

Stations of the Cross (Debt and Jubilee)

Welcome and introduction

Leader

“Whatever the detailed history of today’s debt-ridden countries... those who could be blamed least, the poorest people in the poorest countries have suffered most.” These words of Cardinal Hume, together with Pope John Paul II’s call to all Christians to raise their voices on behalf of the poor, are a profound challenge to us all as we prepare for the Millennium.

As we meditate on Christ’s suffering and death we remember too those who are suffering and dying today. As we remember Christ’s Resurrection we look for signs of hope and new life in a changed world.

Mulima Kufekisa from Zambia speaks out, “What sort of economic justice is it, where those who can afford the least are expected to give to those who already have the most? Enough is enough. It’s time for justice.”

Today we ask for the strength, determination and courage to continue to pray and work for justice for all God’s people.

All

Jesus our friend and our brother, through your life and your journey to the Cross, your death and Resurrection, you have shown us how to live in love. May we always follow your example, living a life of compassion, in the search for peace through justice for all your people.

1. Jesus is condemned to death

Reading

Pilate said to them, “What am I to do with Jesus who is called Christ?” They all said, “Let him be crucified!” “Why?” he asked, “What harm has he done?” But they shouted all the louder, “Let him be crucified!” Then Pilate saw that he was making no impression, that in fact a riot was imminent. So he took some water and washed his hands in front of the crowd... He ordered Jesus to be first scourged and then handed over to be crucified.

(Mt 27:22-26)

Silence

Reading: Today Jesus is condemned to death

David Hamalambo is seven years old. He is dying of malaria. It’s a treatable disease, but his parents Joni and Rosemary are farmers in rural Zambia, who can’t afford medicines or the fee at the clinic.

Silence

Reading

In Zambia, one in five children dies before its fifth birthday. Zambia spends three times as much on debt interest as on health care.

Prayer

All:

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2. Jesus carries his cross

Reading

They stripped Jesus and made him wear a scarlet cloak, and having twisted some thorns into a crown they put this on his head and placed a reed in his right hand. To make fun of him they knelt to him saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" ... And when they had finished making fun of him, they took off the cloak and dressed him in his own clothes and led him away to crucify him.

(Mt 27:28-31)

Silence

Reading: Today Jesus carries his cross

Fatoma has no donkey to help her with her load. In a truly impressive display of strength and flexibility she bends to make a flat back parallel to the ground, hoists the heavy 20 litre jerry can into place and then flips a shawl up behind her over the can, tying it in place around her middle. When the jerry can is secure, she stands up, bowed by the weight. She is also carrying her baby, Abdi. She explains that she walks back to her village, Kcheba, which is quite close by. There she leaves the water and, still carrying the baby, comes back for her cow which is drinking at the cattle trough.

Silence

Reading

In Ethiopia a majority of rural women and children spend three to four hours per day collecting unsafe water from open pools and rivers. Many become ill, but Ethiopia only spends just over two per cent of its income on health care. Ethiopia's debt is £3 billion.

Prayer

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we always follow your example, living a life of compassion, in the search for peace through justice for all your people.

3. Jesus falls the first time

Reading

Here is my servant whom I uphold,
my chosen one in whom my soul delights.
I have endowed him with my spirit
That he may bring true justice to the nations.

He does not cry out or shout aloud,
Or make his voice heard in the streets,
He does not break the crushed reed,
Nor quench the wavering flame.

(Isaiah 42:1-3)

Silence

Reading: Today Jesus falls the first time

Choma is twelve. His father has just lost his job as a bus driver. Now Choma's family cannot afford to send him to school. The fees are too expensive. Choma lives on the streets, begging, running errands and tending cars. Without education his future is uncertain.

Silence

Reading

Zambia spends five times as much on debt interest as education. Fewer than half of Zambian children go to school, because their parents can't afford the fees.

Prayer

All:

Jesus our friend and our brother, through your life and your journey to the Cross, your death and Resurrection, you have shown us how to live in love. May we always follow your example, living a life of compassion, in the search for peace through justice for all your people.

4. Jesus meets his mother Mary

Reading

As the child's father and mother stood there wondering at the things that were being said about him, Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "You see this child; he is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, destined to be a sign that is rejected - and a sword will pierce your own soul too - so that the secret thoughts of many may be laid bare."

(Luke 2:33-35)

Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala. Seeing his mother and the disciple he loved standing near her, Jesus said to his mother, "Woman, this is your son." Then to the disciple he said, "This is your mother."

