



BANGLADESHI CROSS

The Bangladeshi cross is made from bamboo leaves and decorated with stitching.

The idea for the cross came from a member of a church in Jobarpur, Southern Sudan called Mrs Bitihika Baroi. She wanted to find a way to help the women in her church earn some money so that their families could buy plots of land to grow food and open a small shop to sell any excess produce.

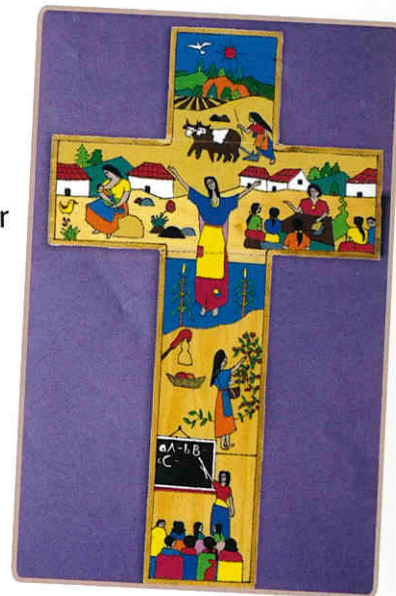
The women used leaves from the bamboo trees, which grow everywhere in the region, to make bamboo crosses and then decorated them by stitching simple designs such as stars in the 4 branches of the cross. The money they made from selling the crosses was paid into a fund run by the Church of Bangladesh, who then offered interest free loans to families to buy small plots of land.

SALVADOREAN CROSS

Crosses from El Salvador are brightly coloured with pictures often inspired by the life of Jesus. The original cross was designed in memory of Maria Gomez.

Maria Christina Gomez was a primary school teacher in El Salvador and an active member of her church. She angered the authorities in her country because she campaigned for the rights of poor people. One day in 1989 as she returned home from school she was kidnapped and taken away in a van. Later that day her body was found.

Some time later Maria's many friends, who did not want to forget her, commissioned a local artist to paint a wooden cross with scenes showing her life and her work among the poor women in the rural villages of El Salvador. The cross has become widely known as the Maria Gomez Cross.



IRISH CROSS



St Brigit of Kildare (born in the 5th century) is one of Ireland's patron saints, along with St Patrick. After many adventures in her early life, Bridget became a nun, founded a Christian abbey near Kildare in Ireland and became its leader or abbess. The monks and nuns at Bridget's Abbey spent their time helping anyone who came to their doors needing food or medical help. Bridget also began a school of art, where crafts such as painting, metalwork and creating illuminated manuscripts were practised. Later she became a patron saint of poets, craftsmen and women, and healers.

According to legend, Bridget used to weave crosses, which were then tied with ribbons. She gave the crosses as gifts to people she met on her journeys.