



## Way of the Cross - Leader's Notes

### Introduction

The Way of the Cross calls us to recall the suffering of Jesus. We are called by Jesus to remember 'the least of these', including those who endure suffering today. Many people in our world continue to endure suffering and hardship, whether it be the lack of access to basic human rights or the fear of living in a world where peace is no longer a certainty.

Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand has adapted a **PowerPoint presentation** designed by Caritas Australia to support the Way of the Cross for Lent this year. This activity can be used as a presentation:

- 1) To guide the movement of a single group from station to station; or
- 2) To run in the background while participants move through the stations in different spaces; or
- 3) To lead the focus for a group during a special Mass or assembly.

If different stations are set up, a coloured piece of ribbon can be given at each station to each person. Each station has a different colour. At the last station, the ribbons can be twisted together to symbolise the interdependency of all peoples in our global community - what we do as individuals and as a community has ripple effects on individuals and communities around the world. Encourage participants to keep their ribbons in their pockets to remind them that what God wants from us is a commitment in all areas of our lives to love one another.

You may choose to adapt these notes to shorten each station depending on the time available and the age of the participants. Depending on how the notes are used, the total duration may exceed 45 minutes in its present format.

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## **1. Jesus in the garden** **(Green ribbon)**

**Prayer focus:**

**Props: One candle.**

If possible, this station should be carried out in dim lighting. One candle should be lit to remind us that light can bring hope even into darkness and despair.

**Scripture:** Matthew 26:36-46

**Reflection:**

Jesus turned to his Father in heaven for comfort and support. He was fully aware of what was going to happen to him and chose to spend time praying to his Father. He asked his friends to stay with him and keep watch. Instead, they fell asleep and abandoned him in his hour of need.

We abandon Christ when we fail to stand in solidarity with the poor and marginalised. We know that more than a billion people live on less than \$1.25 a day and 50,000 people die every day as a result of poverty. These statistics are the modern-day nails in the crucifixion.

**Prayer:**

We ask you, Lord, for strength and guidance to become people of witness. To remember that the way you love us is the way we should love one another.

Help us to stand in solidarity with our sisters and brothers and never to abandon them.

**Response:** E Hēhu Karaiti, empower us to stand alongside those who feel they have been forgotten.

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## **2. Jesus betrayed by Judas** **(Black ribbon)**

**Prayer Focus:**

**Props: Black cloth, unlit candle, black and white face mask.**

**Reading:** Matthew 26:14-16

**Reflection:**

Jesus chose Judas to be one of his twelve apostles, a faithful follower. But Judas betrayed his friend by going to the chief priests and promising to lead the authorities to Jesus in exchange for money.

May 20, 2002 marked the birth of a new nation. Timor-Leste survived 24 years of oppression under Indonesia's occupying forces. Many people lost their lives. Despite great suffering, after the 1999 referendum it rose from the ashes to start the journey towards freedom and self-determination. Timor-Leste continues to face many challenges and Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand stands in solidarity with these courageous people as they continue to develop their nation.

**Prayer:**

Lord, we pray in solidarity with the Timorese people. May they feel your healing power as they rebuild their homeland and work towards reconciliation.

E Hēhu Karaiti, we ask that our government leaders act with integrity and sincerity, as they support Timor-Leste's transition to a stable and democratic nation.

**Response:**

E Hēhu Karaiti, empower us to be people of promise, loyalty and compassion.

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### **3. Jesus condemned by the Sanhedrin (Yellow ribbon)**

**Prayer Focus:**

**Props: Pictures of Oscar Romero and the Romero PowerPoint.**

Not everyone knows Oscar Romero, so you could display some pictures and quotations around the room. You can find some good quotes and slideshows at [www.romerotruster.org.uk/resources/reflections](http://www.romerotruster.org.uk/resources/reflections)

**Reading:** Mark 14:53-65

**Reflection:**

Oscar Romero was the Archbishop of San Salvador in the late 1970s, when many people, including priests, were murdered and hundreds of El Salvadorans disappeared. Romero was threatened with death on many occasions as he spoke out against the military and worked with the oppressed.

