

The History of the Stations of the Cross

The Stations of the Cross originated in pilgrimages to Jerusalem at quite an early date when a desire to reproduce the holy places in other lands seems to have manifested itself. At the monastery of San Stefano at Bologna a group of connected chapels were constructed as early as the fifth century, by St. Petronius, Bishop of Bologna, which was intended to represent the more important shrines of Jerusalem, and in consequence, this monastery became familiarly known as "Hierusalem." These may perhaps be regarded as the start from which the Stations afterwards developed, though we can be reasonably certain that nothing that we have before about the fifteenth century can strictly be called a Way of the Cross in the modern sense. Although several travelers who visited the Holy Land during the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries, mention a "Via Sacra," i.e., a settled route along which pilgrims were conducted, there is nothing in their accounts to identify this with the Way of the Cross, as we understand it. The devotion was likely developed by the Franciscans after they were granted administration of the Christian holy places in Jerusalem in 1342. The earliest use of the word "stations," as applied to the accustomed halting-places in the Via Sacra at Jerusalem, occurs in the narrative of an English pilgrim, William Wey, who visited the Holy Land in the mid-1400s, and described pilgrims following the footsteps of Christ to the cross. During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the Franciscans began to build a series of outdoor shrines in Europe to duplicate their counterparts in the Holy Land. The number of stations varied between eleven and thirty.

The object of the Stations is to help the faithful to make a spiritual pilgrimage of prayer, through meditating upon the chief scenes of Christ's sufferings and death. While it has become one of the most popular devotions for Roman Catholics, stations are featured in the worship and devotion of other Christian denominations as well.

Sheridan Lutheran Church Invites You to Pray The Stations of the Cross

"Let me tell you what the good Lord has done for me." These words from an old hymn are frequently sung by former street children rescued from the streets of Port-au-Prince. The church's work in Haiti, the poorest country in the western hemisphere, is a part of rescuing these children. Sheridan Lutheran Church shares in this partnership of bettering children's lives in Haiti. In these Stations of the Cross that mark the final hours of Jesus life, you will see 'what the good Lord' has done for all of us in Jesus Christ. These Stations of the Cross were made from recycled oil drums – making treasure from trash. They were commissioned from various Christian artisans in the Iron Market of Port-au-Prince, Haiti. Along the way you will see a marker at each of the fifteen stations encouraging you to pray for those whom Jesus walks alongside each day. You will note in the artwork the use of flowers – which are a sign of beauty in the midst of suffering. You will also see the crow that flies and torments – which is a sign of our struggles with evil and sin. As you walk these stations and pray, may you be able to express what the 'good Lord has done for you' in our Savior Jesus.

Prayers for the Stations

I. Jesus is condemned. Remember those condemned unjustly, those sentenced by members of government, and society because of their faith.

II. Jesus carries the cross. Remember those carrying a heavy cross in life without murmuring, inspired by Christ.

III. Jesus falls for the first time. Remember those breaking down under the weight of their failures.

IV. Jesus sees his mother. Remember all mothers who nurture and care for others, those who are called to be mothers ...all expectant mothers too.

V. Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus. Remember those who are fathers, both those who are trying to fulfill their call to be men after God's heart, and those who are struggling with their role as a father and man of God.

VI. Veronica wipes the face of Jesus. Remember children everywhere.

VII. Jesus falls for a second time. Remember those reaching out to the marginalized of society, those helping Aids victims, prisoners, minorities and those struggling to rise out of poverty.

VIII. Jesus consoles the mothers of Jerusalem. Remember families who are struggling with any kind of difficulties and problems, women oppressed by society, church, work force, spouses....all mistreated women in our world.

IX. Jesus falls for a third time. Remember those who lack the courage and strength to overcome addiction, personal shortcomings, sinfulness, and find themselves back in their old habits and behaviors.

X. Jesus is stripped. Remember those sisters and brothers who have been stripped of their dignity.

XI. Jesus is nailed to the Cross. Remember those who find themselves trapped in difficult situations and see no way out.

XII. Jesus dies on the cross. Remember the lonely, the dying, those who have no one to be with in their final hours of life's journey.

XIII. Jesus' body is taken off the cross. Remember those who mourn the loss of loved one, those longing for consolation.

XIV. Jesus' body is placed in a tomb. Remember those facing death without the hope of eternal life those who will die unexpectedly.

XV. Resurrection! Remember those who believe in resurrection and give witness to it daily.