(John 19:25-26)

Silence

Reading: Today Jesus meets his mother Mary

Aysha, who is around 50 years old, has eight children, six girls and two boys. She has given birth to three sets of twins. But when I asked her if she had had any other children who had died, the answer was eight. They mostly died before making it to their second birthday.

Silence

Reading

Nearly half of all children under five in Ethiopia are underweight. One in five Ethiopian children dies before their fifth birthday.

Prayer

All:

Jesus our friend and our brother, through your life and your journey to the Cross, your death and Resurrection, you have shown us how to live in love. May we always follow your example, living a life of compassion, in the search for peace through justice for all your people.

5. Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus

Reading

They led Jesus out to crucify him. They enlisted a passer-by, Simon of Cyrene, father of Alexander and Rufus, who was coming in from the country, to carry his cross.

(Mark 15:21)

Silence

Reading: Today Simon helps Jesus carry his cross

Porfirio Triminio always loved to draw, but he never dreamt he would be able to study art, let alone teach it. Like all his friends, Porfirio thought he would leave school early to support his family, by shining shoes or selling gum on the streets of Esteli in northern Nicaragua.

"Once out of the school system they never go back," says Daniel Hopewell, who runs mural workshops for children in Esteli. "They start working and that's it."

Some murals display a mature grasp of Nicaragua's economic problems. One painting of a health centre depicts a nurse telling children, "I'm sorry, there are no medicines" and children protesting, "We have the right to health."

Porfirio is now a teacher at the mural workshops. He says they were a wonderful opportunity for him: "They helped me get to know people and gave me a way into society. Now I want to pass on the talents and confidence I've learnt to other children."

Silence

Reading

Nicaragua's debt is £5.5 billion, that is £1,334 per person. On average Nicaraguans earn £250 a year.

Prayer

All:

Jesus our friend and our brother, through your life and your journey to the Cross, your death and Resurrection, you have shown us how to live in love. May we always follow your example, living a life of compassion, in the search for peace through justice for all your people.

6. Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

Reading

As the crowds were appalled on seeing him – so disfigured did he look that he seemed no longer human – so will the crowds be astonished at him, and kings stand speechless before him...

(Isaiah 52:14-15)

Then from behind him came a woman, who had suffered from a haemorrhage for twelve years, and she touched the fringe of his cloak, for she said to herself, "If only I can touch his cloak I shall be well again." Jesus turned round and saw her; and he said to her, "Courage, my daughter, your faith has restored you to health."

(Matthew 9:20-22)

Silence

Reading: Today Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

Mulima Kufekisa is 28. She runs an organisation that monitors the effects of debt on people in Zambia. She says, "I believe in working to change unfair situations. Unnecessary suffering saddens me. My dream for the next millennium is debt cancellation so that poor people's lives can be improved."

Silence

Reading

Out of every £10 Zambia receives in aid, £7 is used to pay interest on debts to rich countries.

Prayer

All:

Jesus our friend and our brother, through your life and your journey to the Cross, your death and Resurrection, you have shown us how to live in love. May we always follow your example, living a life of compassion, in the search for peace through justice for all your people.

7. Jesus falls the second time

Reading

Without beauty, without majesty we saw him
no looks to attract our eyes;
a thing despised and rejected,
a man of sorrows and familiar with suffering,
a man to make people screen their faces;
he was despised and we took no account of him...
By force and by law he was taken; would anyone plead his cause?
(*Isaiah 53:2-3,7*)

Silence

Reading: Today Jesus falls for the second time.

Azon is a garment worker in the Philippines, earning £3.60 a day. She had managed to save some money, thinking that she would start her own business if the factory closed down. But she became ill and had to spend all her savings to pay for an operation.

Marilou works at the Golden Thimble factory in Manila, making garments for export. At 32, her working life in the garment industry is almost over. She is on a five-month contract. She says:

“I’ve worked in the garment industry since I left school at 18. At first I was a regular in the Glorious Sun factory. It’s better to be a regular, to have the benefits, the job security.

The five month limit is awful; you’re always worrying about the next job. I’m 32 now, and once I’m 35, I’ll be over the age limit.”

Silence

Reading

Countries in debt have to attract foreign investment so that they can earn money to pay the interest. Working conditions often get worse as poor countries compete against each other.

Prayer

All:

Jesus our friend and our brother, through your life and your journey to the Cross, your death and Resurrection, you have shown us how to live in love. May we always follow your example, living a life of compassion, in the search for peace through justice for all your people.

