



Easter Walk

A Holy Week Event for Children

Monologues by Sally Askins, John Ballenger, Susan Shearer Ballenger, Crystal Carter, Katie Cook, Michael Long, Mark McClintock, Kelli Martin, Ann McGlashan, and Kimmy Scott

a Seeds of Hope publication



art by Robert Askins

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The following is a drama to be enacted for children during Holy Week. Seventh and James Baptist Church, the community of faith that houses the Seeds of Hope ministry, has presented a drama similar to this, for a number of years, on Maundy Thursday. The first Easter Walk came under the leadership of youth and children's minister Susan Shearer Ballenger. Here's how we did it:

Susan tapped seven people from the congregation, of varying ages, to play the parts of people who might have come into contact with Jesus during the last week of his life on earth. She gave each person a scripture reference and allowed each to create a character based on the events in the passage. Also, each character had a "token" to give to the children to help them remember his or her story. (For instance, the witness at the temple gave the children an ancient-looking coin and a feather, Pilate's scribe gave them tiny scrolls, and the witness in the garden gave them sprigs of rosemary.) The children brought baskets in which to collect these tokens.

We are deviating slightly here from the original outline used at Seventh. The characters below include the monologues Seeds printed the first year: a boy whose donkey was borrowed for the triumphal entry, a woman who saw the overturning of the tables in the Temple, a disciple who stayed behind after the last supper, a woman in the Garden of Gethsemene, Pilate's scribe after Jesus' encounter with the governor, Barabbas, and the three women who found the tomb empty on Sunday morning.

We have included others below, as we came up with new scenes and characters over the past several years. Several of the witnesses are easily switched from male to female—the witness at the temple, the witness in the garden, the boy/girl with a donkey. We have also experimented with the number of scenes and have come to the conclusion that, for several reasons, seven is the best number for the length of time it will take.

The seven scenes are set up year in different rooms in the church buildings and outside on the church grounds. We borrowed costumes from the Baylor University theater department—mostly rough or loosely woven tunics. (Costume professor Sally Askins later helped us to make costumes to put in our Easter Walk closet.) Outer garments were created by wrapping lengths, of various woolens and woven fabrics with "ethnic" stripes, around the body. We also borrowed a few props, such as Roman columns, from the theater. Mostly, however, the props were improvised from furniture that was already in the church. (For instance, the tomb was recreated by making a room dark with several candles, and a white sheet over a coffee table, with a cloth folded on one end. We placed styrofoam "rocks" at the entrance.)

On the evening of the Walk, the children went from place to place (with at least two adult sponsors) to hear the mono-

continued

logues that the characters had prepared. After each presentation, the children were invited to ask questions. The players answered questions and posed their own (such as, “Why do you suppose Jesus was so angry that he knocked all these tables over?”) They interacted with the children in character.

Scene 1. Boy/Girl with a Donkey

Scripture: Matthew 21:1-11, Mark 11:1-11,
Luke 19:29-44

Setting: Outside, out of sight of any of the other settings. A real donkey would enhance the interest of the piece, but is not necessary. The first year there was a live donkey, and the children were encouraged to pet it before the young man—a high school youth—began his story. He was dressed simply, in peasant garb, barefoot. Most years we merely littered the ground with palm branches from the previous Sunday. (One year we had a middle school girl in this role.) The children were given leaves from the palm branches to remember the story.

I am a peasant. There has never been anything very fascinating about my life. I’ve never been outside of the city walls and never owned anything fancy or expensive—in fact, I’ve never owned anything! I work hard just to be able to eat every day and sleep indoors.

I was busy at my work—my master is a stable keeper. I was standing beside a donkey that was tied to the door of my master’s house. Suddenly these two men came up to me and began untying the donkey. I wanted to stop them, but I didn’t know what to do.



art by Robert Askins

“What are you doing, untying that donkey?” I asked them. “That donkey belongs to my master, and I will not let you have it!” I wanted to sound firm, but to myself I sounded very small. I thought the men would laugh at me, but they just turned and smiled kindly.

“Our master has sent us for this donkey. He needs it and will send it back very soon.”

Well, I decided, for some reason, to trust them. I allowed them to take the donkey. After they had walked off, I ran around the corner of the house to my older brothers.

“You won’t believe what just happened,” I cried. They just looked down at me uninterested.

“Ahh, go on,” they sneered. “Leave us alone.”

I tried to explain to them what happened, but they turned their backs to me, like they always do. So I walked back to the front of the house. I decided to walk into town to see if I could find the men with my master’s donkey.

As I got closer to the city, I heard great, joyful shouts coming from the main street. I ran the rest of the way, wondering what was happening. All I could see when I got there was hundreds of people waving palm branches and crying out, “Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David! Hosanna in highest heaven!”

