

St. Francis of Assisi Faith News

April 2017



What Are the Stations of the Cross?

The Stations of the Cross are a 14-step Catholic devotion that commemorates Jesus Christ's last day on Earth as a man. The 14 devotions, or stations, focus on specific events of His last day, beginning with His condemnation. The stations are commonly used as a mini pilgrimage as the individual moves from station to station. At each station, the individual recalls and meditates on a specific event from Christ's last day. Specific prayers are recited, and then the individual moves to the next station until all 14 are complete.

The Stations of the Cross are commonly found in churches as a series of 14 small icons or images. They can also appear in churchyards arranged along paths. The stations are most commonly prayed during Lent on Wednesdays and Fridays, and especially on Good Friday, the day of the year upon which the events actually occurred.

1st Station: Jesus is condemned to death

2nd Station: Jesus carries His cross

3rd Station: Jesus falls the first time

4th Station: Jesus meets his mother

5th Station: Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus to carry his cross

6th Station: Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

7th Station: Jesus falls the second time

8th Station: Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem

9th Station: Jesus falls a third time

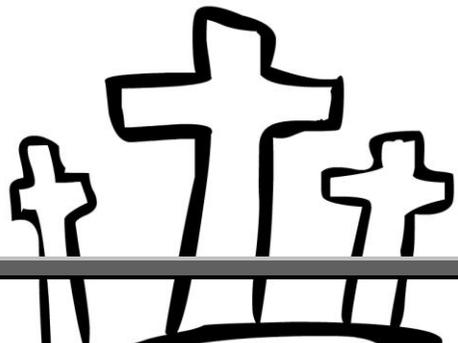
10th Station: Jesus clothes are taken away

11th Station: Jesus is nailed to the cross

12th Station: Jesus dies on the cross

13th Station: The body of Jesus is taken down from the cross

14th Station: Jesus is laid in the tomb



Saint of the Month: St. Bernadette



St. Bernadette was born in Lourdes, France on January 7, 1844. Her parents were very poor and she was the first of nine children. She was baptized at St. Pierre's, the local parish church, on January 9. As a toddler, Bernadette contracted cholera and suffered extreme asthma. Unfortunately, she lived the rest of her life in poor health.

On Thursday, February 11, 1858, fourteen-year-old Bernadette was sent with her younger sister and a friend to gather firewood, when a very beautiful lady appeared to her above a rose bush in a grotto called Massabielle (Tuta de Massavielha).

The woman wore blue and white and smiled at Bernadette before making the sign of the cross with a rosary of ivory and gold. Bernadette fell to her knees, took out her own rosary and began to pray. Bernadette later described the woman as "uo petito damizelo," meaning "a small young lady. Though her sister and friend claimed they were unable to see her, Bernadette knew what she saw was real.

Three days later, Bernadette, her sister Marie, and other girls returned to the grotto, where Bernadette immediately knelt, saying she could see "aquero" again. She fell into a trance, one girl threw holy water at the niche, and another threw a rock that shattered on the ground. It was then that the apparition disappeared.

On February 18, Bernadette said "the vision" asked her to return to the grotto each day for a fortnight. With each visit, Bernadette saw the Virgin Mary and the period of daily visions became known as "la Quinzaine sacrée," meaning "holy fortnight." When Bernadette began to visit the grotto, her parents were embarrassed and attempted to stop her, but were unable to do so. On February 25, Bernadette claimed to have had a life-changing vision.

The vision had told her "to drink of the water of the spring, to wash in it and to eat the herb that grew there" as an act of penance. The next day, the grotto's muddy waters had been cleared and fresh clear water flowed. On March 2, at the thirteenth of the apparitions, Bernadette told her family the lady said "a chapel should be built and a procession formed."

During her sixteenth vision, which Bernadette claims to have experienced for over an hour, was on March 25. Bernadette claimed she had asked the woman her name, but her question was only met with a smile. Bernadette asked again, three more times, and finally the woman said, "I am the Immaculate Conception."