8. Jesus speaks to the women of Jerusalem

Reading

Large numbers of people followed him, including many women, who mourned and lamented for him. But Jesus turned to them and said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep rather for yourselves and for your children. For the days will surely come when people will say, “Happy are those who are barren, the wombs that have never borne, the breasts that have never suckled!” Then they will begin to say to the mountains, “Fall on us!” To the hills, “Cover us!”

(Luke 23:27-31)

Silence

Reading: Jesus speaks to women today

In Mexico thousands of women work in the export factories along the border with the United States. They work twelve or more hours a day, often in unsafe conditions. Soledad works in a factory where women are forced to take pregnancy tests. If they are found to be pregnant they are fired. But, together with a local organisation, women are getting together to form health and safety committees. Here they can discuss their problems and get advice. Emilio Alvarez, who works with them, says, “Even though we have so many problems, I really feel we’re making teamwork with God!”

Silence

Reading

Mexico, like other indebted countries, relies on exports to pay the interest on its debts. “My country is like a football team made to play a very unfair game,” says Emilio Alvarez, “Our opponents are 20ft tall while we haven’t even got any football boots.”

Prayer

All:

Jesus our friend and our brother, through your life and your journey to the Cross, your death and Resurrection, you have shown us how to live in love. May we always follow your example, living a life of compassion, in the search for peace through justice for all your people.

9. Jesus falls the third time.

Reading

Let me say to God my Rock,

“Why do you forget me?
Why must I walk so mournfully, oppressed by the enemy?”

Nearly breaking my bones
my oppressors insult me
as all day long they ask me,
“Where is your God?”

Why so downcast, my soul,
why do you sigh within me?
Put your hope in God; I shall praise him yet,
my saviour, my God...

(Psalm 42:9-11)

Silence

Reading: Today Jesus falls the third time

Tracksoa Mwemba is trusting God that nothing goes wrong this year. The income from his harvest in 1997 was so low he had nothing left to save for emergencies.

“I couldn’t even buy spare parts for my plough,” says the 40-year-old farmer from Monze diocese in southern Zambia. “If my tools break this year I’ll just have to dig with my hands. And if that happens my crop will be even smaller.”

Silence

Reading

While children go hungry, only one tenth of Zambia’s arable land is being farmed and the country is importing food, which poor people can’t afford to buy.

Freda Luhila, director of the Programme Against Malnutrition, says, “Zambia doesn’t have money to build roads, bridges and storage facilities. But every day we find money to pay our debts.”

Prayer

All:

Jesus our friend and our brother, through your life and your journey to the Cross, your death and Resurrection, you have shown us how to live in love. May we always follow your example, living a life of compassion, in the search for peace through justice for all your people.

10. Jesus is stripped of his garments.

Reading

When the soldiers had finished crucifying Jesus they took his clothing and divided it into four shares, one for each soldier. His undergarment was seamless, woven in one

piece from neck to hem; so they said to one another, "Instead of tearing it, let's throw dice to decide who is to have it."

(John 19:23-24)

Silence

Reading: Jesus is stripped of his garments today

In Bolivia there has been wave after wave of job losses. The man shining tourists' shoes ... on La Paz's main street is Selvestre Hiladi, aged 51. He lost his job in a factory, and now feels that he has no choice, "We old ones have to do whatever we can," he says, "you have to swallow your pride."

(Duncan Green. Silent Revolution)

We, the housewives, ask ourselves: What have we done to incur this foreign debt? Is it possible that our children have eaten too much? Is it possible that they have studied in the best colleges? Have our wages become too great? Together we say, no, no we have not eaten too much. No, we have not dressed any better... Then to whom have the benefits gone? Why are we the ones who have to pay for this debt?

(75/25, Birmingham DEC)

Silence

Reading

More than eight out of ten Bolivians live below the poverty line. Bolivia's debt is £3.12 billion.

Prayer

All:

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11. Jesus is nailed to the cross

Reading

When they reached the place called The Skull, they crucified him there and the two criminals also, one on the right, the other on the left. Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; they do not know what they are doing."

(Luke 22:33-34)

Silence

Reading: Jesus is nailed to the cross today

Matilda Makombe and her husband are both working, but she says, "Economic Structural Adjustment Programmes, called ESAPs for short, are designed to cut public spending so that Zimbabwe can keep up its debt repayments. But it means that the cost of basic groceries has gone up from £11 to £55 a month. It's really harsh for me

and my husband, but when you think of a family with children you can't imagine how they are surviving. Some families survive with just one meal a day. That's why the ESAPs are known as the Extended Suffering of the African People."

