

THE STATIONS OF THE CROSS

The Stations of the Cross have formed part of Christian devotion during Lent for many centuries - they provide a way for us to engage actively with the path of suffering walked by Jesus. They originated when early Christians visited Jerusalem and wanted to follow literally in the footsteps of Jesus, tracing the path from Pilate's house to Calvary. They would pause for prayer and devotion at various points. Eventually those pilgrims brought the practice back to their home countries and ever since then Christians of differing traditions have used this form of devotion.

In the late 14th century, the Franciscans were given the responsibility for the holy places of Jerusalem; they erected tableaux to aid the devotion of the visitors. Images of this nature are now found in churches all over the world.

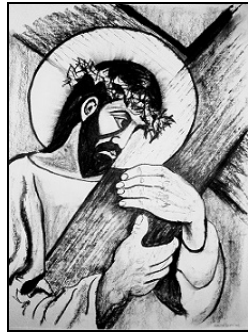
The number of stations has varied through the centuries from as few as 5 to as many as 36, but the now traditional number of 14 was established by Pope Clement XII in 1731 - nine scriptural stations and a further five based on popular devotion. In recent years there have been a number of variations in these 14, particularly to focus on wholly scriptural derivations. These tend to widen the scope of the depiction of the Way of the Cross to start at Gethsemane and include events at the Trial. Some churches include a 15th Station - The Resurrection.

The stations, as displayed in churches, act as a focus for personal prayer and as part of a liturgical celebration. In this latter context they have been used either as a whole service in themselves, or a few of the stations have been used in the context of a larger liturgical celebration.

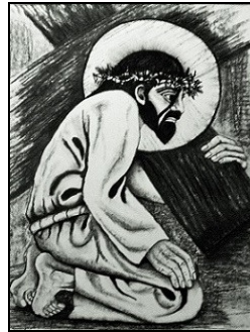
The stations displayed during Lent in St. Michael's are ...



I Jesus is condemned to death



II Jesus takes up the cross



III Jesus falls for the first time



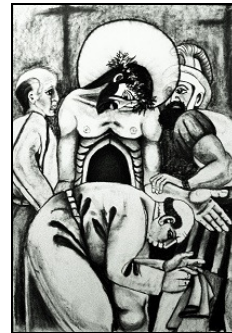
IV Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem



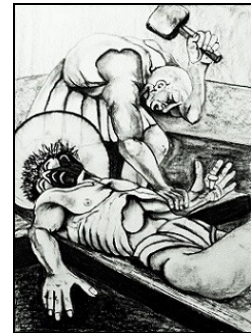
V Jesus falls for the second time



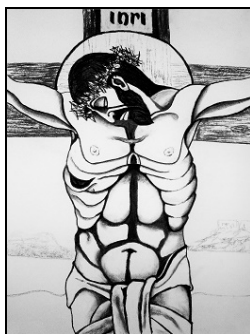
VI Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus to carry the cross



VII Jesus is stripped of his garments



VIII Jesus is nailed to the cross



IX Jesus dies upon the cross



X Jesus is taken down from the cross



XI Jesus is laid in the tomb

The drawings for each station are the work of Pat Rozental, a member of the congregation at St. Michael's. It was an ambition of hers for many years to produce a suite of works for the Stations of the Cross that conveyed a sense of the emotional power of the Passion of Christ, so when the Rector of St. Michael's invited her to do just that for display in the Church, she was most eager to take up the opportunity. Pat writes as follows ..

"The body of Jesus is a combination of two models I draw in a weekly life class, and I drew him with cavernous hands, as though we could walk or crawl into him – a refuge for us in his suffering and pain.

I felt it was important to give Jesus large hands, after all he was a carpenter, and he holds the whole world in them! Indeed in number 4 his hand actually comes over the cross and through his halo.

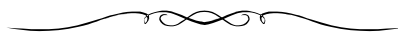
Simon of Cyrene's hands are huge, coming to the aid of a small, exhausted, beat-up Jesus.

With the other characters in the 'Greatest Story' I wanted them to reference the gargoyles in church and for the texture of their skin to reflect the formal quality of the stone.

Mary and the other women of Jerusalem are grief-stricken, Pilate is a fat Roman, and the man nailing Jesus to the cross is revolting, clearly enjoying his job.

My drawings, executed in charcoal, are a representation of violence and suffering brought to bear upon a single human figure. This is the Son of God, but also represents the son of man and is a response to human cruelty and the abuse of power that is most evident in the actions of repressive political and governmental regimes today. I feel we should be affected by them, they should make us feel angry, humble, complicit and pained."

Pat's drawings are displayed in St. Michael's Church throughout Lent.
There is a special Service at St. Michael's, of Prayer, Reflection and Readings,
usually in Holy Week, this year on Good Friday, 15th April, at 2.00 pm.



Almighty and everlasting God,
who in your tender love towards the human race
sent your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ
to take upon him our flesh
and to suffer death upon the cross:
grant that we may follow the example of his patience and humility,
and also be made partakers of his resurrection;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,
because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.