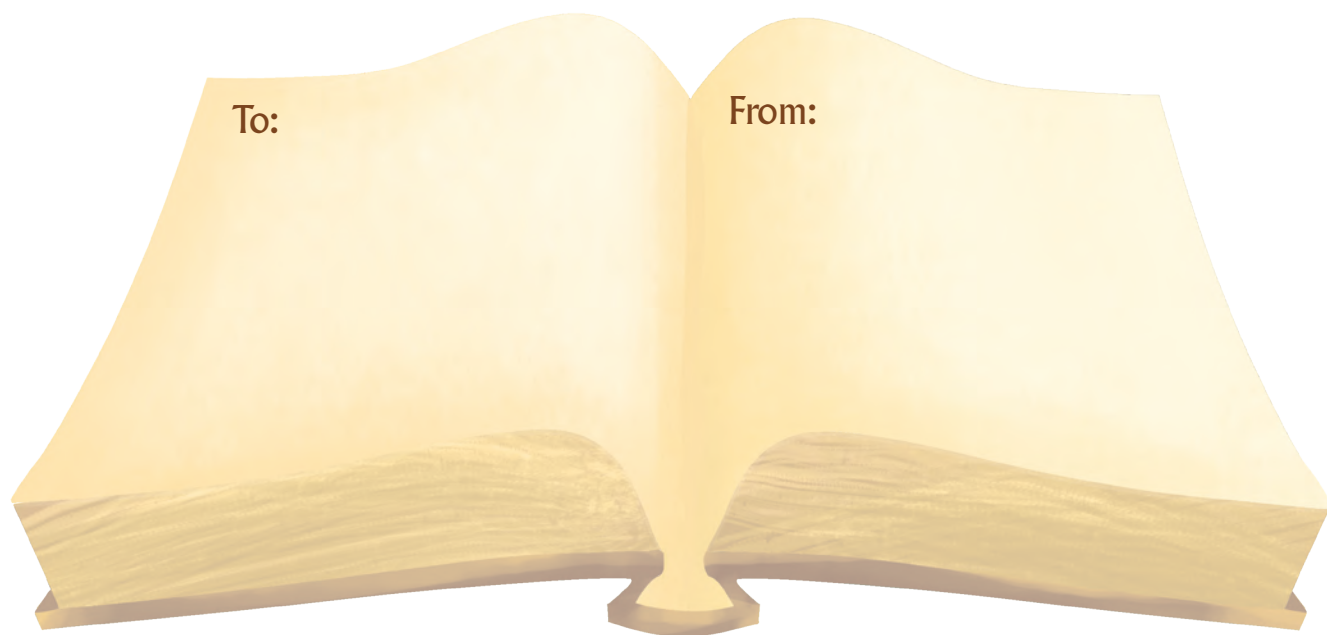


The illustration shows a close-up of a man in a white robe with a red sash, likely a priest, reaching out his hand towards a young boy. The boy, Brendan Kelly, is wearing a brown suit and holding a blue object. In the background, the dome of St. Peter's Basilica is visible under a warm, golden light.

The TRUE STORY of
BRENDAN KELLY

Written by
Jennifer Nelson

Illustrated by
Sam Estrada



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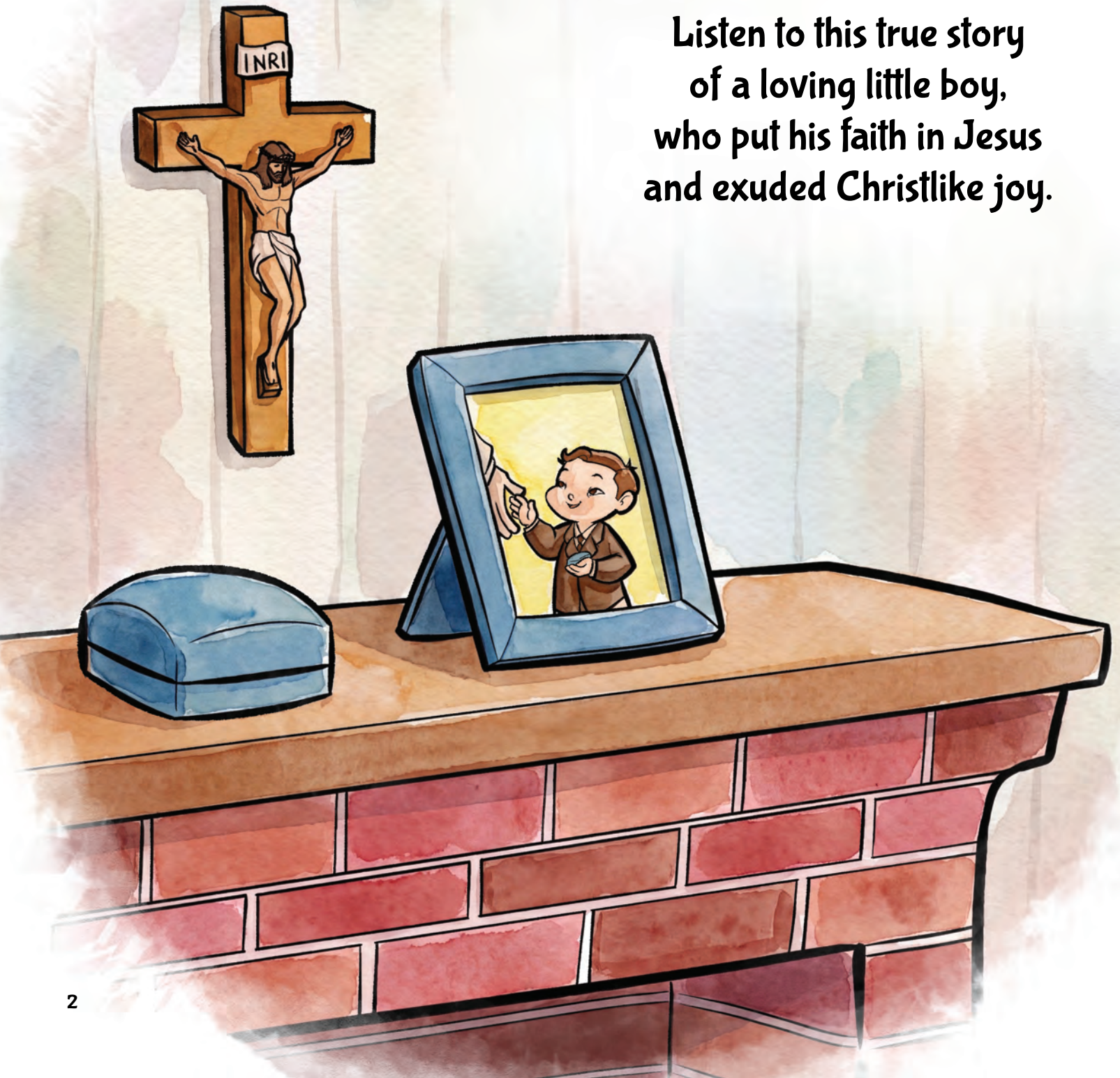
*The **TRUE STORY** of*
BRENDAN KELLY

