

## A NOTE TO PARENTS

Sacrifice is a deeply rooted religious impulse. Human beings in every culture seem to share the conviction that in giving up ourselves or something we greatly treasure, we unleash a great power for blessing. This conviction may spring from terror: in a powerful, capricious universe, one seizes anything of value, from crops to treasure to human life, and makes a great show of offering it to the gods, to flatter them into blessing rather than cursing. Or it may spring from guilt (real or imagined): receiving a blessing, we cannot believe we deserve it, and in a welter of gratitude, fear, and self-mistrust, we return the gift to God, the sender.

Both these interpretations have at times been given to Jesus' self-offering on the Cross. We may experience God as tyrant or judge: the Cross will then express, for us, the idea of appeasing an angry or cruel God, or of frightful self-humiliation as the only possible response to God's sheer, unapproachable righteousness. Beneath these distortions, however, lies a profound religious response to the world God has made—a world in which nothing can live without the death of other living things. To ritualize the cutting of grain and the slaughter of animals, to offer them to God, is to give thanks with awe, to honor the life laid down that we may live; and to recognize that we cannot escape the connection between life and death, suffering and growth. Hard as it may be for us to understand, Jesus on the Cross shows us that this connection holds true not only in nature but on every level of reality.

What Jesus has done for us is like the death of wheat and lamb: it gives us life. And we are to imitate him. We make "spiritual" sacrifices—give something up for Lent, or accept whatever bitter cup God may give us—not to allay God's anger, and not to show how brave or how unworthy we are; but simply because God has made a world in which letting go is the way to new life, for ourselves and for others. . Our lifelong vocation—beginning with our "death" in baptism—is neither more nor less than to draw near in faith to this mystery, and to pattern it into our own lives.

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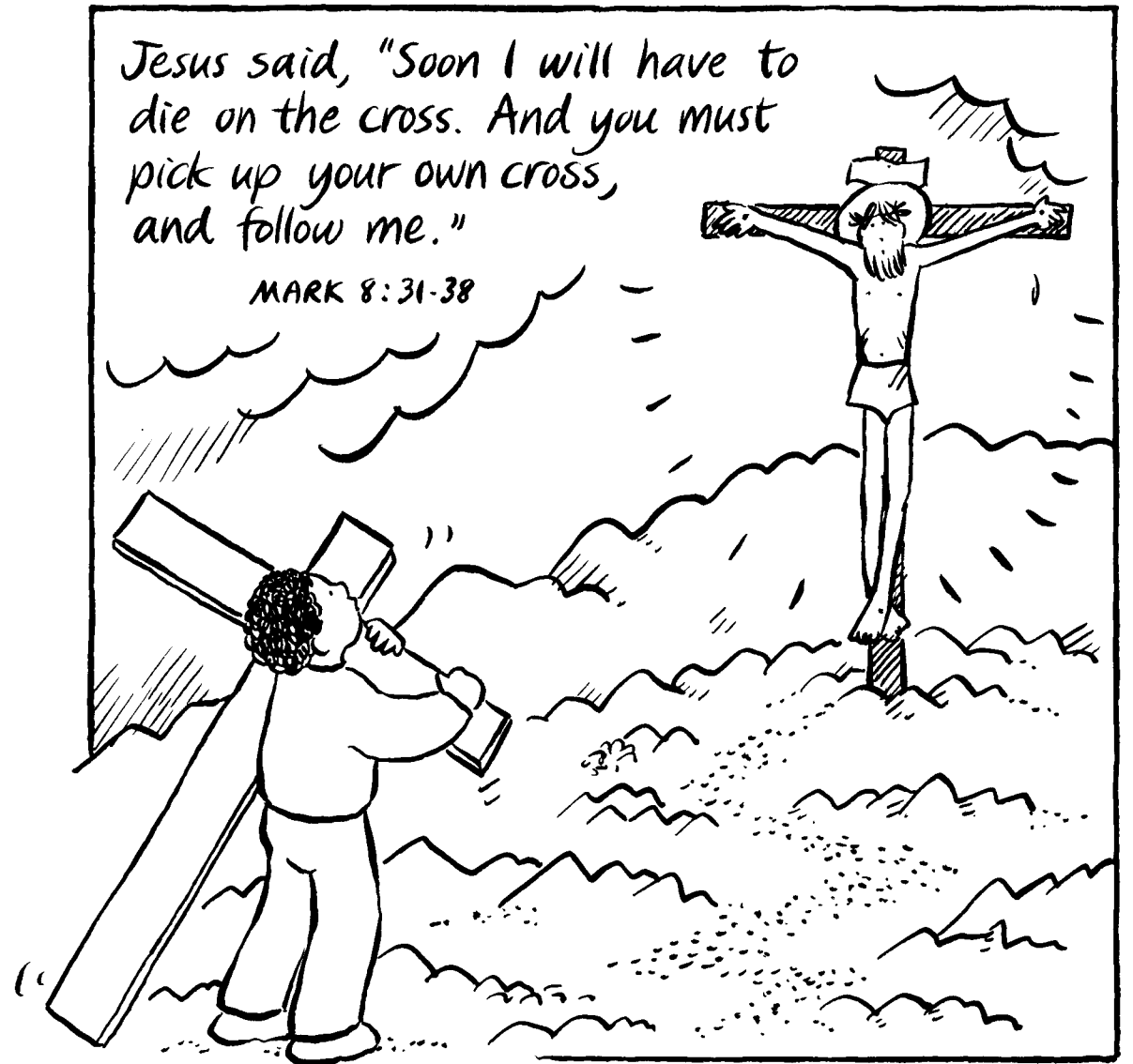
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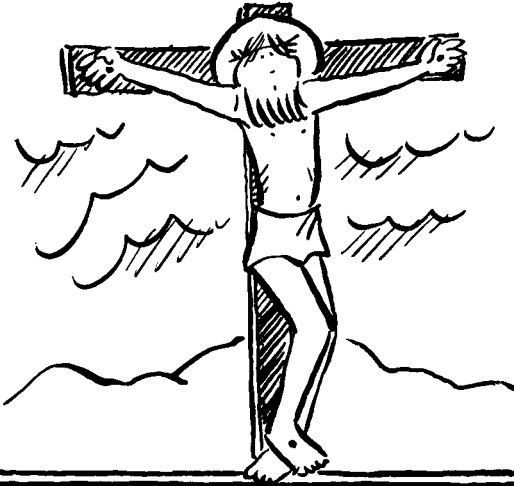
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Jesus said, "Soon I will have to die on the cross. And you must pick up your own cross, and follow me."

