The Last Words of Christ in the Way of the Cross

A Sequence for Voices

By Thomas J. Gardiner

Performance Rights

It is an infringement of the federal copyright law to copy or reproduce this script in any manner or to perform this play without royalty payment. All rights are controlled by Encore Performance Publishing, LLC. Call the publisher for additional scripts and further licensing information. The author’s name must appear on all programs and advertising with the notice: “Produced by special arrangement with Encore Performance Publishing.”

PUBLISHED BY

ENCORE PERFORMANCE PUBLISHING
www.encoreplay.com
© 1993 by Thomas J. Gardiner

Download your complete script from Eldridge Publishing
http://www.95church.com/playdetails.asp?PID=1843
The Last Words of Christ in the Way of the Cross

- 2 -

DEDICATION

For Anne

STORY OF THE PLAY

The 14 Stations of the Cross are brilliantly re-interpreted for modern audiences. Each Station is written to be whole in and of itself, and thus different Stations may or may not be used in each production. The goal of this play is to “Help us to share in the Passion of our Savior, to sense how those twisted streets of Jerusalem run through the streets of Los Angeles and Calcutta. To intuit how the wood that made the cross may buttress the fragile walls of our own homes, to feel how the steel that made the nails may make bullets and bayonets. To teach us to somehow make sense of our suffering, the way You make the suffering of Our Lord meaningful. To put our lives and ourselves together the way You put those sacred events together.” This work has been praised by clergy and performed in churches around the country. A man and a woman are the minimum cast; if more speakers are available, the parts should be distributed appropriately, changing at each station. About 30 minutes if performed in its entirety.
THE LAST WORDS OF CHRIST
IN THE WAY OF THE CROSS

(The room or auditorium is darkened, except for the LIGHTS on the lecterns in front of the room or at the edge of the stage. The SPEAKERS enter and take their places at the lecterns. A man and a woman are the minimum cast; if more speakers are available, the parts should be distributed appropriately, changing at each station. “All” refers to all the men and women in the cast, who should speak those lines in unison.)

WOMAN: O Holy Spirit, You whose enveloping wings
    Embrace the outermost edges of the universe
    And touch the innermost center of our selves
    With gentle understanding, hear our prayer.
MAN: You are the Meaning under all the meanings
    We hear in words or read in the world’s events.
WOMAN: Help us to share in the Passion of our Savior,
MAN: To sense how those twisted streets of Jerusalem
    Run through the streets of New York and Los Angeles,
    Calcutta and Sarajevo, Berlin and Paris and Rio,
WOMAN: To intuit how the wood that made the cross
    May buttress the fragile walls of our own homes,
    To feel how the steel that made the nails
    May make bullets and switchblades, bayonets and bombs,
MAN: To guess how the Roman administrator Pilate
    May reappear an administrator anywhere
    When we disregard Your guidance;
ALL: And to confess
    That part of us was in the crowd that rejected You,
    That let You be led away.
WOMAN: Dear Holy Spirit,
    Teach us to somehow make sense of our suffering,
    The way You make the suffering of Our Lord
    Meaningful, to put our lives and ourselves together
    The way You put those sacred events together,
ALL: And to make Our Lord’s reunion with His Father
    And with us, His chastened followers, a joyful one.
FIRST STATION

WOMAN: The First Station: Jesus is condemned to death.
MAN: She got pale and faint coming from the abortion clinic,
    Big beads of cold sweat strung across her forehead.
    I knew the place was private, first-rate doctors,
    And what else should she do, raise an unwanted child?
WOMAN: I'll be okay, she said, lying down.
MAN: It's not as if I left her there to die. (Pause.)
WOMAN: The prison is really crowded, the place is filthy,
    But at least they guarantee them three meals a day.
    They're not running rehabilitation programs,
    But I said I'd visit him, if I can find the time.
    It's much too far to travel very often,
    But it's not as if I left him there to die. (Pause.)
MAN: She had what they called "an identity crisis" in college,
    And after she flunked all her courses they sent her home.
    She didn't keep herself clean and she ate like an animal.
    She spent all her time just sitting in her room.
    The mental hospital is not very pretty,
    But it's not as if I left her there to die.
WOMAN: When he got fired the last time, that was it.
    I don't care if it wasn't his fault or not.
    I know what the Church says about divorce,
    But I have my own career to think of, too.
    He may have been depressed when I left before,
    But it's not as if I left him there to die.
MAN: The doctor said it wasn't a normal baby,
    But she never even began to develop normally.
    Just walking in the street with her was embarrassing,
    And talking to her was a waste of time.
    The institution's no paradise I suppose,
    But it's not as if I left her there to die.
WOMAN: Pop could still shop for himself and visit his cronies
    And managed to keep himself in pretty good health.
    It's just that he seemed to get in everyone's way.
    In the nursing home there'll be people his own age.
WOMAN: (Cont’d.) It may not be the nicest place in the world
But it’s not as if I left him there to die.
MAN: We warned Jesus about provoking the politicians,
    Annoying the army, and insulting the doctors and lawyers.
    When he took on the rabbis we knew they’d get revenge.
    We stuck out our necks for him in a few conversations,
    But how far can you go to defend a fanatic?
    It’s not as if we left him there to die.
WOMAN: It’s not “as if.”
ALL: We left Him there to die.

