

Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults
The RCIA Process

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Mystagogy And Beyond

The Stations Of The Cross

The RCIA Process

In our faith we have a very strong history of unfolding traditional practices such as praying through the Stations of the Cross. In many cases these practices evolve into a modified version of the original.

The practice of praying the “way of the cross” or “Via Dolorosa” has been a part of Christianity since the very early centuries. However late in the eleventh century the Moslems took power over the Holy Land, which consequently made pilgrimages to this area treacherous.

The way of the cross was the journey along the road on which Jesus was lead to His crucifixion; many people come to the Holy Land to take part in this practice. The most popular time to do this is during Lent, in the four weeks leading up to Easter. People, who take part in this tradition, walk along this road and stop along the way to recall the suffering and agony Jesus endured for our salvation.

Since the Christians of the eleventh century and later found travel to the Holy Land difficult, they devised ways to make this tradition remain a part of their faith and lives at home. Many communities erected crosses or pictures in buildings or coves that were cut out of wilderness areas so that they could walk along the way of the cross. In the early centuries of this practice, many of the people were illiterate and pictorial depictions of this custom were drawn or painted for these Christians to view. The idea spread also to depicting parts of Jesus life as a child and adult, such as the mysteries that we use when praying the rosary. Many of these stories ended up on stained glass windows of the church’s being attended; this practice is still in use now in the twentieth century. The areas such as the coves or small buildings where they would stop to meditate on the passion and suffering of Jesus along the way became known as “Stations of the Cross” because they would stop at each station to pray. Some of the art work over the centuries has been very explicit and intensely depicted, the first stations of the cross contained 150 stations, which has decreased in number over the span of time to the 14 stations which we now use for meditation. Some communities add one more station to this number for the resurrection of Jesus.

The Franciscan Order was widely known for their devotion to the Stations of the Cross, and for helping to convey the message that you don't have to travel over the miles to do what can be accomplished in our parish church. The way of the cross has become a popular Lenten tradition and practice for many denominations. The priest or pastor goes from station to station and recites a small description of the station and then says a prayer, to which we make a prayerful response concerning the pain and suffering Jesus endured for us. The Stations of the Cross are as follows:

How To Pray The Stations Of The Cross

<i>1. Jesus is condemned to death</i>	<i>8. Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem</i>
<i>2. Jesus takes up His cross</i>	<i>9. Jesus falls for the third time</i>
<i>3. Jesus falls for the first time</i>	<i>10. Jesus is stripped of his clothing</i>
<i>4. Jesus meets Mary</i>	<i>11. Jesus is nailed to the cross</i>
<i>5. Simon is forced to carry Jesus' cross</i>	<i>12. Jesus dies on the cross</i>
<i>6. Veronica wipes the face of Jesus</i>	<i>13. Jesus is taken off the cross</i>
<i>7. Jesus falls a second time</i>	<i>14. Jesus is laid in the tomb</i>
	<i>15. The Resurrection of Jesus</i>

The presider opens with a prayer, and we all respond, "Amen". The presider now moves with an altar server or acolyte to the first station of the cross, the acolyte carries the cross to each station. The presider reads the accompanying scripture and prayer, then we respond in whatever manner is prescribed for this form of meditation. We then genuflect and reflect on the station in silence for a few moments. The presider leads us through each station and prayer, then at the end; he/she says the final

prayer and blessing. There may be a hymn at the end or a silent meditation, then often during Lent, the sacrament of Reconciliation is offered. If this sacrament will be offered, the final prayer will include the invitation to reconcile.

One last interesting note, each station must contain a cross (the acolyte carrying the cross is a way to make sure this is attained). The church does not approve a pictorial depiction. The stations must also be erected and blessed by the proper Church authority.

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