

Tradition of the Stations of the Cross

Originally, the Bible was only in Latin and not many people could read or write. Therefore, in the Middle Ages a series of pictures originated, portraying the events around 30 AD when Jesus was condemned by Pontius Pilate to be crucified. The tradition of the Stations of the Cross is not derived from orthodox theology and there is no set number of crosses. Usually you will find that most Stations of the Cross have 14 stations.

We might also ask why one should stop to contemplate at these points, whose existence is not supported by Holy Scripture. The answer is easy. Human life itself is about stopping and pondering. There are situations in life when we do not want to be alone. Today we are not able to recreate, step by step, the journey Jesus took from Pilate's house to Golgotha. But the Stations of the Cross, created by Christian tradition, express the hope that Jesus is with us at every step even if we cannot see him, and that all the difficult times we may face in our lives might be changed if he is present.

Christians pray at the Stations of the Cross on Fridays and during the period of Lent, before Easter. This is no surprise as Good Friday was the day when, according to Christian tradition, the events of the Stations of the Cross took place.

The devotion at the Stations of the Cross can be communal, led by a celebrant, or the prayers can be said personally. The act of devotion can be made at any time, not just in Lent, nor

need one stop at every Station. Sometimes one stop is enough to allow us to pause and contemplate our pilgrimage.

Sušice Stations of the Cross

The Stations of the Cross in Sušice takes you from the first station by the Otava all the way to Stráž Hill, also called Andělíček (552 metres above sea level) where just below the top you will find the last, fourteenth station. At the top of the hill there is the Chapel of the Guardian Angel. This has long been a popular place of pilgrimage in the Šumava (the Sušice fair takes place on the first Sunday in September). The spot offers superb views of the town. These Stations of the Cross are unique in terms of their location and how they were made. The individual wrought iron stations were very sensitively incorporated into the terrain, placed onto rocks and boulders lining the forest track.

Length of the route:

1 km

Difficulty:

medium, suitable for small children and families

Marked:

VIOLET

Elevation difference: 87 m

Route description:

To reach the starting point of the Stations of the Cross, leave the square and follow the green route. After the footbridge over the Otava, turn left and follow the flow of the river. The first Station of the Cross is situated shortly past the last building on the J Seitz Embankment. From there follow the path up through the forest to the Chapel of the Guardian Angel, Andělíček.



The stations were forged by students from the **Secondary Technical College Oselce**, specialising in Craft and Art Processing of Metal, under the supervision of Mr **Jiří Wallner** and following the design of **Mgr Bohumila Skrbková**. The students made the Stations of the Cross as part of their leaving examinations (2009/2010).

All the Stations of the Cross might not be visible at first sight. Just like in life, you might have to search a bit, look around and maybe you might even have to turn back on yourself to find out why you have set out on this journey.

I. Jesus is condemned to death

Jesus Christ is betrayed by one of his disciples, Judas, arrested by soldiers, tried and condemned to death. He is flogged and a crown of thorns is placed on his head.

II. Lord Jesus accepts his cross

The soldiers give Jesus the cross to carry. Jesus takes up his cross, and walks from Jerusalem to Golgotha, which is also known as Calvary.

III. Lord Jesus falls for the first time under the weight of the cross

Jesus grows weak, the insults, beating and the heavy cross pull him down.

IV. Meeting his mother

The Virgin Mary does not leave her son, she suffers with him.

V. Meeting Simon of Cyrene

No one volunteers to help, so a strong man, Simon of Cyrene, is asked by the soldiers to help carry the cross.

VI. Meeting Veronica

Veronica feels for Jesus but knows that she cannot do much for him. She makes her way through the crowd of soldiers and passes Christ her veil to wipe his face.

VII. Jesus falls down for the second time

Jesus is now utterly exhausted and cannot even stand on his feet. Nevertheless, he somehow manages to get up and he continues carrying his cross.

VIII. Meeting the weeping women

The women of Jerusalem wail and cry for Christ. He turns round to them and says: „Do not weep for me, but consider your own lives.“

IX. Jesus falls for the third time under the weight of the cross

Jesus is at the end of his strength. But he gets up for the last time as he knows he is nearly at the end of his journey.

X. Tearing off his garments

When Christ arrives on Golgotha, the soldiers tear off his garments and draw lots for them. Christ is left only with a loin cloth and people laugh at him.

XI. Nailing to the cross

Passers-by insult Jesus. Soldiers nail him to the cross.

XII. Death on the cross

Before he dies he thinks of his mother. At three o'clock in the afternoon he dies.

XIII. Pieta

Joseph of Arimathea asks Pilate for permission to take Jesus' body off the cross. Nicodemus helps him. They place Jesus' body on his mother's lap.

XIV. Putting Jesus in the tomb

Joseph and Nicodemus wash Jesus' body, wrap it in clean linen, anoint it with sweet-scented herbs and put it into a newly hewn tomb inside a rock. They roll a big boulder in front of the entrance to block it. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary stay by the tomb. The tomb is then guarded by soldiers. According to the Gospels, on the third day Jesus is resurrected - he has risen from the dead.



Stráž Peak

used to be a lookout and guard post. There is a Baroque chapel of the Guardian Angel, commonly referred to as Andělíček, that was built as a pilgrimage chapel by the Capuchins in 1682 – 83. In 1735 cloisters with four corner chapels, dedicated to the Virgin Mary, St John of Nepomuk, St Florian and St Mary Magdalene, were added to the chapel. When looking south, you can see the town as if on the palm of your hand.



THE GUARDIAN ANGEL LEGEND

There are several legends connected with this site above Sušice. One of them tells of a little boy who was gathering strawberries in the woods and by accident trod on a snake. The snake hissed and wound itself around the boy's leg. The boy was petrified but then he saw an angel standing next to him. The angel smiled at the boy and bent towards him. The snake dropped to the ground and disappeared. The boy's parents and other religious families commissioned a small chapel to be built and had a picture of the Guardian Angel painted on the wall.



STATIONS OF THE CROSS AT ANDĚLÍČEK



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