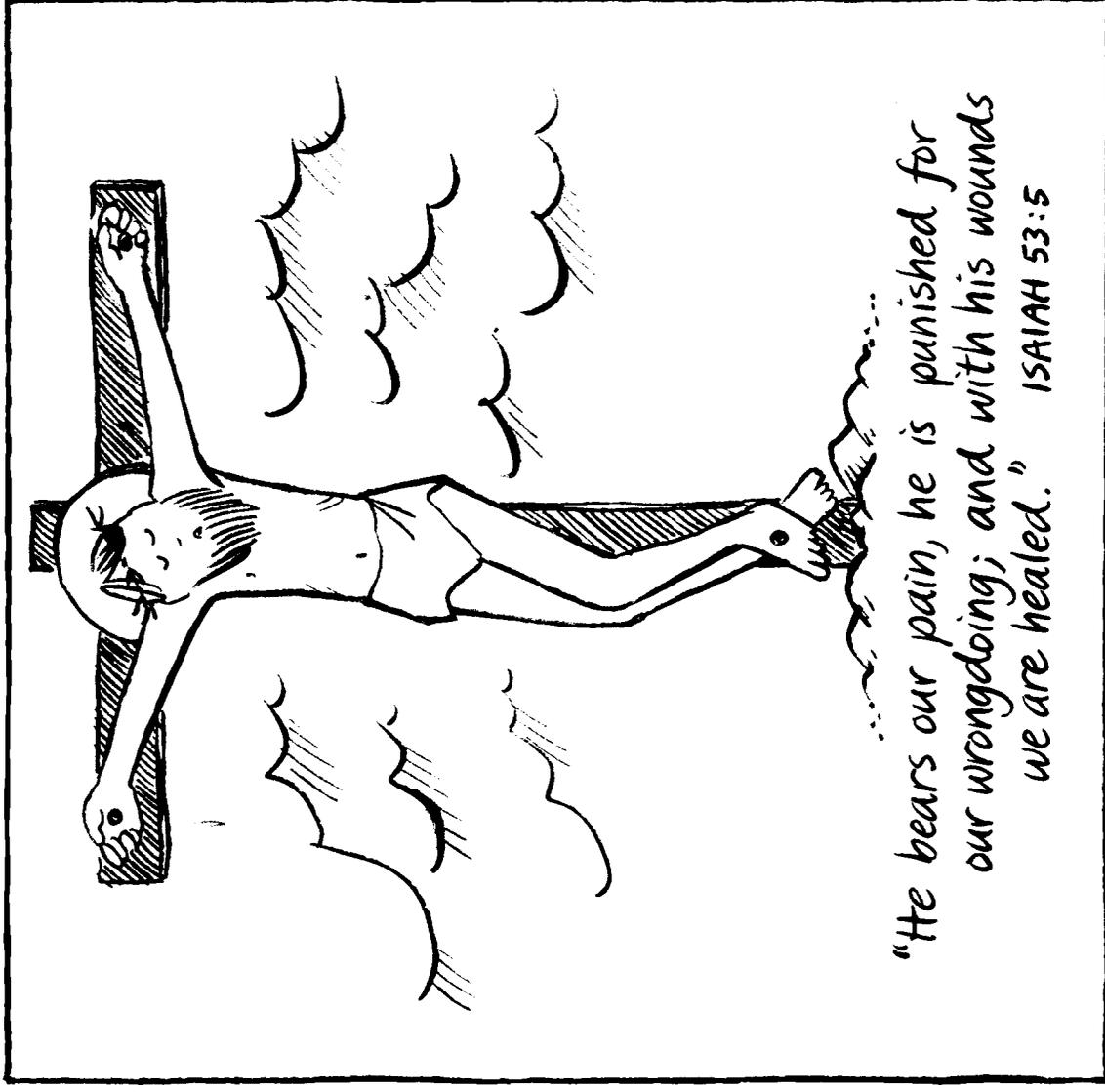


THE SUNDAY PAPER

JUNIOR

Year B
PROPER 24
TRACK 2



A NOTE TO PARENTS

Ancient religions worldwide share an unexplained conviction that the slaying of animals, or even of human victims, can be a sacred act that releases blessing on the human community. As an adult, I am troubled by this conviction: I can't justify it or explain it; to my rational mind it now seems repellent, dangerous, and perilously open to sado-masochistic interpretations. But as a child, my reaction was very different. Yes, the idea of sacrifice was "troubling," the way anything very big and very important is troubling: it was troubling like a very rich story, like birth and death and magic. It was scary, but with a scariness that was of awe rather than of nightmares. I knew that somehow I understood, though I could not possibly explain, that the death of the innocent is holy and life-giving; I knew also that this was a truth that belongs in myth and mystery—I was never, for example, in the least tempted to try to make something of it in real life.

Not all children are as attuned to the psychology of primitive peoples as I seem to have been. Many kids respond to the most ancient stories in the Bible, the stories of altar and sacrifice, blood, tabernacle, priest, and sin offering, by making a face: "Yuck!" "Why did they do that?" "That's mean." "That's disgusting."

Our faith is given to us in the form of stories—ancient and powerful stories, stories that stir and trouble us. Imaginative children who gravitate to fairy tales and myths, who love dressing up and pretending, will have an easier time than soberly literal-minded kids in grasping the *mystery* that is hidden in these stories: the things they have to say to us that cannot be explained on a literal, conscious level. I don't think it helps children who are having trouble with the story of the Cross to try to explain it to them in reasonable ways: "Jesus died so that God could forgive our sins," for example. The Gospel does not require us to *understand* how Jesus' death sets us free, only to respond to it with awe and love. The best help we can give our children is probably not explanations, but a rich imaginative life, through stories, art, songs, and our own gift of forgiving love for them.

© 1988 by Gretchen Wolff Pritchard. All rights reserved.

THE SUNDAY PAPER, 19 Colony Road, New Haven, CT 06511, USA

203 - 624-2520 • www.the-sunday-paper.com

"He bears our pain, he is punished for
our wrongdoing; and with his wounds
we are healed." ISAIAH 53:5

THE PROPHETS TOLD THE PEOPLE GOD'S PLAN FOR THEM.

One prophet said, "God's work will be done by his special servant."

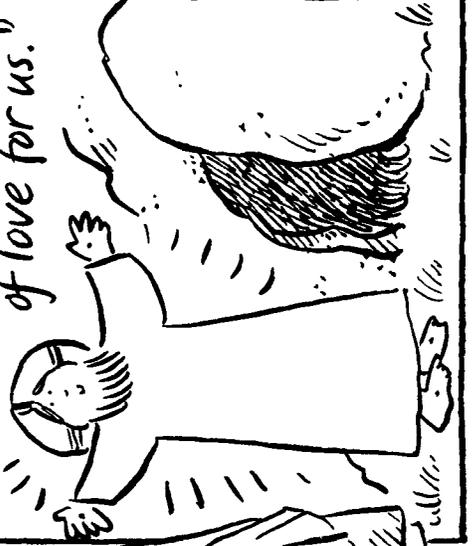
"He will be led away like a sheep to be killed, and he will not fight back."



"He will pour out his soul to death. He will be buried with criminals."



"He will live... he will see the great thing he has done when he obeyed God out of love for us."



Jesus told his friends about God's plan. He knew he would give his life out of love for us. But his friends did not understand. Later, when he died and rose again, they began to understand.

God's plan is sometimes like a picture hidden in a puzzle. Color the parts of this picture that have crosses in them, to show God's promises.