MARK 8:31-38



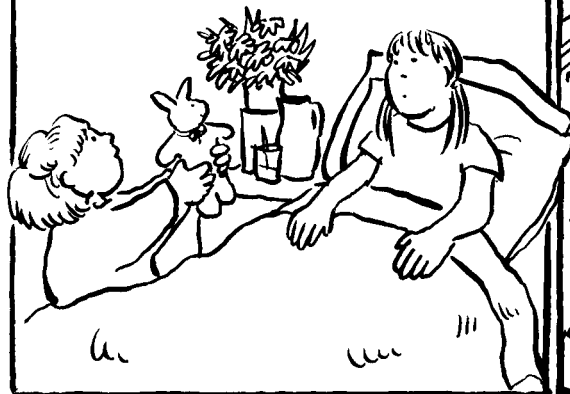
Jesus gave himself to God for us. A gift to God is called a SACRIFICE.



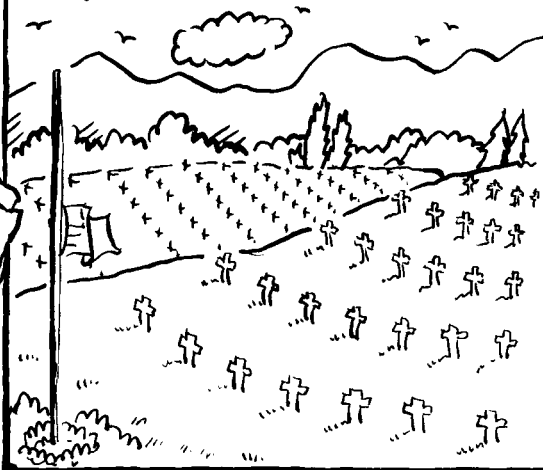
Long ago, people burned crops and animals on an altar, as a sacrifice to God.



Giving up something we love, because we love something else even more, is also a sacrifice.

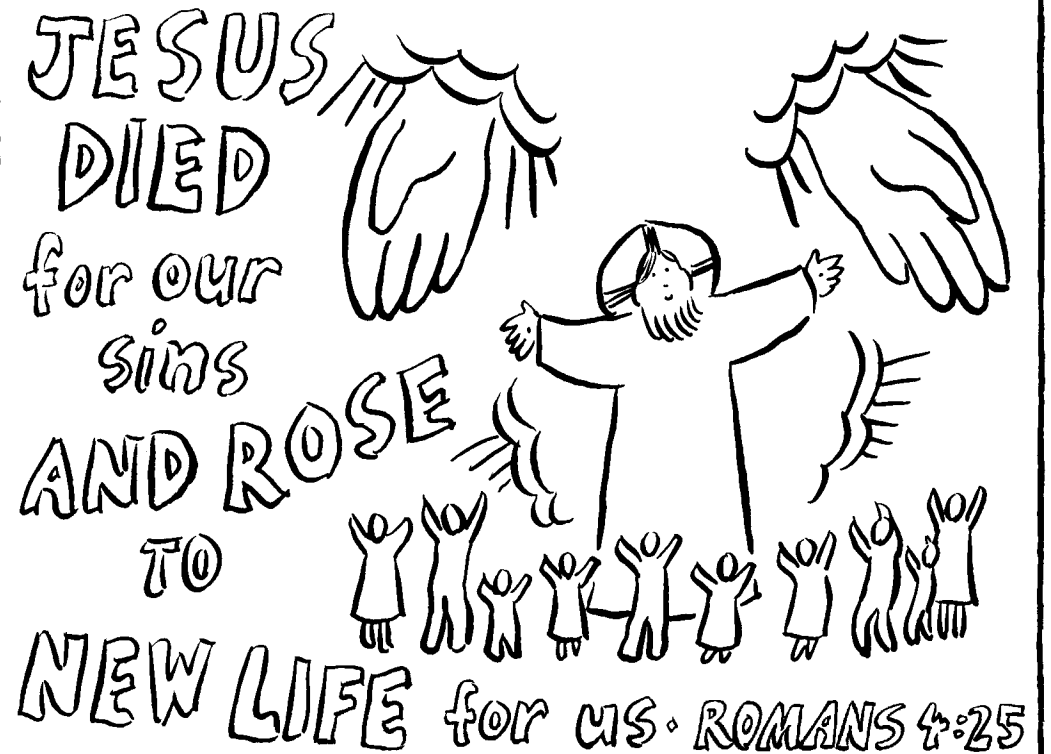


When somebody gives up their life to save someone else, that is a sacrifice.



Lent is a time for sacrifice. Jesus asks us to pick up our cross, like him. Sometimes we have to do hard things, or give up something we love, because we love God most of all.

We love God most of all, because he loves us so much. That's why Jesus came to die for us.



Draw a heart between the two hands, to show God's great love for us.