

# Stations of the Cross



"Let the children come to me"

Reflections to help communities to repent of the sins against the innocent but particularly children and young people.

**Written by Sister Brigid Murphy CP**  
Illustrated by Sister Karen Englebretsen CP

## FORWARD

The reflections which follow flow from many years experience of working with children and young people in Ireland and England as well as contact with children in Israel, Peru and more recently in Australia. They are a response to the ever increasing number of disclosures of abuses by members of families and members of the Church who have held Unique and privileged places of trust in the lives of children and vulnerable young people.

They are offered to help develop awareness and sensitivity to the needs of children. I hope and pray that we may all recognise our own part in the suffering of children whether through hunger, war, violence, exploitation, abuse or poverty. Let us remember that children learn what they live.

### Suggestion for prayer

Take one station for reflection each week over a period of time and perhaps think of one positive action you can take.



# FIRST STATION

## JESUS IS CONDEMNED TO DIE

**'Lamentation is heard in Ramah and bitter weeping;  
Rachael weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted because  
they are no more.'**

**Jer 31: 15**

**EVERY YEAR THOUSANDS OF CHILDREN ARE DENIED LIFE THROUGH WAR,  
ABORTION,  
MALNUTRITION  
AND EXPLOITATION**

Lord, we pray for strength for all whose women faced with difficult choices that they may choose the way that leads to true peace of mind. Forgive those who seek to solve problems through war rather than political solutions. Forgive us all when we have been too busy with our own pre-occupations to care for those who are at risk through war, hunger or violence.







# SECOND STATION

## JESUS CARRIES HIS CROSS ALONE

'Get up, take the child and his mother and escape with them to Egypt and stay there until I tell you; for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him. So Joseph got up, took mother and child by night and sought refuge with them in Egypt' Matt 2

**MANY CHILDREN LIVE IN ISOLATION AND LONELINESS,  
OFTEN ABUSED BY THOSE CLOSEST TO THEM,  
TOO FRIGHTENED TO TELL THE TERRIBLE SECRET,  
OFTEN THEY ARE BLAMED FOR SPEAKING OUT.**

Lord, we pray for those children who must carry adult burdens that they may experience real love and healing. Forgive us for the times when we have ignored the voice of the child.





# THIRD STATION

## JESUS FALLS BENEATH THE CROSS

'Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven? He called a child, set him in front of them and said, 'Truly I tell you: unless you turn round and become like children, you will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven.' Matt 18:1-2

**MANY CHILDREN DIE EACH YEAR AT THE HANDS OF THOSE WHO ARE MEANT TO BE CARING FOR THEM. THEIR PAIN IS NOT NOTICED AND THEY FALL VICTIMS TO VIOLENCE FROM PARENTS AND CARERS.**

Lord, we pray for those who cause violence towards children that the victim within them may be healed. Grant courage and healing to the victims of violence. Forgive us all for the times we have abused our power and when our actions have been oppressive.