Written By Jennifer Nelson

Illustrated by Sam Estrada

Dedicated to Brendan's family:
His parents, Frank and Maura
and siblings, Mollie and Joseph.
Thank you for allowing us to share
Brendan's story with the world.

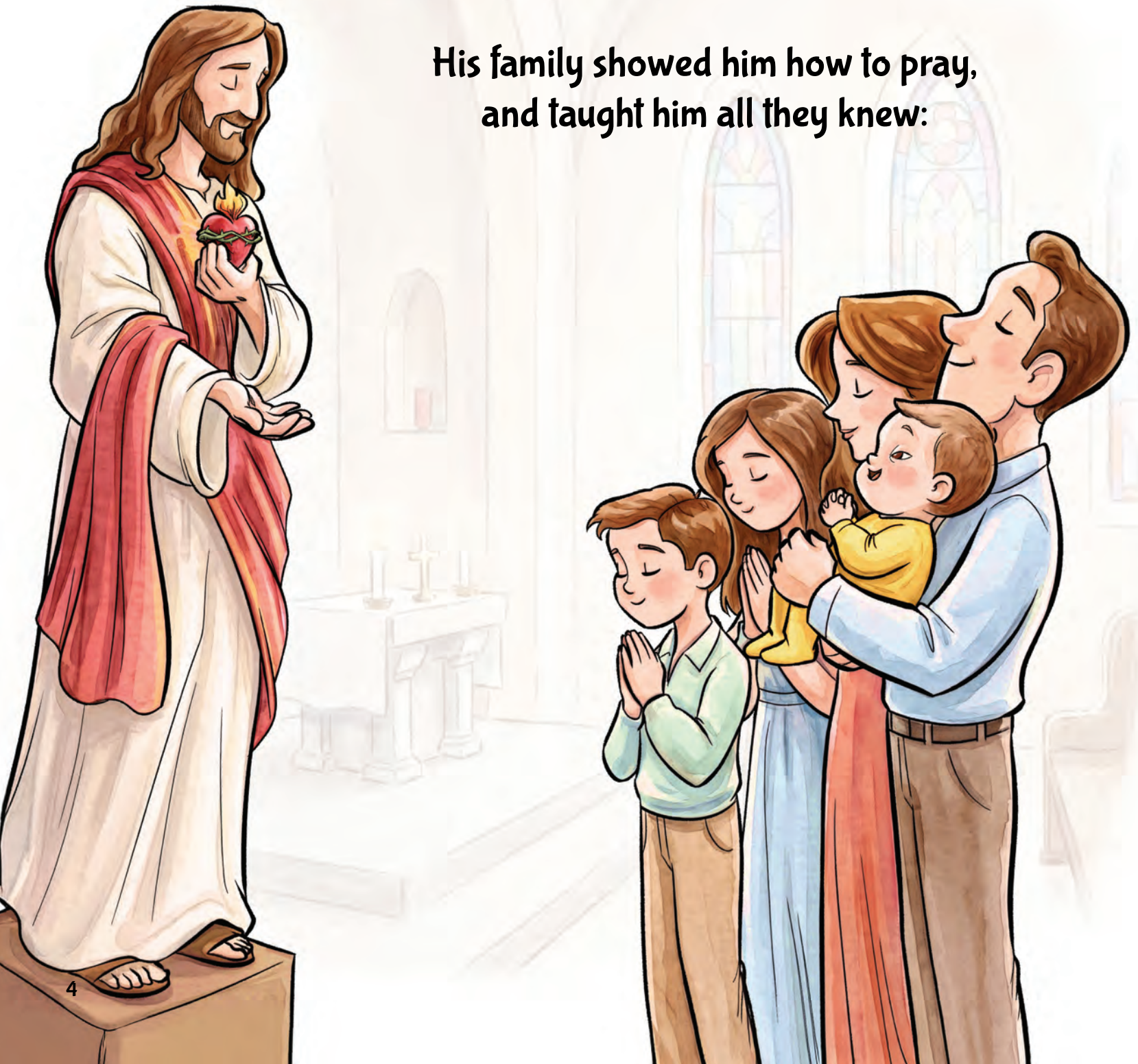
Listen to this true story
of a loving little boy,
who put his faith in Jesus
and exuded Christlike joy.



