

# STATIONS OF THE CROSS

**Meditating on the Stations of the Cross offers a deeper perspective on Christ's suffering and crucifixion during the season of Lent. Learn about the devotion's origins, the significance of each station and how to pray them.**

ALL PHOTOS BY JEFF BLAKE/MISCELLANY: STATIONS OF THE CROSS AT THE BASILICA OF ST. PETER IN COLUMBIA

**Note:** Where there is no Scripture passage corresponding to a Station below, reflections come from "The Way of the Cross" by St. Alphonsus De Liguori.

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## Walking in the steps of the early Christians' pilgrimages to Jerusalem

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During the 40 days of Lent, there is perhaps no prayer or devotion that better sums up the spirit of the season than the Stations of the Cross. Whether we contemplate them alone or together with a group, the stations remind us of Christ's difficult journey to his crucifixion, and of the spiritual journey we should be taking as we move through Lent.

### WHAT THEY ARE

The stations are a series of 14 images which depict the Passion of Christ. The traditional devotion includes meditating on each image and its meaning, and reciting prayers to accompany them.

Depictions of the 14 stations can be found in every Catholic church, usually arranged along the side walls of the sanctuary. The drama of Christ's Passion is depicted through them in a wide variety of forms, ranging from detailed relief sculptures in stone and metal to paintings that may be detailed or stark in their minimalism. No matter the medium, the message comes through.

### HOW THEY STARTED

The Stations of the Cross have their roots in the pilgrimages early Christians made to Jerusalem, and they depict stops along the way of the Via Dolorosa, the path that Jesus is said to have walked on the way to Calvary. Many pilgrims would make this walk when

visiting the Holy Land.

The stations as we know them today were started by Franciscans in Europe in the 15th and 16th centuries, who built outdoor shrines that depicted stops along the Way of the Cross. Putting stations inside churches became popular at the end of the 17th century, especially because Turkish rule made it difficult for most pilgrims to go to the Holy Land. In 1686, Pope Innocent XI granted Franciscans the right to place Stations of the Cross inside their churches, and in 1731 Pope Clement XII extended the right to all churches and fixed the number of stations at 14.

### HOW TO PRAY THEM

During Lent, most churches offer communal prayer of the stations, usually led by a

priest. He will walk to each station inside the church, describe what occurs there, and lead participants in specific prayers or meditations. The faithful follow along in devotional booklets or programs provided by the church. It is also possible to pray the stations on your own with the use of a printed devotional or online devotional.

### FAMOUS STATIONS

**Via Dolorosa:** The most famous set of stations is the Via Dolorosa, also known as the "Way of Sorrows" in Jerusalem. Pilgrims have prayed at stops along this route since before the eighth century. The Via Dolorosa today includes nine stations that are outside, and five that are inside the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Franciscan guides lead pilgrims

along the Via Dolorosa every Friday during the year, with the largest crowds occurring on Good Friday. **Rome:** Each Good Friday in Rome, large crowds of pilgrims take part in a dramatic Stations of the Cross, or Via Crucis, which is led by the pope and takes place at the Colosseum.

### STATIONS TO VISIT IN SC

Contemplating the Stations of the Cross on your own can be one of the most meaningful ways to reflect on the true meaning of Christ's passion. Some parishes offer special outdoor locations which combine the beauty of nature with the power of the Way of the Cross.

**Way of the Cross Park** is located behind Christ Our King Church, 1122 Russell Drive, Mount Pleasant. The

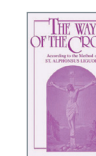
park features a lagoon and oak trees with markers depicting the Stations of the Cross. Visitors can visit the park on their own. Stations of the Cross is offered communally in the park on Good Friday.

**Holy Family Church** in Hilton Head has a Stations of the Cross Walkway located outdoors on the parish grounds next to the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe. The stations are arranged along a boardwalk. The church is located at 24 Pope Ave.

**St. Joseph Church**, 3512 Devine St., Columbia, offers a beautiful set of mosaic Stations of the Cross done by Columbia artist Angel Allen. They are arranged around the edges of the parish prayer garden near the columbarium.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Want to read more about the stations or bring them into your prayer routine? Here are some books and apps to help you along.



**The Way of the Cross** by St. Alphonsus Liguori has been the most popular form of stations in the U.S. since the 19th century. Found in most Catholic bookstores and online.



**Children's Way of the Cross** and **Stations of the Cross in My Pocket** (Pauline Books) are good prayer guides to introduce children to the stations, with prayers and meditations they can easily understand.



