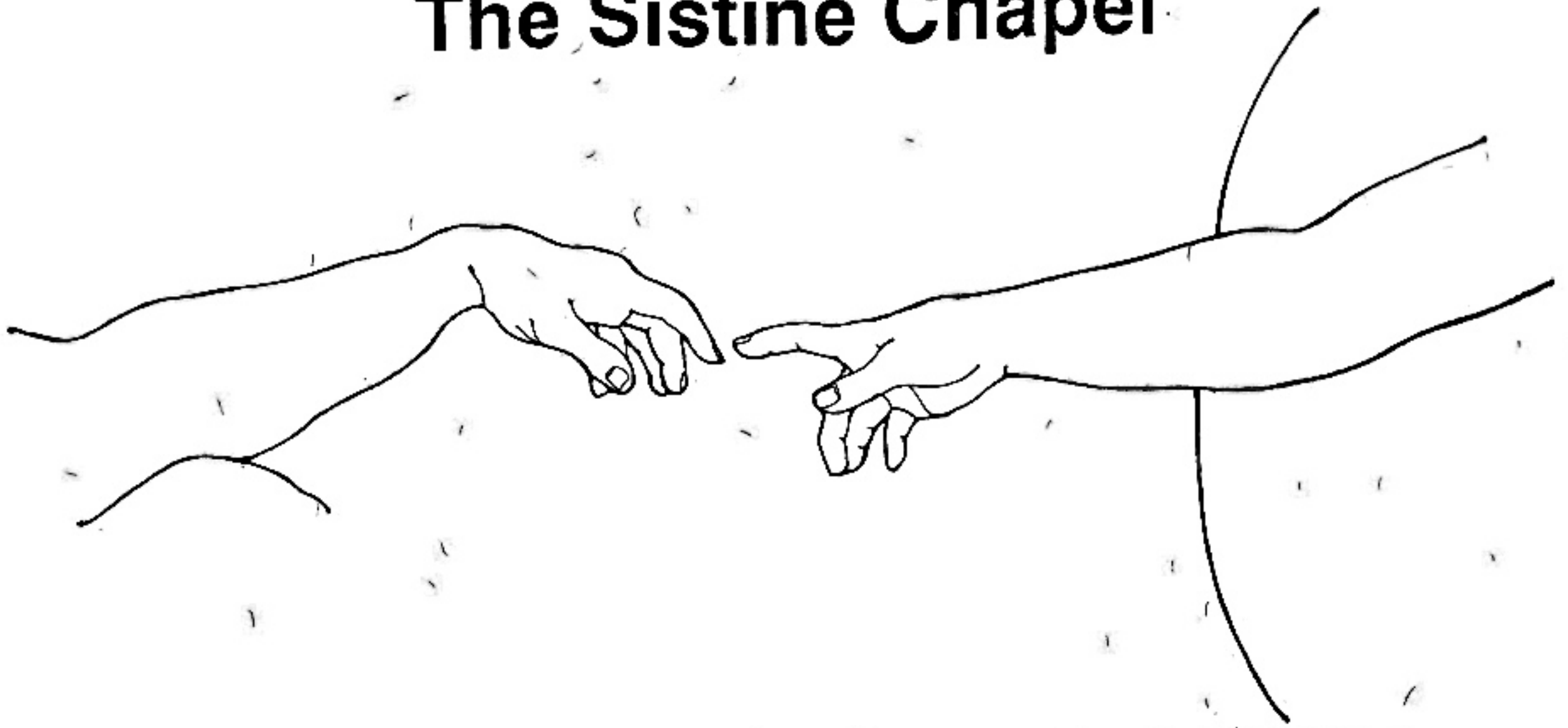


The Sistine Chapel



In 1508, Michelangelo began his most famous painting. He was commissioned to paint a fresco, a painting done on wet plaster, on the 10,000 square foot ceiling of the Sistine Chapel inside St. Peter's Basilica. In the picture, you can see the specially designed scaffold, which enabled Michelangelo to lie on his back to reach the ceiling. He worked long and hard on this project, locking out his assistants and doing all the work himself. He lay for hours at a time, with paint dripping into his eyes. He even slept in his clothes to save time. Despite the pleas from the Pope to finish quickly, and with almost non-stop painting, Michelangelo spent four years painting this magnificent work of religious art. The Sistine Chapel is still viewed today by over 7,000 people per day. It has recently undergone restoration and cleaning. The cleaning of *The Last Judgement*, which is on the wall above the altar, took four years. That is as long as it took Michelangelo to paint the whole ceiling!

Can you create pictures like Michelangelo? Now is your chance!

Preparation:

Take the piece of drawing paper and tape it under your desk, table, or chair.

Create:

Lie on your back under the paper and draw a picture. Try a castle scene, the streets of London in the 1600's, or one of your own choice.

STATION 5: MICHELANGELO

Michelangelo

Michelangelo devoted his whole life to the creation of magnificent works of art. He was born in Caprese, Italy, on March 6, 1475, as Michelangelo Buonarroti. On that day, his father saw lucky stars in the sky and believed his son would have heavenly powers. For that reason, he named his son Michelangelo—angelo in Italian means angel.

Michelangelo was sent to school to become a scholar, but he was interested only in sketching and painting. He wanted to become an artist. His father and uncles were outraged. They thought art was an occupation only for peasants. They cruelly tried to change Michelangelo's mind, but that only made him more determined to succeed at art. Finally, when Michelangelo was 13, his father agreed to let him study with Domenico Ghirlandaio, a popular Florence painter.

In Florence, Michelangelo studied the art of the old masters and learned to paint frescoes, paintings done on wet plaster walls. Michelangelo was highly skilled and soon began to scorn others less skilled than he. He became hot-tempered and outspoken.

When Michelangelo was 16, he was sent to study sculpture under the talent of Bertoldo de Giovanni. Within two years, he had met the most outstanding men of the day and learned a great deal. He began to love the size and power of the Greek style of sculpture and became obsessed with trying to create perfect human forms in marble. He studied anatomy, the structure of the human body, and even secretly cut up dead bodies to see how they were put together. Sculpture became his mission in life.

Two years later, Michelangelo traveled to Rome. Here he created his first famous piece of art, the Pietà, a statue of Jesus and Mary. By 1501, he had become famous. He was 26 years old! His next statue was the warrior, David. He was then commissioned to do other work, designing tombs and libraries and painting frescoes.

When Michelangelo was 30, he was asked by Pope Julius II to design his tomb. It was so large, a church had to be constructed around it! The church was St. Peter's Basilica. It took Michelangelo 40 years to construct the tomb and supervise work on the church. In the meantime, Michelangelo was asked to paint the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel within St. Peter's Basilica. Using a scaffold and lying on his back, Michelangelo took four years to finish painting this ceiling.

It is said that when Michelangelo was 60, he could still carve faster than three ordinary sculptors. Michelangelo lived to be 89, working steadily until his death in Rome on February 18, 1564. All his life he lived for his art and fulfilled the prophecy of the stars.