**Born with Down syndrome,
he was a gift from God above.
His parents named him Brendan,
and filled his life with love.**



**His family showed him how to pray,
and taught him all they knew:**



**To devote his life to Jesus
and care for others, too.**



He learned to walk and talk,
and became so very clever,



until the day would come
when his life would change forever.

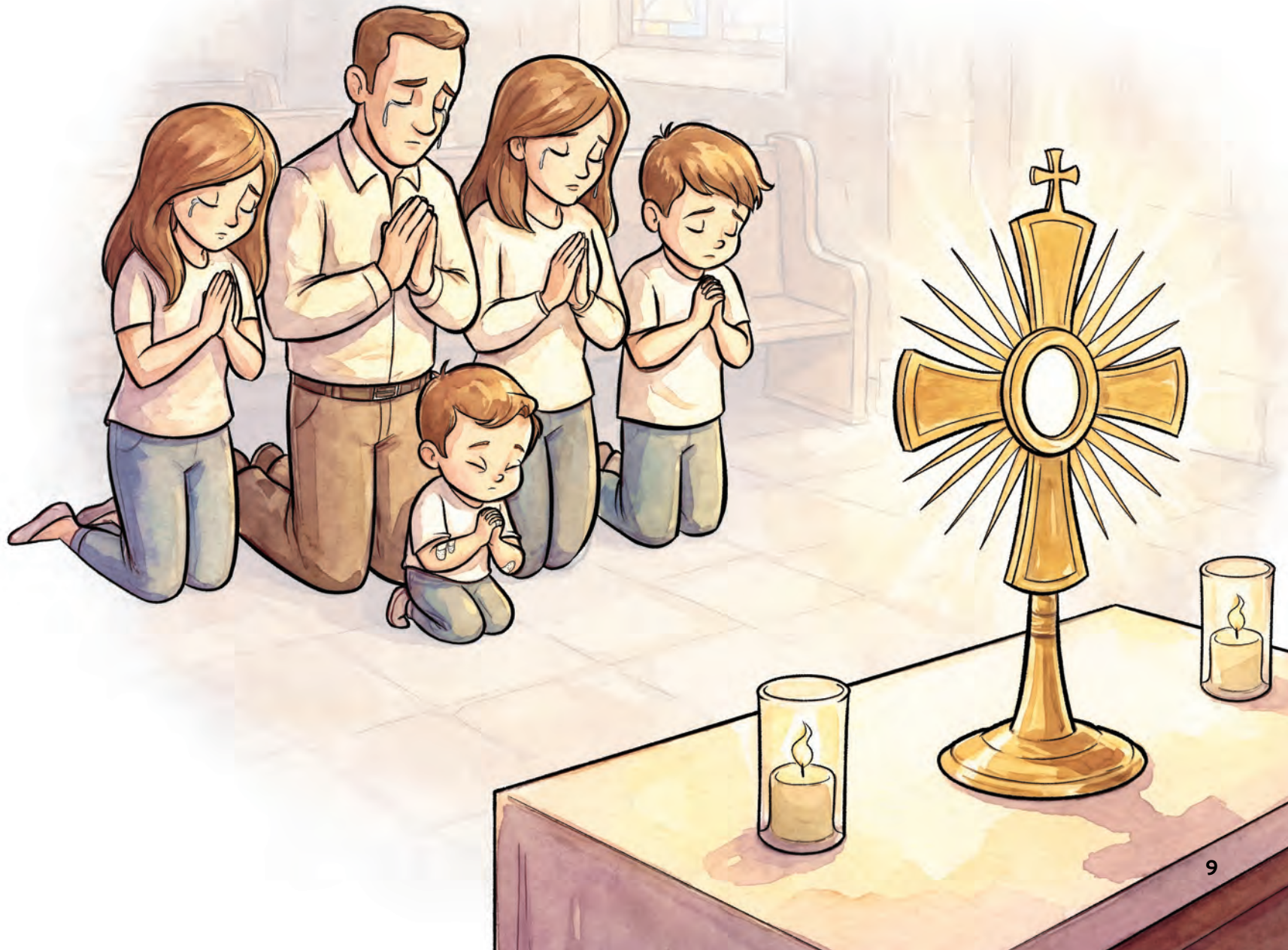


**His family learned he was sick,
life would never be the same.**

**Yet, even in his suffering,
Brendan praised God's holy name.**



