

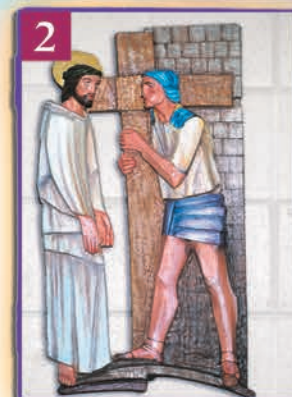
*Holy Week  
and  
Easter Resource  
Kit*

# Stations of the Cross

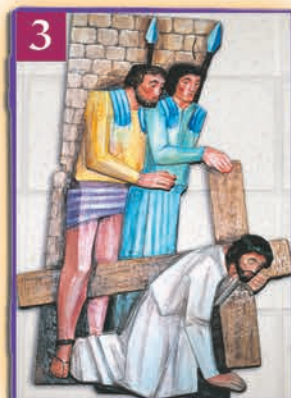
In the stations we follow in the footsteps of Jesus during his passion and Death on the cross.



Jesus is condemned to die.



Jesus takes up his cross.



Jesus falls the first time.



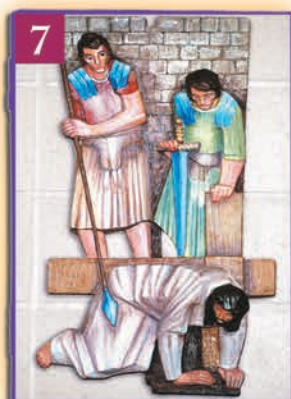
Jesus meets his mother.



Simon helps Jesus carry his cross.



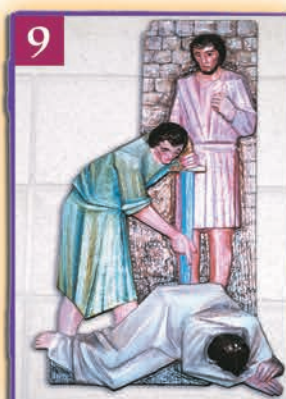
Veronica wipes the face of Jesus.



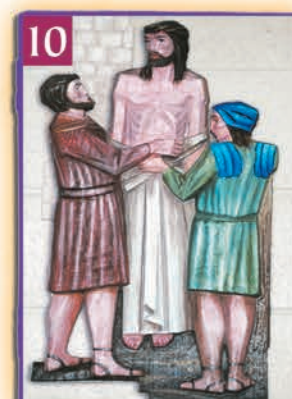
Jesus falls the second time.



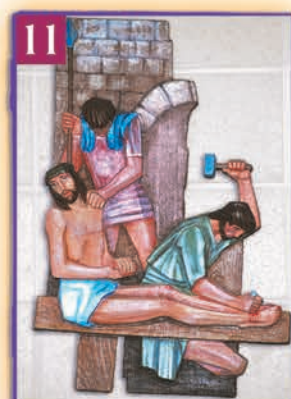
Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem.



Jesus falls the third time.



Jesus is stripped of his garments.



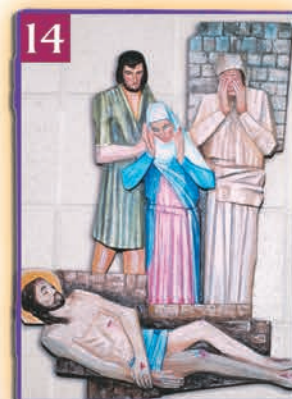
Jesus is nailed to the cross.



Jesus dies on the cross.



Jesus is taken down from the cross.



Jesus is laid in the tomb.

# Reflections on the Stations of the Cross

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## **First Station ~ Jesus is condemned to die**

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Jesus, it is hard to imagine how you stayed quiet when so many people wanted to hurt you. Be with me when I feel afraid. Remind me to trust in God's love for me.

## **Second Station ~ Jesus takes up his cross**

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Jesus, the cross was such a heavy load for you to bear. Yet you took it on your shoulders and carried it bravely. Give me courage when I have to face something difficult in my life.

## **Third Station ~ Jesus falls the first time**

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Jesus, the weight of the cross caused you to fall down. Lift me up when I make mistakes that cause hurt to others or to myself. Help me to trust in your forgiving heart.

