



# STATIONS OF THE CROSS

St. John/Isidore

"The pious exercise of the Way of the Cross represents the sorrowful journey that Jesus Christ made with the cross on His shoulders, to die on Calvary for the love of us. We should, therefore, practice this devotion with the greatest possible fervor, placing ourselves in spirit beside our Savior as He walked this sorrowful way, uniting our tears with His, and offering to Him both our compassion and our gratitude" (St. Alphonsus Liguori, 1761).

Over the course of the six weeks of Lent, it might be spiritually beneficial to actively reflect on the Stations of the Cross and engage in the devotion. One approach for reflecting is to follow thematic pattern, which is what I intend to apply in my personal reflections in the coming weeks. For instance, in the stations, in the traditional form, we identify the Fall, the role of Mary as a mother, the role of women, etc.

## JESUS FALLS THREE TIMES UNDER THE WOOD OF THE CROSS



I have been thinking of why Jesus fell three times and what that means for us, his followers. Scholars have hinted that the distance from Pilate's praetorium to calvary was less than a mile. But Jesus fell three times on the way under the wood of the cross before reaching the place of execution. Why the fall? Is it merely because he was exhausted? Could he have just fallen once? Indeed, couldn't the savior have carried the cross with ease without falling?

We are all familiar with the well-known invitation, "If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me" (Mark 8: 34). So, what does the three times of falling mean to us?

One way to comprehend this is to consider the parallel image of Adam falling under the tree in the middle of the garden. Perhaps the heavy load of sin and its ramification placed on Adam, and subsequently humanity, was the weight that triggered the fall of the second Adam. So, we can say that Jesus fell three times because sin is heavy and the weight of sin on the cross was heavy enough to bring the Lord to fall three times (cf. Romance 5:19).

Another way to understand it is that Jesus fell three times because he was human. He had been scourged and then forced to carry the cross. But, remember that on three occasions he allowed the devil to tempt him and overcome him. On three occasions, he asked Peter if he loved him after he had denied him three times. So, Jesus fell three times before reaching Calvary to "determine his fate on Heaven's terms." In other words, God does not give us limits regarding how many times we can fall. Rather, victory comes when we don't give up after falling, but rise and move on to serve him. Thus, Jesus becomes the reason we get up whenever we fall. No matter how many times you fail, keep going and stake your fate on heaven's terms, which is your salvation.

