

### January 2019: The Stations of the Cross

We continue our journey through the Walsingham weekend with a reflection on our first devotion on Saturday morning, the Stations of the Cross.

The word “station” means a stopping point - which is why the railway announcement that “our next station stopping point will be ...” is unnecessarily repetitive! The Stations of the Cross are points along the journey of Jesus from his condemnation by Pontius Pilate to his being laid in the tomb. The “stations” made have varied over the centuries since they became popular in the middle ages, but the traditional pattern is:

- 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 is stripped of his garments
- 11th Station: Jesus is nailed to the cross
- 12th Station: Jesus dies on the cross
- 13th Station: Jesus is taken down from the cross
- 14th Station: Jesus is laid in the tomb

The “Stations” originated in attempts by pilgrims to follow Jesus’ last earthly journey through the streets of Jerusalem (the *Via Dolorosa*), but were eventually adapted to enable those unable (or unwilling) to go to the holy places themselves to imagine themselves there. Many churches (including St Faith’s) have a “way of the cross” marked out with images representing the traditional stopping points. This is to enable us (either in groups or individually) to travel in imagination with Jesus on his own last journey, and - even more importantly - to make that journey our own.

Jesus himself had told his first disciples to “*take up your cross and follow me.*” In the years that followed, the idea of replicating Christ’s sufferings in one’s own life became an important feature of Christian life. The idea was that as God had sent Jesus to save us, we are saved by being united with Jesus in his life, death and resurrection. And so being with Jesus in his agony came to be seen as one of the most intimate ways by which we could identify with him.

The point of the exercise is not primarily to think about long past events or even to sympathise with Jesus in his sufferings (though both may be useful parts of our devotion) but rather to carry our own cross with him.

*Beloved, if you can have some share in the sufferings of Christ, be glad, because you will enjoy a much greater gladness when his glory is revealed. It is a blessing for you when they insult you for bearing the name of Christ, because it means that you have the Spirit of glory, the Spirit of God resting on you. (1 Peter 4:13-14)*