

1. Jesus is condemned

The crowd who once hung on his every word now turn against Jesus, stirred up by self-righteous religious leaders desperate to rid themselves of a trouble-maker who is constantly challenging them. Pilate can find no valid reason to condemn Jesus but is swayed by the bloodthirsty mob.

Mob mentality still flourishes in our midst today: hostility towards immigrants and other minority groups whipped up by extreme factions who claim to protect the nation's best interest. Do we have the courage to challenge them?

Response: Jesus came into the world to bear witness to the truth; all who are on the side of truth listen to his voice.

2. Jesus carries the cross

The cross - an agonising burden; no easy place to grip hold; the wood rough and jagged. Betrayed by a kiss. Sold for 30 silver coins - the price of friendship comes cheap. Denied three times over by a beloved disciple.

It's easy to turn our backs on the problems of others; to convince ourselves it's nothing to do with us. The poor and unemployed are labelled 'benefit scroungers' and written off as being to blame for their troubles.

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3. Jesus falls for the first time

Pushed roughly along by the jeering soldiers; stumbling blindly; flung to the ground; flesh torn and bloody; searing pain. Humiliated and broken: the God of love.

One law for the rich and powerful; another for the poor and downtrodden; the weak exploited by the strong. It's not who you are but who you know that counts and how much you can afford to pay.

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4. Jesus comes face to face with his mother

Watching and waiting: a helpless bystander. Even a mother's love is powerless to prevent what is to come. A sword pierces her heart.

There can be few worse torments than seeing your child suffer and die. For the families of hostages mercilessly tortured and executed without warning the pain is unimaginable.

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5. Simon of Cyrene helps carry the cross

Press-ganged by the soldiers to help carry the cross, reluctant at first to get involved, Simon shows kindness and compassion to someone in desperate need.

Can your church community provide food, shelter and friendship for those who find themselves homeless: migrants; asylum seekers; ex-prisoners; young people who can no longer stay in a violent or abusive home situation?

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6. Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

Moved to pity by Jesus' plight. Not stopping to think how the soldiers might react; no time to worry about her own safety, Veronica gently wipes his face; eases his suffering with a loving gesture; a simple act of kindness in a world bound up in cruelty and hate.

Could we do more to make newcomers welcome in our community? Do we take time to chat to the Big Issue vendor or offer a warm drink on a cold day? Are elderly or lonely people respected and well cared for in your neighbourhood?

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7. Jesus falls for the second time

Weak from the beatings; struggling to pick himself up and carry on, Jesus shares in the hopelessness and misery endured by so many.

Trying desperately to make ends meet. Forced to turn to food banks to feed the family; parents going hungry when there isn't enough to go round.

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8. The women of Jerusalem weep for Jesus

Hearts bursting with sorrow; desolation that knows no bounds. A suffering not understood in human terms. The ultimate sacrifice: a perfect act of love to redeem a fallen world.

Victims of civil war, traumatised and broken, must rely on the kindness of others. Victims of domestic violence in our own local community need practical help and compassion too. What can we do to show our love for them?

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9. Jesus falls for the third time

Yet another fall, this time worse than the two before. Scarcely enough strength to get up again. Truly a man of sorrows: bruised and broken; despised, crushed and pitiful. A lamb led to the slaughter, never even opening his mouth.

The rich get richer at the expense of the poor. Those at the bottom of the pile take out exorbitant pay-day loans to simply survive whilst city bankers receive five figure bonuses.

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10. Jesus is stripped of his clothes

Pitilessly taunted; mocked as a king; stripped to nothing. All trappings of dignity roughly torn away: the very opposite of worldly power and majesty.

Vulnerable young people suffer cruelly at the hands of cyber bullies. In despair, they may self-harm or even take their own lives. How can we show them that they are valued and cherished and help them find a way through?

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11. Jesus is nailed to the cross

Ethnic cleansing; mindless violence; murder; torture; rape; gun crimes on the streets; a lack of care and respect for God's wonderful creation. A man nailed to a cross; a slow, agonising death in the heat of the mid-day sun.

The Big Society is failing: community spirit is at a low ebb. How can we bring people together to build bridges between different groups and celebrate our common aims and desires?

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12. Jesus dies

Such a dreadful way to die: the mouth on fire with an unbearable thirst: lips parched and dry. A drink is offered - vinegar - bitter tasting and sour; smarting against cut lips. The bitter vinegar like the bitterness of the mob who clamoured for his blood. The end is near. The sky darkens. It is finished.

Governments and manufacturers profit from selling arms to oppressive regimes yet basic services suffer cuts. Money that could be used for the good of all is channelled into stockpiling weapons of war and mass destruction. How can we halt this damaging spiral?

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13. Jesus is taken down from the cross

Joseph of Arimathea was a secret follower of Jesus, afraid to let his allegiance be known. After Jesus was put to death his courage grew and he went to Pilate to ask for the body.

Inspired by Joseph, we can let go of the fear of what others might say or think and focus on doing what we know to be right. By putting the needs of the weakest members of our society before our own, we can begin to confront injustice.

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14. Jesus is placed in the tomb

A race against time to finish the burial preparations before the Sabbath begins. Joseph and Nicodemus prepare an empty tomb for Jesus' body; wrap it in a clean burial garment; place it in the tomb and roll a large stone over the entrance to prevent anyone disturbing it.

We too are in a race against time to protect our planet for future generations. Despite clear proof that our consumer life-style is causing irreparable damage, many choose to ignore the warnings, leaving a dangerously high carbon footprint. Can we resolve to make personal changes for the good of all?

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Justice and Peace Stations of the Cross



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