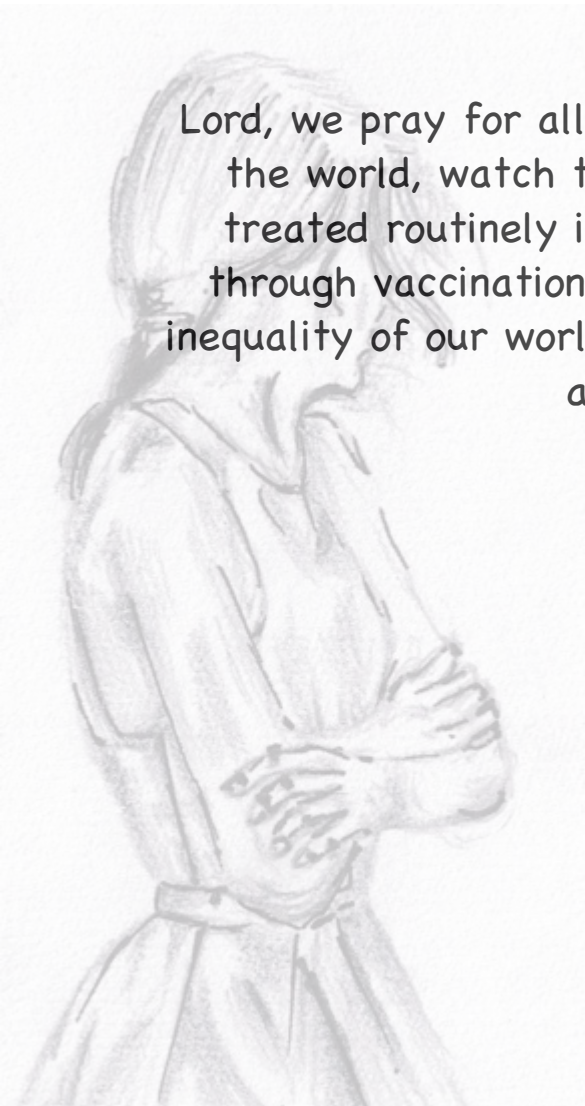
# FOURTH STATION

## JESUS MEETS HIS MOTHER

'Have no fear, for I have redeemed you:  
I call you by name: you are mine.'  
Is 43:1

**MARY WAS HELPLESS, SHE COULD NOT CHANGE THE COURSE OF HER SON'S LIFE. MANY MOTHERS WATCH THEIR CHILDREN DIE FROM CURABLE DISEASES IN PARTS OF THE WORLD WHERE THEY CANNOT AFFORD MEDICAL CARE.**

Lord, we pray for all those parents who, daily in some parts of the world, watch their children die from diseases that are treated routinely in other parts of the world or prevented through vaccination programs. Forgive us for our part in the inequality of our world and give us the courage to work towards a changing world order.





# FIFTH STATION

## SIMON HELPS JESUS

'They brought babies for him to touch and when the disciples saw them they rebuked them. But Jesus called for the children and said, 'Let the children come to me; do not try and stop them for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you; whoever does not accept the Kingdom of God like a child will never enter it.'

Luke 18:15

**MANY CHILDREN HAVE TO RELY ON STRANGERS TO GIVE THEM THEIR BASIC NEEDS.**

**MANY ARE DEPRIVED OF LIVING IN THEIR OWN FAMILIES AND HAVE TO LEAVE THEIR HOMES HAVING WITNESSED THEIR PARENTS DIE.**

**SOME CHILDREN ARE ABANDONED BECAUSE PARENTS CANNOT COPE WITH THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES.**

Lord, we pray for all children who are in the care of people other than their parents especially those raised in institutions in countries where war has caused acute suffering. Forgive those attitudes in ourselves which are sources of disharmony.







# SIXTH STATION

## VERONICA REACHES OUT TO JESUS

**'Hannah did not go: she said to her husband, after the child is weaned I shall come up with him to present him before the Lord: then he is to stay there always. Her husband Elkanah said to her, do what you think best: stay at home until you weaned him. Only may the Lord indeed see your vow fulfilled; So the woman stayed behind and nursed her son until she had weaned him.'** 1 Sam: 7

**MANY CHILDREN IN OUR WORLD ARE  
FORCED TO PERFORM ADULT TASKS,  
CARING FOR YOUNGER SIBLINGS  
OR  
WORKING TO SUPPLEMENT FAMILY INCOME  
AS THEY STILL DO IN SOME SOCIETIES.**

Lord, we pray for those millions of children throughout the world who must labor for long hours to ensure survival. Forgive us our lack of outreach towards the developing world and for our collusion with structure that keep people poor.





# SEVENTH STATION

## JESUS FALLS A SECOND TIME

'Jairus threw himself down at the feet of Jesus and begged Him to come to his house, because his only daughter, who is about twelve years old was dying. While he was speaking a man came from the house of Jairus with a message to say, 'Your daughter has died .... But taking her by the hand Jesus spoke to her, 'Child get up, and her spirit returned and she got up at that very moment.' Luke 8 : 40-56

**MANY CHILDREN IN OUR WORLD  
GET UP AND GO TO BED HUNGRY.  
OFTEN THIS HUNGER IS A CONSEQUENCE OF UNJUST STRUCTURES IN  
OUR SOCIETIES OR WARS  
WHERE THE OBJECTIVES ARE DOMINATION  
RATHER THAN JUSTICE.**

Lord, we pray for all those children who are faced with hunger daily, not knowing when the next meal will be. Forgive us for our part in maintaining structures of injustice and give us the willingness to work for change.





