

April 3, 2020

The Stations of the Cross are traditional Catholic devotions that are typically prayed on Friday's in Lent. When I was young it was very, very important and popular with people of all ages.

Like all good prayer devotionals in had an inner rhythm, predictability, and synchronized movement with music typically, The Stabat Mater. The Stabat Mater means the "mother standing there," implying that Mary is following her son on the route to his death on Calvary.

The actual "stations" were variously, places in the city of Jerusalem created as if they were the actual places where the events portrayed happened, which is a stretch to me, but no matter, or words that create a "place" to give pause on the real or imagined sequence of events in the suffering and death of Jesus as we find it in the Gospels.

What developed as an industry in the 20<sup>th</sup> century were all kinds of books, films, shrines, and "expert medical speakers" to give all of the details involved in the physical suffering of Jesus and by extension, Mary.

Please take note that the New testament scrupulously avoids that kind of stuff because that wasn't the point. The passion and death of Jesus is recorded in a very sparse manner with little technical concern because the lesson to learn was not about the suffering of Jesus but the suffering that is a part, I would say essential part of being a mature disciple who knows that despite all evidence to the contrary, the Good News is at hand.

That is why the Stations of the Cross devotion follows less than 24 hours in the life of Jesus.

My wonderful neighbor, a woman named Hope, lost her daughter this week, she died at MCH not of the virus, but as the result of a freak complication of a very ordinary medical test. She was in an induced coma on a ventilator for days, I think over a week, and because of the virus, my neighbor, her mother, could not see her before she died, as far as I know, no one could.

If you pray the Stations of the Cross, remember that they are not about the sufferings of either Jesus or Mary alone. Jesus and Mary had less than 24 hours of suffering. My neighbor and millions of other people on this earth in these days are suffering apart, alone, and in some cases abandoned.

The Stations sometimes include a 15<sup>th</sup> station, the Resurrection. That is the goal of that devotion to awaken us to the resurrection that sustains and carries love beyond suffering and death.

***PS Almost a year ago the last choral piece sung in Notre Dame in Paris, the offertory song, was the Stabat Mater, not the version that I am familiar with, but a beautiful and moving meditation in these times. Google Notre Dame Paris Stabat Mater.***