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**Note: There is a modest fee for use.**  
***The Cry of the Whole Congregation***  
***By Walter Wangerin, Jr.***

*(Editor: The complete text of the work is printed in the first section. In a removable center section is printed an adaptation for use as a Palm/Passion Sunday Service involving the congregation. Blank space has been left in the service folder format for the addition of hymns, choral music, etc. The service folder may be reproduced in sufficient quantity for the worshipping congregation.)*

The following drama takes place on the Sunday of the Passion. Its purpose is to allow each worshiper suddenly to discover (pitifully, intensely, truly to discover) his own rootedness in the drama which is Christ's, so that the Passion Story may no longer be mere story for observance, analysis, learning or history; so that it embrace the worshiper, name him, and become his own story indeed: the shape of his being.

Therefore, all senses are enlisted: sight, sound, the rhythm of both, music and motion, and the feel of the worshiper's voice in his throat and his emotion in his breast. This drama has no audience. All are actors. None objective. All subjective, or else the objects of the driving love of God.

There are four readers:

1. The Narrator, responsible both for narrative material and for the words of Jesus.
2. The Judas figure, who also represents the unrepentant criminal.
3. The Peter figure, who also represents that criminal who repents and receives the promise of the Lord; thus, forgiveness follows sin.
4. The Pilate figure, who also reads the Pharisee's lines during the entrance into Jerusalem and later represents Joseph of Arimathea, by which device, again, forgiveness is signaled.

The congregation as a whole shifts its identity so that it suffers the common conversion of the Christian, which is often an extended, dramatic process: that is, it begins with the ignorant praise of the multitude who knew not what sort of Messiah this Jesus was; next, it is the disciples, loving but failing the Lord; next, it plays the neutral role of the watchers, the questioners who disturb Peter by their curiosity; next, it descends to the sinful shrieks of manipulated people crying, "Crucify." This is the congregation's deepest level. Next it arises to play out an internal conflict: men and women divide in their speaking, and some lament the deed, praying forgiveness, while others clearly participate in the deed. In "Crucify" they sinned; in this passage, though they continue in sin, yet they are conscious of it, too; and that is the more painful state, to be sure, but it

is also the better, being the beginning of confession. Next, with the repentant criminal, the congregation recognizes the kingdom, power, glory of the Lord; and finally it is the women, blessedly separated from the event, yet witnesses unto it. Witnesses!

In the congregation's shifting role, the Lord's Prayer plays a constant harmony to the Lord's passion, again and again thrusting the people (by their connotative memory of these significant words) into a worshipful attitude, making real not only to the mouth and the mind but also to the soul what is taking place today.

There is a dancer. She is female. She alone takes the chancel, in which no furniture is but the rail and the altar. Nor does she enter the rail and approach the altar until that moment when Jesus is crucified, and then her feet are rooted and motion appears in her upper body only. At death her head and body sag. At burial she crumples altogether. Before then she may use the passage of music, particularly when the congregation sings, for sweeping steps and speed. But she will also vary her presentation so that sometimes it closes in on mime; for example, during the words of the Last Supper, "This is my body," she will seem to draw away from her very abdomen the invisible gift which then she proffers; and at the right moments she will turn her head through sad degrees to look at Judas, to gaze upon the Peter figure.

The congregation, as it busies itself in reading and singing, shall catch fleeting images of this dancer, and so shall she effect a metamorphical communication. Since they shall not see her whole and lineal, they will find themselves unconsciously filling in the blanks; and what they give to her by imagination shall be diverse among them and mighty indeed.

Please note that she does not play Christ. Rather, she represents, as best as possible, the moods, the changes he must have passed through. She represents both his suffering and his love.

There is a drummer. He teaches the congregation in its rhythm, beginning very slowly and softly, but increasing speed and impact as the drama unfolds, nipping the people's heels like a sheepdog, driving them, making them restless and thumping thunder to their cries of "Crucify! Crucify!" In the last passages of the cross, just before Jesus dies, his beat becomes the death march, funereal and impossibly sad. At death he falls silent altogether, and that silence shall be heard. It shall be deep space and a dangerous thing. I promise you: at that moment not a member of the congregation shall move, for death will be very present against their hearts.

There is a soloist, a male and tenor, if possible. He may be accompanied on a piano for the first three verses of his piece. But the last verse must be sung a cappella, for it must be very lonely. For the first three verses, as for the passages which the congregation sings, the drummer and the dancer fall in rhythm.

There is a children's choir. They, together, with all other principals, process during the first hymn and take positions ready to sing; their still presence there will draw the attention of the congregation and its anticipation. But when their piece is finished, they will take their seats. They should be versed in reading the congregational role, for they will lend dear credulity to the sound; moreover, the children ought never to be forgotten! They know better than we how to hear a story and how to discover the value of it. The theology shall escape them; but the drama shall catch them

up. And isn't that the better thing anyway? Isn't theology simply the drama's interpretation?

Finally, this drama, as written, is essentially Lucan. But the author has sometimes been free with the text.

Oh, and this is not considered extracurricular. This is worship indeed.

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excerpt from **Worship for the Way of the Cross**

1. The Entry into Jerusalem

*(Four readers' stands are visible before the chancel and empty. All is emptiness. A gentle flurry on the drum draws the congregation's attention, out of which rhythm a slow two-note fanfare of the organ rises and lowers again. Before it is silenced, while yet it holds last notes long, long, the narrator begins to read from the back of the church. His voice is clear and declarative.)*

NARRATOR: When Jesus drew near to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount that is called Olivet, he sent ahead two of his disciples, saying, "Go into the village opposite. There you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever yet sat; untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, "Why are you untying it?" you shall say, "The Lord has need of it."

*(During the next portion of the narrator's reading, let the Peter and the Judas figures walk forward to their stands.)*

NARRATOR: So those who were sent went away and found it as he had told them.

PEOPLE: AND AS THEY WERE UNTYING THE COLT, ITS OWNERS SAID TO THEM, "WHY ARE YOU UNTYING THE COLT?"

PETER: And they said, "The Lord has need of it." And they brought it to Jesus, and throwing their garments on the colt, they set Jesus upon it.

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