# EIGHT STATION

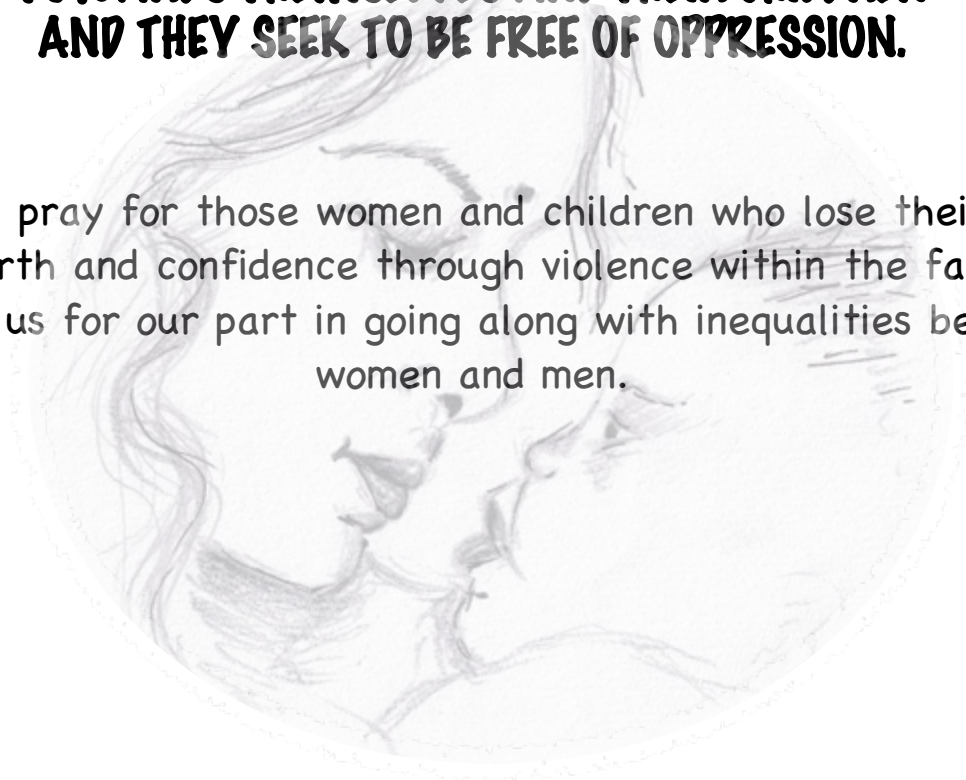
## JESUS MEETS THE WOMEN

'As the child grew up he became strong in spirit: he lived out in the wilderness until the day when he appeared publicly before Israel'  
Luke 1: 80

**MANY WOMEN ARE BRINGING CHILDREN UP ALONE BECAUSE OF  
FRACTURED RELATIONSHIPS,  
OFTEN CAUSED BY THE PRESSURES OF LIVING IN  
POOR HOUSING.**

**AN INCREASING NUMBER OF WOMEN EXPERIENCE VIOLENCE  
TOWARDS THEMSELVES AND THEIR CHILDREN  
AND THEY SEEK TO BE FREE OF OPPRESSION.**

Lord, we pray for those women and children who lose their sense of worth and confidence through violence within the family. Forgive us for our part in going along with inequalities between women and men.









# NINTH STATION

## JESUS FALLS FOR THE THIRD TIME

'Come children, listen to me: I shall teach you the fear of the Lord.  
Which of you delights in life and desires a long life to enjoy  
prosperity' Ps 34

**MANY CHILDREN LIVE IN THE STREETS OF OUR CITIES BEGGING AND  
SEARCHING THE GARBAGE DUMPS FOR FOOD. THEY FALL PREY TO  
ALL SORTS OF ABUSE.  
DO WE EVER STOP TO WONDER  
WHY SOME OF THE WORLD'S CHILDREN CARRY SUCH  
HEAVY BURDENS?**

Lord, we pray for those children in our world who are so  
burdened as to be deprived of dignity, love and education. Forgive  
us our silence in the face of such injustice.





# TENTH STATION

## JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS GARMENTS

'You created my inmost self, knit me together in my mother's womb. For so many marvels I thank you: a wonder am I and all your works and wonders. You knew me through and through, my being held no secrets from you, when I was being born in secret, textured in the depths of the earth' Ps 139: 13-15

**TOO MANY CHILDREN ARE STRIPPED OF THEIR  
DIGNITY AND INNOCENCE  
THROUGH THE EXPERIENCE OF SEXUAL ABUSE,  
OFTEN THIS IS WITHIN THEIR FAMILIES,  
WITHIN CARING INSTITUTIONS  
AND WITHIN THE CHURCH.**

Lord, we pray for all those children whose innocence is stolen from them through sexual exploitation. Forgive us Lord, for any action of ours that may have damaged the trust of a child. Help those who have been harmed by such experience to find wholeness and healing and come to know their essential dignity. Grant strength and guidance to those who may have hurt children that they may seek appropriate help and lead them to make some restitution for the harm inflicted on them.







