

Stations of The Cross

Overview

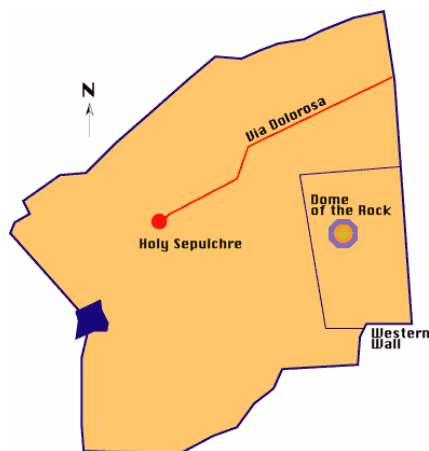
Stations of the Cross are also called Way of the Cross, Via Crucis, and Via Dolorosa. These names are used to signify a series of pictures or tableaux representing certain scenes in the Passion of Christ, each corresponding to a particular incident, or the special form of devotion connected with such representations. This devotion has its roots from the very early church as pilgrims traced the last steps of Jesus in Jerusalem.

Purpose of this devotion

The object of the Stations is to help the faithful to make in spirit, as it were, a pilgrimage to the chief scenes of Christ's sufferings and death, and this has become one of the most popular of Catholic devotions. It is carried out by passing from Station to Station, with certain prayers at each and devout meditation on the various incidents in turn. It is very usual, when the devotion is performed publicly, to sing a song while passing from one Station to the next.

History of the stations

A desire to reproduce the holy places in other lands, in order to satisfy the devotion of those who were hindered from making the actual pilgrimage, seems to have manifested itself at quite an early date. At the monastery of San Stefano at Bologna a group of connected chapels were constructed as early as the fifth century, by St. Petronius, Bishop of Bologna, which were intended to represent the more important



shrines of Jerusalem. These may perhaps be regarded as the germ from which the Stations afterwards developed, though it is certain that nothing that we have before about the fifteenth century can strictly be called a Way of the Cross in the modern sense

Taken in the former sense, the Stations may be of stone, wood, or metal, sculptured or carved, or they may be merely paintings or engravings. They are usually arranged 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. 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.

Originally, their number varied considerably in different places but authority now prescribes fourteen. As will be seen, one can find prophetic sources for the stations in the Old Testament – particularly in the Psalms and Isaiah. They are as follows:

1. *Jesus is condemned to death*
2. *Jesus carries His cross*
3. *Jesus falls the first time*
4. *Jesus meets His mother*
5. *Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus to carry His cross*
6. *Veronica wipes the face of Jesus*
7. *Jesus falls the second time*
8. *Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem*
9. *Jesus falls for the third time*
10. *Jesus is stripped of His clothes*
11. *Jesus is nailed to the cross*
12. *Jesus dies on the cross*
13. *The body of Jesus is taken down from the cross*
14. *Jesus is laid in the tomb*
15. *The Resurrection of Jesus - often called the 15th Station*