I hopped up and down trying to catch a glimpse of the person they were shouting about. Suddenly the crowd parted for a moment, and to my surprise I saw my donkey with a man sitting on it! My mouth dropped open as I watched this man enter into Jerusalem. Suddenly I thought to myself, “He is more than those two men’s master. There is something very special about him. Maybe this really is the Messiah, the long-expected one, the one who is supposed to come and save my people.”

Man, I wished my brothers could have been there to see it. Somehow, though, I knew that it didn’t matter to me if they believed me or not. All that mattered is that I felt that I had been of service to my true master, the master of us all—the chosen one of God.

Scene 2. Witness in the Temple

Scripture: Matthew 21:12-17, Mark 11:15-19,
Luke 19: 45-48

Setting: A foyer, strewn with baskets, bamboo bird cages, feathers, plastic coins, overturned tables. Our first witness was a woman, and was dressed in a tunic with fabric wound around her shoulders and head, creating a hooded shawl, and rope sandals. If a man plays this part, he should be similarly dressed. She/he is sitting on the floor in the middle of the mess. At the

end of the scene she/he gives each child a coin and a feather from the debris.

You are not going to believe what just happened here. Look at all this! It was amazing. You see this money everywhere on the ground? There are always an awful lot of foreigners here for Passover week, and they need local currency. So there are always money-changers right outside the Temple during holy days like this.

You see these bird cages? You see these feathers? People were buying birds and animals to take into the Temple for their sacrifice. There was buying and selling going on all around—it was like a carnival!

And then this man that they're all talking about—this teacher, this carpenter from Nazareth that everybody is saying is the Messiah—came in to the courtyard with his followers. And he just stood there, looking around. And then—this is the incredible part—do you know what he did? He got really angry. He got a *whip*, and started running everybody off and turning over tables! It was chaos! He didn't stop until all of the merchants and money-changers were gone.

I heard him thundering something like, "My temple should be a house of prayer! But you have turned it into a robber's den!" I'm telling you, I couldn't believe my eyes and ears. I'd seen this man before, when he was teaching. He was so nice, so loving. They even say he healed some people. But here he was, in a fit of rage. I just don't know what to think about it. Why do you suppose he did that? What do you think made him so angry?

Okay, everybody knows that these merchants and money-changers charge a little more than they should. And they do take advantage of the foreigners sometimes. But everybody does that. Nobody thinks anything about it. I just don't get it. Can you help me figure this out?

Scene 3. Witness in the Upper Room

Scripture: Matthew 26: 17-35, Mark 14: 12-31, Luke 22:7-38

Setting: An interior room with a long rustic table, set for a simple meal. (We used a regular banquet table with a long piece of fabric. We didn't put chairs around it, so that the children could gather around it more easily. We set the table with wooden bowls and goblets, basket-type bowls, and earthenware pitchers. We poured a little bit of grape juice into some of the goblets and arranged torn pieces of pita bread on some of the plates. Sometimes we add a table holding a bowl, pitcher, and towel. The room, like most of the others, is lit with candles.) A man or woman is there, dressed a little better than a peasant, but not extravagantly, in a dress or tunic of slightly finer striped fabric. For a man leather sandals and belt and a full-length vest would

complete the costume. For a woman it should be floor-length robe with a cloth wrapped around her head and shoulders. Jesus and the other disciples have just left the room. He (or she) has a wooden bowl with tiny goblets to give the children. (One year we gave them squares of flannel to represent the towel with which Jesus washed the feet of the others.)

You just missed them. Jesus and the twelve just left to go and pray. They ate here at my home tonight. We offered them our upper room so they could have some privacy. What happened was really amazing!

While Jesus and His disciples were eating, I came in and out of the room to check on them. In the middle of the meal, Jesus stood up to speak. I stood in the doorway of the room so I could hear.

"I tell you the truth," He said, "one of you in this very room will betray me in just a few hours."

I was shocked when I heard those words—everyone was! The disciples were outraged and saddened at Jesus' accusation. Each one said over and over again that he had no intention of betraying the Savior. I looked at Jesus, wishing I knew what He might be thinking. All I could see was that his eyes were filled with tenderness, love, and sorrow all at the same time. I felt both frightened and comforted by what was in his eyes. He held up his hand to silence the men, and he continued to speak.

"It is the one of you who is dipping the bread into the bowl with me. That man will betray me."

All of them quickly dropped their bread on the floor and looked at one another. All except Judas—the one they call Iscariot. (He's a Zealot, one of those people who want to overthrow the Roman government.) He held his bread tightly and looked down at the table. That seemed kind of strange to me.

Once more Jesus spoke. "Woe to the one who betrays the Son of Man! It would have been better if that man had not been born."

Once again, the disciples began talking loudly, each defending himself to the others. But I continued to look at Jesus. I wish you all could have seen his face! Everyone was so busy talking about themselves that they didn't notice Jesus. As I watched him, I saw such sadness fill his eyes.

