

Stations of the Cross
(Via Dolorosa; Via Crucis)
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History:

- Rooted in two traditions which resulted in a fruitful tension
 - God is everywhere
 - We do not have to go to a special place to worship Him
 - God is in Warrenton as much as He is in Jerusalem
 - However, God became flesh in a human being in a particular time and place – in the Roman Empire which remains for us to day the Holy Land
 - Some were martyred because they did not worship the holy places appropriately (St. Stephen)
 - Universal religious desire to go on a Pilgrimage
 - Passion narrative of Mark's gospel supposedly rooted in the earliest "stations" – i.e. pilgrims following the way of Christ
 - Rooted in the earliest pilgrims to Jerusalem – pilgrims wanted to remember Jesus (just as we do – we visit graves or our family, memorials in our country commemorating something important or sacred)
- As Christianity moved West it was too far, too expensive and too dangerous for folks to go to Jerusalem
- Stations evolved so anyone / anywhere could make the pilgrimage without leaving home. This started about 200- 300 years after Christ.
- The stations were formalized by the Franciscans in the 1300's.
- Now you will find the stations in every Catholic Church in the world.

Liturgy and the Catholic Church

- Stations are a liturgy of remembrance
- Signs and symbols – are important in Catholic Church – simple signs or symbols which point to a deeper mystery and meaning – bread (life -- body) and wine (joy – blood)) of Eucharist; white garment of baptism (putting on Christ; cleansed of sin)

Purpose of Stations:

- So what is the purpose of the Stations – not just an interesting intellectual remembering of some historical events
- It is a prayerful, reflective time
- Recalls the most important fact about the Christian faith – that Jesus died for us – thus bringing us salvation
- Commemorates Jesus suffering and death; it is not a romanticizing of Christ's suffering
- Time to reflect on how our sins contribute to his suffering not only in the past but in those where Jesus is found today –our church teaches He is found in the excluded in our society, our families, our world – poor, hungry, homeless, handicapped – anyone who is excluded or on the periphery
- It is a time to ask for forgiveness
- Time to reflect on the suffering Jesus endured for us – and WHAT INCREDIBLE LOVE HE HAS FOR US

What is the devotion?

- 14 stations traditionally – has been as few as 7 and as many as 15
- Because the death of Jesus took place for one reason – His resurrection
- So it is common to have the 15th station which is the resurrection
- Many different versions – traditional, to orientation toward the excluded, to stations for women, etc.
- May sit, stand, kneel, etc. In other settings ... large churches, outdoors, etc.

So how should we feel / understand at the end?

- Great sacrifice Jesus made for us
- Experience God's mercy
- Experience love of God – which is beyond understanding
- Understand our complicity in the past and now in His suffering – wherever He is found
- Gratitude for the gift of salvation

Prayerful and reflective – let's take 30 – 60 seconds to reflect and prepare ourselves to walk the way of the cross.