**As Brendan battled illness
with every poke and every prod
he closed his eyes and whispered,
“I offer this to God!”**



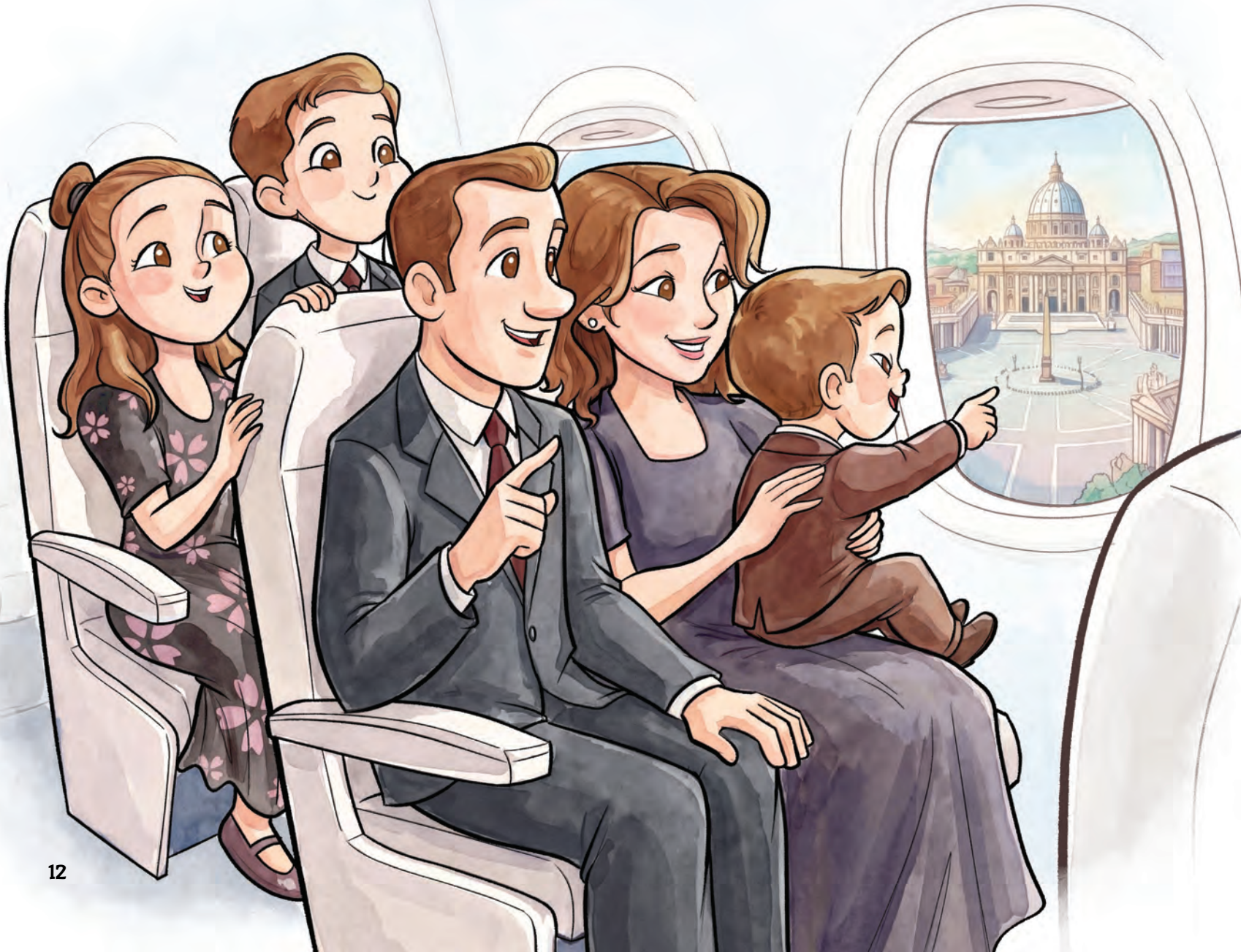
One day “Make-a-Wish”
came knocking at his door,
and Brendan wished for something
they had never heard before.



**They offered him a theme park trip,
but Brendan answered, "Nope!"
He smiled very sweetly
and asked to meet the Pope!**



So off his family went,
far away from home,
and after a long plane ride,
they arrived in Rome.