Then he held up a piece of bread and cleared his throat. After blessing it, Jesus passed the bread around the table. Someone leaned over and handed me a piece as well.

"This is my body," Jesus said, "Do this and remember me." Jesus put a piece of the bread into his mouth. As I raised mine to my lips, he caught my eye and smiled sadly at me. I knew what that look meant. He wanted me to remember him after he died. After that, he took up the wine and poured it into a cup.

“This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood. Do this and remember me.” We each took a sip from the cup. The room was very silent. The men finished their meals quickly and got up to leave. Judas walked off quickly, before anyone could speak to him. The rest of the men followed Jesus to the garden.

So here I am, left to clean up and think about what happened. I wish you all could have been here. I don’t know what will happen now. I have a bad feeling about all of this. My rabbi, my master—my friend—may have eaten his last meal in this very room. I will never forget this night.

Scene 4. Witness in the Garden

Scripture: Matthew 26:36-56, Mark 14:32-50,

Luke 22:39-53

Setting: Outside, an area with foliage. (We used the children’s playground area. Since our Walk was at night, the swings and slides were not visible.) The witness has overheard Jesus and the three who came into the garden with him. The costume is much like the one for the temple foyer or upper room. The witness has a basket of rosemary sprigs to give the children for their baskets. As the children enter the playground area, the witness is sitting on a bench with his/her head in his/her hands. Seeing the children, he/she runs to greet them.

Oh, am I glad to see you! I’ve been so worried. Did you see the crowd? Do you know what’s happened to Jesus? *(shakes head)* I’m sorry. You probably don’t know what I’m talking about. Well, gather round and I’ll quickly tell you what happened here.

I was serving tonight in the house where Jesus and his friends were dining. After such a fine meal, it was only natural that everyone would want a nap, so I was the only one awake when Jesus slipped out, followed by three of his friends. I didn’t think anything of it, until I saw another of his friends, the one they called Judas, leave the house looking very upset about something.

I had a strange feeling that something bad was going to happen, so I sneaked out and followed Jesus up here and hid under that bush. See that piece of grass over there? *(Points to a piece of grass that has been flattened beforehand. If this is not possible, have a blanket laid out ready.)* That’s where the three friends laid themselves down to sleep. Jesus asked them to stay awake with him, but they didn’t. They just let him suffer alone while they slept.

But I wasn’t asleep. Oh no! I saw Jesus go right over there *(points to the far corner)* and kneel down. I knew he was praying, and praying hard, because the sweat was just pouring off his forehead. I heard him pray, and ask God to take away some cup, so that he needn’t drink from it. I think he meant he was afraid of what was going to happen to him, like anyone would be.

But then you’ll never guess what happened. A bright light appeared in front of him and I had to hide my eyes. What could it have been but an angel from heaven, and when I could look again, a great peace seemed to have settled upon Jesus. I have never seen anyone so changed in such a short time, as if all his fear had been taken away.

And it was a good thing too, because suddenly there was a great commotion and a huge crowd of soldiers and townspeople and priests hurried up the hill towards us. At the head was the one they call Judas Iscariot, and he went right up to Jesus and kissed him on the cheek. That must have been a sign, because the soldiers then grabbed Jesus and began to drag him away.

What a friend—to betray someone with the kiss of friendship! Anyway, there was a scuffle and Jesus’ friends even drew their swords, ready to fight for his freedom, but Jesus stopped the fight before it had really begun. “Put away your swords,” he said, and went off with the soldiers and the priests.

And that’s all I know. Would you go and find out what’s happened and come back and tell me? I don’t think I can stand the suspense. *(waves the children off from the center of the garden.)*

Scene 5. Pilate’s Scribe

Scripture: Matthew 27:1-31, Mark 15:1-20,

Luke 23:1-25

Setting: Outside, a large patio-like area. (This scene also be done indoors.) Roman columns would be effective. (We also used a large, throne-like chair from the dais in the sanctuary and draped it with a length of rich red cloth.) There should be pieces of a large, broken bowl on the floor near a wall. The scribe is dressed in Romanesque clothing—a short, belted linen tunic and leather sandals would work. You might want to add a quill pen and scroll to the props. The scribe is seated at a small table when the children arrive. On the table is a brass bowl or ornate box containing tiny scrolls tied with purple yarn. When the narrative begins, he stands and begins pacing. Jesus has just been taken away to be crucified.

(groan) What am I going to do? I cannot find the words. *(groan, heavy sigh)* How can I write down what just happened here? Maybe you can help me find the words. You see, I am the governor’s scribe. It’s my job to faithfully write down, to make a written record, of everything that takes place here. And usually that’s not a problem for me. I am an experienced scribe, trained in the art of turning phrases and choosing the right words. But this is different. This time the words escape me. I don’t know how to describe what I witnessed here just now.



art by Robert Askins

Most of the time I can detach myself from what's happening and just write. But this time I became too involved and now my judgment has become clouded. I cannot put my pen to the parchment without remembering that man—his face, his humility, his pain.