## **Fourth Station ~ Jesus meets his mother**

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Jesus, you saw the sadness in Mary's face when you met her on the road. How painful it was to see you suffering. Fill my heart with kindness when I meet someone who is sad.

## **Fifth Station ~ Simon helps Jesus carry his cross**

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Jesus, Simon's help in carrying the cross must have been such a relief. Remind me how important it is to be helpful when others need my assistance.

## **Sixth Station ~ Veronica wipes the face of Jesus**

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Jesus, did you expect a strange woman to come forward to wipe your bleeding face? It was a simple thing to do and yet it provided so much comfort. Show me small ways I can soothe the pain of others.

## **Seventh Station ~ Jesus falls a second time**

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Jesus, once again you fell to the ground. Even with Simon's help, it was a struggle to get up and continue your journey. Strengthen me when I am tempted to give up and remind me to rely on your love when I need to keep going.

## **Eighth Station ~ Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem**

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Jesus, even in your anguish you stopped to offer encouragement to the grieving women. Help me to be a comfort to others.

# Reflections on the Stations of the Cross

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## **Ninth Station ~ Jesus falls the third time**

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Jesus, this fall must have been the hardest. You were tired and in great pain yet you struggled to your feet and resumed your journey. Inspire me to keep going when the way grows long and weary.

## **Tenth Station ~ Jesus is stripped of his garments**

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Jesus, how humiliating it was to be stripped of your clothes in front of a large crowd. Remind me to show respect to others and to do nothing that robs them of their dignity.

## **Eleventh Station ~ Jesus is nailed to the cross**

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Jesus, I can't imagine the agony of having nails driven through my hands and feet. Yet, in the midst of your pain you forgave those who did this terrible deed. Grant me the courage to forgive when I am wounded by others.

## **Twelfth Station ~ Jesus dies on the cross**

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Jesus, with a great sigh you gave up your spirit. Show me how to surrender in small ways so that each day I make an offering of my life to you.

## **Thirteenth Station ~ Jesus is taken down from the cross**

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Jesus, it was heartbreaking for Mary to hold your lifeless body in her arms. Comfort me when I grieve over the loss of someone I love.

## **Fourteenth Station ~ Jesus is laid in the tomb**

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Jesus, how dark and lonely it must have been to walk away from the tomb and yet your friends would know great hope in the days ahead. Remind me of the light that emerges from darkness because of your great love. May my faith in you grow stronger each day.

# Background on the Stations of the Cross

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The origin of the Stations of the Cross stretches back to the Crusades when, as a result of the conquering of the Holy Land, Christians began making pilgrimages to the sacred sites where Jesus lived, suffered, died, and rose from the dead. Today, the Stations are depicted in many ways, including paintings, sculpture, and stained glass.

The meditations for this prayer practice vary as the tragic walk from condemnation to the cross unfolds. As pilgrims on a journey of faith, we use the Stations of the Cross to reflect on the ways we suffer humiliation, rejection, suffering, and death. This makes the Stations more than a historic re-creation of Jesus' walk to Golgotha. The prayers draw us into considering how Jesus accompanies those who suffer in today's world. The injustice of being arrested and falsely accused, the pain of enduring mockery, torture, and being forced to carry the means of one's own death, the grace of small acts of compassion in the midst of an agonizing climb, and the surrender of heart and soul to God's infinite mercy all draw us into a story that is as contemporary as it is ancient.

The Stations of the Cross are one of many spiritual practices that we can reflect on as we make our way through Lent. Following in the footsteps of Jesus, we can seek ways to find and extend mercy to those who shoulder heavy loads. We can fast from destructive, cynical, or critical thoughts and behaviors, and embrace ones laced with gratitude, humility, and compassion. And we can pray for understanding and generous hearts so that we emerge from Lent, living as disciples of Jesus Christ.