**They waited in the chapel
on that very special day.
When Brendan saw the Pope,
he quickly ran his way!**



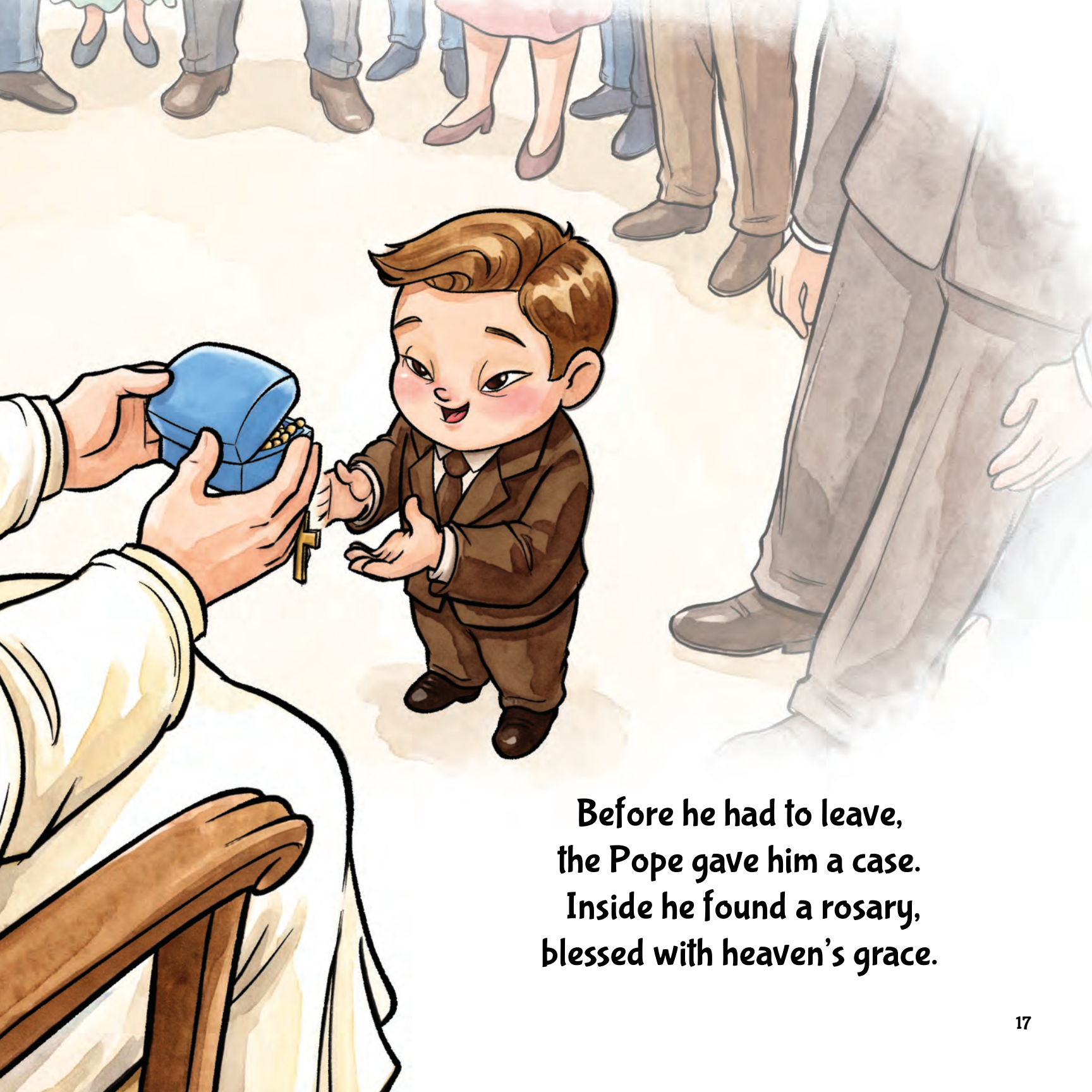
The Pope took Brendan's hand
and sat him by his side.
To Brendan this was better
than any theme park ride!



