

# NJPN North West Justice & Peace E-Bulletin March 2026

The e-bulletin for the North West, linked to the National Justice and Peace Network (NJPN), is produced jointly within the dioceses of Lancaster, Liverpool, Salford, Shrewsbury and Wrexham. Please send articles and diary dates to: [anneoc980@hotmail.com](mailto:anneoc980@hotmail.com)

## SOLIDARITY IN A TIME OF GLOBAL CRISIS

Ian Linden 15 February 2026

“Every world crisis is, as the word denotes, a judgement and a decision out of which something new must come. It is therefore an opportunity to hear the Word of God and for the Spirit to manifest its creative power to humanity. This is the hope that the prophets always maintain in their vision of judgement against the nations, and which the Church constantly repeats in the liturgy.”

Pope Leo on today’s crisis? No, Christopher Dawson, writing in 1941. He was a Catholic historian and Vice-President of Cardinal Hinsley’s Sword of the Spirit which dropped pamphlets over Nazi Germany calling Catholics to resist and, in the 1960s, produced the Catholic Institute for International Relations (CIIR), later known as Progressio. Led by Mildred Nevile, CIIR developed a distinctive approach to solidarity with, what was then known as, the ‘Third World’.

With his hope that ‘something new must come’, Dawson might be speaking directly to our current global crisis. But what might it be? And where might the Church be hoping the Spirit would be manifesting its creative power today? The suffering and prophetic voices of women in and beyond the Church, and in the solidarity with them, suggests itself.

Mothers are last in the family to eat in Gaza and in countless areas of conflict around the world. Rape in wars continues unabated. The sexual trafficking of women, treated as a passing story in our own cities, has now been brought into global prominence by a criminal elite, Epstein and his powerful, rich friends. Then there is the suffering of women oppressed by – what is imagined as – 7th century Muslim religious duties, imposed as the law of the land, cruelly implemented, even by the denial of education making gender equality in Afghanistan a distant hoping against hope. A movement of solidarity with the plight of vulnerable women has been increasingly coming to the fore.

It was Pope John Paul II in his 1987 encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis (On Social Concerns)* who gave a straightforward definition of solidarity as a virtue: “a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good”. It stuck because it bypassed binary arguments about the individual versus the communitarian, liberalism versus post-liberalism. In that sense, and in that sense only, the Christian understanding of solidarity isn’t a political principle. It is by definition a personal commitment to a type of relationship, to friendship and just social structures.

John Paul II also described what solidarity wasn’t: “not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many others”. Solidarity was set in opposition to “structures of sin”, alongside individual moral failings, (he was celebrating the 20th anniversary of Pope Paul VI’s *Populorum Progressio* which condemned unfair trade practices imposed on developing countries by powerful states). If “economic structures of sin” sounds a little academic, think of the cruelty and violence embodied in the laws and social structures of former Apartheid South Africa and in Israel – and the resistance to them, past and present.

I remember taking Rev. Frank Chikane, soon to be General-Secretary of the South African Council of Churches, 1987-1994, but on the run, a target for the apartheid regime, to see the Archbishop of Canterbury and Cardinal Basil Hume. There was an immediate rapport between Robert Runcie and Frank. Runcie had been a tank commander in the Second World War and knew what it was like having someone intent on killing you. Cardinal Hume was kind and welcoming but the ‘vibes’ were more formal. On another occasion, I asked Cardinal Hume to make an appeal for the ANC brother of a young South African women who had come to London to try to save him. He was about to be executed in Pretoria. The Cardinal was sympathetic but clearly wasn’t going to do so. And there was not much chance it would have had any result. I later heard he had driven to Heathrow the next morning to comfort her before she returned to Johannesburg. People are different. They show solidarity in different ways.

Pope Francis, too different for conservative tastes, added his distinctive coda to John Paul II’s words in 2013 speaking off-the-cuff in the Cathedral of Our Lady of Bonaria, patron saint of sailors, in Cagliari, Sardinia. Francis called for compassion for “real people who are suffering and starving” - rather than abstract statistics on poverty. He lived up to his words.

Why choose Cagliari on a coastal hill in a town on an island in the Mediterranean? The clue is in ‘Bonaria’, Good air/winds that had blown sailors in the 16th century, with their veneration of Our Lady with them to Santa María del Buen Ayre, Buenos Aires, Good Air, Francis’ former Argentinian Archdiocese for 15 years.

The Cagliari meeting was at his request with local prisoners and the unemployed. His solidarity with them came at a personal level: from recalling stories of family poverty in Italy and how his unemployed father had suffered during the Great Depression in Argentina. Unemployment, denying a vital space for human creativity, was a “wound to human dignity”. Francis came back often to the centrality of solidarity in a life of faith responding to injustice.

Injustice has moved not only NGOs but has also evoked, directly and indirectly, Government concern and concerted action. Both Conservative and Labour governments have promoted protections for women in war, culminating in rape being made a distinct, recognized war crime. The Metropolitan Police set up a new Violence Reduction Unit in 2022. Domestic violence against women is a key part of it. Women played the leading role in making both the above happen.

Governments obviously have the power, money and resources to achieve more than any number of NGOs, though very often in democracies it is pressure from NGOs, such as the Catholic Institute for International Relations using effective advocacy alongside public opinion, that lies behind or promotes new government initiatives. Building up public opinion against the headwinds of a Right-Wing press is no easy task. In addition, any response to today’s prophetic voices has to weigh up what is doable in different contexts, in the short term and what may require a lifetime. It is one thing to seek justice in a land led by a narcissistic sociopath showing symptoms of cognitive decline, another to deal with a Communist Party led by a ruthless dictator, and another for those living in democratic States with fragmenting political Parties. Each situation will demand analysis and dictate a different expression of solidarity. Seeing round corners is not just a political skill.

The UK has the chair of the UN Security Council for this month of February. OXFAM and other NGOs will be pressing for progress in gender equality and in countering violence against women. In all societies, secular or religious, in back-streets and in global institutions, the creative power of the Spirit is at work, bringing the prophetic voices of women to bear. Christians are called to be its head, heart and hands.

