

Crucifixes and Crosses

I often see Christians wearing crosses on a necklace and I have noticed crosses in churches and in other places too. I wonder if they are a secret symbol?

Can you help me to find out?



Crosses are worn by many Christians as a sign of their faith. It refers to the cross that Jesus was nailed to when he was crucified on Good Friday.

Crucifixion is the execution of someone by nailing them to a cross. This is the way that Jesus died on Good Friday before rising to life on Easter Sunday.



Some crosses are plain.

They are often made of precious metals.

Not all crosses are made of gold or silver, some are made of wood. Does it matter what they are made of or is something else about them important?



Crosses can be made of many different materials. They represent the cross on which Jesus was nailed when he was crucified.



Some crosses have figures on them and these are called crucifixes.

The word crucifixion is very like the word crucifix. Are they linked? How?



A **crucifix** is a cross with a representation of the body of Jesus on it. An empty cross symbolises the resurrection; when Jesus came back to life after death.



What does the message over Jesus' head mean? I know that REX is KING. Can you work it out?

I wonder why it is there?



Jesus Nazarenus Rex Judaeorum means Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews. It was nailed above Jesus' head on the cross by the Roman soldiers who had taken him for crucifixion. It is part of the mocking of Jesus and an insult to the Jews. Jesus was considered leader by many Jews, but not all. He never tried to be "kingly" but evidence from Palm Sunday, where the palms from the trees were spread under his feet as he entered Jerusalem, shows that many people considered him a Messiah, the Son of God.

The children should be able to work out the Latin message using their knowledge and the clue in the picture. If they need help, tell them that Nazarenus means Nazareth and is a place. Judaeorum is the plural of Jew (Jews). In Roman times, U was written as what we would recognise today as a V.



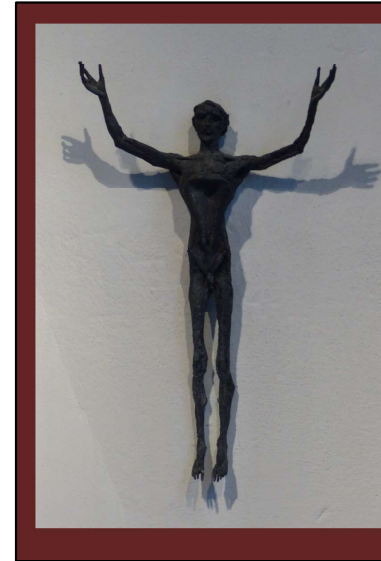
I understand that
the cross is a symbol
of Jesus' death.

How could looking
at this cross help a
Christian to pray?



Ask the children if they think a plain cross or one with a figure on it would be more helpful when thinking about Jesus' death. He is said to have died to save Christians from their sins.

Does the graphic representation of Jesus on the cross, especially the nails through his feet, make a difference? Do the children like it or not? This is a matter of interpretation.



Can this
figure help a
Christian to
pray?

How?



This is an interpretive question designed to get the children thinking about whether a figure in the shape of the cross could help a Christian to pray by the association it has with the crucifixion of Jesus.

Time to think:



Is there a symbol that has meaning for you? Why is it special?

Ask the children to think about whether they can think of a symbol which is important to them. For example, they might think of the badge of a football team or a logo of a company.

In a church school, ask the children to think about the meaning of the cross to them.

The pictures on the crosses are all either of Jesus or of biblical stories. The children could design their own crosses with stories from the Bible or a representation of Jesus on.

Acknowledgements

Photographs taken with permission at:

- Chelmsford Cathedral
- Church of the Ascension with All Saints, Chelmsford
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- Shrine of OLV Shop
- Canterbury Cathedral