**The Pope gazed at Brendan,
a bright-eyed little boy.
He blessed and prayed with Brendan,
filling both with joy.**

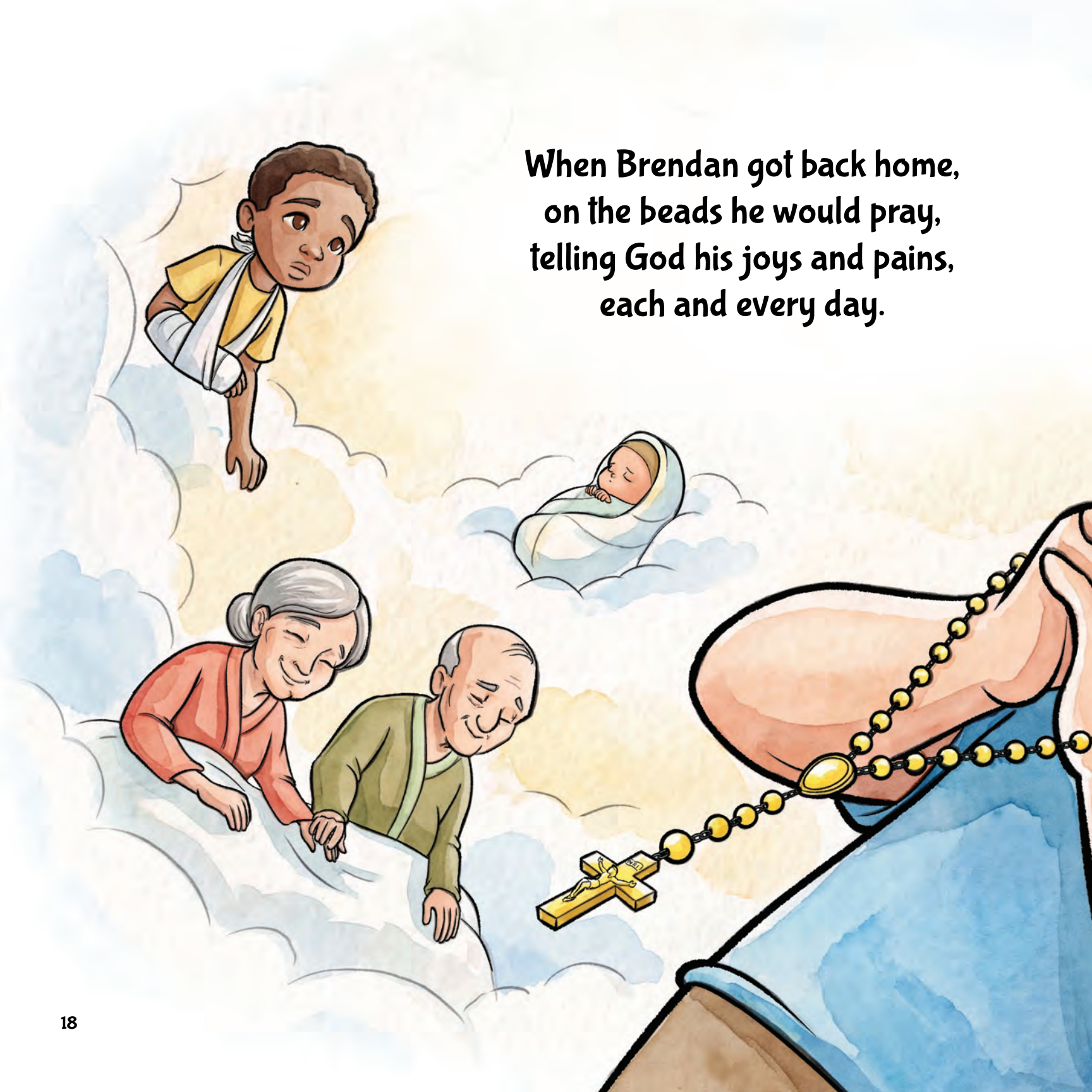






Before he had to leave,
the Pope gave him a case.
Inside he found a rosary,
blessed with heaven's grace.

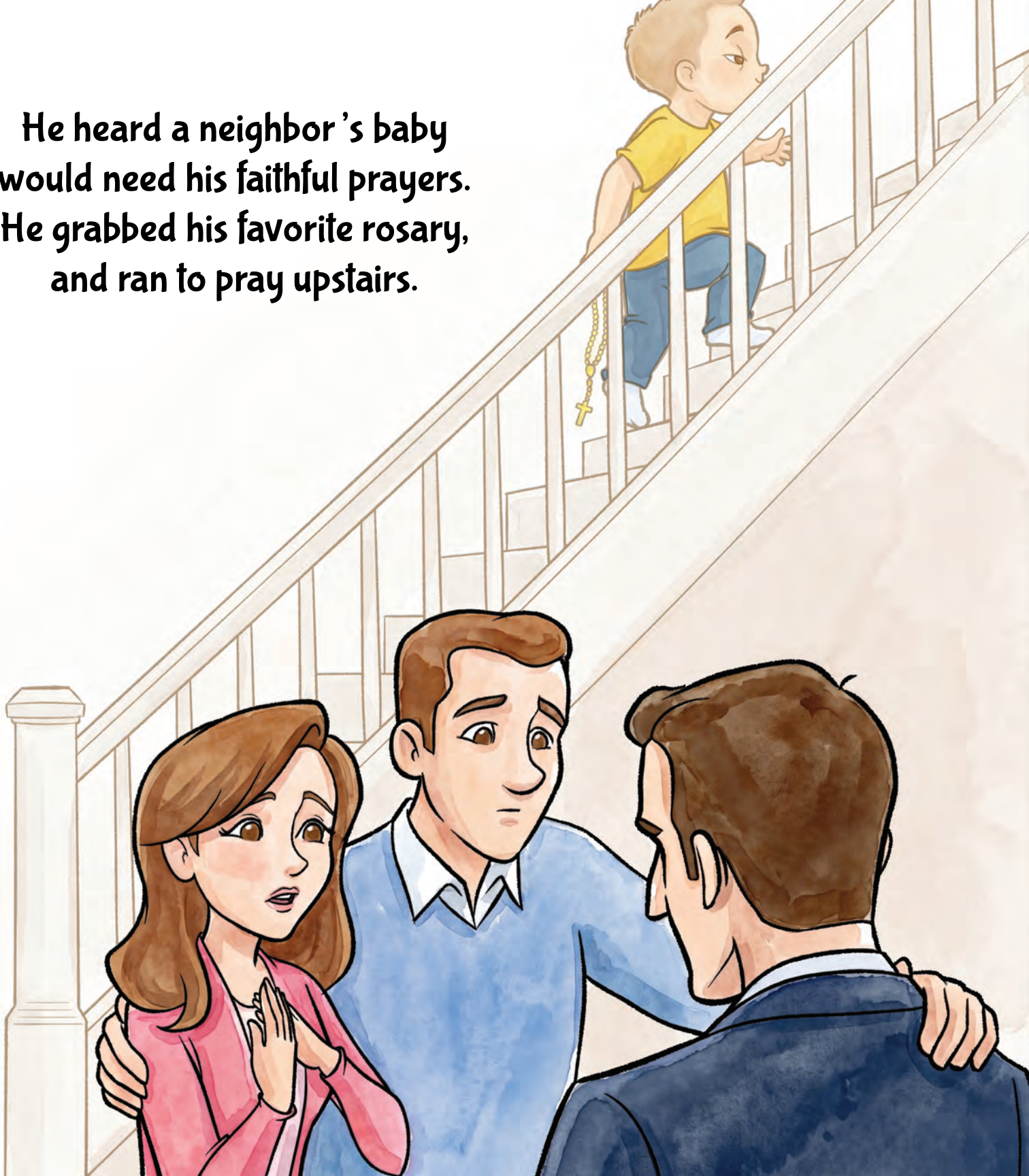
**When Brendan got back home,
on the beads he would pray,
telling God his joys and pains,
each and every day.**





He prayed for suffering souls,
as tears came down his face.
He boldly asked the Lord
if he could take their place.

