

# JUST LENT



## A SECRET SORROW

**REFLECTIONS ON THE SORROWFUL  
MYSTERIES OF THE ROSARY**

**FROM SOUTH CARDIFF MINISTRY AREA**

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## **A SECRET SORROW**

### Reflections on the Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary

These Meditations on the five Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary form part of our JUST LENT Resources from South Cardiff Ministry Area.

For each Mystery, we offer a Bible Reading and poetic reflection which intertwines the imagined experience of Jesus with that of someone who has experienced injustice followed by further elaboration on the particular theme of injustice bring considered.

Each Saturday, we pray the rosary at St Mary's Church, in Butetown, offering each decade for the local communities of which we are a part, and praying for justice, peace and reconciliation, here and everywhere.



# The Agony in the Garden

# The First Sorrowful Mystery

## The Agony in the Garden

Immediately, while he was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived; and with him there was a crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders. Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, 'The one I will kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard.' So when he came, he went up to him at once and said, 'Rabbi!' and kissed him. Then they laid hands on him and arrested him. But one of those who stood near drew his sword and struck the slave of the high priest, cutting off his ear. Then Jesus said to them, 'Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me as though I were a bandit? Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not arrest me. But let the scriptures be fulfilled.' All of them deserted him and fled. A certain young man was following him, wearing nothing but a linen cloth. They caught hold of him, but he left the linen cloth and ran off naked. (Mark 14: 43-52)

The olive season has passed.  
Their pitted hearts long pressed out,  
pulped under pressure,  
or mulched into the ground  
fertilised by blood and sweat  
beneath his feet,  
from where a forgotten Spring  
tries to push them into life again.

He wrestles with his own fruitless life,  
sweats like an imposter,  
considers a new career  
that is less painful.  
His stoned heart weighs heavy.

The police arrive with lights,  
disturb the neighbours from their dreams  
in a planned raid before dawn.  
Operation something-or-other.  
There is commotion, chaos.  
Someone is caught in friendly fire,  
they say,  
and the cheek of a kiss,  
like a knife which slices skin.  
More blood drops to the ground.  
Grown men are scattered,  
but after a time of rioting.  
it's soon controlled.  
He's under control.  
And across a fruitless branch  
flaps a torn white bed sheet.  
A dazed boy runs naked away.



On 28<sup>th</sup> September 1985, Lee Lawrence's mother Cheery Groce was shot by police during an unnecessary and mistake ridden raid on her Brixton home.

The bullet shattered her spine. She never walked again. In the trauma and chaos that followed, eleven-year old Lee watched in horror as news reports falsely pronounced her death. The shooting kickstarted two days of rioting in London.

The experience ignited a battle for justice which would last for 30 years as Lee challenged the police to recognise their wrongdoing. Despite all the obstacles, he persisted in his fight for justice, for peace and for a change in our society.

'My mum will always be remembered as the woman who was shot by police in her own home, the trigger for the 1985 Brixton uprising,' writes Lee Lawrence in his book, *'The Louder I will sing.'* But that wasn't who she was. Being our mum wasn't even who she was. She had her own identity, her own spirit, her own fire.'

Now Lee sits on police advisory boards, and works with them to improve their practices. He visits schools to share his experiences with children and young people and helps change perceptions. He is involved in the work of mediation and restorative justice, and in and through all this, has begun his own process of healing.



# **The Scourging of Jesus**



# The Second Sorrowful Mystery

## The Scourging of Jesus

Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. And the soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and they dressed him in a purple robe. They kept coming up to him, saying, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' and striking him on the face. Pilate went out again and said to them, 'Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no case against him.' So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, 'Here is the man!' When the chief priests and the police saw him, they shouted, 'Crucify him! Crucify him!' (*John 19:16a*)

It takes six of them.  
They force him to the ground  
inflict wounds to the right collarbone,  
left shoulder,  
sharp metal pushed into flesh.  
In his mind he is running  
far away,  
free.  
But he only makes 120 metres  
before he drops to the ground.  
An off-duty police officer covers him with a blanket.  
The beatings continue.  
The lost conversations  
and pointless reports.  
Insufficient evidence,  
they say.  
It feels like a decade  
and more  
of whipping  
and wounds.  
'He didn't distinguish  
between black and white,'  
said his mother.  
'He saw people  
as people.'  
She is smeared too,  
Forced to the ground,  
takes the wounds.  
Pilloried.

It was late in the evening, on 22 April 1993, when eighteen-year-old, Stephen Lawrence from South London was killed by a gang of white men in a racist attack.

He had been waiting for a bus with a friend when the gang attacked them. His friend escaped unhurt, but Stephen died from his injuries.

In the months and years that followed his murder, Stephen's parents fought for justice for their son believing the police treated Stephen's case differently simply because he was black. In 1999, following an inquiry into Stephen's killing and the police investigation, it was concluded that the Metropolitan police were 'institutionally racist'.

It was not until 2012 that two of the perpetrators were convicted of the murder.

In 2013, a former undercover police officer stated that, at the time, he had been pressured to find ways to 'smear' and discredit the victim's family, in order to mute and deter public campaigning for better police responses to the case.

In 2019, *Stephen Lawrence Day* was first celebrated. It takes place annually on 22 April, the date of Stephen's death. The Day is marked officially in the British calendar as a celebration of Stephen's life and legacy, and to inspire a more equal and inclusive society, free of injustice.