<https://www.ianlinden.com/latest-blogs/solidarity-in-a-time-of-global-crisis>

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Read Professor Ian Linden's latest blogs here: [www.ianlinden.com/latest-blogs/](http://www.ianlinden.com/latest-blogs/)

### **POPE LEO TO VISIT LAMPEDUSA ON JULY 4, THE 250<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE**

19 February 2026: May 8 marks the one-year anniversary of Pope Leo’s election to the papacy and he will begin an Italian tour this summer with a visit in Pompeii. One year prior, the newly elected Pope Leo XIV stepped out onto the central balcony of St. Peter’s Basilica and said, “Today is the day of the Supplication to Our Lady of Pompeii. Our Mother Mary always wants to walk with us, be close, and help us with her intercession and love.”

On July 4, the Pope will visit Lampedusa, an island that held a special place in Pope Francis’ heart after his journey in 2013—the first of his pontificate. In the morning, Pope Leo will travel to the island, which has become a gateway for thousands of migrants from Africa and the Middle East to Italy and Europe.

During his visit, Pope Francis threw a wreath into the seas in honour of all the victims who have lost their lives trying to cross the Mediterranean Sea for a better life. Following in his predecessor’s footsteps, Pope Leo XIV will return to Lampedusa to offer comfort and encouragement to the guests at various hotspots and to those who assist them.

See: <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2026-02/pope-to-visit-pompeii-naples-lampedusa-on-pastoral-tour-of-italy.html>

Pope Francis famously celebrated Mass on Lampedusa on an altar made of shipwrecked migrant boats and denounced the "globalisation of indifference" that greets migrants who risk their lives trying to reach Europe — a mantra that would come to define his papacy.

Pope Leo, the first US-born pontiff, has previously called for "deep reflection" on the treatment of migrants in the US under President Donald Trump's administration. In a video message sent to Lampedusa in September, Leo had mentioned a desire to visit and thanked local organizations who offer assistance to arriving migrants. He said volunteers on the island "have shown ... the smile and the attention of a human face to people who have survived in a desperate journey of hope."

See: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/pope-leo-july-4-lampedusa-italy-b2923617.html>

## **NJPN WEBINAR CALLS CHRISTIANS FROM AWARENESS TO ACTION IN CONFRONTING RACISM**

**Brian O' Toole** February 6, 2026: A national webinar hosted by the National Justice and Peace Network (NJPN) has urged Christians to move beyond reflection to concrete action in confronting racism in England, grounding anti-racism firmly in Gospel discipleship and Christian hope. The online event, *"Shining a Light on Racism in England: From Lived Experience to Collective Action,"* brought together church leaders, theologians, campaigners and community practitioners just days before Racial Justice Sunday. It formed part of a wider ecumenical call for renewed commitment to racial justice under this year's theme, *"Love Your Neighbour."*

Opening the evening, NJPN Chair Anne Peacey welcomed participants and stressed that racism in the UK remains a present and structural reality, affecting employment, education, housing, healthcare and the criminal justice system. It is expressed not only through overt hostility but also through patterns of exclusion and everyday "othering."

The webinar combined lived experience, theological reflection and practical challenge, creating space for what Brian O' Toole as moderator described as both honest encounter and purposeful response.

Dr Beverley Prevatt Goldstein — academic, historian and long-standing anti-racism advocate — spoke from both personal and professional experience. Born in Trinidad, she was among the first Black women from a mainstream British school to enter Oxford University in 1968. Her decades of work have focused on challenging monocultural narratives and recovering the long history and contribution of African communities in the North of England.

She stressed that at the end of "shining a light" there must be action and consequence. Awareness alone is not enough. She urged Christians not merely to "understand" racism but to "overstand" it — to go deeper than intellectual acknowledgement toward moral clarity and committed response. Racism, she said, must be named truthfully in all its forms and not softened by language that diminishes its reality. She cautioned against the casual use of the term "micro-aggression" where what is experienced is, in fact, racism.

Dr Prevatt Goldstein highlighted the importance of encounter, recalling a sermon that began simply with an invitation to talk and listen. Genuine encounter, she suggested, remains one of the most powerful tools for change. "We are all part of the one human race," she reminded participants, despite belonging to many overlapping groups and identities. She encouraged participants not to avoid difficult conversations in their parishes and communities. "Too many people know racism, live racism and feel it," she noted, adding that allyship is essential because there must be a gathered and collective reaction to the outrage of racism. Persistent love, she said, remains a force capable of overcoming it — but only if it is active and organised. Attending a webinar, she warned, is not the work; it must lead to what follows.

The second keynote speaker, Richard Reddie, Director of Justice and Inclusion at Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, addressed racism in the context of migration, asylum and public discourse. He spoke candidly about the social and political climate, arguing that progress on racial justice has stalled and, in some respects, reversed over the past two decades. He warned that political rhetoric increasingly presents toughness toward migrants, refugees and asylum seekers as strength, while portraying compassion as weakness. Such narratives, he said, distort both social reality and Christian teaching. For the Church, anti-racism is not optional but integral to discipleship and public witness.

Mr Reddie, who has helped develop national Racial Justice Sunday resources, suggested that racial justice should not be confined to one Sunday each year but embedded in the Church's weekly life. Christians, he said, are called to be "justice seekers" whose actions are intentional and prophetic, not merely rhetorical. He challenged participants to carry forward three questions — the "3 Rs" — after leaving the comfort of the webinar: What will you remember? How will you reflect? How will you respond?

Participants then moved into breakout groups to consider a practical question: how they could "shine a light on racism" in their own local contexts during the coming year. Feedback highlighted the need for deeper listening, parish-level education, stronger allyship, and partnerships with communities directly affected by racism. Reflective feedback framed the evening, emphasising that Christian hope is not passive but transformative. Beverley reminded us that activity does not amount to transformation unless it redistributes power, shifts risk and interrupts harm. The consistent message throughout was clear: confronting racism is intrinsic to the Christian calling to love one's neighbour and uphold human dignity. Churches were urged not only to speak but to act — with courage, persistence and hope as we strive to act justly, to love tenderly, and to walk humbly with our God.

<https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/meetings/njpn-webinar-calls-christians-from-awareness-to-action-in-confronting-racism/>

## THE IMAM AND THE RABBI ... 'GREAT MATES' HELPING TO PROMOTE UNDERSTANDING IN A CITY TORN BY TERRORISM

Lianne Kolirin February 13, 2026

Theirs is the unlikelyst of friendships in a city still reeling from the effects of a fatal terrorist attack four months ago. "We're great mates," said Rabbi Dovid Lewis of his relationship with Imam Nasser Kurdy.

