



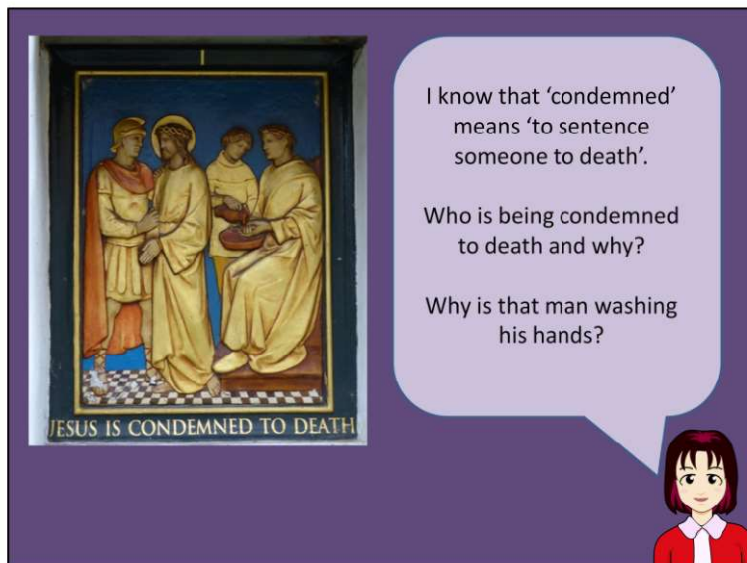
When I was in a church recently I noticed pictures on the walls. They had numbers. I wonder if they tell a story?

The stations of the cross are a series of pictures that tell the story of Jesus' final hours.

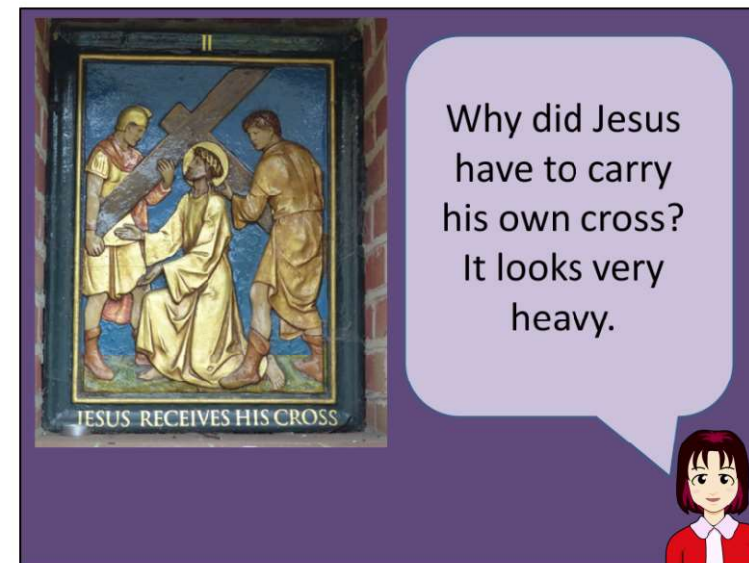
Some Christians find the pictures help them to think about the story and to remember Jesus' suffering.

Traditionally, at each station a meditation is read and then prayers are said.

The stations of the cross in the following pictures are from the Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham in Norfolk. They are scattered around the gardens and pilgrims can walk from one to the other. Most are pictures but two are real. Can you spot which ones they are?



The man washing his hands is Pontius Pilate. He was a Roman who asked the crowd of people whether they wanted to save Jesus or a thief named Barabbas. The crowd chose Jesus but Pilate did not agree that he had done anything wrong so called for a bowl of water and washed his hands to show that he was not responsible for Jesus being condemned (sentenced) to death. This is where we get the phrase "to wash your hands of something" meaning, to no longer take responsibility for it.
(Mark 15: 1-15, Matthew 27:23-31)



Jesus was sentenced to death by crucifixion which is where he was nailed to a cross. He, as with the others sentenced to death, had to carry his own cross to the crucifixion site. This was partly to humiliate him and partly to weaken him so that he would die more readily.
(John 19:13-17, John 19: 5)



Why did Jesus fall over?