You see...they brought him to Pilate, the governor, for a hearing. You know the one I mean, the Galilean, the one they call Jesus. Pilate had to decide what was to be done with this man...this Jesus. Many of the Jews wanted to have him crucified. Others wanted him to go free. Pilate could not understand the hatred of some of the Jewish leaders toward Jesus.

What he had done did not seem to be such a horrible crime that he deserved to be crucified. In fact, we really couldn't find anything he had done wrong according to Roman laws, except maybe to have too many followers! Pilate tried find a way out. He really didn't want to send this man to his death. I think that the governor even secretly admired him. Pilate was so upset by all the turmoil that, whatever happened, he didn't want to be the one to condemn Jesus to death.

And you know what he did? He went to the balcony—turn around and look, yes, that balcony right there. The square below was filled with people shouting. And Pilate turned to the crowd and asked them, "What is to be done with this man Jesus?"

And the crowd shouted, "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

The shouts were deafening, and the crowd was becoming more and more angry.

And Pilate said to them, "One prisoner shall be released today, in honor of your Passover, according to custom. You can have Jesus of Nazareth, or the one called Barabbas, the terrorist."

And the people shouted, "Give us Barabbas. Barabbas! Barabbas!"

Pilate turned back toward me, shaking his head. He was completely bewildered. But he knew that if he didn't do what the people asked, there would be more difficulties for him later.

He turned back to the crowd and asked again, "Whom shall I give you?"

And the crowd answered even more loudly, "Barabbas! Barabbas! Barabbas!"

Pilate finally answered, "You shall have Barabbas." And the crowd cheered.

When Pilate came back into the room, he had the strangest look on his face, and he was as pale as a sheep. He didn't say a word for the longest time. When he finally recovered his thoughts, he had me write the order to have Barabbas released from prison. I could scarcely write the order, because my hand was shaking so badly. Then Pilate had the guards take Jesus of Nazareth away and prepared for crucifixion.

Then the governor did something I have never before seen him do. He ordered a servant to bring him a basin of water. And he washed his hands in it. As he washed, he kept shaking his head and mumbling. And finally he turned to me and said, "The blood of this man Jesus shall not be on my hands." Then he threw the basin against the wall. See, look there, those are the pieces of the basin still on the floor. And then Pilate ran to his chambers.

And now I am left. Now I must write about what happened here. But the words fail me and my hand is shaking.

Scene 6. Barabbas After Jesus' Death

Scripture: Matthew 27:15-31, Mark 15:6-20,
Luke 23:18-25—also Matthew 27:32-34,
Mark 15:21-24, Luke 23:26-34

Setting: Outside. There should be an empty cross above where Barabbas sits to tell his story. (We draped a thin white cloth on the cross.) Since he has just been released from prison, Barabbas should be dressed in worn, dirty clothes, of highly textured fabric, with signs of rough repair, and rope sandals. Beside him on the ground or floor is a pile of large (eight-penny) nails to give the children.

I wasn't always an evil man. When I was young, my parents hoped that I would be very successful, and I tried to please them. But all of that ended when the Romans killed my father.

I remember the day it happened. I was young, but I remember it well. I made up my mind that day to avenge my father's death. I soon lost control of myself. I no longer longed only for revenge, but I began to thirst for Roman blood. I hated all Romans. I shouted for the overthrow of their government, and I took it upon myself to bring it about. I got other people involved—and brought about their ruin as well. Our little "revolution" was soon crushed. The whole thing was ghastly and bloody, and I had asked for it.

I found myself sitting in a dirty, wet prison. I was to be killed by crucifixion on a cross, just like this one behind me. I have never been so scared in my entire life. I had led a violent life, but I wanted to make changes, to become a good man. My time was up, though. I had blown my chance.

As I sat, chained to the wall, so many thoughts went through my head. I knew how painful this death would be. I had watched crucifixions before. It was a shameful and horrible way to die, and I knew it.

When I heard the guards approach my cell, I felt my stomach drop and my mouth went dry. I swallowed hard. I wouldn't let them see my fear, I wouldn't give them that satisfaction. Two guards walked into my cell and stood in front of me. They didn't try to hide their hostility from me—nor I from them. As I looked up at them, I laughed, mostly to hide my fear. When they unlocked the chains that held me down, for a short moment I thought about trying to run, but decided it was no use. I waited for them to tie my hands and lead me out.

Well, you can imagine my surprise when the guards pulled me up to my feet and told me I was free to go!

"What?!" I replied looking at them with wide eyes. I thought they were joking.