This is not a throwaway line, as listeners of *The Rabbi, the Imam and the Power of Dialogue* podcast can attest. The men have used their series to show how powerful talking can be in bridging divides between two communities. In the eight episodes so far, they have discussed topics from the definition of Zionism and how social media has accentuated antagonism between their two communities, to the terrorist attacks on Heaton Park synagogue in Manchester and at Bondi Beach in Australia. Friendship does not mean they always agree. Far from it. The podcast, as the online introduction states, seeks to explore how "despite their many disagreements" they have "managed to stay friends while war rages thousands of miles away."

Rabbi Lewis has been the full-time rabbi of the Orthodox Bowdon Synagogue since 2011. Dr Kurdy, a consultant orthopaedic surgeon, previously served as a lay imam for the Altrincham and Hale Muslim Association. The pair frequently encountered each other at interfaith initiatives in south Manchester.

"We were bumping into each other but almost like two ships in the night," Dr Kurdy said of the time before they became friends 13 years ago. Eventually Rabbi Lewis suggested his synagogue host an iftar in 2018. It was "like a first date," they told the Religion Media Centre, as both sides were unsure of each other. It proved to be a "phenomenal experience" says Rabbi Lewis, whose synagogue went on to repeat the iftar several times, including an online version during the pandemic.

The communities subsequently volunteered together for a local homeless shelter, cooking traditional Asian recipes in a kosher kitchen. "We realised that working together for the betterment of Manchester, we could do a lot," Rabbi Lewis said. When news of their collaboration spread, the two men were invited into a couple of schools to give assemblies on how they became friends.

One might have expected their relationship to have stalled after Hamas attacked Israel on October 7 2023, leading to the bloody war in Gaza — but the opposite happened. Soon after the initial attack, Rabbi Lewis heard from Mark Schweiger, one of his congregants, who desperately wanted to do something to ease communal tensions. His idea was to get a rabbi and an imam to speak together in schools. "I said, 'Hi, I'm a rabbi and I have an imam and we've done this before'," Lewis said. "To his credit, he took our small little thing and supersized it." With Mr Schweiger's help, they have now visited dozens of schools, mainly across Greater Manchester, and addressed about 15,000 schoolchildren. "Without Mark it wouldn't have gone that far," Dr Kurdy said.

"By and large the talks begin with 'Hi, my name's Dovid Lewis. I'm a Mancunian, I'm a rabbi, I'm a Jew and I support Israel. Standing next to me is my very good friend.'" The doctor continues: "I'm Nasser Kurdy, I'm an Arab, I was born in Syria from a Jordanian background. I'm a Muslim and I'm pro-Palestinian so how come we're standing here together, side by side? Some of you may see that this is something odd considering what's happening in the Middle East, but we're here to tell you how we do it."

Where the conversation goes depends on the audience, the mood and the news of the day. "When we started we didn't know what the other was going to say so in a sense we were experiencing and experimenting the other — how will Dovid respond to what I've said and how am I going to respond to what he says," Dr Kurdy said. "Over a period of time we gained trust. Sometimes I'd say something that would make Dovid think, 'Hold on a minute, why did you say that?' and vice versa. But over time we realised we weren't saying it to trip or to trick the other ... we actually speak honestly and from the heart. We don't feel obliged to hold back."

Their young audiences can ask difficult questions and even be hostile. Rabbi Lewis recalled an event at a school with a large Muslim population. "One of the boys turned around and said to me, 'The whole thing's a waste of time — how can you stand there and say you support Israel when Israel is committing a holocaust in Gaza?' "The temperature of the room shot up. I took a breath and then Nasser stepped in and said, 'Let me answer this one.' "I've never been prouder to call him my friend. Emotionally, but not excitedly, knowledgeably but not academic and bookie, Nasser explained what the Holocaust was and why the war in Gaza was not a holocaust. He said 'that doesn't mean I agree with what the [Israel Defense Forces are] doing but let's not start throwing around these words which are not necessarily offensive but they are triggering.' "At that point I thought, 'Here's somebody I can trust when the conversation is difficult'."

In 2017, Dr Kurdy was stabbed in the neck outside the Altrincham mosque. When he later examined his CT scan, he realised how close he had come to death. He set out to forgive his attacker — who was jailed for five years and four months — and wrote a book about the experience. He went on to deliver his message to schools, community groups and prisons. His work promoting peace and forgiveness earned him an MBE in the King's New Year's honours list.

Rabbi Lewis, who comes from the Heaton Park area of north Manchester, where his great uncle was the rabbi for 35 years, also has direct experience of where hatred can lead. His cousin Rabbi Eli Schlanger was among those murdered on Bondi Beach in December.

Although their experiences lend weight to their words, they are not immune to criticism. Dr Kurdy said he sometimes came under fire from Muslim pupils. "At one point," he recalled, "one of the students was having a go at me and Dovid stood in and said, 'Do you realise who this person is? Do you realise what happened to him, the stabbing, the forgiveness ... You're not looking at somebody who just came off the street and is trying to give an opinion like on YouTube or other channels. This is a trustworthy person who has been the leader of his community for a number of years. You're having a go at him because there's some anger inside of you but you really have to rethink your position towards him'."

The rabbi has met similar hostility. "The Jewish kids will sometimes get annoyed with me, like, 'You didn't go at him, you didn't pull the rug out.' I've got better things to do than waste my time with that — this is about understanding, being curious and learning."

There are moments, however, that defy expectation. When the pair attended a sixth-form college, they were warned that one student planned to leave when the rabbi spoke. "He didn't want to be in the same room as me," Rabbi Lewis said. "To his credit, he stayed for my opening line and then he stayed for Nasser as well and then when it was my turn to respond he looked up, facing away from me and he listened. At the end of half an hour he walked up to me and said, 'Is it OK if I shake your hand?' 'No, it's not,' I said. 'I want a hug.' In his life he'd never believed he could actually sit in the same room as a Jew."

The content and delivery of the school talks, coupled with how they were received, proved so compelling that Mark Schweiger helped them to launch the podcast, which he produces. As with their school addresses, the two men regularly banter with each other and nothing is off-limits. Mr Schweiger told the Religion Media Centre that the inspiration for the initiative is "to show young people that a Jew and a Muslim can stand side by side, under the shared banner of humanity, empathy, and unity".

"Together," he said, "we can model how to have difficult conversations, how to disagree respectfully, and how to feel compassion for each other's struggles." Of the two men, he added: "Their authentic friendship and courage bring alive the values of peace and respect in classrooms and assemblies, leaving a deep and lasting impact."

