

Ecumenical Way of the Cross in Holland, MB

June 2017

On Good Friday, April 13, 2017, Saint John Berchmans Church in the town of Holland, celebrated its Ecumenical Way of the Cross. This procession, according to the long standing papal tradition – of the then Pope John Paul II (now Saint John Paul II) is based on his version of the fourteen stations. All of the stations had, as their basis, incidents recorded in the Gospels.



When parishes or groups celebrate these stations publicly, they may be done in the context of Exposition and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament because the Eucharist is at once a memorial of the Lord’s passion and death as well as the Real Presence of the Risen Christ in our midst. Fr. José, the Pastor of Holland Catholic Center said that ***“Integration of the stations with a Eucharistic devotional service seems, therefore, theologically sound, liturgically appropriate, and pastorally wise.”***

During the procession in the streets, there are seven stops. At each stop, two stations are read and each station features a short reading from one of the Gospel passion narratives, a brief reflection, and a prayer response adapted from selected Psalms.

At each station, a hymn is sung to the melody of the ancient and customary *“Stabat Mater.”*

These historic stations, with their richly biblical approach, have been adapted for public and private use and are especially suited for Lenten reflection and can also be a year-round source of inspiration. ***“Being in the streets of the town carrying the cross, even on a rainy day, is a very cool experience and joyful one,”*** said one of the youth participants helping to carry the cross.



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Another participant shared: *“And even though the weather was windy, cloudy with a little rain and therefore not ideal for people to be walking outside, the sharing of our faith with other people, praying, and singing while carrying the cross, was a very humble, joyful, and also reflective experience about the passion of our Lord, Jesus Christ”*. She added, *“...at the end of the procession, the coffee and a piece of bread which were offered were enough to warm up the day.”*

In the procession, there were many children who practiced something they had learned during their Catechism classes and so did several adults. All of them took turns to carry the cross and helped each other in the process.

“We plan to continue with this traditional devotion and we hope that more people will take part in it. Hopefully, weather will be nicer next time but participating in this devotion is a way of thanksgiving to our Lord, Jesus Christ, for his enormous loving sacrifice for our salvation. So, whether there will be rain, snow, sunshine, or a cloudy sky, we will do it again,” said Pastor Fr. José. This is our faith. This is the faith of the Church. We are proud to profess it, in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen

