn out of rock, in which no one had yet been buried.

CELEBRANT: *Could anyone possibly enter into Mary's desolation at this moment? The promise of the angel was that she would give birth to a king who would rule forever. What had gone wrong? How could this have happened? Could she have been cruelly deceived? All these thoughts must have gone through her heart; yet she remained faithful.*

PRAYER: *Lord, may we remember Mary in the times when we are tempted to give up in our journey of faith, those times of emptiness when Jesus seems to lie lifeless in our arms. May we remember her pain, and her faithfulness. We pray that we, like her, may go on and discover the true power of hope.*

THE FOURTEENTH STATION: Jesus is buried.

MUSIC: "Jesus, Remember me, when you come into your kingdom.  
Jesus, Remember me, when you come into your kingdom."

NARRATOR: (*Slowly*) A grave was assigned to him among the wicked, and a burial place with evildoers, though he had done no wrong nor spoken any falsehood. If he gives his life as an offering for sin, He shall see his descendants in long life, and the will of the Lord shall be accomplished through him.

CELEBRANT: *Most people must have stood at the tomb in shocked silence. But for some, undoubtedly, it was a time of relief when the stone was finally rolled into place. For now they knew that Jesus would no longer be confronting them in their daily lives.*

PRAYER: *Jesus, so often our faith becomes a faith of the tomb. We feel we know you well enough; we have figured you out; we know what you want. We know what we have to do. Lord, neither the tomb nor our own conceptions are big enough to hold you. Help us ever to await the resurrection, and ever to grow in following your way.*