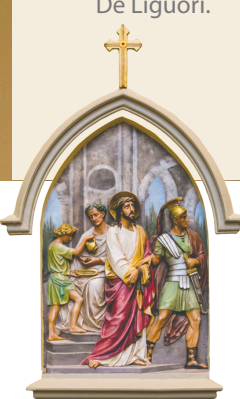
**Creighton University** has an online edition that includes audio versions in English and Spanish, as well as prayers and meditations. <http://onlineministries.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/stations.html>



The **Laudate** app for smartphones and tablets offers stations with images and prayers, and links to podcasts for audio versions. Available through iTunes and Google Play.



**The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops** has print and audio, as well as specially themed stations, including one for victims of human trafficking. <http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/prayers-and-devotions/stations-of-the-cross/index.cfm>



STATION 1

**JESUS IS CONDEMNED TO DIE**

Jesus stands before the high priest in Jerusalem, is questioned and then condemned to death. "At that the high priest tore his garments and said 'What further need have we of witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?' They all condemned him to die." (Mk 14: 61-64)



STATION 2

**JESUS CARRIES HIS CROSS**

Jesus is handed the heavy wooden cross and begins his walk. "Then he (Pilate) handed him over to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus, and carrying the cross himself he went out to what is called the Place of the Skull, in Hebrew, Golgotha." (Jn 19: 16-17)



STATION 3

**JESUS FALLS THE FIRST TIME**

Jesus is shown falling for the first time under the heavy weight of the wooden cross. He is made to get up and continue on the way. "He was so weakened that he could scarcely walk, and yet He had to carry this great load upon his shoulders."



STATION 4

**JESUS MEETS HIS MOTHER**

As Jesus walks he meets Mary, who is in deep grief and anguish at seeing her son and his suffering. "Jesus and Mary looked at each other, and their looks became as so many arrows to wound those hearts which loved each other so tenderly."



STATION 5

**SIMON HELPS JESUS CARRY HIS CROSS**

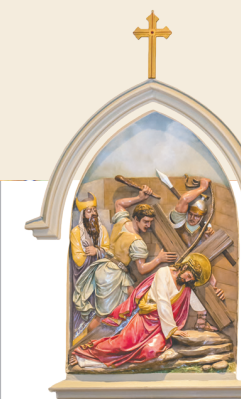
Simon of Cyrene is selected from the crowd to help the suffering Jesus bear the heavy cross. "They pressed into service a passer-by, Simon, a Cyrenian, who was coming in from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry his cross." (Mk 15:21)



STATION 6

**VERONICA WIPES THE FACE OF JESUS**

Veronica steps forth from the crowd and wipes Jesus' face. Tradition states that His image (The Holy Face) was left behind. "The holy woman named Veronica, seeing Jesus so afflicted, and His face bathed in sweat and blood, presented Him with a towel with which he wiped his face."



STATION 7

**JESUS FALLS THE SECOND TIME**

The weight of the cross forces Jesus to fall yet again, and guards force him to move on again. "Consider the second fall ... a fall which renews the pain of all the wounds of ... our afflicted Lord ... Jesus, by the merits of this new fall, give me the necessary help to persevere in Thy grace until death."



STATION 8

**JESUS MEETS THE WOMEN OF JERUSALEM**

Jesus encounters women in the crowd who are in sorrow over what is happening to him. "Jesus turned to them and said, 'Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep instead for yourselves and for your children.'" (Lk 23:27-28)



STATION 9

**JESUS FALLS A THIRD TIME**

The burden of the cross forces the suffering Jesus to fall yet again. "His weakness was extreme, and the cruelty of His executioners excessive, who tried to hasten His steps when He had scarcely strength to move."



STATION 10

**JESUS IS STRIPPED**

When he has reached the place where he will be crucified, the guards strip Jesus of his garments. "They gave Jesus wine to drink mixed with gall. But when he had tasted it, he refused to drink. After they had crucified him, they divided his garments by casting lots." (Mt 27:34-35)



STATION 11

**JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS**

Jesus' hands and feet are nailed to the cross after he reaches Golgotha. "When they came to the place called The Skull, they crucified him and the criminals there, one on his right, the other on his left. Then Jesus said, 'Father forgive them, they know not what they do.'" (Lk 23: 33-34)



STATION 12

**JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS**

Jesus is shown in death on the cross, with Mary and others mourning below him. "Jesus cried out in a loud voice, 'Father, into your hands I commend my spirit'; and when he said this he breathed his last." (Lk 23:46)



STATION 13

**JESUS IS TAKEN DOWN FROM THE CROSS**

Two of Christ's disciples help him down from the cross and he is placed in the arms of Mary. "Two of his disciples, Joseph and Nicodemus ... placed Him in the arms of his afflicted mother, who received Him with unutterable tenderness."



STATION 14

**JESUS IS LAID IN THE TOMB**

Jesus is placed in the tomb, depicted with Joseph, his disciples and his mother attending. "Taking the body, Joseph (of Arimathea) wrapped it in clean linen and laid it in his new tomb that he had hewn in the rock. Then he rolled a huge stone across the entrance to the tomb and departed."