## Prayer for a Celebration of Holy Week

*Jesus, Our Redeemer and Lord,*

*Enter into my mind and heart as Holy Week unfolds  
and open me to the grace of this sacred time.*

*Through its symbols and stories, awaken in me an awareness of your great sacrifice,  
made so generously on our behalf.*

*As I gather with other members of my parish family,  
fill me with humility, gratitude, and reverence.*

*From the solemn celebration of Palm Sunday  
to the opening of the Triduum on Holy Thursday,  
may my focus remain on you.*

*As I listen once again to the agonizing story of your Passion, death, and burial,  
may I learn what it means to say, "your will be done."*

*And, throughout the quiet space of Holy Saturday,  
may I await, dormant and expectant,  
for your rising to new life as Easter dawns.*

*I ask this in your holy and blessed name.*

*Amen.*

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# People of the Passion Reflection

## People of the Passion: Peter

*"Then Peter remembered what Jesus had said: 'Before the cock crows, you will deny me three times.' And he went out and wept bitterly."*  
(Matthew 26:75)

Peter's anguish over his betrayal of Jesus brought about deep remorse and shame. Nevertheless, he did not succumb to despair, but remembered what Jesus taught about forgiveness. When you are tempted to feel ashamed and unworthy, let the story of Peter compel you to stay open to God's unconditional love.

## People of the Passion: Mary

*"Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene."*  
(John 19:25)

It's hard to imagine the devastation Mary felt in seeing her son in such pain. As the only person to be with him from birth to death, Mary knew Jesus like no one else. Her devotion remained steadfast. When you are besieged by grief or hurt, let Mary's devotion remind you to stay close to Jesus.

## People of the Passion: Simon

*"As they went out, they came upon a man from Cyrene named Simon; they compelled this man to carry his cross."*  
(Matthew 26:32)

Simon appears as a bystander who, against his will, is made to carry the heavy cross. What must it have been like for him to walk behind Jesus as he made his painful way to Golgotha? When you are asked to help another shoulder a heavy load, try to respond like Simon and carry it without complaint.



## People of the Passion: John

*"Then he said to the disciple, 'Here is your mother.' And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home."*  
(John 19:27)

Tradition has it that John was the beloved disciple who was charged with taking care of Mary. He did so by bringing her into his family, the ultimate act of hospitality. When you are given the opportunity to provide care and assistance to someone else, let John's example inspire you to be generous.



## People of the Passion: Mary Magdalene

*"Many women were also there, looking on from a distance; they had followed Jesus from Galilee and had provided for him. Among them were Mary Magdalene. . ."* (Matthew 27:55-56)

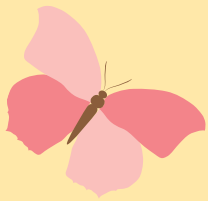
Mary Magdalene experienced a profound healing when Jesus expelled several demons from her. Hers is a life of redemption and transformation. When you find yourself in need of physical, emotional, or spiritual healing, let Mary Magdalene's story bring you hope and comfort.



## People of the Passion: Centurion

*"Now when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, 'Truly this man was God's son.'"* (Mark 15:39)

Did the centurion take part in the scourging or in the throwing of dice for Jesus' garments? As the dreadful procession towards Golgotha took place, something changed for this man and he thus gets the last word in the Passion account. When you grow lax in your faith, let the centurion's story motivate you to remain open to revelation.



# Signs of New Life

## Sensory Bin

A spring garden offers the ultimate sensory bin experience and can help children in preschool through second grade learn about the Easter season in a multisensory way. This bin focuses on the many signs of new life seen during the Easter season.

### Suggested materials

- \* Tub or planter
- \* Soil
- \* Seeds, sprouts, and potted spring plants like Easter lilies
- \* Water
- \* Watering cans or spray bottles
- \* Plastic eggs (can be filled with rice)
- \* Plush baby animals
- \* Faux nest
- \* Spring-scented (unlit) candles
- \* Cotton balls
- \* Twigs and small sticks
- \* Small signs with Easter themed Scripture or prayers



### Suggested activities

Create an outdoor or an indoor "Easter garden" for your sensory bin. Use fresh soil and have the children help to dig and plant seeds, bulbs, sprouts, and potted spring flowers that are already blooming. While they likely won't be able to see the seeds and bulbs actually grow, children will get to feel the smoothness and size of the seeds and bulbs and know that they grow into plants in time. (Note: if it is not possible to use real flowers, substitute faux flowers and grass available at craft stores.) Colorful blooms will be visually stimulating. Teach the children how to gently touch sprouts, stems, leaves and petals without breaking them. Let them smell the soil and the flowers. Provide spray bottles or small watering cans for children to nurture the sprouts with life-giving water. In and around the garden, nestle items such as plastic eggs, soft plush stuffed animals like lambs, and a faux nest with eggs. Sprinkle in loose cotton balls, twigs, and sticks for children to touch and to build nests. An unlit candle with the scent of a lily or spring rain will add to the sensory experience.

