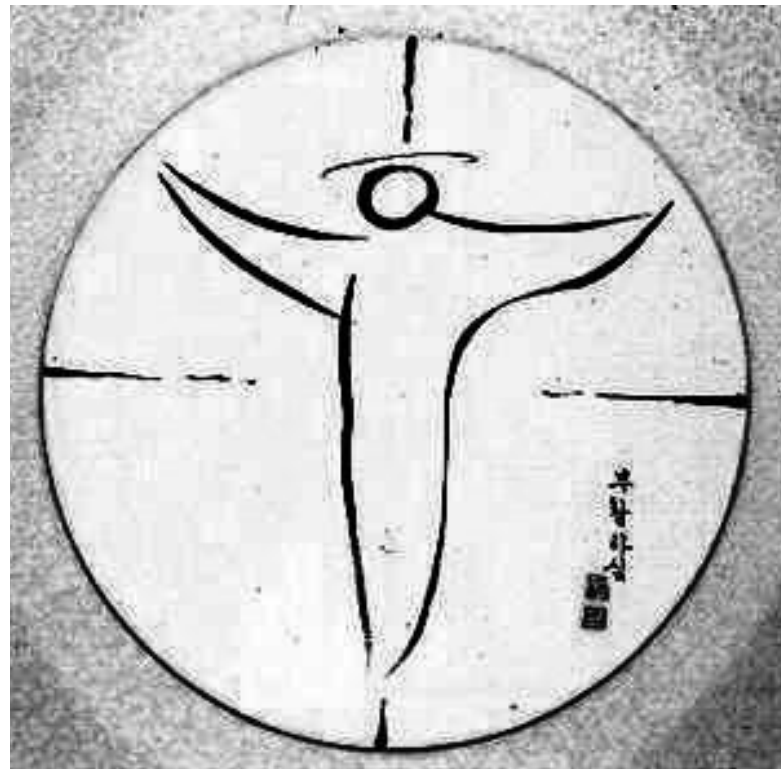


The Stations of the Cross

A Lenten Guide



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A History of the Stations of the Cross

For Roman Catholics throughout the world, the Stations of the Cross are synonymous with Lent, Holy Week and, especially, Good Friday. This devotion is also known as the "Way of the Cross", the "Via Crucis", and the "Via Dolorosa." It represents certain scenes in the Passion of Christ, each corresponding to a particular incident, or the special form of devotion connected with such representations of the fourteen key events on the day of Christ's crucifixion. However, a fifteenth event is added in some traditions representing the resurrection of Christ. Yet, a majority of the images represent his walk through the streets of Jerusalem, carrying the cross.

The Stations originated in medieval Europe when wars prevented Christian pilgrims from visiting the Holy Land. Thus, European artists created works depicting scenes of Christ's journey to Calvary to help pilgrims make a spiritual journey to Jerusalem even if they could not go physically. The faithful installed these sculptures, paintings, or images at intervals along a procession route, inside the parish church, or outdoors in order to have a devotional route in which to stop and pray at each "station."

Today, images of the Stations are on display in almost all Catholic churches. They serve mainly as a focus for Lenten worship services. But the Stations can also be performed privately, at any time of the year, even at home. Organizations over the years have offered free or inexpensive, illustrated pamphlets for this purpose.

The stations may be of stone, wood, or metal, sculptured or carved, or they may be merely paintings or engravings. Some Stations are valuable works of art, as those, for instance, in Antwerp cathedral, which have been much copied elsewhere. They are usually ranged at intervals around the walls of a church, though sometimes they are to be found in the open air, especially on roads leading to a church or shrine. In monasteries they are often placed in the cloisters. The erection and use of the Stations did not become at all general before the end of the seventeenth century, but they are now to be found in almost every church.

In summary, the object of the Stations is to help the faithful make in spirit a pilgrimage to the chief scenes of Christ's sufferings and death by passing from Station to Station, with certain prayers and devout meditations upon the various incidents of Christ's final days.

A Journey Through The Stations of the Cross (How to Use this Guide)

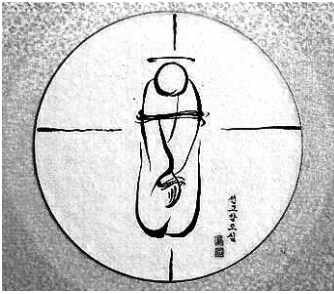
Pick a place to do the Stations of the Cross. Most of us can't travel to the Holy Land, but there might be a local church with the stations. Or, you can do the stations online using one of several websites that have been designed for this purpose. However, this pamphlet gives you the opportunity to pray the Stations of the Cross from your home a personal holy place.

Prepare your heart and mind for prayer. Before you begin the stations, you will want to open your heart and prepare yourself to walk with Jesus along his journey to the cross. Centering yourself will allow you to enter into a state of real prayer that goes beyond looking at pictures and reciting words.

Visualize the meaning of Christ's passion and death. Move beyond the basic historical facts to understand what Jesus' death means about his love for us.

Go from station to station in your mind and read the description of the Christ event connected to that image. Next, read the biblical passage illuminating the Station and Christ event. Finally, utilize the Intention and lift up a prayer in your own words. Contemplate each scene and allow it to touch you deeply.

Set your own pace. You can do 1 station a day, 7 stations at a time, or do all 15 in one session. There is no right or wrong way to do the Stations of the Cross. This exercise is meant to cultivate your relationship with Christ, prepare your spirit for Lent, and help you follow the "Way of the Cross."