Ultimately, what the rabbi and the imam would like to see is more people reaching across the religious divide to make friends. "Everybody's hurting about what's happening — it's how you express that," Dr Kurdy said. "We're not shy of standing and talking to people. I'm a surgeon and by nature an alpha male and we give lectures, we talk. Where we operate is called the theatre as well so we're performing all the time. And Dovid, if you go to one of his sermons, he's definitely not shy."

Rabbi Lewis laughed and added: "There's no one doing what we do but as my siblings remind me constantly — there ain't nothing special about me. Find someone you trust and if you can't find that, develop that trust."

<https://religionmediacentre.org.uk/news/the-imam-and-the-rabbi-great-mates-helping-to-promote-understanding-in-a-city-torn-by-terrorism/>

**Rabbi David and Imam Nasser will be appearing at the JW3 Centre in north London on 27 April for "An Evening with the Rabbi and the Imam" – details here: <https://www.jw3.org.uk/whats-on/evening-rabbi-and-imam>**

**See also The Forgiveness Project – Explore forgiveness through real-life stories**

The Forgiveness Project is a charity that shares stories of forgiveness to build hope, empathy and understanding. Explore their online workshops, podcasts, videos and blog to learn more. Our mission is to use the transformative power of personal stories to foster understanding, bring hope, and restore our shared humanity.

<https://www.theforgivenessproject.com/>

## **NEW DOCUMENT: KAIROS II – A MOMENT OF TRUTH: FAITH IN A TIME OF GENOCIDE**

14 November 2025 **Kairos Palestine – The Palestinian Christian Initiative**

### **A Moment of Truth: Faith in a Time of Genocide**

We, the Palestinian Christian Ecumenical Initiative, issued the Kairos Palestine Document in 2009 — “A word of faith, hope, and love from the heart of Palestinian suffering.” The Heads of Churches in Jerusalem heard this cry, welcomed it, and offered their support. Likewise, the document resonated widely, both locally and internationally. Then, as now, we gathered — women and men, clergy and laity — from across the different church families in Palestine. After prayer and reflection on the suffering of our people under occupation, we released that cry of hope in the absence of hope, affirming our faith in God and our love for our homeland, convinced that our struggle is ultimately about human life and dignity.

**Kairos 2009 Document:** <https://www.kairospalestine.ps/index.php/about-kairos/kairos-palestine-document>

We live now in a time of genocide, ethnic cleansing and forced displacement unfolding before the eyes of the world. This moment — a moment of truth — demands from us a new stand unlike any before it. It is both a decisive moment and. Today, we renew our stand for truth and our commitment to fundamental religious, theological and moral principles. We look at our reality and take a renewed stand, responding to the voice of the Holy Spirit deep within us, listening to the call of faith in this time of genocide. We renew our message of faith, hope, and love — offering a faith-inspired vision for the time after genocide.

**Kairos II document:** [https://www.kairospalestine.ps/images/Final\\_Kairos\\_document\\_II\\_English.pdf](https://www.kairospalestine.ps/images/Final_Kairos_document_II_English.pdf)

**Sabeel-Kairos UK** is a campaigning Christian charity that works for human rights, justice and equality for Palestinians in partnership/solidarity with the Christian community in the Holy Land. <https://www.sabeel-kairos.org.uk/>

**See also:** <https://paxchristi.net/pax-christi-international-delegation-to-the-holy-land-november-2025/>

## **PRIESTS AGAINST GENOCIDE USA URGE CATHOLIC LEADERS TO SPEAK OUT ON 'BOARD OF PEACE' AMID ONGOING SUFFERING IN GAZA**

**Source: Priests Against Genocide** Feb 19th, 2026 (Updated Feb 20th, 2026)

Priests Against Genocide USA-part of a global network of 2,200 priests from 58 countries, along with 22 bishops, archbishops, and two cardinals-issued an open letter to the US Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) calling on Catholic leaders in the United States to speak with moral clarity regarding President Trump's convening of the 'Board of Peace' on February 19, 2026 in Washington, DC. The group warns that the initiative risks side-lining Palestinian voices and legitimizing ongoing injustice amid the deepening humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

The appeal echoes concerns raised by Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, who described the Board of Peace as "an initiative that appears to be primarily aimed at protecting the interests of the major powers, without real recognition of the Palestinian people and their rights." He further emphasized that "Christ is not absent from Gaza. He is there, crucified in the wounded, buried under the rubble, and yet present in every act of mercy."

Fr Jacek Orzechowski, OFM - who recently returned from a pilgrimage to the Holy Land-spoke forcefully about the urgency of the moment. "As a Franciscan friar, I'm passionate about peacebuilding. But appearances can be deceiving. Palestinian people in Gaza continue to be starved, killed, deeply traumatized, denied access to water and basic medical care. You can't build peace and security on injustice and ethnic cleansing, excluding Palestinian people, shielding with impunity war criminals, and providing them with more weapons, denigrating the United Nations, and bringing back raw colonial exploitation for the highest bidder."

In their statement, Priests Against Genocide USA call on US Catholic bishops to help "inform the conscience of our nation" about the implications of the Board of Peace and to guide the faithful toward a Gospel-rooted understanding of authentic peace – one grounded in truth, justice, and the protection of human dignity. The group urges Church leaders to summon Catholics to a Lenten conversion of heart through prayer, fasting, and action in solidarity with the people of Palestine. Their appeal highlights the Church's longstanding teaching that peace cannot be built while systemic injustice persists or while the rights of the oppressed are subordinated to political or economic interests.

Priests Against Genocide USA concluded their message with a call for renewed commitment to international humanitarian law, multilateral cooperation, and the institutions – especially the United Nations – that safeguard peaceful coexistence among nations.

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/54394>

**LINK: Priests Against Genocide:** <https://forms.gle/WH66Tzqa6KgKzyra8> (For Catholic priests who wish to join this network)

## **A PRAYER FOR PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST**

Christ, Prince of Peace, hear our prayer and lament for our suffering sisters and brothers. Our hearts are heavy as we witness lives torn apart, as we see the faces of frightened children and hear the pleas of those without water or food.

We pray for the dead and the grieving, for the injured and the afraid.  
We pray for courage and perseverance, for those working for healing and to bring aid.  
We pray for world leaders, that they may strive for a just and lasting peace.