**He heard a neighbor's baby
would need his faithful prayers.
He grabbed his favorite rosary,
and ran to pray upstairs.**





**Baby Bella was born!
His prayers had all come true!
“God, you are so good!
There’s nothing you can’t do!”**



**Another time he asked the Lord
to cure a girl of cancer.
He was very confident
the Lord would surely answer!**

He offered up his suffering
because he truly cared.
Soon her cancer disappeared—
God had answered Brendan's prayers.



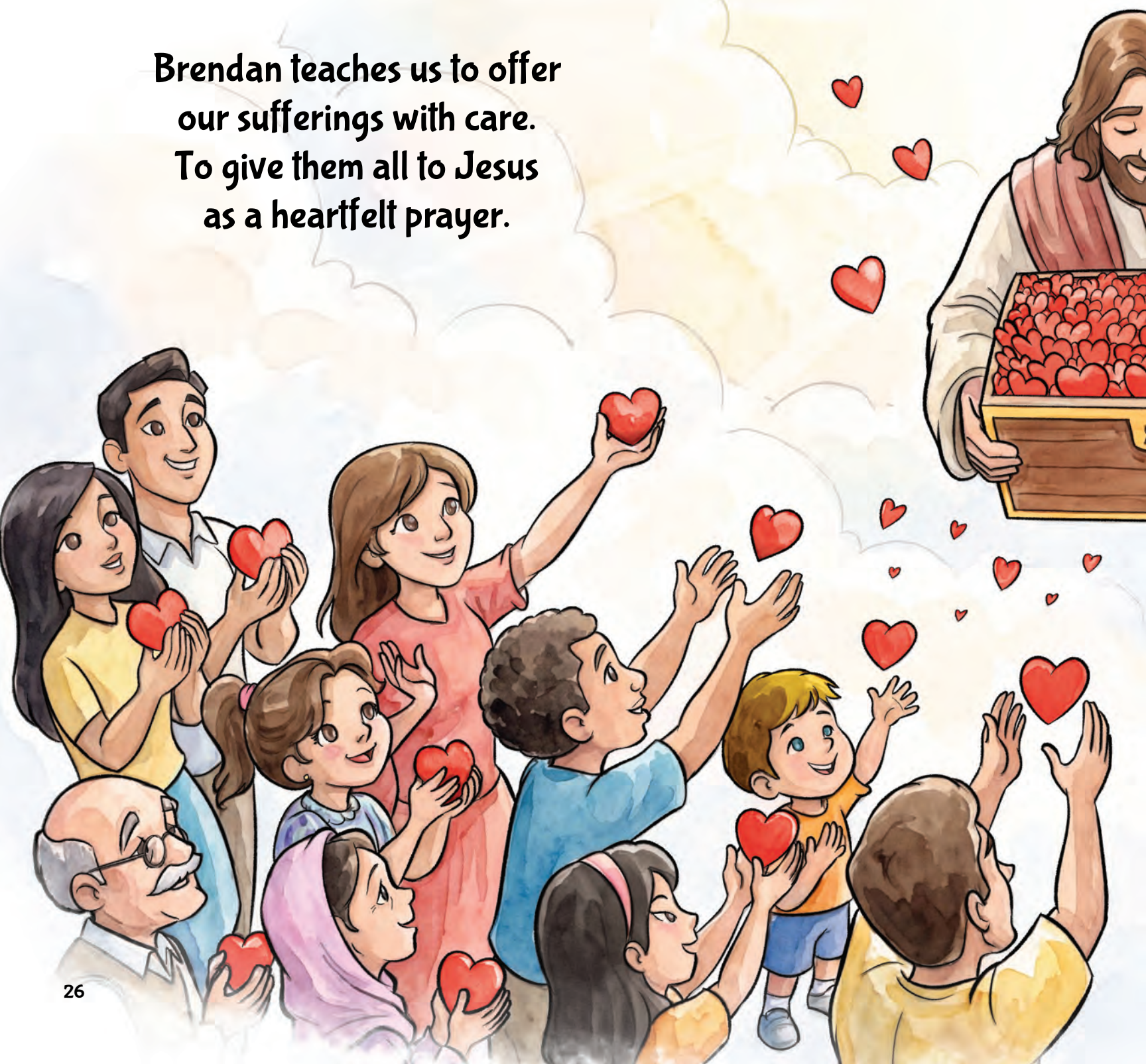
**As Brendan's cancer battle
was coming to an end,
His family called a priest
to bless our little friend.**



