

Stations of the Cross

The Stations of the Cross refer to the depiction of the final hours of Jesus, and the devotion commemorating the Passion. It is also known as Via Crucis, the Via Dolorosa or Way of Sorrows, or simply, The Way.

History

From as early as the fifth century, the faithful desired to reproduce Jerusalem's holy places in other lands and use these sites as a mini pilgrimage. This practice may be the origin from which the Stations developed. However, 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," or 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 of the Via Dolorosa, for which there have been a number of variant routes in Jerusalem, was probably 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," 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 number of stations varied between eleven and thirty. In 1731, Pope Clement XII set the number at fourteen.

Spiritual Significance

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.

Scriptural Way of the Cross

Out of the fourteen traditional Stations of the Cross, only eight have clear scriptural foundation. Stations 3, 4, 6, 7, and 9 are not specifically mentioned in the gospels. Station 14 seems to reinforce the gospels' record which states that Joseph of Arimathea took Jesus down from the cross and buried him.

The devotion may be conducted personally by the faithful, making their way from one station to another and saying the prayers, or by having an officiating celebrant move from cross to cross while the faithful make the responses. The stations themselves must consist of, at the very least, fourteen wooden crosses. Pictures alone do not suffice.

The Place of the Resurrection in the Stations

Modern say the traditional Stations of the Cross are incomplete without a final scene depicting the empty tomb and/or the resurrection of Jesus, because Jesus' rising from the dead was an integral part of his salvific work on earth.

Advocates of the traditional form of the Stations ending with the body of Jesus being placed in the tomb say the Stations are intended as a meditation on the atoning death of Jesus, and not as a complete picture of his life, death, and resurrection.

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From: The Online Catholic Encyclopedia. For more information on this topic go to:
www.catholic.org/encyclopedia or
<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15569a.htm>

About the Artist

Jordi Bonet

Born: 7 May 1932, Barcelona, Catalonia, Spain

Died: 25 December 1979, Mont-Saint-Hilaire, Quebec

Jordi Bonet was born in Catalonia, Spain. At the age of 7, he fell from a tree, and broke his right arm. When gangrene set in, it had to be amputated at the shoulder.

The world of art became his refuge. His father introduced him to Goya, Gaudi, Picasso and Dali. By 20, he had his own studio and held showings with older Catalan painters.

He began to work in paint, ceramics, and murals. After studying in Barcelona, he settled in Quebec in 1954, where he continued his studies. Over the next twenty years, he created more than a hundred murals in ceramic, cement, bronze, and aluminum across the world, and associated with the likes of Salvador Dalí.

Much of his work was in sacred and liturgical art. He won a place among Quebec's most important artists before his untimely death of leukemia at age 47.

The New York area is privileged to have his work in such diverse locations as the Church of the Holy Family, Our Lady of the Skies Chapel at Kennedy International Airport, a mural at the 1964 New York World's Fair and several works in New York City public schools. (From: *Collection Signatures* by Jacques De Roussan, Ottawa, Canada, Marcel Broquet, Inc., 1986)

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Please view the following links for more information:

<http://www.jordibonet.net/English/IndexEn.htm>

<http://www.metrodemontreal.com/art/bonet/index.html>

<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=A1ART0000865>

LECTIO DIVINA and THE STATIONS OF THE CROSS

Lectio Divina (pronounced "Lec-tsee-oh Di-vee-nah") means "Divine Reading" and refers specifically to a method of Scripture reading practiced by monastics since the early days of the Church. St. Benedict, (453 -480 A.D.), stresses the importance of reading, meditating and then praying about the Scriptures in Chapter 48 of *The Rule of St. Benedict*. □

But it was an 11th century Carthusian Prior named Guigo who formalized Lectio Divina, describing the method in a letter written to a fellow religious. This letter, which has become known as *Scala Paradisi* -- the Stairway to Heaven -- describes a 4-runged ladder to Heaven, each rung being one of the four steps in his method of Scripture reading.

For more information go to: www.fisheaters.com/lectiodivina.html

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*"To get the full flavor of an herb, it must be pressed between the fingers, so it is the same with the Scriptures; the more familiar they become, the more they reveal their hidden treasures and yield their indescribable riches."*

*St. John Chrysostom, A.D. 347-407* □

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**The intention of this meditative workshop** is to utilize the Lectio Divina process as a guide along the path as you meditate on the Stations of the Cross. Take your time thinking about and praying about each of the Stations of the Cross.

You are invited to spend a **full two days** praying and meditating on **each** of the Stations even as you go about your daily tasks. It will take five weeks to complete this exercise.

Keep Sunday as your 'day off' from walking the Via Delarosa with Jesus. Use Sunday as the day to walk with your loved ones and notice if anything has changed **for you** or **about you**. Have you become a little bit more Christ-like?

The following page describes the Lectio Divina 'steps'. Try to follow these four steps, *Scala Paradisi*, as you begin the walk along each of the Stations of the Cross.

(Kathleen Ullmann: Lent 2010)

## **Lectio Divina**

**1. Lectio** – Choose one of the lines from the prayer (or description of the particular Station of the Cross). Read it over slowly at least three times. It is even OK to move your lips as you read. What word or words leaps off the page (or sculpted image), what catches your attention?

**2. Meditatio** – explore whatever thoughts come to you as you sit with your word or words, let your awareness about the word (or image) deepen, get richer.

**3. Oratio** – Let your thoughts and awareness move toward ‘talk time’ with God. This is a time to permit yourself to experience the “groanings of the Spirit” as you adore, petition, and confess in prayer.

**4. Contemplatio** – This is the passive act of being in the presence of God not by active thought but by the act of love. It is a gift, cannot be conjured up, so just wait, in God’s presence.

**5. Incarnation** – (This is not normally taught as a part of Lectio Divina, but is a good additional step). How can I put flesh on the words I have been praying? How can I be the Word made Flesh representative for Christ? How will this word transform me to be in the world as His representative? Consider social action propelled by this Lectio Divina exercise.

### **Suggested Reading on the topic:**

**Casey, Michael. *Sacred Reading: the Ancient Art of Lectio Divina*.  
Ligouri, Missouri. Ligouri/Triumph. 1996.**

(Kathleen Ullmann: Lent 2010)