

Stations of the Cross in a Time of Fear and Uncertainty

1. Jesus is condemned

They kept shouting at the tops of their voices, demanding that he should be crucified.

The crowd, who once hung on his every word, now turn against Jesus. Pilate can find no valid reason to condemn Jesus but, in his weakness, is swayed by the bloodthirsty mob.

Mob mentality still flourishes in our midst today: hostility towards minority groups whipped up by extreme factions.

We pray for strong leadership to root out intolerance and ensure fairness and justice for all who are persecuted or abused.

Response: In these times of fear and uncertainty be with us, Lord, as we journey together in hope.

2. Jesus carries the cross

Before the cock crows today, you will have disowned me three times.

The cross – an agonising burden, no 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.

We can be so wrapped up in our own lives that we turn our backs on the problems of others rather than get involved.

Let us pray for a greater awareness of those in need and a willingness to respond in love and friendship.

Response: In these times of fear and uncertainty be with us, Lord, as we journey together in hope.

3. Jesus falls for the first time

Carrying his own cross he went out of the city to the place of the skull or, as it was called in Hebrew, Golgotha.

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.

Pinned down by the police, what agony passed through George Floyd's broken body as he lay gasping for breath? How many more lives will be taken before the violence ends?

We pray for consideration and kindness to be shown to all people, regardless of race or colour and for those in positions of authority that they uphold the dignity of each individual.

Response: In these times of fear and uncertainty be with us, Lord, as we journey together in hope.

4. Jesus comes face to face with his mother

Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala.

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

Losing a child is the hardest pain of all for a parent to bear. The natural order of life is devastatingly turned upside-down.

Let us pray for the mothers (and fathers) who have lost children through sudden death, poverty or disease.

Response: In these times of fear and uncertainty be with us, Lord, as we journey together in hope.

5. Simon of Cyrene helps carry the cross

As they were leading him away they seized on a man, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, and made him shoulder the cross and carry it behind Jesus.

Press-ganged by the soldiers to help carry the cross, reluctant to get involved, Simon shows kindness and compassion.

Local community groups have been quick to provide food, shelter and friendship for the elderly, the vulnerable and the lonely during the pandemic – we have discovered true 'angels' in our midst.

Let us pray for all those who feel isolated and fearful at this time of uncertainty that their spirits will be lifted.

Response: In these times of fear and uncertainty be with us, Lord, as we journey together in hope.

6. Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

You have said, 'seek my face.' My heart says to you, 'your face, Lord, do I seek.'

Moved to pity by Jesus' plight. No time to be concerned for 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.

Stepping forward to help someone in distress takes courage and selflessness. We are all called to be Good Samaritans.

Lord, guide us to act with compassion, to care for others without worrying about the cost to ourselves.

Response: In these times of fear and uncertainty be with us, Lord, as we journey together in hope.

7. Jesus falls for the second time

He had no form or charm to attract us, no beauty to win our hearts.

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

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

Help us, Lord, to work for a fairer society where the worth of all is valued and no one lacks food, warmth or shelter.

Response: In these times of fear and uncertainty be with us, Lord, as we journey together in hope.

8. The women of Jerusalem weep for Jesus

Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep rather for yourselves and for your children.

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

Many suffer in silence, unseen, unheard. Victims of bullying or domestic violence need practical help and compassion.

Lord, open our eyes to the needs of those around us and guide us to reach out with love.

Response: In these times of fear and uncertainty be with us, Lord, as we journey together in hope.

9. Jesus falls for the third time

He was despised, the lowest of men, a man of sorrows, familiar with suffering.

Yet another fall, scarcely enough strength to get up again. A man of sorrows: bruised and broken; despised, crushed, pitiful. A lamb led to the slaughter, never even opening his mouth.

So many crosses to bear: fear of the virus, illness, death, loss of work, bills to pay, reduced income, separation, isolation.

We pray for health, strength and respect for the key workers who give their time and skills for the benefit of all.

Response: In these times of fear and uncertainty be with us, Lord, as we journey together in hope.

10. Jesus is stripped of his clothes

They shared out my clothing among them. They cast lots for my clothes.

Pitilessly taunted; mocked as a king; stripped to nothing. Every scrap of self-respect roughly torn away: the very opposite of worldly power and majesty.

Asylum seekers, harshly treated in holding centres, do not know whether they will be permitted to stay in a place of safety. Some, risking death to make the journey to a new homeland, are cruelly exploited by the greed of those who transport them in inhuman conditions.

We pray for all who have died in terrible circumstances as they seek a new life, for greater kindness from those who fail to welcome them and for a fairer world for all.

Response: In these times of fear and uncertainty be with us, Lord, as we journey together in hope.

11. Jesus is nailed to the cross

Yet ours were the sufferings he bore, ours the sorrows he carried.

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.

Instead of focusing on the negative in our society, let's work together to build bridges between different groups, share our stories and celebrate our common hopes and desires.

Lord, teach us to look for the good in everyone that we may be beacons of light and hope in our communities and in the wider world.

Response: In these times of fear and uncertainty be with us, Lord, as we journey together in hope.

12. Jesus dies

Putting a sponge soaked in vinegar on a hyssop stick they held it up to his mouth.

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

Governments and manufacturers profit from selling arms to oppressive regimes whilst basic services suffer cuts. Money that could be used for the good of all is channelled into stock piling weapons of war and mass destruction.

We pray for an end to the arms trade: that world leaders will have the courage and vision to respond to calls to abolish nuclear and chemical arsenals.

Response: In these times of fear and uncertainty be with us, Lord, as we journey together in hope.

13. Jesus is taken down from the cross

Then a member of the council arrived, an upright and virtuous man named Joseph. He had not consented to what the others had planned and carried out. He lived in hope of seeing the kingdom of God.

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

Joseph teaches us to let go of the fear of what others might say and to simply focus on doing what we know to be right.

Lord, inspire us to put the needs of the weakest members of our society before our own, to boldly confront injustice and to work together for the common good.

Response: In these times of fear and uncertainty be with us, Lord, as we journey together in hope.

14. Jesus is placed in the tomb

They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, following the Jewish burial custom.

A hurried race against time to finish the burial preparations before the Sabbath begins.

We too are in a frantic race against time to protect our planet for future generations. Despite clear evidence that our consumer life-style is causing irreparable damage, many choose to ignore the warnings, leaving a dangerously high carbon footprint.

Let us resolve to make personal changes for the good of all creation and encourage others to do the same before it is too late.

Response: In these times of fear and uncertainty be with us, Lord, as we journey together in hope.

