

## Jesus' Triumphant Entry

### The Story

The crowds loved Jesus but the authorities were suspicious of him and so some type of confrontation was inevitable. Jesus wanted to go to Jerusalem so that everyone would have the chance properly to hear his message. When he entered the city, the crowds of people welcomed him with shouts of joy. They were intrigued and excited by what he planned to do.

As he rode along, the crowds spread out their garments on the road ahead of him. When he reached the place where the road started down the Mount of Olives, all of his followers began to shout and sing as they walked along, praising God for all the wonderful miracles they had seen. "Blessings on the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in highest heaven!" (*Whole story - Luke 19:28-40*)

### Children's questions from the picture

1. What do you think Jesus would have felt like being the centre of attention?
2. Why do you think the crowds are feeling so happy that Jesus is coming into Jerusalem?
3. Does anything interest you about the characters in the picture? Who are the people in the crowd – do they look like Jesus' friends or are they strangers?

### Group Leader's notes

Traditional pictures of the Triumphal Entry will offer a literal presentation of Jesus riding on a donkey and the crowds waving palm leaves. This picture is designed solely to capture the excitement of the event. It was hastily drawn together and shot quickly with a minimal amount of preparation. The young people had been coming and going throughout the photo shoot and this was the first time that we had enough people together to take this particular image. They were confused and initially embarrassed at being thrown together and asked to create an exuberant and noisy crowd scene - not everyone knew each other and so they were more reticent than they would have been within a single friendship group. The Jesus figure in this picture appears bemused by the attention he is receiving. This reflects what might have been the temporary nature of the crowds at Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem – crowds follow crowds and people would have been cheering simply because others were doing so as well. It also suggests that Jesus might have felt self-conscious about the attention he was receiving from the cheering crowds. He was not a gladiator looking to milk the applause but a 'man of sorrows' (Isaiah 53:3) on his way to his death. The picture cuts across traditional representations of Jesus as a pale white skinned saintly looking figure.

## The Last Supper

### The Story

Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem coincided with the Jewish feast of the Passover, the most important Festival of the Jewish year. It was the occasion when the Jews would give thanks to God for rescuing them from slavery in Egypt. When Jesus was growing up, he would have eaten the Passover meal every year with his family and friends. Now, Jesus knew that he was going to die soon, and he wanted to give his friends a way of remembering him. So he celebrated the Passover meal with them as always, but he did it a bit differently. During the meal, he took some bread, gave thanks to God and he broke it. He passed it to his friends on either side of him and said, 'Take and eat; this is my body.' Then he picked up the cup of wine and said, 'Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.' That was the last time that Jesus ate with his friends before he died and so we call it the Last Supper (*Whole story - Luke 22: 7-28*)

### Children's questions from the picture:

1. Why is Jesus placed at the centre of the picture? What might he have been saying to his disciples?
2. Who was Judas? Which person in the picture do you think is meant to be Judas?
3. Which of the disciples in the picture do you like best? Why? What do you think they might have been feeling?

### Group Leader's notes:

This picture was the most carefully prepared of all the images and it took the longest to stage. We wanted to make the point that the fact that the Last Supper was a Passover meal does not mean it would all have been formal ceremonial eating. Jesus and the disciples would also have been hungry and enjoying a meal with rough and ready food common to all of them. This aspect of the meal is symbolized in the picture by our using chicken and chips – a basic, easy and accessible meal for young people in the city. We had to wait half an hour for the food to arrive and so by the time it came everyone was feeling genuinely hungry. This gives an energy to the picture that is lacking in more traditional representations of the Last Supper, where the meal is pictured at a later stage; the disciples appear to have already eaten and are seen sitting far apart from each other, listening intently to what Jesus has to say. At the back of this picture there is a hooded figure looking away from the rest of the group. We intended this figure to represent Judas. He is loath to join in with the first hungry scrabble for food because he no longer feels himself to be a part of the group of disciples. It would have been a double betrayal for him to join in the meal and then to hand Jesus over to the Romans. It makes Jesus' actions later in the meal more poignant when he says 'the one whom I give this bread to will be the one to betray me' (John 13:26).