God of new beginnings, in your ways are compassion and hope.  
Open our hearts to dialogue and understanding.  
Lead us all to answer your call to become peacemakers today, and all the days of our life. Amen.  
<https://cafod.org.uk/pray/prayer-resources/prayer-for-israelis-and-palestinians>

## **ASSISTED DYING WOULD COMMODIFY DEATH, SAYS JAMES GORDON REID HAVELOCH-JONES**

20 February 2026: The World Day of the Sick, observed by the Roman Catholic Church on Wednesday of last week, was introduced by Pope St John Paul II in 1993. The new Pope has given it his full support; for it reflects his profound desire to place those whom society marginalises and devalues at the heart of the Church's life. When we uphold the dignity of those who suffer, we encounter the face of Christ.

But this year the day passed in macabre juxtaposed with the legislation now moving through Parliament: the Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill, sponsored in the House of Lords by Lord Falconer.

As worshippers of the "Prince of life" (Acts 3.15), on our way to meet him in word and sacrament, we must ask ourselves whether we are prepared for a society in which edifices dedicated to death will be found on our high streets alongside Pret A Manger and Greggs.

For two millennia, Christians have proclaimed that life — fragile, dependent, and unfinished — is not a problem to be solved, but a mystery to be accompanied. Yet the assisted-dying Bill invites us to imagine death not as the final horizon of a life held in communion, but as a purchasable solution to suffering, administered with clinical tidiness and cultural indifference.

Once death becomes a service, it inevitably becomes a convenience. Once it becomes a convenience, it will not be long before it becomes an expectation — especially for people who already feel like a burden.

Those who believe that strict safeguards will remain intact — including the requirement for judicial sign-off — should look again at jurisdictions that set out upon this path with the same assurances. In Canada, assisted dying<sup>1</sup> has expanded far beyond terminal illness to include conditions such as depression. Further extensions are being actively considered (Comment, 29 November 2024). In Australia, where abortion is now available up to the point of delivery in some states, we see how quickly the boundaries around life and death can shift once the principle of "ending suffering" becomes detached from a communal ethic of care.

Secular society has absorbed Descartes's mantra "I think, therefore I am" so deeply that consciousness is often treated as the measure of identity, worth, and even moral standing. In contrast, the gospel and Catholic social teaching offer a far richer account of human dignity.

Take dementia: a chronic, progressive, irreversible decline in memory which ultimately ends in death. If personhood is reduced to cognitive capacity, then the 15 million people worldwide living with dementia — including more than 800,000 in the UK — become prime candidates for assisted dying.

But God's perspective is different. People who live with dementia are made in his image; and scripture insists that this image is "very good". The Bible sees the human person as an embodied soul, capable of spiritual life and held in communion with God (John 20.22; 1 Thessalonians 5.23). In other words: God thinks, therefore we are. It is his creating, sustaining, and cherishing of us that gives us our value — not our productivity, memory, or independence. This truth should not only shape our pastoral imagination: it should be a catalyst for the firm and permanent rejection of the assisted-dying Bill.

Jesus spent his earthly ministry restoring people to wholeness of body, mind, and spirit — and it is an instinct that society should recover, reflecting the God who redeems rather than discards. It is worth remembering that Christ descended into hell, breaking down every barrier between who is "in" and who is "out", who is "worthy" and who is "unworthy". In his eyes, every person is worthy of love, and that dignity must be extended to all, especially those who are suffering.

Technology, too, should follow this pattern. Just as Jesus restored sight to the blind, our medical and scientific advances should be directed toward healing, comfort, and the continual improvement of palliative care — not towards welcoming death as a guest or offering it as a solution.

St Thomas À Kempis urges us to imitate Christ. One of the clearest modern echoes of that instinct can be found in the Samaritans. This charity takes calls from people in profound distress — including many who are experiencing suicidal thoughts or are in the process of attempting to end their lives.

The Samaritans do not passively accept that someone intends to die. Their vocation is to get alongside them, to let them talk about their pain, to listen with reverence, to reflect, to clarify, and to help them to find even the smallest foothold for choosing life rather than death.

On the World Day of the Sick this month, Pope Leo called us to be like the Good Samaritan. And it is precisely this posture — attentive, patient, unhurried, and full of dignity — that society needs to recover. A culture shaped by the gospel does not step aside when someone suffers. It draws near; it listens; it accompanies. It refuses to treat a person's darkest hour as a justification for ending their story.

<https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2026/20-february/comment/opinion/assisted-dying-debate-let-dignity-be-extended-to-all>

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2024/29-november/comment/opinion/canada-shows-the-slippery-slope-is-real>

• *James Gordon Reid Haveloch-Jones is an educational consultant and applied theologian. He is an Honorary Associate Fellow of St George's House, Windsor Castle, a contributing writer for the Catholic Bishops' Conference initiative "The God Who Speaks", and a trustee of the Heythrop Association at the University of London.*

**Anne O'Connor writes:** James is a new contact with whom I've corresponded several times. Both James and my late daughter Annie are/were theologians with an MA in Biblical Studies and also, like Annie, James is a Samaritan Listening Volunteer. He wrote, "in that work alone Annie would have accompanied so many people with reverence and Christ like dignity and 'held that space' for them as they navigated through so much hurt and brokenness." He added, "it is so important that everyone knows they are 'fearfully and wonderfully made' in God's own image and not expendable."

"The cross ... has the power to heal and save" – James highlighted these words (taken from an essay on healing by Annie which I've used in this year's Stations of the Cross) as "a beautiful truth in a broken world".

*"The cross is the measure of Christ's love for us. This love has the power to heal and save. The cross is an act of love, both on the part of the Father who sent his only son to save us, and on Jesus' part, who lays down his life in love. Salvation and healing come in the person of Christ. The people who encounter Jesus are saved through his healing presence."* – Annie O'Connor (reflection for the Third Station)

## RESOURCES FOR LENT FROM NJPN

**NEW RESOURCE: Let us Pray Lent** – daily scripture readings, prayer resources, book suggestions, reflections and poems to accompany you on your journey from Lent to Easter:

<https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/app/uploads/2026/01/2026-A-JOURNEY-FROM-LENT-TO-EASTER-NJPN.pdf>

**Other resources for Lent this year include:**

**Stations of the Cross for Young People for schools, youth groups and Confirmation:**

<https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/app/uploads/2026/01/Stations-of-the-Cross-for-Young-People.pdf>

**A Stations of the Cross for parish use (booklet format):**

<https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/app/uploads/2026/01/Stations-of-the-Cross-with-opening-and-closing-prayers-2026-AOC.pdf>

(See the last pages of this bulletin for an easy to print A4 format)

**A 4-page A4 sheet with reflections and prayers from the start of Lent up to Holy Week:**

<https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/app/uploads/2026/01/LENT-REFLECTION-SHEET-2026.pdf>

**An updated version of The Prince, an Easter story:**

<https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/app/uploads/2026/01/THE-PRINCE-AN-EASTER-STORY.pdf>

**TERTIA DIE RESURREXIT A MORTUIS (on the third day he rose again) Jon Swales from the *Creed Collection***

Dawn does not rush.  
It comes softly,  
as if the world itself is afraid to breathe.  
I reach the next line:  
On the third day he rose again.  
And the silence bends  
toward light.

