

THE STATIONS OF THE CROSS

Ever since the start of Christianity just over 2000 years ago, people have travelled to the Holy Land to walk along the route taken by Our Lord Jesus Christ on the last day of his passion. It continues to this day, but some of us never get the opportunity.

To help us overcome this problem, any Catholic Church anywhere in the world contains fourteen depictions of Our Lord's final hours. These are what we call THE STATIONS OF THE CROSS, or sometimes THE WAY OF THE CROSS. They are used in a special service to give us a very close feeling of what it's like to be in the Holy Land on such a pilgrimage, but how many know what's involved and when and where we can participate?

Although it can be done by anyone, even in our home, it is usually conducted by a Parish Priest in his church. A favourite time is Easter Week, especially Good Friday, but what is it all about?

The 14 stations depict scenes from his condemnation through to his death on the cross. They were approved by Pope Benedict XVI in 2007 for meditation and public celebration and are as follows:

1. Jesus is condemned to death
2. Jesus takes up his Cross
3. Jesus falls the first time
4. Jesus meets his Mother
5. Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus carry the Cross
6. Veronica wipes the face of Jesus
7. Jesus falls for the second time
8. Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem
9. Jesus falls for the third time
10. Jesus is stripped of his garments
11. Jesus is nailed to the Cross
12. Jesus dies on the Cross
13. Jesus is taken down from the Cross
14. Jesus is laid in the tomb

In a Catholic Church, the service may be conducted by the congregation, going from one station to another saying prayers. It can also be done by the priest or deacon, who moves from station to station while the congregation make any responses.

There are various ways to participate in the Stations of the Cross, but the following is a simple one.

You are going to imagine 14 different parts of Christ's passion. You may have your own way of doing this, but there is one way of going through them while praying and that is to try and imagine the great

sorrow Our Lady was going through as she witnessed what happened to Jesus in each of these parts. You can find good examples of what can be said during each station in the ST PAUL Missal, provided by many churches in the UK for use by parishioners, but the following is a basic structure that can be used to create your own Stations of The Cross.

YOUR OWN STATIONS OF THE CROSS

An opening prayer could be:

*Priest: Holy and merciful Father, grant that we may follow the way of the cross In faith and love, so that we may share in Christ's passion and together with him reach the glory of your kingdom.
We ask you this through your Son Jesus Christ.*

We then start each station with:

*Priest: We adore you O Christ and we bless you,
People: Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.*

Priest: Relates this part of Christ's passion.

Priest: Says a prayer about this station.

We then all say the OUR FATHER prayer, and close each station with:

*ALL: Holy Mother pierce me through: in my heart, each wound renew
Of my Saviour crucified.*

A final prayer after the 14 Station could be:

*ALL: While my body here decays, may my soul your goodness praise
Safe in Paradise with you. Amen*

*Priest: He descended into hell, on the third day he rose again from the dead, he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God
The Father almighty: from there he will come again to judge the living and the dead.*

*ALL: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit
AMEM*

The whole service takes less than an hour, yet the feeling one gets from taking part and realising what Jesus and his mother went through on our behalf makes us feel humble and how truly blessed we are.