## Gethsemane

### The Story

After the Last Supper had finished, Jesus took his three closest friends, Peter, James and John and went to a place called Gethsemane. Jesus wanted to spend time with God, praying and asking for the strength to face his death. The disciples were tired and fell asleep, so Jesus was left alone. He felt frightened at the idea of being crucified and as he prayed his sweat fell to the ground like great drops of blood. It was here that Judas brought the Roman soldiers and had Jesus arrested (*Whole story - Luke 22:39-56*).

### Children's questions from the picture:

1. Why do you think that Jesus is on his own and not with his disciples?
2. Why do you think Jesus is looking sad and walking with his head bent down?
3. Where do you go and what do you do when you feel like this?

### Group Leader's notes:

This picture was shot in a bleak and deserted park. In traditional representations of Gethsemane, the garden is a tranquil spot on the edge of the bustling city of Jerusalem and Jesus is always pictured bent over in prayer pleading with God. This picture transposes the events into a deserted urban landscape and captures what would have been the moments in-between him praying when he would have been pacing up and down preparing himself for the test that lay ahead of him. Gethsemane is the only time in the story of Holy Week when Jesus is entirely on his own – before this point he had been buoyed up by his disciples and afterwards he would be dragged down by his enemies – Gethsemane is the hinge point between these two parts of the story. When difficult choices are looming people withdraw to be on their own and this is what is happening here. The fact that the Jesus figure is walking in the rain rather than sheltering inside indicates the turmoil that he would have been feeling. What was striking was that when asked to look dejected and miserable the young person knew exactly what was being asked of him, suggesting that this was a feeling that he was familiar with. People know instinctively the sensation of feeling a nervous knot in their stomach and being overwhelmed at the challenges of the day ahead.

## The Trial

### The Story

It was now late Thursday night and Jesus was on trial for his life. He had been arrested even though he hadn't done anything wrong. The Temple leaders were angry at what he had been saying about God. He was taken to the Council of the High Priests in the Temple where Caiaphas, the high priest, questioned him. Caiaphas got people to make false accusations against Jesus but the witnesses all contradicted one another. They could not seem to get their stories straight. Jesus was silent throughout this proceeding. Angered to the point where he tore his clothes in frustration, Caiaphas pronounced Jesus a heretic and, with the consent of his fellow priests, took him to Pilate, who was the Roman Governor of Judea. Pilate sentenced Jesus to death, even though he found Jesus innocent (*Whole story - Mark 14:53 – 15:16*).

### Children's questions from the picture:

1. Why is everyone pointing their fingers at the Jesus figure?
2. What would Jesus have felt while this was happening?
3. Have you ever been accused of something you did not do? What did this make you feel?

### Group Leader's Notes:

This picture was taken inside in a cold and unheated dance studio. The most powerful aspect of constructing the image was the simplicity and the silence; nobody said a word. People simply lined up and began to point at the Jesus figure. The scriptures talk about Jesus being silent when the accusations were leveled against him (Matthew 26:63). It does not talk about moments of silence from those who are judging him: the pauses before they return to the fray and repeat their allegations against him. Their minds are made up and any accusations leveled against Jesus are simply to justify the decisions they have already made. The truth or otherwise did not matter to them. They wanted Jesus dead. The picture is taken down the line of one of the pointing fingers to indicate the helplessness of Jesus' situation. The fingers take up the majority of the picture and this is intended to suggest that the judgment made of Jesus is not a single one-off historical event but an ongoing process. The Christian belief is that people are judging Jesus the whole time by how they chose to live their lives. The object of the accusing fingers - the Jesus-figure - is deliberately blurred to suggest that it can just as easily be us, as it was Jesus, who is being judged and condemned. The sensation of being pointed at and judged for whom you are is familiar to many.

