



## STATIONS OF THE CROSS

"Making the Stations of the Cross" is a powerful way to contemplate, and enter into, the mystery of Jesus' gift of himself to us. It takes the reflection on the passion out of my head, and makes it an imaginative exercise. It involves my senses, my experience and my emotions. To the extent I come to experience the love of Jesus for me, to that extent the gratitude I feel will be deep. Deep gratitude leads to real generosity and a desire to love as I have been loved.

### The History:

From the earliest of days, followers of Jesus told the story of his passion, death and resurrection. When pilgrims came to see Jerusalem, they were anxious to see the sites where Jesus was. These sites become important holy connections with Jesus. Eventually, following in the footsteps of the Lord, along the way of the cross, became a part of the pilgrimage visit. The stations, as we know them today, came about when it was no longer easy or even possible to visit the holy sites. In the 1500's, villages all over Europe started creating "replicas" of the way of the cross, with small shrines commemorating the places along the route in Jerusalem. Eventually, these shrines became the set of 14 stations we now know and were placed in almost every Catholic Church and many other churches in the world.

### The Experience:

**This is prayer.** It isn't an intellectual exercise. This is an invitation to enter into a gifted faith experience of who Jesus is for me. It becomes prayer when I open my heart to be touched, and it leads me to express my response in prayer.

**This is an imaginative exercise.** Its purpose is not a historical examination of "what really happened" on that day in history. It's about something far more profound. This is an opportunity to use this long standing Christian prayer to let Jesus touch my heart deeply by showing me the depth of his love for me. These exercises can allow me to imaginatively visualize the "meaning" of his passion and death.

The point of **this exercise is to lead us to gratitude.** It will also lead us into **a sense of solidarity** with all our brothers and sisters. In our busy, high tech lives we can easily get out of touch with the terrible suffering of real people in our world. Journeying with Jesus in the Stations, allows us to imagine his entry into the experience of those who are tortured, unjustly accused or victimized, sitting on death row, carrying impossible burdens, facing terminal illnesses, or simply fatigued with life.

This can be as personal as you'd like it to be. We are not alone. The Good News is that Jesus entered into our life's experience completely - even suffering and death - and that he fell into the hands of a Loving God, who raised him from death to life. We can have complete hope that suffering and death have no complete hold on us. We will all share eternal life with him, if we can fall into the hands of the same Loving God. And, along the way, we are not alone. Jesus is with us as one who knows our suffering, and the death we face. So try the stations, and experience the consolation they offer. And return often, to be renewed in this intimate experience of Jesus' solidarity with all humanity in our way of the cross each day.

### How to:

Simply go from one station to the next. "Arrive" at a station by looking carefully at the image itself. See who is in the scene & what the artist is trying to tell us about the drama there.

The text will offer

1. a simple description of the scene
2. the traditional prayer
3. a guided reflection on the power of the scene
4. my own response