Why does that man look like he is about to hit him?



Jesus fell over as he was weakened from carrying his cross, from being hit by the Roman soldiers and from blood loss from his wounds. The man looks as though he is going to hit him to make him carry on walking. He is also controlling Jesus through the rope round his waist.
(Isaiah 53: 4-7, Matthew 11:28-30)



I know Jesus' mother was called Mary.

I wonder how she was feeling?

Was Jesus pleased to see her?



Jesus' mother, Mary, was with him until his death. She was there to comfort him while being in sorrow for his death.
(John 19: 25-27)



Why did Jesus need help to carry his cross?

Who was Simon of Cyrene?



Simon of Cyrene was chosen by the Roman guards to help Jesus carry his cross as Jesus was struggling. This may have been because he sympathised with Jesus or it may have been just because he happened to be there and was compelled (forced) to carry it. (Mark 15: 21)



Veronica was a holy woman who lived in Jerusalem. When she saw Jesus struggling to carry the cross she wiped his face with her veil.

Why did she do that?



Veronica was one of the women of Jerusalem who sympathised with Jesus. By wiping his face she showed him kindness and concern in his distress and was a way of showing solidarity with Jesus. (John 14: 9, Matthew 25:40)



Why does the soldier look as though he is going to whip Jesus?

Isn't Jesus suffering enough with that heavy cross to carry?



The Roman soldiers were brutal and forced Jesus to carry the cross even when he was struggling. They had previously beaten him and whipping him now to force him to carry on was just another humiliation for Jesus.
(Hebrews 4:15, Isaiah 63: 9)



Jesus spoke to the women who were crying as they followed him.

Why were they crying?

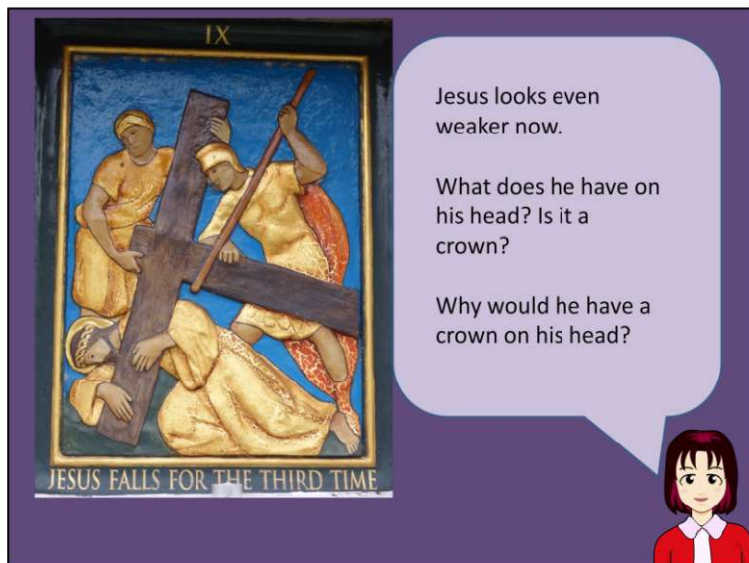
Jesus told them not to cry for him but to cry for humans who had committed sins.

What does this tell us about Jesus?