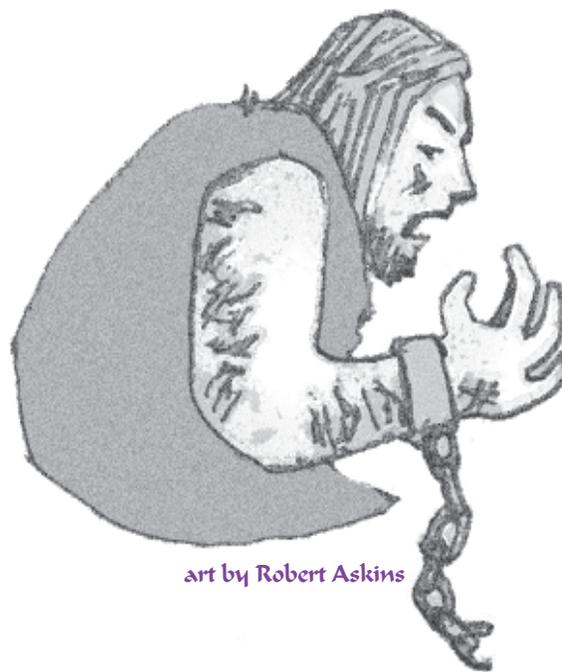
"You're free to go," they mumbled again, clearly disgusted with the way things had turned out.

I didn't know what to think. How could this happen! I had killed a Roman soldier, started an insurrection, and they were going to set me free?!

"Another man has been tried and is going to die in your place. You have been pardoned because there are those who want him to die," one guard explained. He would not look me in the face.

Well, I didn't wait for them to change their minds. I ran out of the room and up the dark steps, stumbling into the bright street. Tears of joy flooded my eyes and streamed down my face as I looked up at the sun that I had not seen in weeks.

"I'm free," I shouted, laughing and crying at the same



art by Robert Askins

time. That's when I noticed the crowd of people rushing past me. They were headed up a long narrow road, which led to Golgotha, the place where they crucify people.

"No way," I said to myself. "The last thing I want to see right now is a crucifixion."

When I turned to walk away, though, I was overwhelmed by a desire to see the man who was to be killed in my place. What could he have possibly done to deserve that death more than I did? I turned down a side street and took a short cut up the road. When I came out, I entered into a vicious, angry crowd. They were shouting over and over, "Crucify him!" I couldn't see what was going on so I climbed some nearby stairs and leaned over to catch a glimpse of this hated man.

What I saw made me sick to my stomach. The man walking up the street was so badly beaten that he could hardly walk.

"He must truly be evil," I thought, "to have deserved such a beating first."

I leaned over to a man standing beside me and asked him why this man was being killed.

"They say his name is Jesus. He's supposed to be some kind of Messiah. He claims to be the King of the Jews; the Son of God." The man sneered and shouted at this Jesus along with everyone else.

When this mysterious man and the soldiers reached the place where I stood, he stumbled and fell to the ground. He looked up and caught my eye. What I saw in his face was not evil, nor anger. There was no sign of hatred. I saw only love and forgiveness. This man was innocent—more innocent than anybody I had ever known. He had done nothing wrong. But why, then, was he dying in my place?

As Jesus struggled to get up, the guard reached over and pulled a man from the street, commanding him to carry the cross. Jesus looked up at me one more time. I had to lower my eyes. I didn't deserve to look into that face. I couldn't watch him die. I had to leave. But I came back right after they took the body away.

I should not be alive! I don't deserve to be free, but I am. I'm free only because he died for me. (Looks up at cross and reaches out to touch it. Whispers.) For me.

Scene 7. Three Women at the Tomb

Scripture: Matthew 28:1-10, Mark 16:1-8 (9-11), Luke 24:1-12

Setting: The entrance to a tomb. (We set this up by using an empty corner area under a stairwell. The area should be any isolated area that is not well-traveled; it should be a space with which the children are not familiar. And outdoor tool shed would also work. We draped the area with fabric to create the tomb. We used papier-mache rocks at the entrance, with a stool covered in fabric for one sturdier rock.) The women are simple peasant women, and are dressed like the women at the Temple and in the garden. When the children arrive, they are standing around the entrance. One could be sitting on the sturdy "rock." They have a basket filled with crosses made of cinnamon sticks tied with rough string or twine. As they talk, they interrupt one another, and they nod their heads at what one another is saying. They are clearly agitated.



art by Robert Askins

First Woman: We came here, where they buried our friend and master, to anoint his body with spices, as is our custom of treating the dead. But, well...it's amazing! As we were walking to the tomb, we had been worried about how we would move the stone that covered the entrance to the tomb. We knew that it was very heavy—too heavy for us to move, and we were hoping that someone would be there to help us. But, as we walked up the path toward the tomb, we saw—

Second Woman: We saw that the stone had already been moved! We were nervous and a little frightened, so we slowed down a little and we looked all around. "Who would roll away the stone from the door of the tomb?" We asked each other. These two pushed me in front and made me go into the tomb first!