**The Crowning with Thorns**

# The Third Sorrowful Mystery

## The Crowning with Thorns

Then the soldiers led him into the courtyard of the palace (that is, the governor's headquarters); and they called together the whole cohort. And they clothed him in a purple cloak; and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on him. And they began saluting him, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' They struck his head with a reed, spat upon him, and knelt down in homage to him. After mocking him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him. (*Mark 14:6-20*)

It was the irony of evergreen  
as death sat in the wings  
that hurt him the most.  
His postcode suggested he wouldn't live  
as long as those  
in more affluent areas,  
so he was always consigned to an earlier death.  
An accident of birth.

The purple blanket  
was a foreign comfort,  
and brought some warmth as he shivered.  
It stopped some flow of blood  
like a bandage for the wounds,  
an echo of a Royal visit some years ago  
when, as a boy,  
he dodged a ball with a Prince  
who came and went away,  
moved on by security  
and a full itinerary.  
The reed gave him  
something to do  
with his clenched fist,  
a morphine relief.

But a thorned crown with its leaves  
as green as Spring  
hanging over his eyeline  
teased him the most  
with eternity  
when an early death  
sat in the wings.



Take a Train journey around the London Tube, and you'll travel through an adventure of inequality in life expectancy.

The life expectancies of children born near stations which are only minutes apart are years different. There is, for example, a 20 year difference in life expectancy between those born near Oxford Circus and others born close to some stations on the Docklands Light Railway.

Those born around Star Lane are predicted to live on average for 75.3 years in contrast to 96.4 years for those born near Oxford Circus.

If you prefer, we can compare countries. Take an imaginary flight from London to Guatemala and you'll see an 11 year difference in life expectancy—although that's the same difference between Hackney and the West End.

It's replicated across the UK. Males living in the most deprived areas of the UK were living almost 10 years fewer than males living in the least deprived areas. Females living in the most deprived areas were also found to live almost 8 years fewer.

It's a matter of life and death, determined by an accident of birth. If only we could choose where we are born.





**Jesus Carries his Cross**



# The Fourth Sorrowful Mystery

## Jesus Carries his Cross

They compelled a passer-by, who was coming in from the country, to carry his cross; it was Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus. Then they brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means the place of a skull). And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh; but he did not take it. And they crucified him, and divided his clothes among them, casting lots to decide what each should take. (Mark 15:21-24)

It is a long journey  
through the marketplace  
of pilgrims and peddlers.  
He takes the “official” route  
knowing that any other  
will send him back for more,  
a repeat of everything that came before.

But in a mad moment,  
he takes a detour,  
pays a backhander,  
meets some weeping women  
and his mother along the way,  
and a family, foreign to this place,  
knows that friendships come and go.  
Some never make it.

Traders roll down the shutters,  
and drive away.  
They carry their rubbish to the tip  
but not before the sky begins to darken.  
‘Unseasonal weather for the time of year,’ says one.  
He steps over a trail of blood in the street.

He makes his way to the hill  
beyond the city walls,  
wishes he was dead now  
in the marketplace,  
at the gateway to another world.  
Maybe things could have been different,  
if he’d taken the official route.

We saw the photographs in the Media. A child's body washed up on a beach. He was a refugee, crossing the Mediterranean Sea, seeking safety. A dead child, washed away from his family, carried by the tide to a Spanish beach. The flotsam of war, disturbs the holidaymakers.

In 2022, more than 45,000 people crossed the English Channel to the UK in small vessels, a 60% increase on the previous year, and the highest figure since records began. How do we respond? Send them to Rwanda for processing? Return them to war and poverty because their chosen route was unofficial, and maybe broke a law?

Often facing imprisonment or harsh conditions, refugees and people seeking asylum are often pushed to seek extreme ways to find refuge in another country. The smugglers cash in, making money from the movements of those who hope for a better life, a safer life, a life free from the threat of death and persecution.

The safe and legal means to reach the UK are limited, and there is a reduced number of places available on UK resettlement schemes, accompanied by stringent family reunion laws. Even if someone is eligible for a resettlement programme, it can take years for applications to be processed, condemning refugees to wait in difficult and damaging situations.

Yes, we have the seen the photographs. How do we respond?



# The Crucifixion



# The Fifth Sorrowful Mystery

## The Crucifixion

It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, while the sun's light failed, and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, 'Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.' Having said this, he breathed his last. When the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God and said, 'Certainly this man was innocent.' And when all the crowds who had gathered there for this spectacle saw what had taken place, they returned home, beating their breasts. But all his acquaintances, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

*(Luke 23:44-49)*

They are marched  
and made to watch him hang.  
His neck noosed,  
his young lungs stilted,  
breath after squeezed breath,  
as he gasps for breath,  
chokes on his own breath.

His eyes are as wide  
as the mad moon.  
His limbs kick  
long after he has taken his final breath,  
like a stringed marionette,  
punching and out of control.  
His lop-sided tongue  
makes him look comical,  
a grotesque,  
but unable to scare evil away.

But there is no laughter.

Just emptiness.

A void.

And a sun that left the day to itself,  
to its own long night.

The Genocidal atrocities of the Second World War have left a scar on the human memory. They are a wound that will never go away.

The attempted eradication of a whole race, and the persecution of other certain minority groups haunts us. And yet we do not seem to learn.

Emerging in the decades after that war, other atrocities of 'ethnic cleansing' have continued to emerge and astound us, and antisemitism, persecution and abuse continues.

The witness and the words of those who have been able to share their experiences are an important testimony which will not go away. They will continue to challenge and unsettle us.

The words of Elie Wiesel, for example, who survived the death camps of Auschwitz and Birkenau, continue to unsettle us, and inspire us to strive for a world free of persecution and injustice.

In his book, *'Night,'* he recounts the disturbing moment when they were made to watch the execution of a teenage boy, hanged before them. There is a cry, 'Where is God?' The response from another, 'He is there.' There, in the boy before them.

With their devastating experiences of life and death, God was dying, God had died.



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