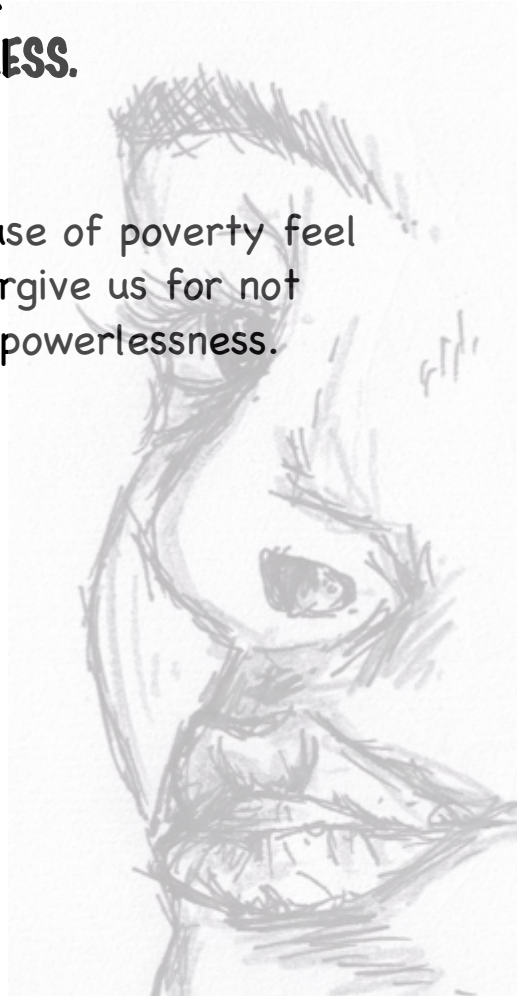
# ELEVENTH STATION

## JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS

'Can a woman forget her baby at the breast, feel no pity for the child she has borne? Even if these were to forget you. Look I have engraved you on the palms of my hands. Is 49: 15-16

**MANY OF THE DECISIONS MADE BY OUR  
POWER INSTITUTIONS IGNORE THE PLIGHT OF THE  
POOR AND THE MARGINALISED  
OFTEN OUR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE  
ARE NAILED TO THE CROSS OF  
DEATH, POVERTY AND HOPELESSNESS.**

Lord, we pray for all those children who because of poverty feel themselves to be in a hopeless situation. Forgive us for not leading our voice to protests against such powerlessness.