## The Crucifixion

### The Story

The soldiers took Jesus to a place just outside Jerusalem called Golgotha (The Place of the Skull) to be put to death by crucifixion. They beat him, laughed and mocked him, then nailed him to a cross to die. Jesus would have been in agony. The nailing of the hands and feet forced the victim to push up against the weight of his own body to take a single breath. In the hot sun he felt a terrible thirst and was exhausted. Whilst Jesus was on the cross the sky fell dark. After three hours Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"— which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Then he died. (*Whole story - Mark 15:16-41*).

Crucifixion was a brutal method of execution reserved for criminals of the state. The authorities needed to make a public spectacle of Jesus' death in order to convince people of how misguided his claims had been. But Jesus asked God to forgive them. The crucifixion fitted God's plan that Jesus should absorb the very worst that people had to offer, even to the point of death. In doing so he took on the sins of humankind and showed that love and forgiveness are more powerful than all the evil.

### Children's questions from the picture:

1. What do you think Jesus would have felt like when he was crucified?
2. How do the sky and the trees make you think about the crucifixion?
3. What do you like and dislike about the picture

### Group Leader's notes:

This picture was taken outside on a dark midwinter evening and it was too cold for us to be able to take a long time rehearsing the image. The suggestion that he climb up onto the wire fence was intuitive and the picture was taken quickly – he still has his iPod fastened round his belt. Traditional pictures of the crucifixion will show a man battered to death on the edge of despair. It is easy to think of Jesus as a man hounded to his death by a cruel and unremitting God. This picture shows differently. Jesus is a healthy young man, fit and able to make decisions for himself. He has chosen to allow himself to be crucified to fulfill God's plan for the world. The picture runs together the idea of blessing and crucifixion in that the way that he is holding his hands gives both the pose of a blessing as well as the posture of crucifixion. The question asked by the picture is which side of the fence do we see ourselves to be on? Do we see ourselves as being trapped behind the wire looking out at Jesus who wants to reach in and help us? Alternatively, do we see ourselves as being outside the wire looking back at Jesus who has already set us free?

## The Resurrection

### Story

Jesus was crucified, died and was buried on the Friday. Saturday passed without event. But early in the morning on Sunday Jesus' friends went to his tomb with spices to anoint his body. When they got there, they found the tomb had been opened and there was no body inside. Jesus had left the tomb – he had risen from the dead and was alive! He came to his disciples and showed them the marks of his crucifixion so that they would be in no doubt that his resurrection was physical, literal and actual. The disciples who had been frightened and confused were then transformed into the people of faith who would take the message of Christianity to the ends of the earth. (*Whole story - Luke 24:1-49*)

### Children's questions from the picture:

1. Why and how does the bright blue sky in the picture make you think of the Resurrection?
2. What do you think is happening in this picture? Why do you think that Jesus is stretching (waking up or excited)?
3. What do you think it would it have felt like for Jesus to come back from the dead?

### Group Leader's notes:

This picture was taken on a crisp autumnal morning in a park on the edge of a busy high street. A group of dancers hold the Jesus figure up in the air. She stands with her body arched, mirrored against the sky. It was a delicate and fragile posture to hold because she was effectively balanced on people's upturned hands. The tableau suggests that Jesus' reappearance from the dead was more tentative and hesitant than it is traditionally thought to be. In effect he needed to relearn how to think, feel, behave and engage with the world. He would not have bounced in with a boisterous "I am back", but would have felt his way slowly, amazed at what had happened to him. By framing the Jesus figure against the sky, the picture runs together the idea of resurrection (raised from the dead) and Ascension (return to heaven). They are both a part of the same miracle that provides the foundation of the Christian faith. The end of one story (Jesus' time on earth) is the beginning of another (the Church).