Silence

Reading

Nearly half the population of Zimbabwe does not have the money to buy enough food for their daily needs.

Prayer

All:

Jesus our friend and our brother, through your life and your journey to the Cross, your death and Resurrection, you have shown us how to live in love. May we always follow your example, living a life of compassion, in the search for peace through justice for all your people.

12. Jesus dies on the cross

Reading

When the sixth hour came there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour Jesus called out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you deserted me?"... Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last.

(Mark 15:33-34,37)

Silence

Reading

When I met 16-year-old Marjerie, despite sitting upright, her short breath betrayed her very poor health. She had hours to live. In all likelihood, she was suffering from an HIV-related illness, probably TB. Marjerie died shortly after I met her. Her parents buried her along with two other children.

Silence

Reading

Zambia spends three times as much paying interest on its debts to rich countries as it spends on healthcare. People living with HIV/AIDS elsewhere in the world have access to medicines that can increase their quality of life, and prolong it. But these medicines are far too expensive for people who only earn £20 a month like most Zambians. "No hospital can afford the medicines, no family can afford them," says Joe Chilaizya, a Zambian journalist, "So the doctor is effectively telling them, go home and die."

Prayer

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13. Jesus is taken down from the cross

Reading

Joseph of Arimathaea... asked Pilate to let him remove the body of Jesus. Pilate gave permission so they came and took it away. Nicodemus came as well... and he brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred pounds. They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths.

(John 19:18-19)

Silence

Reading: Jesus is taken down from the cross today

Benita Louis is 14 years old and lives with her family on a small farm in...southern Haiti. She has just been given four fruit trees by a Haitian environmental organisation... She says, "I was really excited when I was told about the project. We were told about the importance of trees to our environment... In three years' time I will sell the fruit in our local market and pay for my education out of the money I earn. These trees will not only help us with our school fees. They will send an important message to other children and our parents that trees are important... Now if I see someone cutting down a tree, I tell them that their actions affect all of us.

(Hidden Lives, Duncan Green)

Silence

Reading

Income per person per year in Haiti is £79. This is the lowest in Latin America.

Prayer

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14. Jesus is buried

Reading

Pilate granted the corpse to Joseph who bought a shroud, took Jesus down from the cross, wrapped him in the shroud and laid him in a tomb, which had been hewn out of the rock. He then rolled a stone against the entrance to the tomb. Mary of Magdala and Mary the mother of Joset were watching and took note of where he was laid.

(Mark 15:45-47)

Silence

Reading

David Gwemani is a Justice and Peace volunteer in his diocese in Zambia. He explains, "I make home visits. I explain that I'm checking on the impact of the structural adjustment, which was introduced to make sure Zambia could pay interest on its debt. We ask how many in the family, who is working, if the children go to school. We ask them how they make ends meet. It causes them anxiety. Some families are not working and children not going to school because there's no money. We ask what happens when they're sick.

"We were supposed to ask about the food basket but we've found it very difficult to do that when they're telling you their story. They sometimes say they haven't eaten for two days and they are relying on the charity of their neighbours. Most people are barely existing, they're not living. They don't even know when the next meal will come."

Silence

Reading

Every Zambian owes creditors in rich countries three times their annual salary.

Prayer

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15. Christ is Risen!

Reading

On the first day of the week, at the first sign of dawn, the women went to the tomb with the spices they had prepared. They found that the stone had been rolled away from the tomb, but on entering discovered that the body of the Lord Jesus was not there. As they stood there not knowing what to think, two men in brilliant clothes suddenly appeared at their side. Terrified, the women lowered their eyes. But the two men said to them, "Why look among the dead for someone who is alive? He is not here; he has risen."

(Luke 24:1-8)

Silence

Reading: Jesus is risen today!

In Ethiopia Mumasufiam has joined her school's food club, "I like working in the garden," she says. "I'm growing peas, cabbages, potatoes and tomatoes. We tell the

other children in school about the use of vegetables, how to grow and cook them and why they're important. My mother and father are very happy about the new things I am learning. We understand now that vegetables help our health and make our bodies strong."

Silence

Reading

Debt campaigns have been launched in Europe, Africa and Latin America. Hundreds of thousands of people support the call for change.

Mulima Kufekisa from Zambia speaks out, "What sort of economic justice is it, where those who can afford the least are expected to give to those who already have the most? Enough is enough. It's time for justice."

Prayer

All:

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