

Walking in His Footsteps

The Stations of the Cross – a time-honored Lenten Devotion



As a reminder, on Wednesday, March 28, at 6:30pm, Priests will be available for Confessions in our Church, as we enter the final days of Holy Week and the Sacred Triduum. Following Confessions, at approximately 7pm, the Stations of the Cross will be prayed, with musical accompaniment. Please plan to join us as another Lenten practice, in preparation for our celebration of Easter.

From Rome, the Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments, in the Document *Paschalis Solemnitatis*, reminds us that: *“The faithful are to be encouraged to participate in an ever more intense and fruitful way in the Lenten liturgy and in penitential celebrations... Devotional exercises which harmonize with the Lenten season are to be encouraged; for example, the Stations of the Cross...”*

The Stations of the Cross as a devotional practice is a time-honored tradition for many Catholic Christians. It involves tracing Jesus’ journey along “the Via Dolorosa,” *the Way of Sorrows, the Way of the Cross*. This is Christendom’s most sacred route for it is the path walked by Jesus, bearing His Cross on His back, from the place of trial before Pilate, to Golgotha, Calvary – the place of the Crucifixion.

This tradition began in the City of Jerusalem itself by processing along Jesus’ route and pausing along *the Way* for reflection and prayer. It continues to this day, even amidst the strife in the Holy Land, as Christian pilgrims from all over the world join in procession to retrace those steps and recall Jesus’ agony. There are fourteen Stations: nine along the narrow street and five inside the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Despite the hustle and bustle of the route, it is a moving spiritual experience to wander along *the Way* where Jesus suffered on His last day on earth, more than 2,000 years ago.

Throughout our history, the shrines of the holy places in and around Jerusalem have drawn pilgrims desiring to walk in the footsteps of their Lord and Savior. However, not all of us are able to travel to the Holy Land. So, ever since the Middle Ages, Churches and Chapels began erecting images devoted to the Passion. By the fifteenth century, the Franciscans had developed a devotion they were calling “stations.” The word simply means: a place where people stand still or gather together. It took a while to fix the number and the names of the Stations, but in 1731 Pope Clement XII established the fourteen as we know them today. We pray the Stations of the Cross always mindful of and thankful for the suffering and death that Jesus experienced for us. However, since we are a “Resurrection people,” believing in Christ’s Victory over death through His Resurrection, we are consoled and filled with Hope, knowing the true end of Jesus’ and our story, is not “*the end*” at all – but “*the Beginning*” – **the Resurrection!**

Blessings & prayers to you and your Families, especially during these final Weeks of Lent, and Sacred Days of Holy Week. Please pray for me, and all Priests, Deacons, Bishops, and Religious ministering in our Archdiocese.

–Monsignor Michael