The Way of the Cross and the Via Dolorosa

The Way of the Cross (Via Crucis) is a religious path following the sites of Jesus' Passion. It begins at the Praetorium, where Jesus was condemned and whipped (according to tradition, in the premises of the Antonia Tower) and reaches the site of Calvary (Church of the Holy Sepulchre), where Jesus was crucified and buried. The present route (Via Dolorosa) was crystallized during the 16th century and subsequently only slightly modified. The route includes fourteen stations.

1. Jesus is condemned to death
2. Jesus carries his cross
3. Jesus falls for the first time
4. Simon of Cyrene helps carry the Cross
5. Veronica wipes the face of Jesus
6. Jesus meets his mother, Mary
7. Jesus falls for the second time
8. Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem
9. Jesus falls for the third time
10. Jesus is nailed to the Cross
11. Veronica wipes the face of Jesus
12. Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem
13. Jesus is taken down from the Cross
14. Jesus is buried

Every Friday the Franciscans lead a procession along this route beginning from the yard of the building across the way at 15:00 (16:00 during the summer). All pilgrims are invited to take part.

Church of the Flagellation

The Church of the Flagellation was originally built by the Crusaders in the 12th century and was then deserted for many centuries. In 1838 it was purchased by the Franciscans and was opened again for worship due to the generous donations of Maximilian of Bavaria, as indicated by the plaque on the front of the Church. In 1929 the architect Antonio Barluzzi restored the Church, preserving its medieval style.

“When Pilate heard these words he brought Jesus out and had him flogged. The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They clothed him in a purple robe and went up to him again and again, saying, ‘Hail, king of the Jews!’ And they slapped him in the face.”

(Gospel of John 19:1-3)

Chapel of the Condemnation

The Chapel of the Condemnation was rebuilt in 1904 by Wende-lin Hinterkeuser on the ruins of a medieval chapel discovered several years earlier. The name of the ancient church is unknown and the new chapel was given this name due to the stone pavement made of large flagstones. This continues beneath the nearby site of Ecce Homo (“here is the man”), which at that time was considered to be part of the stone pavement (Lithostrotos) where Pilate tried Jesus.

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(Gospel of John 19:13-16-17)
Antonia Tower and Lithostrotos

Herod the Great (King of Judea from 39 to 4 BC) built a fortress in the north-west corner of the Jewish Temple which he named Antonia Tower, after the Roman general Marc Antony who supported his rise to the throne. According to Christian tradition this is the site of the Lithostrotos, a stone pavement, known in Hebrew as 'Gabbatha' (John 19:13) where Jesus appeared before Pontius Pilate and was condemned to death.

After the first Jewish Revolt (66-70 AD), the Roman general Titus destroyed the fortress and after the second Revolt (132-135 AD) Emperor Hadrian rebuilt this area of the city. The pool known as Struthion was covered by a paved square with a monumental arch at its entrance.

The archaeological site

A Antonia Tower area
B Struthion pool
C Lithostrotos - paved square
D Ecce Homo arch

The map represents the complexity of the site, rich in layers of archaeological evidence, which cannot always be unequivocally interpreted and dated.

The graphic reconstruction was performed according to a study by Bellarmino Bagatti published in 1958.

The pilgrims’ voices

“And I thought that sweet harmony of our souls respond to all the points of the basilica, already shuttered in the shadows of the night, the echo of all the souls who over centuries have come here to pray souls of apostles, of knights, saints…”

(Giuseppe Roncalli – future pope John XXIII).

Absorb, quaeas, Domine, mentem meam et cor meum ignita et melliflua vis amoris Tui ut amoris Tui moriar, qui pro amore amoris mei dignatus es mori.

May the power of your love, O Lord, ardent and sweet power, so absorb our hearts as to withdraw them from all that is under heaven. Grant that we may be ready to die for love of your love, as you died for love of my love.

(St. Francis of Assisi)