

Scripture ~ John 19:25-27

²⁵ And that is what the soldiers did. Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶ When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, "Woman, here is your son." ²⁷ Then he said to the disciple, "Here is your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

Reflection for Adults

Around 250CE, a devastating plague swept from Ethiopia across North Africa, then to Italy and the Western Empire. At the height of the plague, which was most likely an outbreak of smallpox, 5,000 people a day were said to be dying in Rome. Many Roman citizens simply abandoned their family and neighbors, tossing them out into the street to die. The early Christians however, went into the streets, caring for the dying, and burying the dead. Almost two hundred years later, the Patriarch of Alexandria in Egypt organized groups of volunteers from the local church to transport and care for the sick. They were called parabalani, "the reckless ones," because they ventured into places where others refused to go. Where did these early Christians get the inspiration to be so reckless in their caring, not only for fellow believers, but for all their fellow citizens?

At this twelfth station we find the answer to that question. Jesus, now in his last moments of life, concerns himself not with his own suffering, but with the suffering of his mother and one of his best friends. Mary, his mother, was most likely a widow at this point in her life. Now, with the death of her eldest son, she would be relegated to the lowest rungs of society with no one to look after her. So Jesus motioned to John and asked him to take Mary into his own care. Behold your mother. And then he asked Mary to look after John as if he were her own son. Behold your son. There, at the cross, Jesus asked his followers to be reckless in their care for one another, to strip away the traditional ideas of what constituted a family, and to forge a new family of faith that would care for one another at all costs.

Take a look at the picture. The beloved disciple's arm is lovingly placed around Mary's shoulder. Who is in need of your care at the moment?

Going Deeper

- When have you been "reckless" in your care for another person?

Reflection for Children

Jesus taught us that we are all part of God's family. When he was dying on the cross, he asked his friend, John, to take care of his mother. And he asked his mother, Mary, to treat John like she would treat her own son. Even when Jesus was dying, he wanted to show us how to love and care for each other.

Discussion with Children

- What are some ways you could show another person you care for them?
- Have you ever thought about the people in your church as your family?