Use the liturgical colors of the Easter season in the bin where possible. In the garden, place small signs printed with Bible verses or Easter prayers.



### Suggested Bible verses to include

- \* "They waited for me as for the rain; they drank in my words like the spring rains." JOB 29:23
- \* "Alleluia! Alleluia!"
- \* "Grow in grace." 2 PETER 3:18
- \* "You shall be like a watered garden, like a spring whose water never fails." ISAIAH 58:11



# A Prayer for Joyful Heart

Bless me, O God, with a joyful heart.

Awaken me each day with eagerness to see the possibilities that lie ahead of me.

In doing so, enlarge my capacity for sharing your love with others.

During times of distress, remind me that joy does not always equate with happiness.

Through openness and hope, I will find gladness in the midst of my troubles.

As I retire for the night, let worry and anxiety fall away, replaced by a simple trust in your care.

Let the joys of the day wash over me in a spirit of gratitude and wonder.

In the name of your beloved Son, Jesus, I pray.

Amen.



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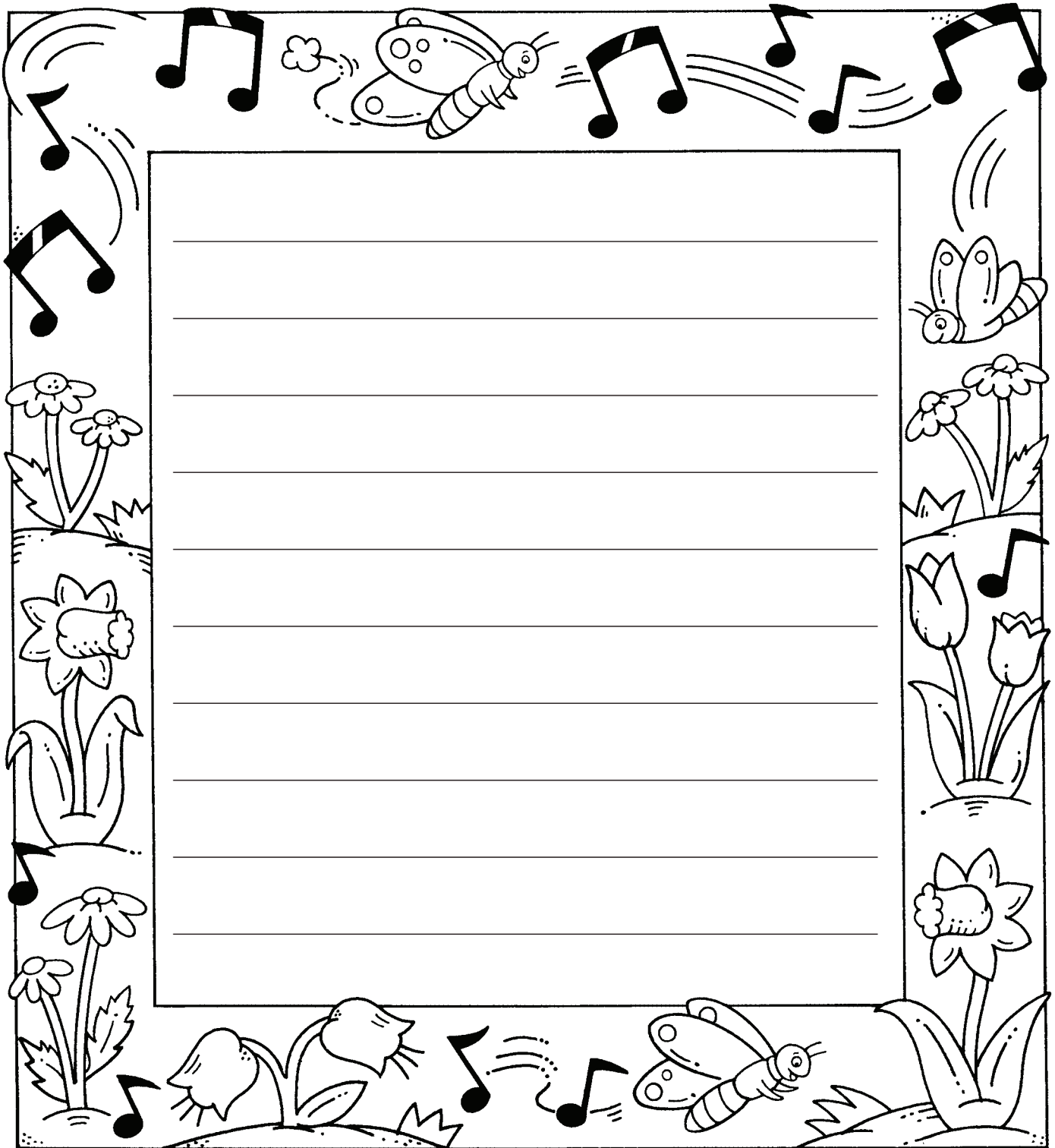
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# Alleluia Easter Activity