Third Woman: Oh, but you should have seen what we saw! There was a young man sitting on the right side of the tomb—

First Woman: Wearing a white robe!

Third Woman: Yes. And it was the most beautiful robe I have ever seen. It almost sparkled! Well, as you can imagine, we were amazed and speechless. After a few moments, we dropped to our knees, out of fear and respect, and bowed to this radiant man.

Second Woman: Then he spoke! "Don't be amazed," he said, "you seek Jesus, the Nazarene, who has been crucified. He is risen; he is not here."

First Woman: When we heard these words, we all began to cry. He is what?! Risen?! What was that supposed to mean?

Second Woman: But the angel went on. "Come, look at the place where they laid him!" We all got up slowly and walked toward where they had laid Jesus. His garments were there, but his body was gone! It was—

Third Woman: Incredible, amazing, wonderful! Then the angel spoke to us again! "Go quickly, and tell his disciples he is risen from the dead. He goes before you into Galilee; it is there that you will see him." See him!! We were going to see him alive again!

First Woman: Well, we were so excited, we couldn't run fast enough!

Second Woman: The guys didn't believe us at first. They thought we were crazy! Well, all except for Peter, who got up and ran to the tomb to see for himself.

Third Woman: And we don't blame them, not really. We hardly believe it ourselves. That's why we came back to look again. But it's true! We just went back inside and He is gone! He is alive!

(See page 9 for additional characters.)

Additional Easter Walk Monologues

Mary of Nazareth and John the Apostle

Scriptures: John 19:16-37 (also Matthew 27:32-56,
Mark 15:21-41, Luke 23:26-49)

Setting: Mary and John are sitting on a bench in a dark, secluded place. Somewhere above or in the distance is a cross or the silhouette of a cross. This scene should come sixth in the sequence, just before the empty tomb, and would probably take the place of Barabbas's scene in the original walk. The "token" they give the children could be large nails

John: Did you guys see what just happened? Did you see them force Jesus up the hill to be crucified? No? Well, the story must be told.

It was awful. After the Roman governor sentenced Jesus to be crucified, they made Jesus join two other criminals—thieves, someone told us—who were also to be executed and they made him carry this big wooden cross



art by Nancy Cagle

up to a hill they call "The Place of the Skull." Sounds scary, doesn't it? It is! Once they arrived, they put Jesus on the wooden beams, in the middle between the two criminals.

Mary: John and I were standing nearby and heard Jesus say, "Forgive them, Father, for they don't know what they're doing. Even as they were killing him, my son prayed for his enemies.

John: While he was hanging there, the soldiers were throwing dice, dividing his clothes between them. People were pointing and laughing at Jesus, telling him that if he was the Son of God, he could save himself and other things like that. It was hard to listen to that.

I also heard Jesus talking to the criminals beside him. One made fun of Jesus, and he said, "If you really are the Messiah, save us all!" But the other one said to him, "We have been punished properly for what we have done wrong. But this man has done nothing wrong." And he said, "Please don't forget me when you enter your kingdom." Then Jesus turned to him and said, "Today you will be in Paradise with me." That was pretty amazing.

What happened next was very strange. It was only twelve noon and the entire sky turned black for three whole hours. Right in the middle of the day! When the sun came back out, Jesus looked up to the heavens and said, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" That was the first time I ever saw Jesus question God. That was really frightening for me.

Mary: Do you know what the last thing he said to me was? He looked at me and John, who was standing next to me, and said to me, "Woman, here is your son." Then Jesus said to John, the one he loved, "Here is your mother." I believe Jesus wants us to take care of each other, but he especially wants John to take care of me. He was worried about me, even through all his pain.

John: After Jesus said that, we heard him say he was thirsty. A soldier soaked a sponge in some sour wine, poured it over Jesus' head and he drank it. Jesus' last words were, "It is finished," then he bowed his head and died.

Right as he died, the curtain that hung at the top of the temple tore in half. The earth shook, like an earthquake, and like a huge storm at the same time.

I guess I'll take Mary home now. This is a very sad time for us. I don't understand why this had to happen.

Mary of Bethany

Scripture: Matthew 26:6-13, Mark 14:3=19
(see also Luke 7:36-40)

Setting: Mary is dressed simply but elegantly, as if she has some wealth but chooses not to use it on clothing. She is in a small, darkened room where it looks as though some people were gathered to eat and drink and relax. Her main props are a towel and an empty, fancy perfume jar. She will have small perfumed bath oil balls to give to the children for their baskets. This scene should come just after the temple scene and before the upper room scene. My name is Mary, and I live in Bethany—that's a small town right outside Jerusalem—with my sister Martha and my brother Lazarus. You may remember stories about how my brother died and Jesus brought him back to life. Really!! And there was another time that I was listening to Jesus teach and my sister got mad at me for not doing the housework. But Jesus took up for me. But I bet you want to hear about the night Jesus and his disciples came to dinner at our house. Yes? I knew it! Everyone wants to hear about it, especially since I poured a really expensive jar of perfume on his head and feet, and everyone thought I was crazy. But I'm not crazy....I just had a really strong feeling that it was the right thing to do. And I still think it was right.