The darkest day is not the final day.  
The tomb is not the end of the story,  
but its turning point.  
What we call dead,  
God calls seed.  
What we bury in despair,  
Love raises in mystery.

He rose—  
not to erase death,  
but to unmake it.  
Not to deny the wounds,  
but to show that they can shine.  
The cross still stands,  
but now as a tree that flowers.

It begins in stillness:  
stone, linen, breath.  
No thunder,  
no spectacle—  
just a slow stirring  
as creation wakes from its long night.

And there, in the garden,  
the world begins again.  
Dew on grass.  
A voice speaking a name.  
Mary turns,  
and grief gives way to recognition.  
The gardener stands before her,  
hands still scarred by mercy,  
tending the soil of resurrection.

He walks the road to Emmaus,  
a stranger at first,  
his words burning in the hearts of the weary.  
At supper,  
bread breaks,  
and suddenly they see—  
light in the ordinary.  
He vanishes,  
but the fire remains.

He stands in the upper room,  
where fear has bolted the door.  
Peace, he says.  
He shows his hands.  
He breathes on them.  
Love still carries scars.  
Love still breathes forgiveness.

He meets them at the lakeshore,  
where failure hangs heavy.  
The smell of charcoal,  
the sound of waves.

Breakfast sizzles.  
Mercy tastes like fish and friendship.  
The risen one still cooks for the hungry,  
still restores the lost.

And he meets us still—  
in the breaking of bread,  
in the pouring of wine,  
in the trembling of prayer,  
in the warmth of dawn,  
in the quiet moments when fear begins to  
fade.

I believe he rose again.  
Sometimes I doubt.  
Some mornings belief feels like sunrise;  
other days it feels like holding ashes.  
But even then—  
he meets me.  
In the place between faith and fear,  
he stands,  
hands open,  
light spilling through the wounds.

Hope leans forward,  
tender and persistent,  
listening to the groans of creation.  
It gazes through shadow,  
finding within darkness  
the first faint shimmer of dawn.

There is a holy audacity in this hope—  
a quiet confidence  
that all things are held  
in nail-scarred hands,  
that the soil itself waits  
for the footsteps of resurrection.

So I believe—  
in love stronger than death,  
in mercy that mends what was torn,  
in the gardener of new creation,  
who still meets us in bread and wine,  
who still meets us when we are afraid,  
who still meets us at breakfast,  
and who, even in doubt,  
still meets me.

I believe  
that the darkest day was never the last,  
and that even now  
the earth hums softly with resurrection—  
for he said,  
“I am the resurrection and the life.”

<https://www.cruciformjustice.com/post/tertia-die-resurrexit-a-mortuis-on-the-third-day-he-rose-again>

• *Jon Swales is an Anglican priest, prophetic theologian, and poet. He is founder and leader of Lighthouse West Yorkshire, a fresh expression of church and grassroots charity rooted among people who have been battered and bruised by the storms of life, particularly those facing homelessness, poverty, and social exclusion. Jon is passionate about peace-making & climate justice and seeks through prayer and activism to be a prophetic witness to the church.*

## DIARY

### MARCH

**6 World Day of Prayer** A women-led, global, ecumenical, movement. This year the service has been prepared by Christian Women from Nigeria on the theme, "I will give you rest, come". Look out for a service in your area. <https://www.wwdp.org.uk/>

**7 Winners of Columban Schools Media Competition** announced <https://www.columbancompetition.com/>

**8 'Towards an Unarmed and Disarming Peace' – What does this mean for Women of Faith today?**

7:00 pm – 8:30 pm An online roundtable discussion to celebrate International Women's Day with:

Sr Katrina Alton, Pax Christi National Chaplain, Siobhan Burke, Tutor, St Bede's Pastoral Centre, York, Christabel McCooney, Barrister and Judge, Sr Maryanne Francalanza FCJ, Director of the Centre for Spirituality and Ecojustice. Register here: <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/22Qt5xztTaUlw9Z4bPSSA#/registration>

**12 Merseyside Pax Christi meeting** 2-4 pm at Quaker Meeting House, School Lane, Liverpool. L1 3BT New members welcome. Contact Jan Harper 07591082195 [janharper20211@outlook.com](mailto:janharper20211@outlook.com)

**14-16 PAX CHRISTI SPEAKING TOUR** <https://paxchristi.org.uk/event/save-the-date-nonviolence-speaking-tour/>

**14 London: 'Nonviolence: A Radically Different Response to our Violent World'** A day of presentations, discussion and reflection with Nicholas Paz, Director of the Pax Christi International Nonviolence Initiative. 10:30 am – 4:00 pm Aula Magna, London Jesuit Centre 114 Mount Street London W1K 3AH Free event - reserve a place here: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/nonviolence-a-radically-different-response-to-our-violent-world-tickets-1980722535423?aff=oddtcreator>

**15 Leeds: 'Nonviolent Approaches to Conflict'** A practical workshop with Nicholas Paz, Director of the Pax Christi International Nonviolence Initiative. 2:00 pm – 6:00 pm Quaker Meeting House 188 Woodhouse Lane Leeds LS2 9DX [https://paxchristi.org.uk/event/save-the-date-nonviolence-speaking-tour-leeds/?instance\\_id=1570](https://paxchristi.org.uk/event/save-the-date-nonviolence-speaking-tour-leeds/?instance_id=1570)  
Fee £10 Bursaries are available. Please contact us on [info@paxchristi.org.uk](mailto:info@paxchristi.org.uk) if you need a bursary in order to attend. Numbers limited – book here: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/nonviolent-approaches-to-conflict-tickets-1980457583946>