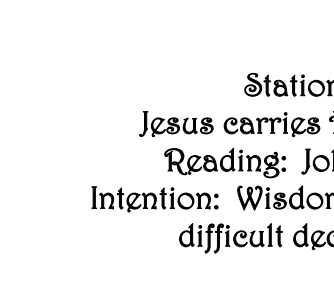
Station 1
Jesus is condemned to die.
Reading: John 19: 13-16.
Intention: Patience to fulfill our duties.



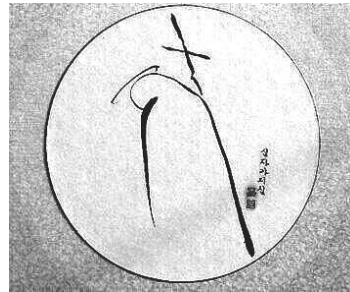
Station 6
Veronica wipes Jesus' face.
Reading: Isaiah 52: 14.
Intention: Generosity toward those in need.



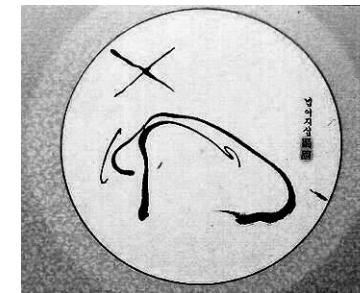
Station 11
Jesus is nailed to the cross.
Reading: Luke 23: 34.
Intention: Courage to forgive those who have hurt us.



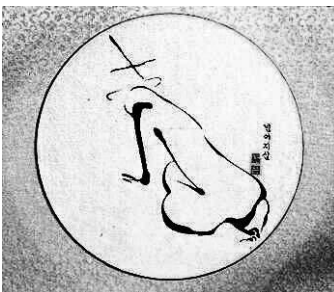
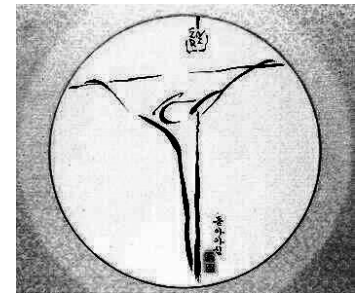
Station 2
Jesus carries his cross.
Reading: John 19: 17.
Intention: Wisdom when facing difficult decisions.



Station 7
Jesus falls the second time.
Reading: Isaiah 53: 4.
Intention: Endurance to follow Jesus faithfully.



Station 12
Jesus dies on the cross.
Reading: Luke 23: 44-46.
Intention: True contrition for our sins.



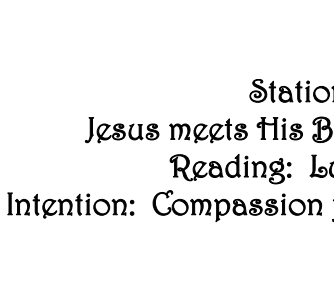
Station 3
Jesus falls the first time.
Reading: Isaiah 50: 6.
Intention: Trust in the Lord.



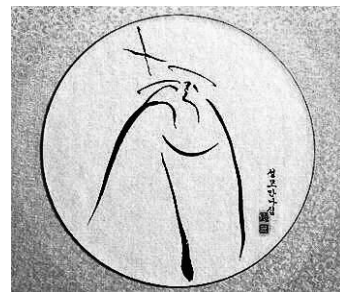
Station 8
Jesus consoles the women of Jerusalem.
Reading: Luke 23: 27-28.
Intention: Consolation for those in mourning.



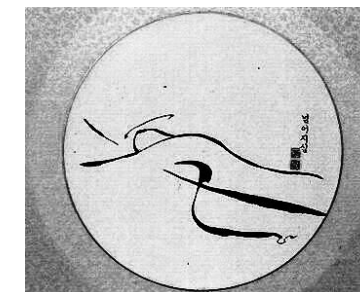
Station 13
Jesus is taken down from the cross.
Reading: Luke 23: 50-53.
Intention: Eternal rest for the faithfully departed.



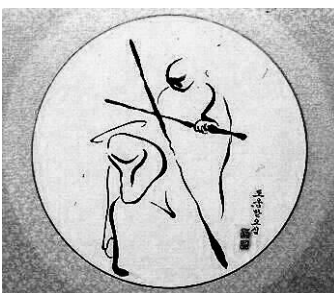
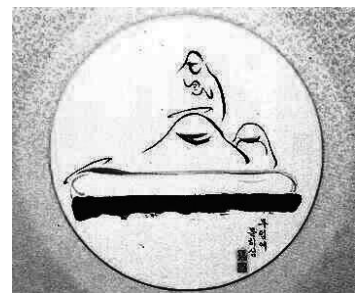
Station 4
Jesus meets his Blessed Mother.
Reading: Luke 2: 35.
Intention: Compassion for those who suffer.



Station 9
Jesus falls the third time.
Reading: Matthew 11: 28-29.
Intention: Perseverance in overcoming our faults.



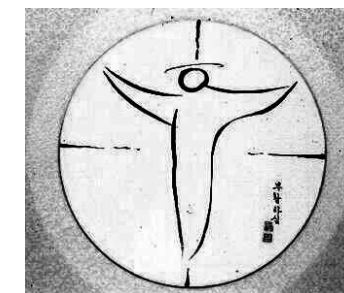
Station 14
Jesus is laid in the tomb.
Reading: Matthew 27: 59-60.
Intention: Hope in the Resurrection.



Station 5
Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus carry his cross.
Reading: Luke 23: 26.
Intention: Strength to do what is right.



Station 10
Jesus is stripped of his garments.
Reading: Matthew 27: 33.
Intention: Purity in body and mind.



Station 15
Jesus is raised from the dead.
Reading: Mark 16: 5-6.
Intention: Believing in the Resurrection.