During the Easter season the Church sings the song of “Alleluia.”

The word *Alleluia* means “Praise God!”

Write a song to celebrate the Easter season.  
Include an Alleluia in your song.





# He is Risen!

## An Easter Preparation Checklist for Families

### ✓ Watch “New Life” Grow

Early spring is the perfect time for spotting spring blooms. Depending on the climate of the region in which you live, you can do an activity with your child to inspire conversations about new life.

Before Easter, plant a fast-growing seed with your child. You could do this in a planter in your home, outdoors, or in a greenhouse. A bean plant is an excellent choice to see almost immediate results, but pumpkins and wildflowers also germinate quickly and are a beautiful addition to a yard or garden. After planting, explain to your child that although it may look like nothing is happening, a planted seed is getting ready to germinate. If conditions are right, a plant will grow from it: a beautiful sign of new life. Observe your plant growing together.

In addition or as an alternative to planting a seed, you could also share an age-appropriate children’s book about seeds to spark a conversation, or go on a family nature walk in search of plants beginning to grow and flower.

Help your child connect the germinating seed with the liturgical movement of the Triduum. After Jesus died, his body was placed in the tomb. It wasn’t until Easter Sunday that he rose to new life.

### ✓ Bring “New Life” To Others

Part of celebrating the Easter season is recognizing the gift that God gave us in the Death and Resurrection of his Son. An important way to celebrate Easter as a family is to go out together to be a gift to others in the world. Your family members can make a plan to impact your community in a meaningful way as you share the Good News of Jesus Christ with neighbors in need.

As a family, brainstorm ways that you could go out and bring the hope of the Resurrection to someone or a group in need. Once you have considered some options, decide on one and make a plan. Perhaps you will volunteer together at in a community garden and donate the produce that you helped grow to a homeless shelter. Whatever you choose to do, continue your commitment to serving others weekly until Pentecost.

### ✓ Commit to Family Prayer

Throughout the Easter season, commit to gathering together for nightly prayer and devotions. Praying as a family is an essential part of celebrating the Easter season. Gathering around the table and sharing our prayers helps us grow closer to God and to one another. Choose a time that works best for your family, whether it is before you have dinner together, or before bedtime.



*A note to Parents and Catechists:* This experience invites your young people to joyfully and prayerfully celebrate the resurrection of Jesus and our new life in him. Have bare branches, white popcorn and/or white tissue paper, and glue available.

## Easter: A Blossoming Celebration

### LISTEN TO GOD'S WORD

**READER 1:** Mary stayed outside the tomb weeping. And as she wept, she bent over into the tomb and saw two angels in white sitting there, one at the head and one at the feet where the body of Jesus had been. And they said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken my Lord, and I don't know where they laid him." When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus there, but did not know it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" She thought it was the gardener and said to him, "Sir, if you carried him away, tell me where you laid him, and I will take him." Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni," which means Teacher. (John 20:11-16)

**READER 2:** "Mountains and hills shall break out in song before you, and all the trees of the countryside shall clap their hands." (Isaiah 55:12)

**READER 3:** "The flowers appear on the earth....The fig tree puts forth its figs, and the vines, in bloom, give forth fragrance." (Song of Songs 2:12, 13)

**ALL:** Alleluia! Alleluia!

### MY PRAYER GOES ON

Make a blossoming prayer poster. Glue bare branches to poster paper. Then create fluffy blossoms by gluing pieces of white popcorn or pieces of white tissue paper on those bare branches. As you work, imagine you are in a garden with Jesus. Talk to him about the signs of growth and new life surrounding you.