**16 Just Peace or Just War? Nonviolence – a radical approach in our troubled world** - an interactive workshop for 16 – 18 year-olds (and particularly Sixth Form and RE students) with Nicholas Paz, Director of the Pax Christi Catholic Nonviolence Initiative starting at 1:15 pm Bellerive FCJ Catholic College 1 Aigburth Drive Sefton Park L17 3AA Contact: Jennifer Rowlands for further information on 0151 727 2064

**16 Liverpool: 'Nonviolence: A Radical Response to our Violent World'** Nicholas Paz, Director of the Pax Christi International Nonviolence Initiative. 6.30pm Quaker Meeting House, 22, School Lane Liverpool L1 3BT. All welcome (drinks available from 6.00pm, bring sandwiches) Local contact Jan Harper 07591082195 email [janharper20211@outlook.com](mailto:janharper20211@outlook.com) see <http://www.paxchristi.org.uk> and <https://paxchristi.org.uk/event/save-the-date-nonviolence-speaking-tour-liverpool/>

### APRIL

**9 Merseyside Pax Christi meeting** 2-4 pm at Quaker Meeting House, School Lane, Liverpool. L1 3BT New members welcome. Contact Jan Harper 07591082195 [janharper20211@outlook.com](mailto:janharper20211@outlook.com)

### MAY

**14 Merseyside Pax Christi meeting** 2-4 pm at Quaker Meeting House, School Lane, Liverpool. L1 3BT New members welcome. Contact Jan Harper 07591082195 [janharper20211@outlook.com](mailto:janharper20211@outlook.com)

- See current NJPN news here: <https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/news/>
- Sign up for regular news and information from NJPN (plus copies of this newsletter & back issues for NJPN North West) at [www.justice-and-peace.org.uk](http://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk) or contact [ebulletin@justice-and-peace.org](mailto:ebulletin@justice-and-peace.org) 020 7901 4864
- Read the WINTER issue of *MOUTHPEACE* the quarterly online newsletter for Shrewsbury, Liverpool and Lancaster dioceses: <https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/njpn-north-west/winter-mouthpeace-2025-2026/attachment/mouthpeace-winter-25-corrected/>

- Many items taken from the daily e-bulletin Independent Catholic News [www.indcatholicnews.com](http://www.indcatholicnews.com) an invaluable free resource for up-to-date J&P news, events and in-depth articles.

*The views expressed in this bulletin are not necessarily those of NJPN*

SEE BELOW for A4 Stations of the Cross

# STATIONS OF THE CROSS



## OPENING PRAYER

We come together to travel the road to the Cross with Our Lord. May we be filled with new blessings as we wait in hope for the resurrection.

## THE FIRST STATION: JESUS IS CONDEMNED

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

**All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.**

*At festival time Pilate used to release a prisoner for the people, anyone they asked for. Now a man called Barrabas was in prison for murder at that time. The chief priests incited the crowd to demand his release in place of Jesus. Pilate, anxious to placate the crowd, released Barrabas, ordered Jesus to be scourged and handed him over to be crucified.*

The cross is the luminous sign of God's immense love. God bent down over us, he lowered himself, even to the darkest corner of our lives, in order to stretch out his hand and draw us to himself, to bring us all the way to himself. In the Son of God's death on the cross, we find the seed of new hope for life, like the seed which dies within the earth.

**Pope Benedict**

## THE SECOND STATION: JESUS CARRIES THE CROSS

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

**All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.**

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

The innocent is condemned, the King of love will die. He is dragged through the streets, stripped of dignity, spat upon and mocked. A crown of thorns, a purple robe, a reed for a sceptre. The soldiers laugh, the crowd looks away, and heaven holds its breath. He carries his cross through dust and derision. The maker of worlds stumbles beneath wood and shame.

**Jon Swales**

### **THE THIRD STATION: JESUS FALLS FOR THE FIRST TIME**

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

**All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.**

*Peter said to him, 'Even if all desert you, I will never desert you.' Jesus answered, 'In truth, I tell you, this very night, before the cock crows, you will have disowned me three times.'*

The cross is the measure of Christ's love for us. This love has the power to heal and save. The cross is an act of love, both on the part of the Father who sent his only son to save us, and on Jesus' part, who lays down his life in love. Salvation and healing come in the person of Christ. The people who encounter Jesus are saved through his healing presence.

**Annie O'Connor**

### **THE FOURTH STATION: JESUS COMES FACE TO FACE WITH HIS MOTHER**

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

**All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.**

*Simeon said to Mary his mother, 'Look, he is destined for the fall and the rise of many in Israel, destined to be the sign that is opposed – and a sword will pierce your soul too – so that the secret thoughts of many may be laid bare.'*

By giving his mother and his beloved friend John to one another with the words, 'Woman, here is your son ... Here is your mother,' Jesus created a community that was to become family to the widow, the orphan, the outcast, and the stranger. Our call to such a community is a sacred trust. If we accept, can anybody suffer hunger, homelessness, or need?

**Peter Storey**

### **THE FIFTH STATION: SIMON OF CYRENE HELPS CARRY THE CROSS**

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

**All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.**

*On their way out, they came across a man from Cyrene called Simon, and enlisted him to carry his Cross.*

In life's journey, as in every journey, what really matters is not to lose sight of the goal. We should ask ourselves: on the journey of life, do I seek the way forward? 'Return to me,' says the Lord. 'To me.' The Lord is the goal of our journey in this world. The direction must lead to him.

**Pope Francis**

### **THE SIXTH STATION: VERONICA WIPES THE FACE OF JESUS**

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

**All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.**

*Come back to me with all your heart ... turn to the Lord your God again, for he is all tenderness and compassion, slow to anger, rich in graciousness, and ready to relent.*

In deep shadow, amidst plain-chanted hymns to end the day, I looked to the altar where candles burned round a simple cross. Behind the altar loomed a larger than life picture of a sorrowing Christ, cross on his shoulder, down on one knee as he bore the weight of the world's sin and grief. Kneeling there in the candlelit darkness, with the hymns almost whispered in a tender, gentle awe, I was aware of Christ's givenness. Of the love poured without stint or measure. Of the grace that is with me now, regardless of what I offer.

**Sarah Clarkson**

### **THE SEVENTH STATION: JESUS FALLS FOR THE SECOND TIME**

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

**All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.**

*Will no one hear my prayer, will not God himself grant my hope? May it please God to crush me, to give his hand free play and to do away with sin. This insight, at least, would give me comfort – a thrill of joy in unrelenting pain, that I never rebelled against the Holy One's decrees.*

All too quickly the breaking of the bread becomes the breaking of the flesh. All too soon the cup offered at the table becomes the life poured out on the cross. After the rending, after the emptying: an impossible stillness, an aching silence, an incomprehensible hollow for which no words will ever be adequate.

