



Way of the Cross: The War in Syria Art installation and reflective space

St Barnabas Church, Lyme Avenue, Macclesfield

Good Friday - 25th March 2016

Church open from 10am until 4pm

The Way of the Cross

It has been a tradition in many Churches to reflect on the Way of the Cross using 'stations' during Holy Week and particularly on the night of Maundy Thursday and Good Friday.

The Church has always kept alive the words and the events of the last days and hours of Jesus, taken from the words of scripture. The Way of the Cross is a loving, although painful memory of the path Jesus walked to his crucifixion at Calvary. We know that in the memory of every episode on that Way, there lies a gesture of the reality of Christ's love for us all. The purpose of re-living the Way by following these reflections, is to remind ourselves of what Christ did for us at that first Easter and also to reflect on what He does for us daily in our lives.

The twelve stations in this Way of the Cross are images taken from the current War in Syria. The purpose of using these images is to prompt reflection on the Way of the Cross, simply by using a contemporary image. Each image is accompanied by scripture. The words below the scripture are meant to also prompt reflection; on our human situation, our frailness, our capacity to hurt each other and why we so need Christ.

These images intentionally raise many emotions and questions will arise. The installation does not claim to give any answers. The Syria War was chosen because it is close to us and it has affected us all. It is also happening not far from Jerusalem, the place of Jesus' walk and his suffering.

Rob Wardle

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Image: thelibertarianrepublic.com

1 Jesus Prays

Then he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, knelt down, and prayed, 'Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but yours be done.'

Luke 22:41-42

Faced with death. Hands covering his face, unable to look, his heart and his mind in complete despair. Friends dig through the rubble, looking for life. He asks himself questions about why? Why me? Why us? Why now? What have I done to deserve this? When will my suffering end? And finally, the guilt 'why do I live?'. Take me away from this.



Image: thenewdaily. Screenshot from ISIL released video

2 Jesus is condemned

'When morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people conferred together against Jesus in order to bring about his death. They bound him, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate the governor.'

Matthew 27:1 -2

These Coptic Christians are about to be killed; murdered. The horror of innocents being walked out to die. The image faces us with the frightening truth: this is the brutality which human beings are capable of. That is the root of our fear. We look for someone to blame. History repeats itself, always. Scapegoats found.



Image: wsj.com

3 Jesus is crowned with thorns

Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters, and they gathered the whole cohort around him. They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on his head.

Matthew 27:27-ff29

The crown of a missile; hand made. Prickling with explosive, ready to pierce. Being made by human hands makes it even more grotesque; hands that will receive pain as well as give. What Just War here? Mocking, laughter, pride. Death is round the corner, there must be another way.



Image: Reuters/Bassam Khabieh

4 Jesus carries his Cross

And carrying the cross by himself, he went out to what is called The Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha.

John 19:17

Easter is about us; we are real. The son feels the full weight of the forthcoming death for the first time. Compassion fills us. Maybe we want to help but can't, maybe we just want to look, to gaze. Death will come. Death has to come. An image of love without comfort. Jesus carries his cross and we cry for him and for ourselves in our helplessness. Perhaps we know this has to be.



Image: Reuters

5 Jesus falls

Jesus began to weep.

John 11:35

Hollowness, crushing. I can find no solace or rest here. When all is lost, Jesus weeps with us as he did for Jerusalem, as he did for his friend Lazarus. Jesus falls when the burden is too great. This way, I know he is with me. The weight of the world upon him. And still we don't know why, why we take this suffering, when he died so that we might live. Where is our freedom.



Image: Lefteris Partsalias

6 Jesus meets Mary his Mother

*He said to his mother, 'Woman, here is your son.'
Then he said to the disciple, 'Here is your mother.'*

John 19: ff26-27

A Syrian mother arrived on the Greek island of Lesbos, homeless and struggling to feed her baby. Three grandmothers, or yiayiaades stepped in. Militsa Kamvisi, 83, gave the baby a bottle of milk while she and her friends sang a lullaby. Grandma Militsa said she does not think their response was anything extraordinary and maybe she's right. Each of them has nothing, and yet everything.

He said that whatever you do for the least of these you do to me. If we can, then maybe we should. Why is giving so hard for us? When he blesses us each time we give.



Image: Reuters

7 Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus to carry his Cross

They compelled a passer-by, who was coming in from the country, to carry his cross; it was Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus.

Mark 15:21

The nobody becomes somebody. Simon was a passer-by from the country, who entered the history books. They forced him to help, nobody wanted to help Jesus to his death. But for a moment, he took some of the weight; he did carry.

The 'white caps' have entered history. When the bombs are dropped in Syria they run towards the destruction, not away from it. They search the rubble of collapsed buildings looking for life. They carry survivors, not towards death but away from it. Men and boys from the country.



Image: REUTERS/Aikis Konstantinidis

8 Jesus falls for the second time

After mocking him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.

Matthew 27:31

The journey is not as expected. The weight is heavy; crushing. Even when the end is in sight, the limbs are weak and cannot carry on. Our human frailty gives us no comfort; when we think we can be strong, He shows us we are weak. Lacking compassion, lacking strength, lacking what is needed. There is only one place to rest. He opened wide his arms of love and took us in.



Image:

9 Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem

But Jesus turned to them and said, 'Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.'

Luke 23:28

We still do. He knew they would be strong; the women. And he knew they would weep, for him, for them. Stronger than men, the women bear the brunt of conflict; carrying on. Pain and suffering is no stranger to them. 'Do not weep for me' we are told, 'weep for yourselves'. If only we could change; how beautiful life is.



Image: bbc news [Getty Images]

10 Jesus is nailed to the Cross

It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him.

Mark 15:25

Wincing with pain, nails driven, breaking skin and bone. Too much to bear; we cannot watch. She was buried, and her father wills her back. He offers her as if to believe that she can live. Who drove those nails? They stand and do nothing, we stand, passers by to another death.



Image: Sebastiano Tomada/Sipa USA via News.com

11 Jesus and the Repentant Thief

One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, 'Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!'

Luke 23:39

Thieved child's lives. Here as yet unrepentant, with a childhood stolen. No fun and games. Games of violence, with the other as different instead of the same. No innocence in playfulness, only tournaments of unkindness to breed pain and hatred. Love here shows itself only in death.

Ahmed, is eight and lives in Aleppo. Who is the thief, who will repent, who will go to paradise.



Image: New York Times

12 Jesus dies

And about three o'clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, 'Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?' that is, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'

Matthew 27:46

For now, the end. There is no comfort to be had in the death of a son so loved. His blood stained clothes, what will we avenge? Father distraught, the earth shakes with him. Mourning his son.

What have we done. And Jesus says 'stay with me'.