

LITURGY BYTES

Stations



A very popular devotion in our Catholic tradition is the Stations of the Cross. This was always a welcome experience for me during my eight years in Catholic elementary school because we stopped schoolwork at 2 PM on the Fridays in Lent and gathered in the church for stations. As we moved up the chain to the upper grades, students were chosen to be readers, and some even got to join Father and the altar boys in the procession to each station. It was not ending the school day early that made me happy on those Fridays, but the experience of this journey that touched my heart. Hence, that is why it is one of my favorite devotions. Through the pandemic, there have been virtual experiences of the Stations of the Cross on some websites. Fortunately, recent changes are seeing some in-person station services in our churches. Of course, you can watch it on our Diocesan TV station, CFN, too. We are additionally blessed to have outdoor stations right here on the church property. With these sunny, warmer days, consider spending time meditating on these wooden structures for something different in your prayer life. Having said all of the above, let us see where and how the stations began.

An ancient tradition has it that the Blessed Mother visited the sites of Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection daily after He ascended into heaven. It did not take pilgrims very long to imitate her example and walk this road of Jesus' suffering and death. During the reign of Constantine, various churches and markers were set up at specific points on Jesus' path to Calvary. Travelers to the Holy Land visited these sacred sites for many centuries, sometimes bringing something back from a site to remember this journey. Traveling to the Holy Land was not always easy or even permitted because of religious tension and war. In lieu of traveling to these holy places, the Franciscans throughout Europe decided to create shrines and replicas in local towns. Their goal was to help the people enter into Jesus' passion without having to leave their hometowns. A little later on, in the 17th Century, the Franciscans replicated these holy places within churches. In 1731, Clement XII fixed the number of stations at 14. In these last few weeks of Lent, let us try the Stations of the Cross once again.

Have a blessed, healthy, and safe week. ~~~~*Michele Hahn*



My Jesus, we have traveled Your Way of the Cross. You saw beauty in the Cross and embraced it as a desired treasure. Help us to trust the Father and to realize that there is something great behind even the most insignificant suffering. There is someone lifting my cross to fit my shoulders – there is divine wisdom in all the petty annoyances that irk my soul every day. Teach me the lessons contained in my cross, the wisdom of its necessity, the beauty of my cross, and the fortitude that accompanies even the smallest crosses. Amen.