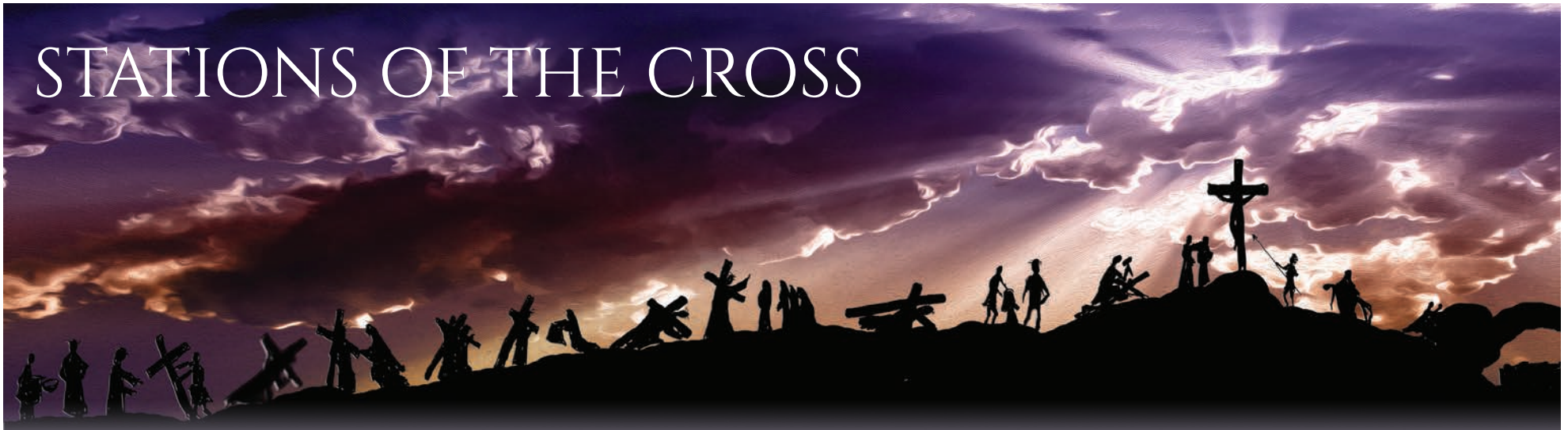


# STATIONS OF THE CROSS



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During Lent, there is, perhaps, no devotion more popular than the Stations of the Cross. This devotion finds its roots with the Franciscans who helped rebuild the sites of the Holy Land following destruction during the medieval crusades. Originally appealing to pilgrims in Jerusalem who journeyed along Christ's way to Calvary, the enduring relevance of the Stations of the Cross in the Christian life caused the devotion to spread. Today, it's a rare parish church or complex that does not contain the Stations of the Cross. As we meditate on Christ's passion and death, we are given the opportunity to join our sufferings to Christ. Christ's passion is the model of what true love is all about. The Stations of the Cross provide the opportunity to meditate on the self-sacrificial foundation of love that Christ reveals to us.

## A spiritual plan

Each of us should take advantage of the spiritual opportunities presented by the season of Lent. There is ample opportunity for spiritual growth, if only we commit to making it happen.

In order to be effective in Lenten observances, it might be advantageous to have a plan. There are many suggestions put forth for consideration, or you may make up your own. One plan to make your Lent more spiritually engaging and profitable might be our L-E-N-T Plan.

## Lectionary

— We must be grounded in the Word of God.

You cannot expect to grow in your relationship with God without letting him speak to you. If you do not make it a habit to prepare for Sunday Mass by looking at the readings ahead of time, Lent is a great time to start. The readings from Mass are collected in a book called the Lectionary.

Take a few minutes each day to take a look at the readings for the Sunday ahead and meditate on them in prayer. What is the Lord telling you? What can we learn from the Lord to be the people he made us to be? Or, perhaps you can find different ways to enhance such an experience if you pray with the Sunday readings already.

## Extra time in prayer

— Build your relationship with God.

You cannot grow in your relationship with God unless you make the time to speak with him and give him praise. Each of us can find more time to spend with the Lord in conversation and adoration. Consider what you can add to your daily or weekly prayer life during Lent. Perhaps attend Mass an additional day or even each weekday of Lent. Perhaps make it a point to attend devotional or formational opportunities in your parish like a Bible study or the Stations of the Cross. Or commit to individual prayer time at home, on the way to or from work or in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament.

## Say "No" to yourself

— Focus on God and others.

The central theme put before us in Lent draws us toward a focus on Christ's passion and death. Through that prism we find the foundation for our Lenten observances. Through them we seek to love God and others above ourselves — to follow Christ's model of self-sacrificial love that stirs our hearts to abandon ourselves in imitation of his illumination of love's greatest action. Lent is a great opportunity for us to say "no" to a variety of things. That's the fundamental point of prayer, fasting and almsgiving. We say "no" to ourselves and "yes" to love of God and others. Lent is a good time to identify opportunities for us to increase our service to our neighbor by offering more of our time, talent and treasure to their benefit.

## Turn away from sin

— Recommit to the Gospel.

"Repent, and believe in the Gospel" is one of the two formulas the Church provides for the minister to recite when distributing ashes on Ash Wednesday. Taking this as something of a motto for Lent can lead us into a deeper awareness of our sinfulness and its consequences and our desire to recommit to the Gospel each day. We need to make time to examine our consciences and reflect on our thoughts, words and deeds. When we sin we should not just be upset with the consequences, although that is an important aspect of the heart that desires conversion and repentance. We should also be filled with a sense of sorrow because our sins themselves reject the love that God freely gives us. Lent can be an opportunity for us to acknowledge our sins before God and receive his reconciliation — which always will make us more aware of how our sin affects our relations with God and neighbor and fill us with a resolve to avoid it again because we experience again God's love we rejected by our sin.



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