SECOND STATION

WOMAN: The Second Station: Jesus takes up His cross.
MAN: That tree’s good
    Solid wood
    Joseph said,
    Cut it down,
    Drag it 'round
    To the shed. Lop the limbs,
    Peel and trim
    All the bark;
    Leave the trunk
    Like the chest,
    Clean and stark.
    To make wood
    For our good
    Trees must die
    Like the lamb
    So that all
    May survive,
    So that we
    From this tree
    Can make planks
    For a house,
    Wood for fires.
ALL: We give thanks
   For the tree
   And the lamb,
   For the ram
   In place of Isaac,
   For our father Abraham.
MAN: When our God
   Made the stars,
   Made the earth,
   He made all
   As a test
   Of our worth,
   He made even
   This tree
   Tall and bare
   Stretching out
   Empty arms
   In the air,
   Reaching down
   Hungry roots
   In the dry
   Sandy soil
   Of our questioning
   Why.
ALL: In the dry
   Desert wastes
   Wondering why
   Our just God
   Lets the just Man
   Die.

(Pause.)

MAN: Miriam! Come and see
   How the boy
   Handles wood!
   With what joy
   He lifts up the big planks....
THIRD STATION

WOMAN: The Third Station: Jesus falls the first time
MAN: Not like a snowflake powdering to crystals,
WOMAN: Nor like a meteor melting into fireworks,
MAN: Nor even like an astronaut returning back to earth
   With mathematical, heroic certitude,
   Insulated by a steel shell,
WOMAN: But like an old person in the grip of a mugger,
MAN: Like the naive target of a wily con-man,
WOMAN: Like a kid being sold a vial of crack,
ALL: Or like the time we wondered whether
   Lying would make any difference.
MAN: “Carry that coal if you want the minimum wage,”
WOMAN: “Carry the extra baggage or we’ll fire you,”
ALL: Carry all the loafers on the top
   So they won’t treat you like “the peons on the bottom.”
MEN: Don’t protest, if you want to keep your job -
   No matter how low the wages, unsafe the conditions,
   Unfair the promotions, the benefits, the boss
WOMEN: Or quit, coward - you can be replaced!
MAN: “Blacks are all shiftless,”
WOMAN: “Hispanics are unreliable,”
MAN: “Asians will work for anything you pay them.”
WOMAN: When you’re down, you can always
MAN: “Take an upper”
WOMAN: “Buy some new clothes”
MAN: “Go to the movies”
WOMAN: “Try professional help”
ALL: Get up from there, you lazy slob, Get up.

FOURTH STATION

WOMAN: The Fourth Station: Jesus meets His Mother
   at the end of a twisted corridor,
   The comforting light on her shoulders like a shawl
Of cotton she wove on her loom, her presence always
Like the seamless garment she had woven him
End of Freeview

Download your complete script from Eldridge Publishing
http://www.95church.com/playdetails.asp?PID=1843

Eldridge Publishing, a leading drama play publisher since 1906, offers more than a thousand full-length plays, one-act plays, melodramas, holiday plays, religious plays, children's theatre plays and musicals of all kinds.

For more than a hundred years, our family-owned business has had the privilege of publishing some of the finest playwrights, allowing their work to come alive on stages worldwide.

We look forward to being a part of your next theatrical production.

Eldridge Publishing... for the start of your theatre experience!