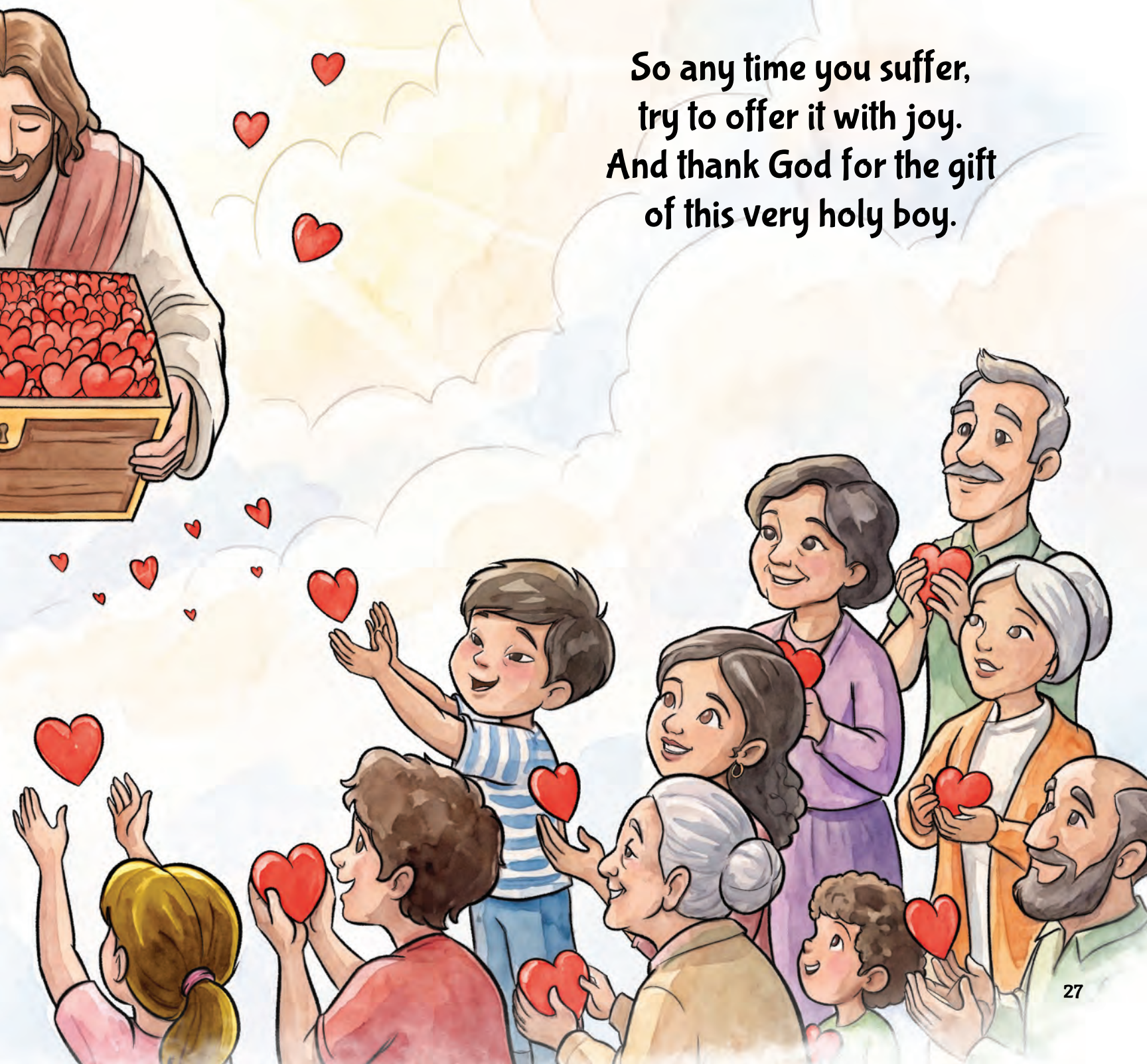


**Brendan gently closed his eyes
and fell into Christ's peace.
We know his prayers continue
where prayers will never cease.**

**Brendan teaches us to offer
our sufferings with care.
To give them all to Jesus
as a heartfelt prayer.**



**So any time you suffer,
try to offer it with joy.
And thank God for the gift
of this very holy boy.**





**We all have a special mission:
God calls us all, you see.
To sacrifice with love,
just like Brendan Kelly.**





Brendan Kelly was born in 1997 to Frank and Maura Kelly of Great Falls, Virginia. Brendan had Down syndrome. When he was two years old, Brendan was diagnosed with leukemia. Throughout his short life, Brendan suffered three recurrences of leukemia. He suffered greatly, died young, and brought many people to the faith. One story will suffice, though there are many.

Bella Santorum was diagnosed in utero with Trisomy 18. The doctors told her parents, Rick and Karen, that she would not live beyond a few days and advised abortion. Faithful Catholics, they declined. She was born and lived perilously. Even a cold could kill her. Brendan was having one of his repeated bouts with leukemia. During long radiation sessions, Brendan could be heard offering his suffering for Bella. The Santorums still credit Brendan's intercession with the fact that Bella lives. There are many stories of Brendan offering his suffering for others.

His parish priest said this boy with Down syndrome and nearly lifelong leukemia was a mystic. Brendan died in the odor of sanctity in 2013, just two weeks shy of his 16th birthday.

—**Austin Ruse**, author of the book, *The Littlest Suffering Souls*, which features stories of Brendan Kelly and whose work was the inspiration for this story.



Jennifer Nelson is passionate about creating stories that recognize the dignity and worth of every person created in God's image and likeness. Her first published book, *Super J and the Power of Love*, is about a child with Down syndrome and the blessing he is to everyone who knows and loves him.

The True Story of Brendan Kelly is her second published children's book. Jennifer is a wife,

homeschooling mom, and founder of a worldwide prayer ministry for infertile women, women facing difficult pregnancies, and women who have suffered miscarriage or child loss.



Sam Estrada is a Seattle-based illustrator, graphic designer, and animator. As the eldest of a large Christian family, Sam has witnessed how important good faith formation is for young people. His goal is to use art and digital media to not only help young readers learn, but inspire them to imitate the Origin of Art, God Himself.

More can be found at his site: **Prostrada.com**