He said: *"Many would like the poor to keep on saying that it is God's will for them to live that way. But it is not God's will for some to have everything and others to have nothing. That cannot be of God. God's will is that all his children will be happy"*.

Oscar Romero was assassinated on March 24, 1980 while he was celebrating Mass in the cathedral in San Salvador.

Inspired by his faith, Oscar Romero spoke out against violence, poverty and injustice. Today, we are called to do the same. As he said, *“The Church cannot remain silent before injustice; to remain silent is to be an accomplice.”*

**Prayer:**

May the courage of Oscar Romero inspire us to work with integrity for an end to violence and poverty.

**Response:**

E Hēhu Karaiti, empower us to be witnesses to your love through our defence of the poor.

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#### **4. Jesus denied by Peter (Dark blue ribbon)**

**Prayer Focus:**

**Props: Questions written up around the space; and a bell or musical instrument.**

Use a bell or musical instrument. Ring the bell at the beginning of the station followed by a period of silence, then twice more throughout the station.

Have some questions written up around the space that people can focus on:

- Who are the people in our local community who have been denied the opportunity of living a life filled with dignity?
- Who are the people who struggle to provide enough food and clean water for their families?
- How can we continue to recognise Jesus in the face of the other?

**Reading:** Luke 22:54-63

**Reflection:**

Just as Judas gave way to temptation, Peter also let Jesus down. Three times he was identified as a follower of Jesus, and three times he denied any association with him. Peter later repented and turned to the Lord for forgiveness. How many times have we failed to see the face of Jesus in those in our global family who wake each day to a life of suffering? How often do we disconnect ourselves from global issues?

**Prayer:**

We pray that governments around the world will answer the call to act with justice and compassion in their dealings with other nations.

E Hēhu Karaiti, guide world leaders to honour their commitments to supporting developing nations. We ask forgiveness for the times we have failed to stand up as

followers of Christ and denied our obligation to put our faith into action. May we use our freedom to serve others.

**Response:**

E Hēhu Karaiti, empower us to recognise Jesus present in everyone and to treat them accordingly.

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## **5. Jesus condemned by the people (Red ribbon)**

**Prayer focus:**

**Props: Red ribbons.**

Throughout the world, many Christians are persecuted for their faith. This station reminds participants that, like Jesus, innocent followers of God are still condemned and forced to struggle to stand up for what they believe in. The red ribbons symbolise pain and suffering.

**Scripture:** Matthew 27:20-23

**Reflection:**

Standing innocent before them, Jesus had to face the condemnation of the crowd – a crowd which included those who should have spoken up for him. But all were against him ...

Christians in areas with extreme religious restrictions pay a heavy price for their faith. Imagine if there were laws forbidding you to go to church or to pray? What if people in NZ were put in prison for believing in Jesus?

The majority of the world's population lives in areas with severe religious restrictions, with Christians from more than 60 countries facing persecution from governments or neighbours because of their belief in Jesus Christ.

**Prayer:**

Lord, help those who suffer in order to follow you. May they know your peace and be strengthened to face the challenges that come their way.

Thank you for the witness of people like Bishop Belo, who was courageous in speaking out against human rights abuses during the Indonesian occupation of East Timor

Help your Church throughout the world to grow as a compassionate community and a voice of justice that will for speak for those who are persecuted.

**Response:**

E Hēhu Karaiti, empower us to stand up for all who are persecuted – to be people of faith.

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## **6. Jesus crowned with thorns and clothed in purple (Purple ribbon)**

**Prayer Focus:**

**Props:** Purple material and thorns (think about health and safety with this prop).

**Scripture:** John 19:1-3

**Reflection:**

The image of Jesus at this station is one of physical suffering; more than that, it is the image of someone who stands painfully alone, without friends, among those who threaten and hurt.

Are we always available to help our friends when they are having a difficult time? Do we provide encouragement and support when our friends lose a loved one, or suffer some loss?

Do we ever threaten or hurt others?

**Prayer:**

Lord, we belong to one human family. The search for peace through justice is a shared search; a way to find hope for the future.

Help us to open our hearts to each other, everyday, offering our talents to the cause of justice and giving our hands to support our friends in their struggles.