About six days before Passover, I was helping Martha prepare for dinner one night when there was a knock at the door; and who do you think it was? It was Jesus and the disciples! We had heard that Jesus had been in Jerusalem, so we were hoping that he would come to our house. Fortunately we had made plenty of food, so we helped them wash their hands and put the food on the table.

As they started to eat, I thought to myself, "This is Jesus—the teacher whom I loved, and who everybody was saying was the Messiah—eating at our table! Surely there is something special I can do for him."

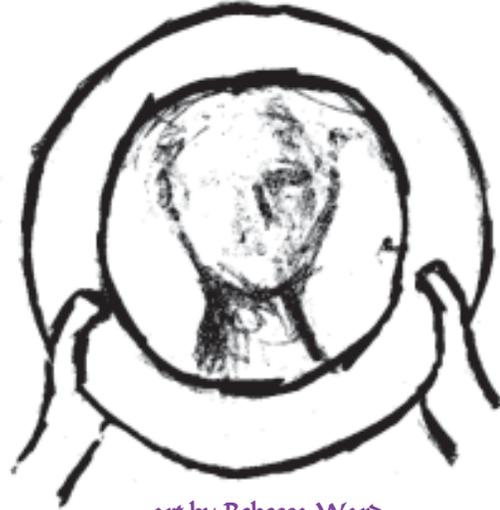
I got up and ran into my bedroom as fast as I could and got an alabaster jar filled with an expensive ointment my father had given to me as a little girl. I was so pleased with my idea that I ran up behind him, broke the alabaster bottle of ointment, and poured the perfume all over his head and his feet.

While I was washing his feet with my hair—that's how someone like me shows how much we love someone—I could hear some of the disciples complaining. Judas was getting angry at me for not selling the perfume and giving the money to the poor. I guess I could have done that; I know Jesus said to do all we could for the poor.

But you know what? Jesus defended me. Me! He said, "Leave her alone; why are you giving her a hard time? She is performing a good service for me. There will always be

poor men and women around you can give money to, but I will not always be around. This woman, Mary, has done all she can, she has anointed me in preparation for my death. Whenever my story is told, let her story be told as well in remembrance of her."

Can you believe that? He stood up to his own disciples for me. He took up for me—again. I didn't like what he was saying about dying, but I really didn't understand all of that at the time.



art by Rebecca Ward

Pilate's Wife

Scripture: Matthew 27:1-31; Mark 14; Luke 22

Setting: Outside, a large patio-like area—or a large, official-looking room. The props for Pilate's scribe would work for this. One year we had her on a richly draped divan, lying down with a servant tending to her. Pilate's wife should be dressed richly, in sleeping clothes to give the impression that it's late at night. Jesus has just been taken away to be crucified, and Pilate's wife is visibly shaken. She has tiny bowls to give the children for their baskets. This scene should come after the garden scene and before the crucifixion scene.

I don't know exactly how to begin to tell you what just happened here.

A few hours ago, the chief priests and Jewish police brought a man named Jesus of Nazareth to my husband, the governor, Pontius Pilate. They wanted my husband to convict Jesus of some sort of crime and have him sentenced to death.

Pontius took Jesus into another room and asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" and all Jesus said was, "That's what you say." Pontius couldn't believe that the Jews actually wanted this man killed simply because he called himself the King of the Jews!

Pontius went back out to the police and told them, "I have not found this man guilty of any of your charges against him." Then he sent him to Herod, the Jewish prince

who had charge over Galilee, where this Jesus was from. Pretty soon, though, he was back in our courtyard. Herod had sent him back; I'm not sure why.

My husband was frustrated; he didn't know what to do. I heard him say to the crowd, "This man has done nothing to deserve death. I will have him beaten with whips and then release him." The priests and police did not like this at all; it wasn't enough.

There were several prisoners waiting to be crucified that day—many of them were Jewish. Pontius went out to the crowd and announced that he would release one of



art by Peter Yuichi Clark

the prisoners because it was Passover, a Jewish holiday. He assumed that the crowd would choose this Jesus to be released—we thought the common people loved him. But to his surprise, they asked for a murderer name Barabbas. A murderer!

I don't know why, but they wanted Jesus crucified. They began to get very angry and their voices got louder and louder. Pontius kept asking them, "Why? What evil has he done?" But the crowd continued to chant, "Crucify him!" I think the priests had bribed the people to say that. Poor Pontius sat in his judgment chair with his head in his hands. He didn't know what to do.

