

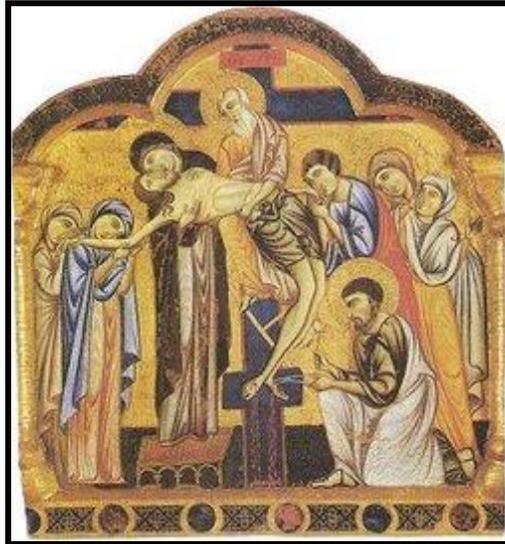
The Stations of the Cross

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The **Stations of the Cross** (or **Way of the Cross**; in Latin, **Via Crucis** or **Via Dolorosa**) refers to the depiction of the final hours (or [Passion](#)) of [Jesus](#), and the [Catholic](#) devotion commemorating the Passion. The tradition also exists liturgically in confessional [Lutheranism](#) but is only done on [Good Friday](#).

The **Stations** themselves are usually a series of 14 pictures or sculptures depicting the following scenes:

1. Jesus is condemned to death
2. The cross is laid upon him
3. His first fall
4. He meets [His Blessed Mother](#)
5. [Simon of Cyrene](#) is made to bear the cross
6. Jesus' face is wiped by [Veronica](#)
7. His second fall
8. He meets the women of [Jerusalem](#)
9. His third fall
10. He is stripped of His garments
11. His [crucifixion](#)
12. His death on the cross
13. The Deposition, His body taken down from the cross, centered upon the agony of Mary
14. His body is laid in the tomb



The Deposition became an important [icon](#) in [Christian](#) imagery, with increase in appeals to emotion from the 11th century onwards



The Stone of the Anointing, believed to be the place where Jesus' body was prepared for burial. It is the 13th Station of the Cross.

Some trace the history of the devotion to the [Blessed Virgin Mary](#) visiting the locations of the Passion in Jerusalem, but most trace the beginning of the specific devotion to Saint [Francis of Assisi](#), or at least to the [Franciscan](#) tradition. Originally, it was specifically connected to visiting the actual sites in Jerusalem, where Jesus suffered and died. As such a [pilgrimage](#) was impossible for many, the stations were erected in the local churches as a way of bringing Jerusalem to the people. The number and names of the stations changed radically at various

times in the history of the devotion, though the current list of fourteen stations is now almost universal.

[Pope John Paul II](#) led an annual public [prayer](#) of the Stations of the Cross at the Roman [Colosseum](#) on Good Friday. Originally, the Pope himself carried the cross from station to station, but in his last years, he presided over the celebration from a stage on the [Palatine Hill](#), while others carried the cross. Just days prior to his death in 2005, Pope John Paul II observed the Stations of the Cross from his private chapel in the [Vatican](#).

Each year a different person is invited to write the meditation texts for the Stations. Past composers of the Papal Stations include several non-Catholics. In many years, the Stations meditated have not corresponded to the traditional list given above, which led some to speculate that the Pope would change the list. However, the Holy Father himself wrote the texts for the [Jubilee](#) year 2000 and used the traditional Stations.

Prayer of the Stations of the Cross is connected with a plenary [indulgence](#) according to the normal conditions of the Church. To achieve the indulgence, the person praying must walk from station to station, meditating on the Passion. There is no requirement that this meditation be of a certain duration, use specific prayers, or indeed, that the meditation correspond to the stations that are depicted. A validly erected set of the Stations of the Cross should be blessed by a Franciscan, and should include a wooden cross at each station. (Images are optional.) The same indulgence is available to those unable to visit the stations by meditating for 30 minutes on the Passion.

The celebration of the Stations of the Cross is especially common on the [Fridays](#) of [Lent](#), and especially Good Friday. Community celebrations are usually accompanied by various songs and prayers. Particularly common as musical accompaniment is the [sequence *Stabat Mater Dolorosa*](#). At the end of each station, the [Adoramus Te](#) is sometimes sung.

Many advocate today the addition of a 15th station, depicting Christ's [Resurrection](#), so as not to end the devotion on a negative note. Others have begun the practice of the [Via Lucis](#) in [Eastertide](#) to meditate on the Resurrection and [Ascension](#) of the Lord.