**Response:**

E Hēhu Karaiti, empower us to be people of courage, brave enough to act with love.

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## **7. Jesus carries the cross (Orange ribbon)**

**Prayer focus:**

**Props:** A pair of shoes; signs saying 'Refugees, not illegal immigrants', 'I was a stranger and you welcomed me'; UN definition of a refugee; and a family photograph.

Refugees know what it means to carry a cross each day. They know what it means to live constantly in fear of violence, hunger, homelessness and abuse. This station asks how we can bring about a change of heart in our own community so that we become beacons of peace and inclusion.

**Scripture:** John 19:17

**Reflection:**

It took mental, spiritual, emotional and physical strength to bear the weight of the cross.

Every day, refugees who seek asylum from fear, oppression and danger must gather the strength they need to find a better life in new surroundings. All countries of the world, including our own, must listen to those whose voices have lost their power. The genuine cry for justice cannot be ignored. The duty to defend human rights is clear.

**Prayer:**

Lord, we pray for peace in lands so much in crisis that their peoples must leave them.

We pray for reconciliation so that nations do not carry the cross of division and hatred.

We pray for our own people so that in a spirit of love we can offer a welcoming place to those who need it.

**Response:**

E Hēhu Karaiti, empower us to build communities of welcome and refuge.

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## **8. Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus** **(Light blue ribbon)**

**Prayer focus:**

**Props: Crucifix and template of a hand on A4 sheets of paper.**

Each person writes their name on a hand and places it around the Cross. The hands symbolise assistance, solidarity, reaching out to others. We are called by God to embrace those who need us and relieve them of their burdens.

**Scripture:** Mark 15:21

**Reflection:**

As Jesus struggled on the way of sorrows to his crucifixion, he was helped by a man who did not even know him.

Everyday people work hard to provide for their families. In some places, including New Zealand, there are some people who don't have enough to make ends meet. They need support from food banks and other community groups. Help us always to be willing to share what we have with those in need.

**Prayer:**

Lord, help us to share our strength, willingly, with our neighbours who are on the journey from injustice to justice.

We can bear some of the weight of their struggles.

**Response:**

E Hēhu Karaiti, empower us to be witnesses of solidarity, sharing with those in need.

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**9. Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem**  
**(Pink ribbon)**

**Prayer Focus:**

**Props: The icon of Mary can be the focus of this station.**

We know from scripture that Jesus recognised the poor status of women in his time. Today, women are the poorest people on the planet. Working for the equality of women, and more educational opportunities for women will help to raise families out of poverty.

**Reading:** Luke 23:27-28

**Reflection:**

Jesus can hear women crying for him. He is touched but he knows that they have more things for which to feel sorrow. The children of the world are hungry. Mothers weep for them and Jesus weeps too.

Women can be a powerful force for good in the world, but in so many places they still struggle to be recognised. In many countries, women do not have access to basic education. The basic dignity of women continues to be infringed upon each day around the world.

In Timor-Leste, more than 250 women working with the HAFOTI group are empowered to use new business skills to transform the lives of their families.

**Prayer:**

Lord, we pray for the women of our world. We pray especially for girls deprived of educational opportunities.

Help us to see women as the life-givers, the workers, the nurturers. Lord, we pray that people may see women as you do.

**Response:**

E Hēhu Karaiti, empower us to be advocates for the dignity and the rights of women.

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**10. Jesus is crucified**

**(Crimson ribbon)**

***Prayer focus:***

***Props:*** The map, flag or photos from South Sudan.

Millions of people in South Sudan are still suffering from food shortages and a lack of clean water, because of the effects of climate change and conflict in their country.

Many aid agencies are trying to get food and water to people, but this is sometimes difficult because there are many armed groups fighting each other in different parts of the country.

For countries to truly develop they need to have peace.

***Reading:*** John 19:16-19

***Reflection:***

Jesus Christ died on the cross. The crucifixion continues in our world.

There is great pain and suffering throughout our world as billions of people live without enough food, and without peace.

In South Sudan it is hard for people to develop their gardens and grow good food, when they are continually forced to leave their homes to escape the fighting.