**Jan Richardson**

### **THE EIGHTH STATION: THE WOMEN OF JERUSALEM WEEP FOR JESUS**

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

**All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.**

*Large numbers of people followed him, and women too, who mourned and lamented for him. Jesus turned to them and said, 'Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep rather for yourselves and for your children.'*

We are called to serve the Crucified Jesus in all those who are marginalized, in those who are disadvantaged, in those who hunger and thirst, in the naked and imprisoned, the sick and unemployed, in those who are persecuted, refugees and migrants. There we find our God; there we touch the Lord.

**Pope Francis**

### **THE NINTH STATION: JESUS FALLS FOR THE THIRD TIME**

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

**All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.**

*He had no form or charm to attract us, no beauty to win our hearts; he was despised, the lowest of men, a man of sorrows, familiar with suffering.*

Jesus' total obedience to his Father led him to the cross. To return to God means to return to him with all that I am and all that I have. I cannot return to God with just half of my being. Every time I pray, I feel the struggle. It is the struggle of letting God be the God of my whole being. It is the struggle to trust that true freedom lies hidden in total surrender to God's love.

**Henri Nouwen**

### **THE TENTH STATION: JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS CLOTHES**

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

**All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.**

*When the soldiers had finished crucifying him they took his clothing and divided it into four shares, one for each soldier. His undergarment was seamless, woven in one piece from the back to the hem, so instead of tearing it, they threw dice for it.*

Lord, open the eyes of my heart, illuminate within it places of eternal Lent where I have not permitted your Love entry. Come into those Golgothas, those broken places in me, in relationships with others, in the world around us in need of reconciliation. Open the eyes of my heart to see you in those with whom I live and work and walk, in those whose journey through Gethsemane is long. Allow me to accompany you in them.

**Rebecca Ruiz**

### **THE ELEVENTH STATION: JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS**

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

**All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.**

*And yet ours were the sufferings he bore, ours the sorrows he carried. But we, we thought of him as someone punished, struck by God, and brought low. Yet he was pierced through for our faults, crushed for our sins. On him lies a punishment that brings us peace, and through his wounds we are healed.*

Jesus sets his face to Jerusalem. He disregards the shame of the cross and steadfastly goes through suffering, not around it. Likewise, God seems to send us on the path towards our own wholeness not by eliminating obstacles, but by making use of them. Going somewhere good means having to go through and with the bad. The best way out is if we have first gone in – into great suffering and great love.

**Annie O'Connor**

### **THE TWELFTH STATION: JESUS DIES**

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

**All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.**

*The soldiers came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with him and then the other. When they came to Jesus, they saw he was already dead, and so instead of breaking his legs one of the soldiers pierced his side with a lance; and immediately there came out blood and water.*

By dying on the cross, Jesus surrendered himself into the hands of the Father, taking upon himself and in himself, with self-sacrificing love, the physical, moral and spiritual wounds of all humanity. By embracing the wood of the cross, Jesus embraced the nakedness, the hunger and thirst, the loneliness, pain and death of men and women of all times.

**Pope Francis**

### **THE THIRTEENTH STATION: JESUS IS TAKEN DOWN FROM THE CROSS**

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

**All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.**

*The centurion, who was standing in front of him, had seen how he had died, and he said, 'In truth, this man was the Son of God.'*

We call the crucifixion of Jesus the passion, and so it is, for us as well as for him. Each time we stretch out our arms in love to one another, every time we open our hearts, we find the shadow of the cross, but also a glimpse of the open tomb. Jesus' final words from the cross, 'Into your hands I commend my spirit,' remind us that every relationship will, at some point, contain a good-bye. Yet we who know the rest of the story, we who have glimpsed the other side of Good Friday, know that Jesus' last words from the cross are not the final words. There are more words to come, crucial words that Christ will add to our vocabulary, our story, our community. For now, we wait. Together.

**Jan Richardson**

### **THE FOURTEENTH STATION: JESUS IS PLACED IN THE TOMB**

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

**All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.**

*When it was evening, there came a rich man of Arimathea, called Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered that it be handed over.*

Years earlier, when an angel appeared in a sheep pasture proclaiming good news of great joy, the angel told the shepherds of a Saviour, a Messiah, a Lord whom they would find as a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger. Now, on this day, the Saviour is wrapped in a spiced shroud of linen cloths, a scented winding sheet to hold him as he lies in the tomb. As at the beginning, so at the end: those who love Christ enfold him, tend him, bless him.

**Jan Richardson**

### **THE FIFTEENTH STATION: THE RESURRECTION**

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

**All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.**

***'I have risen and am with you still, alleluia!' The Lord is truly risen, alleluia!  
To him be glory and power for all the ages of eternity, alleluia, alleluia!***

The darkest day is not the final day. The tomb is not the end of the story, but its turning point. What we call dead, God calls seed. What we bury in despair, Love raises in mystery. He rose – not to erase death, but to unmake it. Not to deny the wounds, but to show that they can shine. The cross still stands, but now as a tree that flowers. I believe that the darkest day was never the last, and that even now the earth hums softly with resurrection – for he said, 'I am the resurrection and the life.'

**Jon Swales**

### **CLOSING PRAYER**

May the spirit and light of Easter bless us all, watch over us and protect us on our journey, open us from the darkness into the light of peace and hope and transfiguration.

**John O'Donohue**

### **Contributors:**

*Sarah Clarkson* is a theologian, author and broadcaster living in Oxford

*Jan Richardson* is an artist, writer and retreat leader based in Florida

*Rebecca Ruiz* is an Ignatian spiritual director and writer from Virginia

*Peter Storey* is a retired bishop of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa where he was active in the anti-apartheid movement

*Jon Swales* is an Anglican priest, prophetic theologian, and poet who ministers to marginalised and vulnerable adults at Lighthouse, Leeds

*Pope Benedict*

*Pope Francis*

*Henri Nouwen* was a Dutch Catholic priest, writer and theologian

*Annie O'Connor* was a street evangelist and lead training tutor for Church Army in Sheffield

*John O'Donohue* was an Irish poet, author, priest and philosopher

Reflections compiled by Anne O'Connor 2026

Cover photo: Annie O'Connor 2019 Cross at St Beuno's