# TWELFTH STATION

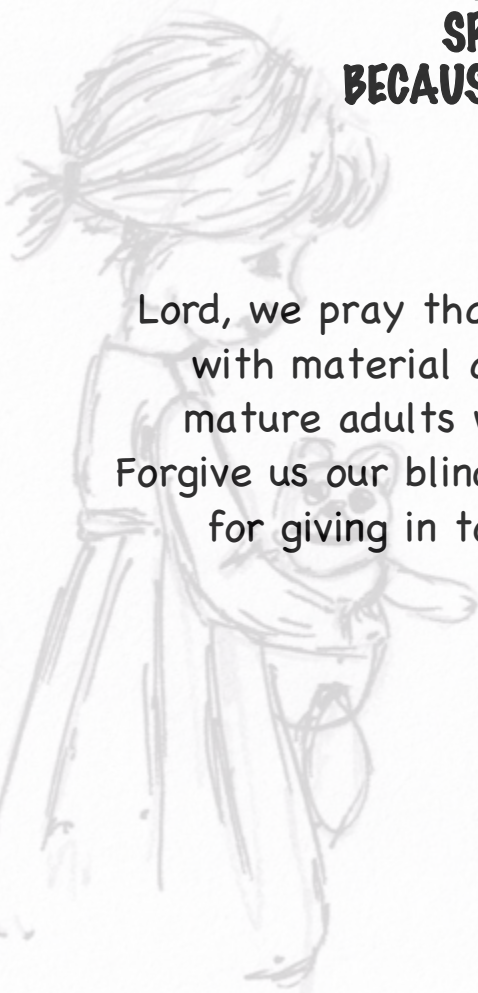
## JESUS DIES

'Blessed are those who mourn: they shall be comforted.' Matt 5:5

**MANY CHILDREN IN POOR COUNTRIES DIE BEFORE THEY REACH  
THEIR FIRST BIRTHDAY.**

**THIS CAN BE A CONSEQUENCE OF  
INSUFFICIENT OR NO MEDICAL CARE.  
IN OUR RICHER COUNTRIES CHILDREN DIE  
SPIRITUALLY AND EMOTIONALLY  
BECAUSE MATERIAL NEEDS ARE SEEN TO BE  
MORE IMPORTANT.**

Lord, we pray that we may see children as whole human beings with material and spiritual needs so that they grow to be mature adults with a sense of their own value and dignity. Forgive us our blindness to the spiritual needs of our children and for giving in to the pressure of the world of advertising.







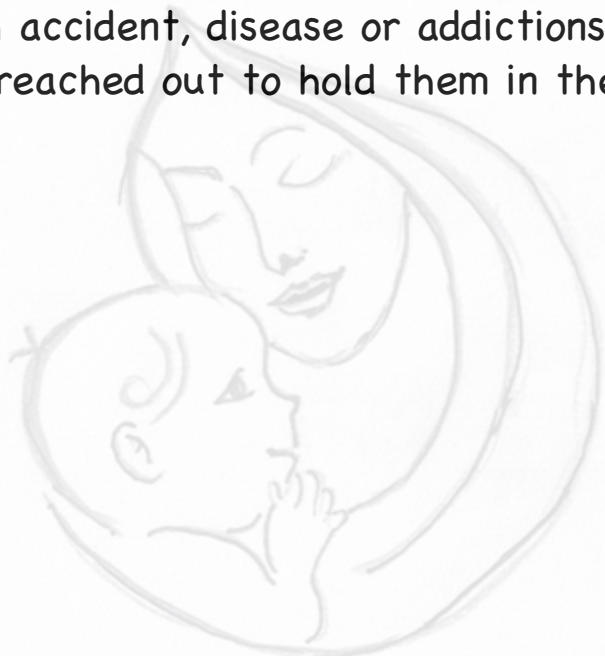
# THIRTEENTH STATION

## JESUS IS TAKEN DOWN FROM THE CROSS

'As the child's father and mother were wondering at the thing that were being said about him, Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother, 'Look he is destined for the fall and for the rise of many in Israel, destined to be a sign that is opposed and a sword will pierce your soul too so that the secret thoughts of many may be laid bear.' Lk 2" 33-35

**MARY RECEIVED THE LIFELESS BODY OF HER SON,  
SHE HAD SUPPORTED HIM IN LIFE.  
SHE WOULD NOT ABANDON HIM IN DEATH.  
MANY FAMILIES MOURN THE LOSS OF CHILDREN THROUGH  
ACCIDENT, DISEASE, DRUGS OR SUICIDE.**

Lord, we pray for all those families who have suffered the loss of a child through accident, disease or addictions. Forgive us when we have not reached out to hold them in their deep loss.