***Prayer:***

Lord, guide those organisations working for justice and peace in South Sudan so that everyone's basic needs are met including food, water, shelter and health.

***Response:***

E Hēhu Karaiti, empower us to be witnesses who lead the way in upholding the rights of people in the most vulnerable places.

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**11. Jesus speaks to the thief**

**(Dark green ribbon)**

***Prayer focus:***

***Props:*** Green fabric; symbols of the earth, eg. soil, water, flora, sand, etc.

In this station, we reflect on the impact our lives and lifestyles have on our neighbours. As a global community, we need to stop and think about the environmental impact of how we live.

***Reading:*** Luke 23:39-43

**Reflection:**

The small Pacific island nation of Kiribati is suffering from environmental degradation, rising sea levels and the effects of global warming. Many families throughout the low lying islands have been forced to re-locate or have lost their land due to the rising tides.

**Prayer:**

Lord, help us to open our eyes to the needs of others, especially our nearest neighbours. Jesus, remember us when we come into your kingdom.

**Response:**

E Hēhu Karaiti, empower us to be people who care for others and for our environment.

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**12. Jesus speaks to his mother**  
**(Mauve ribbon)**

**Prayer focus:**

**Props: The icon of Mary could be carried to this station.**

This station recalls that Jesus, knowing his own death was imminent, entrusted his mother to the care of John, his beloved disciple. It invites us to reflect on the mothers today who lose their children through inadequate access to healthcare or through conflict and war.

**Reading:** John 19:25-27

**Reflection:**

In New Zealand, six babies die in every 1000 live births. In other countries, this figure is much higher. In Cambodia, it is 49 and Somalia it is 97.

Jesus sees the pain in his mother's eyes: "Woman, this is your son. Son, this is your mother." If we reflect on the icon, in Mary we can see all mothers. Jesus understands the pain of mothers who lose their children.

World leaders have agreed to Sustainable Development Goal 3 aiming, by 2030, to reduce the number of children dying before they reach the age of five.

**Prayer:**

Lord, we thank you for the mothers, and aunts and grandmothers who care for us. Help all mothers around the world to have access to good healthcare for themselves and for their babies.

**Response:** E Hēhu Karaiti, help us to appreciate those who love and care for us, and to show a caring attitude towards others.

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### **13. Jesus dies on the cross**

**(Brown ribbon)**

**Prayer focus:**

**Props: Cross made of red cloth and a world map.**

This station invites us to reflect on the reality of death in all our lives. As Christians, we believe that death is not the end. Rather it is a doorway to eternal life with God.

**Reading:** Luke 23:44-46

**Reflection:**

Jesus shows that he trusts in the will of God. He knows that death is not the end, but rather something he must endure before he returns to be with his Father.

Doug Tennent is a volunteer working with the people of East New Britain in Papua New Guinea. He worked hard to help the people preserve their land, which made some authorities angry, and they forced Doug to leave the country. However, Doug refused to give up. Now he is back in Papua New Guinea, continuing to defend indigenous land rights.

**Prayer:**

Lord, help us to keep trying when we are finding life difficult. Help us to look with hope to a better future for everyone in our human family.

**Response:**

E Hēhu Karaiti, empower us to live our lives in faith and hope.

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### **14. Jesus is buried**

**(White ribbon)**

**Prayer focus:**

**Props: As in the first station we return to the one lit candle.**

In the shadow of the sadness and grief of the tomb we take time to reflect on what has been and what can be. We use this time in the tomb to renew our commitment to respect and uphold the dignity of every person.

**Reading:** Luke 23:52-56

**Reflection:**

The friends of Jesus had to leave his body, wrapped in a linen cloth and return to their home. They would have to wait to do what needed to be done.

Let us reflect on what we have heard today and what we need to do to make our world a better place. We can learn about those who are less fortunate than ourselves, and sometimes we can raise money to help others. We can be more aware of those around us, especially those who may be carrying heavy burdens in their lives.

**Prayer:**

Lord, help us to be generous in the way that we care for our sisters and brothers. Help us to give of our time and talents to help those in need.

**Response:** E Hēhu Karaiti, renew us so that we uphold the dignity of all as children of God.

