Good Friday meditations

1 Jenny: Jesus, why didn't you speak? Why didn't you explain, defend yourself? Were you so tired, had tried so hard using everything you knew of to let in the light? And you knew if you resisted, your followers would die for you? So the last thing you could do now, was take the place of one man Barabbas?  Jesus, I don't understand.

But oh Pilate, I do understand. I have betrayed someone because others' opinion was more important, often I haven't done what I knew in my heart out of fear, and I am sorry too.

2 Wendy: We like to think that 2000 years on we are more civilised than the fickle crowd who bayed for Jesus to be crucified. However we only need to look over events in the last century to realise that the human character has not changed.

Take the appalling treatment of Archibald Baxter, singled out as a conscientious objector and forced to hang on a cross at the battle-front during World War 1

Or the way Jewish people were flogged and gassed in the Nazi concentration camps.

Until the Homosexual Law Reform Act was passed in 1987, gay citizens could be arrested and sent to jail, where other criminal inmates bullied them mercilessly.

We are indeed capable of terrible brutality against those who dare to be different.

And yet when a person has the courage to defy the crowd, he or she can make a real stand for justice.

3 Judith: From our own falling, let us remember what despair and shame felt like, so we withhold our judgement of others that have fallen.

Let us offer help where it is wanted.

4 Valerie: I don’t know how I will get through the next few hours let alone the next few days and weeks. Why? I keep on asking and I can’t find any answers or comfort. This lovely, lovely son of mine, a man of peace and goodwill - how did it go so wrong? Surely he or his friends could have seen what was coming. Why didn’t he lie low for a while? Why did he put his life on the line? What made the crowds shouting ‘hosannah’ one minute turn into a hate-filled throng calling for his blood? Why did his closest friends desert him when he needed them most? He could have avoided upsetting the authorities. He could have played it safe. So what is left? A broken body on a cross of shame, a body wracked with pain and a mother’s broken heart.

5 Jon: Ah well, someone to help yet again

Maybe Simon would take my place

Oh, it’s getting dark

Perhaps I could sneak away

Maybe I should just bolt for it

Oh, the pain

Oh, the fatigue

Oh, the mocking

Oh, the hate

Oh, the irony

Shrive my soul

6 Paul: Veronica walks purposefully through the crowd and stands close to Jesus.  She takes out her handkerchief and tries to wipe away the blood running into his eyes.  Her handkerchief is too small, and she gets blood on her hands and dress, and more still runs into Jesus’s eyes.  But her heart is big enough.

7 Tony: Human. Vulnerable. The target of horrible abuse. Rejected. Worse than worthless. Cast out.

8 Frances: It is likely that the Roman soldiers escorting Jesus to Golgotha saw no trouble coming from a group of women gathered to comfort him in his agony; after all they were just women. During his life, Jesus appreciated women; he probably laughed at the riposte ‘… but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master’s table.’ And understood the weeping of Mary Magdalene, probably stigmatised as a prostitute who washed his feet with her tears.

9 Barrie: Can you remember the last time you had a fall?

What were your first thoughts?

How long did it take you to get up?

What did you need to do to get going again – to keep on going?

A silence -

This was the third time Jesus fell that day.

What can we do in our time, for ourselves, for others, for our community?

10 Gabrielle : "You cringe at the thought   
 That someone from home   
 Might see you now here.  
 In this unsheltered room.  
 Now is the time to hold faithful  
 To your dream, to understand   
 That this is an interim time   
 Full of awkward disconnection"

11Meg: They hung him in Jerusalem

And in Hiroshima

In Dallas and in Selma too

And in South Africa.

We hear you in agony cry.

For freedom you march.

In riots you die.

Your face in the papers.

We read and we see.

The tree must be planted

By human decree. (Anon)

12 Colma: Our journey from Ash Wednesday, through Lent brings us to the foot of the cross.

In our own ways we have shared the impact of Jesus’ death on those who loved him.

When destructive forces threaten us we too can feel powerless.

We too feel weak when nature’s forces wreak havoc in our lives and in the world around us.

13 Pam: As Jesus’ friends waited at the Cross, so we recognise the sacred privilege of watching with a loved one whose life journey is nearing its end, perhaps more slowly that they had wished. We keep talking to them, and when they might not hear or comprehend we keep talking. Perhaps the recognition of a familiar voice might trigger a precious memory and a flicker of a smile. We honour the dedication of nurses and care-givers, doctors and chaplains in hospitals and rest-homes who tend our people as though they were their own.

14 Ellen: We watched his body be wrapped.

Then the work was done. It was over. Nothing left to do. Nothing.

Numbness.

Emptiness.

Our beloved Jesus in the tomb. Emptiness outside it. Emptiness within us.