

The Stations of the Cross

An Explanation of the Stations of the Cross

Since the edict of Toleration, decreed by the Emperor Constantine in 313 under which all Christians were given freedom to worship in the Roman Empire, Christians have wished to walk where Christ walked in the week of his Passion (Holy Week). Crowds of pilgrims have achieved this over the centuries, but for the majority it was an unrealizable dream.

Some churches in the Middle Ages had chapels to commemorate an event in the passion of Jesus and, from these, the Franciscans, since the 15th century, have developed the devotion that has come to be called the "Stations of the Cross." The word "station" (statio) implies either "standing still" or "gathering place."

It was not until the 17th century that stations came to be erected in churches, ranged at intervals around the walls. They took the form of wooden crosses, with a representation of an event in the passion underneath to fix the incident in mind. They are now almost universal in Roman Catholic churches of the Latin rite and also in many Anglican churches.

At first, the number of stations varied considerably, but the number was fixed at 14 by Pope Clement XII in 1731. Since the theological and liturgical reforms of the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), many churches have added a 15th station to commemorate the Resurrection. Ten stations commemorate events related in the gospels and five stations from early tradition.

The devotion can be either public or private. Prayers are said at each station, with a short meditation on the scene from the passion.

The Stations may be of stone, wood, or metal, sculptured or carved, or they may be merely paintings or engravings.

Traditional Stations:

1. Christ condemned to death;
2. The cross is laid upon him;
3. His first fall;
4. He meets His Blessed Mother;
5. Simon of Cyrene is made to bear the cross;
6. Christ's face is wiped by Veronica;
7. His second fall;
8. He meets the women of Jerusalem;
9. His third fall;
10. He is stripped of His garments;
11. His crucifixion;
12. His death on the cross;
13. His body is taken down from the cross; and
14. He is laid in the tomb.

Modification by Pope John Paul II

In recent years some variations have been introduced in the traditional devotion. One of these is the addition of a 15th station - the Resurrection of Jesus. Another is a series of scriptural stations, which begin with the Agony of Jesus in Gethsemane and omit some of the traditional non-scriptural stations in favor of incidents mentioned in the gospels.

A series of Scriptural Stations was celebrated on Good Friday by Pope John Paul II in 1991, and again in 1994, in the Coliseum at Rome.

The Scriptural Stations of the Cross

1. Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane
2. Jesus betrayed by Judas
3. Jesus condemned by the Sanhedrin
4. Jesus denied by Peter
5. Jesus condemned by the people
6. Jesus crowned with thorns and clothed in purple.
7. Jesus carries the cross.
8. Jesus assisted by Simon of Cyrene
9. Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem
10. Jesus is crucified.
11. Jesus speaks to the thief
12. Jesus speaks to his mother
13. Jesus dies on the cross
14. Jesus is buried.

There are numerous web-sites that tell us about the Stations of the Cross. Here are ones I found to be most helpful:

[The Stations of the Cross](#)

Sources of the above:

[Stations of the Cross](#)

[Catholic Encyclopedia: the Way of the Cross](#)

[Variations on the Stations of the Cross](#)