

enthusiasm of Franciscans such as St Leonard (1676-1751) who erected some 600 sets in Italy. In 1731, Pope Clement XII permitted and encouraged stations to be erected inside churches generally, but still on condition that a Franciscan friar had to erect them, with the consent of the local bishop. He stipulated that the number of stations was to be fixed at 14. It was as late as 1857 that the bishops in England were first allowed to erect the stations without a Franciscan priest. In 1862 this right was extended to bishops throughout the church. Thus the Stations evolved over many centuries until they crystallised in their present form. Their early evolution was recently described by Carmen Butcher in this way: *“From the first surviving narrative by the anonymous early fourth century Pilgrim of Bordeaux to the famous travelogue-memoir dictated by fifteenth century Margery Kempe, Holy Land pilgrimages make fascinating reading, but not all aspiring pilgrims could manage this arduous, costly trip; therefore, pictures or sculptures representing stages of Christ’s journey to the cross were erected in or near local churches or other public venues, and medieval practitioners of the stations increased. Starting in the fifteenth century, open-air Via Dolorosa processions occurred throughout Europe, made concrete by measuring actual distances in Jerusalem and setting up memorials at relevant spots. ...”*

**-Stephen S.**

**Entrance Antiphon: When he calls on me, I will answer him; I will deliver him and give him glory, I will grant him length of days.**

**First Reading: Genesis 9 8-15**

**Responsorial Psalm: 24 Response: Yours ways, Lord, are faithfulness and love for those who keep your covenant.**

**Second Reading: 1 Peter 3 18-22**

**Gospel Acclamation: Praise to you, O Christ, king of eternal glory! Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God. Praise to you, O Christ, king of eternal glory!**

**Gospel: Mark 1:1-12**

**Memorial Acclamation: Save us, Saviour of the world, for by your Cross and Resurrection you have set us free.**

**Communion Antiphon: One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.**



## **First Sunday of Lent, Cycle B, 2024 Weekly Reflection: The Stations of the Cross (1): A historical overview:**

Tradition held that Our Lady set up stone markers at her home outside Jerusalem so that the Passion could be retraced in prayer and that she daily visited the scenes

of the Passion. However, the origin of the Stations is shrouded in mystery. After Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire under Constantine, the Way of the Cross was marked out in Jerusalem. Early Christian pilgrims to Jerusalem were desirous of retracing the Via Dolorosa which Christ trod beneath the weight of His cross towards His crucifixion, death and entombment. St Jerome (342-420 AD) tells of crowds of pilgrims following its route. Then in the 5<sup>th</sup> century a practice began of reproducing the holy places locally, so that pilgrims who could not travel to Jerusalem could partake in devotion inspired by them. For example, St Petronius, Bishop of Bologna, built chapels in the monastery of Santo Stefano reflecting important Holy Land shrines, including some which would become Stations of the Cross. In 1187 Jerusalem fell to Muslim rule. Some 40 years later Franciscans were allowed back into the Holy Land. In 1342 Pope Clement VI officially appointed them custodians of the holy places, with a duty to promote devotion there. The first historical mention of the word ‘Station’ was by William Wey, a 15<sup>th</sup> century English pilgrim. He described the practice of pilgrims following the way from Pilate’s house to Golgotha. During the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, seemingly inspired at least in part by Muslim restrictions on Christian worship in Jerusalem, reproductions of the Stations were constructed in shrines elsewhere in Europe, eg, in Cordoba, Messina, Nuremberg and Leuven. The number of Stations originally observed in Jerusalem was much smaller than 14. The early set of seven scenes was usually numbers 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 11 and 14 from the modern list. William Wey refers to 14 stations, but only 5 corresponding to our own. Over time the number of Stations varied between 5 to 30 plus. In 1686 Pope Innocent XI gave Franciscans the right to put up Stations in their churches, recognising the continuing serious restrictions imposed by the Muslims on Christians visiting Jerusalem. The devotion of the Stations was spread by the