



On your marks

Finding ways to connect with the worldwide family of the Christian faith has been a growing area of interest both in churches and schools. Such windows into the multicultural and international practice of Christianity in today's world are a vital resource to give us a true picture of what it means to be a global Christian in the 21st century. For Christians this is of course also important evidence of the continuing truth and power of the story of Jesus to influence lives and transform societies.

In [A-cross the World](#) (BRF, 2011), this connection to the big picture was through the symbol of the cross. Differing Christian traditions and various Christian faith communities around the world are united by this one key and central sign of a shared faith. This universal cross has at the same time been interpreted, designed and adapted to express a unique, local expression of that same faith. With each cross comes a particular story of how each community experiences God's love and puts it into action.

Get set

Each of the crosses in this new series supplements the 40 crosses that can already be found in the book [A-cross the World](#). With each there is a Bible link with wondering questions, background information about the cross, stories to share and craft ideas to make a version of the cross - providing enough material for a session with children in a church group, in the classroom or at a mixed-age event. There is also a picture provided for each cross that could be printed or used in a PowerPoint presentation in order to provide a talking point for groups or as a focus for collective worship.

This cross belongs to a series of new crosses and, as with the first collection, the overall aim remains the same, namely:

- to enable children and adults to see the cross through the eyes of other cultures and traditions
- to prompt discussion and debate on why this single, historical event continues to exercise such an influence worldwide
- to explore how Christians in a wide variety of places, different times in history and in different circumstances, have lived purposeful lives because of their faith in a Christ, who died and who is risen - symbolised by the cross

For further cross ideas linked to the church's year, go to:

- [Easter - a resurrection cross](#)
- [Lent - an ongoing idea for exploring the cross through Lent](#)



Go!

To view an associated picture for this cross, go to [A Spanish cross - picture](#)

Bible Link

Be humble in the presence of God's mighty power, and he will honour you when the time comes. God cares for you, so turn all your worries over to him.

1 Peter 5:6-7 (CEV)

Peter wrote his first letter to Christian believers who were facing threats and persecution. Again and again he points them to Jesus as their example of how to respond when things are tough. In these verses he urges them to hand over all their anxieties and fears to God in prayer.

Wondering about this Bible Story

I wonder why Peter had to remind his readers about prayer? Wasn't that the obvious thing to do?

I wonder if there are any words in these verses that would help them believe that God really can relieve them of their worries?

I wonder how easy it is just to pray and leave all our worries with God? How can people be helped not to 'pick them up' again and go on worrying?

The story of the cross

Every year thousands of Christians go on pilgrimage by walking along the 'Camino de Santiago' in northern Spain. This 500-mile-long path takes them to the Cathedral of Santiago De Compostela, where according to tradition the bones of St James the apostle are buried. They are said to have been brought here from Palestine following his martyrdom at the hands of King Herod (see Acts 12:1-2). This pilgrim route was particularly popular in medieval times but today too more and more Christians are choosing to make the long trek as a spiritual discipline, often at important transition moments in their lives. The long walk gives them the opportunity to pray and reflect on their faith as they join others seeking after God.

Parts of this long walk can be very demanding on the pilgrims, as they follow the conch shell signs which are the symbol of St James. Some days into the journey the pilgrims climb up to the highest point of the Camino (around 1500 metres), where they find a Cross of Iron set up at the summit (Cruz de Ferro). It is a tall spike of iron topped by a traditional cross. The custom is that pilgrims bring a small rock from his or her homeland and leave it here at the foot of the cross to represent all the sins and failures of the past. The rock, which has been a burden to them up to that point, is now left behind and this helps the believer remember that Jesus' death can take away guilt and sin. Prayers for protection on the rest of the Camino are also made. Today the pile of rocks has grown so large that pilgrims have to climb a winding path on the hill of rocks to leave their offering at the foot



of the cross. A number of other items are also tied onto the cross such as ribbons, prayers and significant personal items.

The Spanish Cross of Iron on this pilgrim way has come to represent that moment of turning over to God all that has damaged a person's relationship, both with God and with other people.

In his novel *Pilgrim's Progress*, John Bunyan describes a similar moment for his pilgrim Christian. When he arrives at the cross with his burden on his back, he is invited to lay that burden down and find release from all the sin that has weighed upon him up until then.

Crafting the cross

Create your own Spanish cross of iron using some chenille wires (pipe cleaners) that you have twisted together to make a firm upright pole. Wrap around this some grey masking tape in strips.

Next use some small pieces of chenille wire and make a small cross to go on top of the pole. Again cover this to give it an iron-grey appearance.

Finally fix the iron cross in a pile of small stones, glued together for stability.

You might like to use this Spanish iron cross as a focus for some personal or group reflection, inviting people to add another stone to the pile (or perhaps tie a ribbon to the pole instead) as a symbol of something that they want to bring to God for forgiveness and the promise of a fresh start.

On the *Barnabas* website there is a set of activities, drama ideas, craft and stories linked to the life of St James. Go to: [Seaside Surprise](#)

NB: St James has his own particular cross, see [St James cross - picture](#)

Cross reflection

***Faithful Cross!
Above all other,
One and only noble Tree!
None in foliage, none in blossom,
None in fruit thy peers may be;
Sweetest wood and sweetest iron!
Sweetest Weight is hung on thee!***

This is from a 6th-century Latin hymn by Venantius Fortunatus, which was written for a church procession of a 'part of the true cross' in 570 AD. This English translation is by Edward Caswall (1814-78).