I was watching and listening from inside our house, and I was TERRIFIED. You see, I had a dream last night about that very same man. I knew that there was something special about him, and I didn't want my husband to have anything to do with him. I sent him a note, hoping my words would convince him to let the man go. The note

said: "Have nothing to do with that innocent man. I had a dream about him, and I am very, very frightened."

When Pontius finally realized he had to do what the crowd asked or else there would be a riot, he took some water and washed his hands in front of the crowd—see there? That's the bowl he used. (Picks up the towel) And this is where he wiped his hands. He said, "I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves." And the crowd responded with, "Let his blood be on our hands!" So Pontius sentenced Jesus to be crucified.

I don't know what is going to happen. I don't know much about this man, but I feel so sad and frightened about him going to his death like that. I know he didn't deserve it.

(Explains to the children as she gives out cloth squares that they are to remind them of the towel Pilate used to dry his hands after washing them.)

Joseph of Arimathea

Scripture: Matthew 27: 57-66; Mark 15:42-47;
Luke 23:50-56; John 19:38-42

Setting: Outside. There should be an empty cross above where Joseph stands to tell his story. Joseph is dressed in the clothing of a wealthy man and a Jewish religious leader. He has large nails to give to the children. (This should come sixth in the sequence, just before the empty tomb, and could take the place of Barabbas in the original walk.)

Did you guys see what just happened? Did you see them force Jesus up the hill to be crucified? No? Well, the story must be told.

It was awful. After the Roman governor, Pilate, sentenced Jesus to be crucified, they made Jesus join two other men—thieves, someone told me—who were also to be executed. And they made him carry this big wooden cross up to a hill they call "The Place of the Skull." Sounds scary, doesn't it? It is! Once they arrived, they put Jesus on the wooden beams, in the middle between the two thieves.

While he was hanging there, the soldiers were throwing dice, dividing his clothes between them. People were pointing and laughing at Jesus, telling him that if he really was the Son of God, he could save himself—and other things like that. It was hard for me to listen to that.

I also heard Jesus talking to the men beside him. One made fun of Jesus, and he said, "If you really are the Messiah, save us all!" But the other one said to him, "We have been punished properly for what we have done wrong. But this man has done nothing wrong." And then he turned to Jesus and said, "Please don't forget me when you enter your kingdom." Then Jesus answered him. He said, "Today you will be in Paradise with me." I was a little confused by that, but I thought it was pretty amazing.

What happened next was very strange. It was only twelve noon and the entire sky turned black for three long hours. Right in the middle of the day! When the sun came back out, Jesus looked up to the heavens and said, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” That was the first time I ever saw Jesus question God. That was really frightening for me.

After that, it was nearing the end of the ninth hour. By now, everyone knew what they’d done, but it was too late. With his last breath and the earth shaking beneath our feet, the people finally understood what they’d done. At least, some of them did. I stood at a distance with Mary and several other women from Galilee. They had followed Jesus as he went around teaching. We watched as one of the centurions who had nailed him up there turned around and looked at the others, and said, “Surely this was a righteous man.” Some of the other people beat on their chests when they realized what they had done. We, who knew him, watched from far away, because we were afraid.

Being an upright man, I was waiting for the Messiah to come. But there was something about this teacher that was different. I am a leader among my people, but I did not consent to the decisions or actions of the people today. I wanted something to do, I don’t know why, but I couldn’t think of anything. It seemed like it was too late to do anything. But then I realized that Jesus, who barely owned the robe he had on, wouldn’t have any place to be buried.

So I decided to bury him in my tomb. I had carved it out of the rock myself.

I went to Pilate, and I was frightened—but I had to be bold. I asked him for the body of Jesus. He acted surprised that I asked. He was surprised that Jesus was already dead. People usually take much longer to die on crosses. I guess he did not believe me, and he summoned one of his centurions. Sure enough, the centurion stated what I already knew—that Jesus was dead. Pilot gave me permission to take Jesus’ body. I bought clean linen cloth and carefully wrapped his body. Mary Magdalene and Jesus’ mother Mary, and several other women were with me. We couldn’t really prepare him for burial yet, because the sun was about to go down, and we can’t do things like that on the Sabbath. We agreed that the women would go on the morning after the Sabbath and take the ointments for his body.

So I placed his body inside the tomb and rolled a heavy stone over the entrance. It was the most difficult thing I’ve ever done. There was some controversy, because someone said he would rise from the dead, and the Jewish leaders were afraid that someone would steal his body and pretend that he was alive—oh, I don’t know. I didn’t feel like listening to them. Anyway, they placed a guard there to keep anyone from tampering with the body. I didn’t care. I just went home. My heart was broken.

—Note: We have found this monologue to be the most effective immediately before the tomb scene.

Sacred



Seasons

art by Sharon Rollins

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