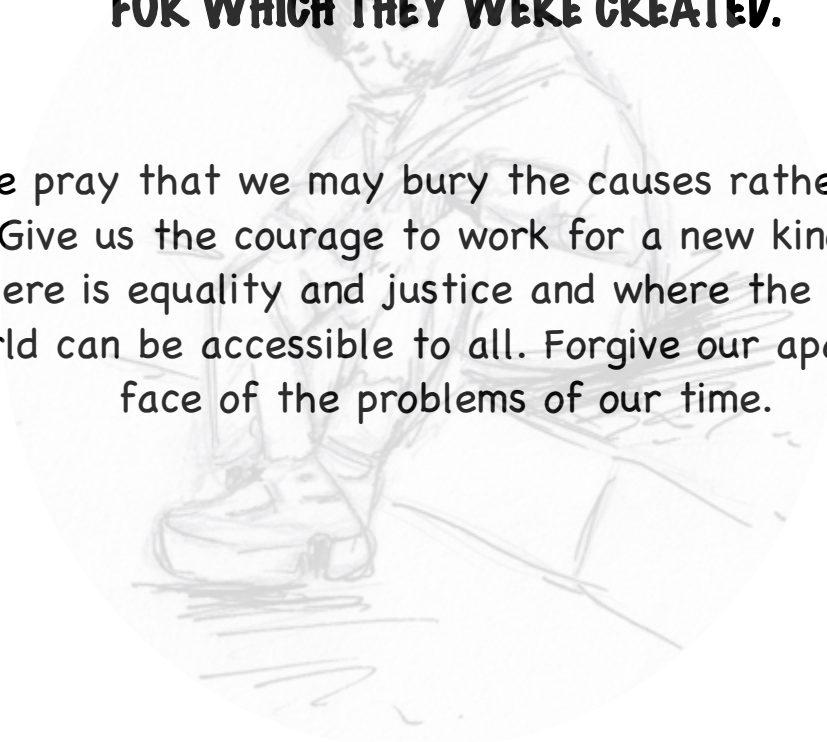
# FOURTEENTH STATION

## JESUS IS LAID IN THE TOMB

'Now, Master, you are letting your servant go in peace as you promised; for my eyes have seen the salvation which you have made ready in the sights of the nations: a light of revelation for the Gentiles and glory for your people Israel.' Luke 2: 29-32

**MANY OF THE WORLD'S CHILDREN ARE ENTOMBED BY  
POVERTY, WAR, DRUGS, AND DISEASE  
AND THEY ARE DENIED THE OPPORTUNITY TO  
DEVELOP THE FULLNESS OF LIFE  
FOR WHICH THEY WERE CREATED.**

Lord, we pray that we may bury the causes rather than the victims. Give us the courage to work for a new kind of society where there is equality and justice and where the resources of the world can be accessible to all. Forgive our apathy in the face of the problems of our time.







# FIFTEENTH STATION

## JESUS RISES FROM THE TOMB

'Do not be afraid, for I am with you, I shall bring your offspring from the east, and gather you from the west. To the North I will say, 'Give them up!' To the South, 'Do not hold them back!' Bring back my sons from far away and my daughters from the remotest parts of the earth, everyone who bears my name, whom I have created for my glory, whom I have formed, whom I have made.' Is 43: 5-7

**WHEREVER LIFE IS DEFENDED THEN THERE IS HOPE.  
MANY FAMILIES GIVE THEIR CHILDREN  
A LOVING AND SECURE ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH TO  
GROW AND DEVELOP.  
MANY ORGANISATIONS DEVOTE RESOURCES AND COMMIT  
THEMSELVES TO THE LIBERATING OF CHILDREN AND WORK TO  
UPHOLD THEIR DIGNITY.**

Lord, we pray for all the individuals and organizations that work constantly and creatively to develop awareness and bring about changes so that the world's children can enjoy being children in security. Forgive us for our apathy when we are asked for our support. Lord give us all the courage to work for improved conditions for the children of the world thus becoming a sign of hope.



# The Sisters of the Cross and Passion

The Sisters of the Cross and Passion are a small congregation founded in Manchester in 1852 by Elizabeth Prout, an English woman from Shropshire. Elizabeth touched by the plight of the poor in Manchester, was inspired to set up schools for the education of children as she saw education as a passport out of poverty and a way of opening up to possibility and developing potential. To achieve this vision she gathered other women around her and so the Congregation of the Sisters of the Cross and Passion was formed.

## **S r Brigid Murphy C.P**

Brigid, is an Irish woman who on completion of her secondary education in England, joined the Sisters of the Cross and Passion. After Profession she trained as a teacher and taught in Dublin and Birmingham before moving into Social work with children and families in Birmingham, St Helens and London. It was while involved in this work that she came acutely aware of the devastating effects of abuse by trusted adults on children that lasted into adulthood.

In this reflection Brigid has made connections with the traditional way of the Cross, scripture and the reality of childhood experiences. She draws on her experience of ministry in Ireland, England and Australia but also on countries where she has been resident for shorter times e.g. Israel, Peru.

Combining her experience of cultures and pastoral ministries Brigid threads together a reflection which helps us to grow in awareness of the suffering of the innocent with the hope that we can, as a society, be more sensitive to the innocent and the vulnerable. We pray for transformation that is needed for all especially those who are victims that they will find healing and peace.

## **S r Karen Englebretsen C.P** **Illustrator**

Karen Englebretsen is from New Zealand and she joined the Sisters of the Cross and Passion in Australia. She was professed in 2018 and is currently serving in Vietnam. Sharing her artistic gifts to illustrate our prayer with her drawings to help us grow our awareness of the suffering of the innocent.



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