Holy Week and Easter Activities for the Whole Family

Preschool Activity

Retell and celebrate the Resurrection story with your child by creating a preschool version of "Resurrection eggs." Gather six plastic eggs, each a different color. Place the following items inside, one item per egg: breadcrumb, paper cross, strip of cloth, rock and piece of candy. One egg will remain empty. As you tell the Resurrection story, let your child open the eggs. Explain each item in the following order:

1. Bread crumb: Jesus ate dinner with His friends. (Luke22:14-15)
2. Cross: The next day, Jesus died on the Cross. (John19:17-18)
3. Strip of cloth: He was wrapped in cloth and placed in a tomb.
(John 19:40)
4. Rock: A stone was placed in front of the tomb. (Matthew27:59-60)
5. Empty egg: Jesus' friends came to the tomb and saw the stone had been moved. The tomb was empty! (Luke 24:1-3)
6. Candy: Jesus is alive. That's the sweet surprise of Easter. (Matthew 28:5-6)

Once you've finished sharing the Resurrection story with your child, encourage her to use the eggs to tell the story in her own words.

—Becky Baudouin

School-age Activity

Use this activity to help your kids understand that Christ's resurrection means that we can have eternal life!

Lay a skein of yarn on a table and pull 2 inches of yarn from one end. Ask your child to slowly pull on this piece, and when she has pulled out about an arm's length of yarn, snip it off with scissors. Tell your kids that this piece of yarn has a beginning and an end, just like our lives here on earth.

Take the snipped piece of yarn and tie it back onto the skein, explaining that, through Christ, we are free to live with God forever. When Jesus died and rose again, He gave us eternal life. Although our time on earth will come to an end,

our life with God will go on and on forever. Celebrate the power of the Resurrection by allowing your kids to pull freely on the piece of yarn and run with it as it unravels from the skein. Let them run out of the room! Up the stairs!

Pray together, thanking God for sending His Son and welcoming us into eternal life with Him.

—Vance Fry

Tween Activity

To teach your tweens about the forgiving power of Christ's resurrection, try this activity. First, put on an old, white T-shirt. Then discuss what sin is by asking your tweens to share some examples, such as lying or envy. Invite them to use permanent markers to write their examples on the shirt.

Explain that our sins create a rift in our relationship with God and keep us from experiencing His love. To be reconciled with God, we need to get rid of the sin that separates us. Ask for ideas on how to remove the marker stains from the shirt. If the kids suggest washing it, try scrubbing it in the sink. Let them see that the stains are permanent. Also note how the "sins" can't be hidden, even if the shirt is turned inside out.

Ask: "If we can't remove our own sin, who can help us?" Guide your tweens toward understanding that only Jesus, through His death and resurrection, has the power to get rid of our sins. Take the old, dirty shirt and place it in a trash bag near a Bible or a cross, where you've also set anew, clean white shirt. As you put on the clean shirt, talk about how Christ takes away our sin and gives us His righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:21).

—Jeannie Vogel

Time with Your Teen

The thrill of driving, the freedom to ignore homework, the delight of staying on the computer all night long—teens love to assert their independence. They hold tight to a "my way is the best way" attitude that influences the choices they make during these formative years. Sometimes that attitude protects them from peer pressure; other times it drives them to settle for less than God's best.

Could the power of the Resurrection and the hope of eternity actually make a difference for a teen who is torn between choosing God's will and doing his own thing?

As parents, we get to be the voice reminding teens that pleasing Christ is better than pleasing self. Living with an eternal perspective can help them see that the joy of living forever in God's presence far outweighs the momentary satisfaction of getting their own way.

The same power that raised Christ from the dead is available to strengthen our teens to make wise choices today (Romans 8:11-14). Ask your teen about choices she's watched her friends make that were not pleasing to God. Were there any disappointing consequences? Ask your teen if his friends have shared stories about decisions they regret. Share honestly about your own teenage choices to either choose God's best or have things your way.

Now remind your teen that God has provided all she needs to live a life pleasing to Him—both now and forever (2 Peter 1:3). Encourage your teen to trust God for the strength to do His will, and pray that the hope of eternity will empower her to choose wisely (Colossians 1:10-12).

Parents' Prayer for their Children

O God the Father of mankind, who hast given unto me these my children, and committed them to my charge to bring them up for Thee, and to prepare them for eternal life: help me with Thy heavenly grace, that I may be able to fulfil this most sacred duty and stewardship. Teach me both what to give and what to withhold; when to reprove and when to forbear; make me to be gentle, yet firm; considerate and watchful; and deliver me equally from the weakness of indulgence, and the excess of severity; and grant that, both by word and example, I may be careful to lead them in the ways of wisdom and true piety, so that at last I may, with them, be admitted to the unspeakable joys of our true home in heaven, in the company of the blessed Angels and Saints. Amen.

“The greatest love story of all time is contained in a tiny white host.”

~Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen