

From ST. JAMES SPIRITUAL GROWTH and LITURGY COMMITTEE

An explanation of the history and meaning of the Stations of the Cross

The Stations of the Cross

“Of all the pious exercises connected with the veneration of the Cross, none is more popular among the faithful than the *Via Crucis*.” Through this pious exercise, the faithful movingly follow the final earthly journey of Christ: from the Mount of Olives, where the Lord, in a place called Gethsemane (Mk 14, 32), was taken by anguish (cf. Lk 22, 44), to Calvary where he was crucified between two thieves (cf. Lk 23, 33), to the garden where he was placed in a freshly hewn tomb (John 19, 40-42).” (131)

With its origin in medieval processions between Churches commemorating the various stages of the *via dolorosa*, the Stations of the Cross is itself a sort of pilgrimage to the land of “the dolorous journey of Christ.” (132) The stations have taken on various forms, but always conclude “in such fashion as to leave the faithful with a sense of expectation of the resurrection in faith and hope.” (135) Since the middle of the seventeenth century, this devotion has consisted of fourteen stations, and is indulgenced by the Holy See. To this end, some modern stations, however, have even included an additional “fifteenth station” meditating on the Resurrection of the Lord, sometimes in the reserved Eucharist.