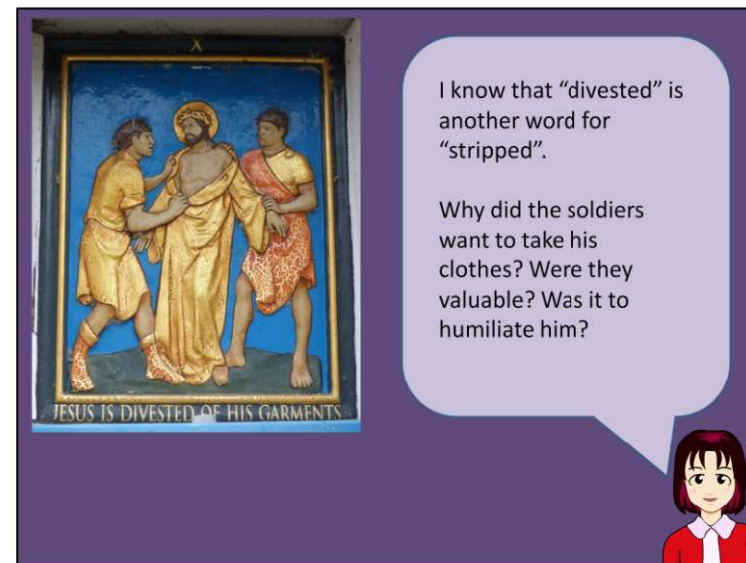


The women of Jerusalem were crying as they were upset that Jesus was being taken to be killed.

Jesus told them not to cry for him but for others who had committed sins. This shows us that Jesus was always thinking of others and wanted them to think of the people who were not close to God, as he was. Jesus died on the cross to atone for (make right) the sins that humans had committed. He knew he had done nothing wrong.
(Luke 23: 27-31)



Jesus has a crown of thorns on his head. This was a way of the Roman soldiers humiliating Jesus and mocking him as people were calling him the King of the Jews. The crown is symbolic of a king and therefore making it of thorns, which would have scratched and injured Jesus, was a way of making fun of this title and the Romans demonstrating that they did not believe it was true.
(Luke 22: 28-32)



In the Bible there is a prophecy (prediction) that says that Jesus' clothes were taken from him and shared among the soldiers. This happened routinely at crucifixions and any possessions were shared out but also makes the prophecy true. Taking Jesus' clothes both humiliated him and provided the soldiers with a "perk" of the job, gaining the possessions of those who were to be killed. Traditionally, the robe Jesus was wearing were made of one piece of cloth so instead of dividing it up the soldiers threw dice to decide who was going to have it.
(John 19: 23-24)



What are they doing?!

Why?!



Jesus was nailed to the cross with long nails through his palms and feet. This must have been excruciatingly painful and also humiliating. Nailing Jesus to the cross ensured a slow death as he would not be able to breathe after a while and also through slow blood loss. It was a very nasty way to die.
(Luke 23: 33-43)



Jesus dies on the cross after being nailed onto it. Apparently when he died the sky went dark and the curtain in the temple ripped.
How does this part of the story make you feel? What are you thinking?



As Jesus died the sky went dark and the curtain in the temple ripped.

Ask the children to respond personally to this part of the story. Does it have a meaning for them? (AT2)
(John 19: 28-37, Matthew 27: 50)



Is that lady Mary, mother of Jesus?

Why does the artist show her holding the body of Jesus?

Why does she have a halo round her head?



Halo – a ring around the head of a saint or holy person in art to show that they are special.

This is Mary, the mother of Jesus, holding her son's body. This is to show the distress and despair she must have been feeling at this point in the story.
(John 19: 38-40)



Jesus was taken and put into a sepulchre or grave. The stone was rolled across the opening so that his body would be safe.
Is this the end of the story? Did anything happen next?



(Mark 15: 46-47)



After 2 days Jesus rose from the dead on Easter morning.

He was found in the garden near his tomb by Mary Magdalene and his disciple Simon Peter.

This is the miracle that Christians believe lies at the heart of their faith.

Disciple – a follower of Jesus.
Mary Magdalene – a friend of Jesus.

Miracle – something that cannot be understood fully or logically.

Time to Think...

Think about the story told in the Stations of the Cross.

Does it have a message for Christians?

Does it have any meaning for you?

Is there a special story that has meaning for you?