

Liturgical Stations in Rome

The stational church is that church designated for the pontifical celebration of the Eucharist by the local bishop. Different churches were designated on different days. This custom may exist in Anglican dioceses, but is not generally known by this name. Some Anglican bishops may visit the same church on the same Sunday or feast day every year, but not all bishops adhere so closely to a fixed schedule, and of the ones who do, the editor is not aware of any who publish formal lists of their liturgical stations.

During the Middle Ages, when the Bishop of Rome held preeminence over all the bishops of Western Christendom, it was logical that his liturgical stations would be a matter of interest. Many Roman Catholic missals up until Vatican II included the Pope's liturgical station as a headnote for the proper to which it applied. It is not clear why the editors of the Anglican Missal chose to continue this practice, especially since it was based on information which became obsolete in 1305. Perhaps it was for purely historical interest. That is why it is being included here, with some additional background information not previously published.

The Roman stational celebrations originated in the third century, and were fully developed by the eighth century in the form given in most pre-Vatican II Roman missals. There were a total of 89 stational celebrations on 87 days in 42 churches. The Anglican Missal lists 78 of them; presumably the other eleven were on feast days which the Anglican Missal did not include.

After the Papacy was transferred to Avignon in 1305, the liturgical stations were abandoned. In 1378, when the Popes once again lived in Rome, the stations resumed on a much diminished scale. In 1586, Pope Sixtus V attempted to restore the traditional stations, but with little success. In 1870, the Pope became the prisoner of the newly unified Italian government, and had no freedom to visit the churches of Rome. In 1929, after the Lateran Treaty freed the Pope from his captivity, Pope Pius XI did not resume the stational practice himself, but encouraged other bishops to take up the practice, and granted indulgences to the laity who participated. In 1959, Pope John XXIII resumed the Lenten stations. The reader is referred to Rome's Historic Churches, by Lilian Gunton, for a discussion of the Lenten stational churches as resumed by John XXIII, which includes photographs and floor plans. Also useful is A Guide to the Churches of Rome, by Mary Sharp, which, while not relating directly to the liturgical stations, has more detailed street maps, for those who are interested.

The traditional stations are as follows:

Proper	Station	Notes <i>Notes given only the first time a church is named</i>
First Sunday of Advent	St. Mary Major	<i>St. Mary Major, in Italian, Santa Maria Maggiore, so called, partly because it is reputed to be the largest church in Christendom dedicated to Our Lady, but more likely because the present structure replaced an earlier, smaller one. Located on the Esquiline Hill, the original structure was erected by Pope Liberius (352-366), and replaced on a grander scale by Pope Sixtus III (432-440), using the same materials, as an act of thanksgiving for the Council of Ephesus, which declared Mary to be Theotokos, God-bearer. It has also been known as the Liberian Basilica (named for its founder), Our Lady of the Manger (because it possessed the relics of the Manger of Bethlehem), and Our Lady of the Snow, because of a legend connected with its site.</i>
Second Sunday of Advent	Holy Cross in Jerusalem	<i>Holy Cross in Jerusalem, or the Basilica of the Holy Cross, known in Italian as Santa Croce in Gerusalemme, located at a city gate called Porta Maggiore, was built in 330 by the Empress Helena, mother of Constantine the Great, by converting one of the halls of her Sessorian Palace, in order to contain relics of the True Cross. It has been known as Sancta Hierusalem, Basilica Heleiana, and Basilica Sanctæ Crucis.</i>
Third Sunday of Advent	St. Peter at the Vatican	<i>St. Peter at the Vatican, or St. Peter's Basilica, familiar to Christians the world over as the Pope's church, was built on the site of the burial-place of St. Peter. The first church was built by Constantine the Great, but was entirely rebuilt starting in 1505 and ending in 1625.</i>
Ember Wednesday of Advent	St. Mary Major	

Proper	Station	Notes <i>Notes given only the first time a church is named</i>
Ember Friday of Advent	Holy Apostles	<i>Holy Apostles, or, the Basilica of the Holy Apostles, in Italian, Santi Apostoli, on the Via dei Santi Apostoli, this church was built by Popes Pelagius I (556-561) and John III (561-574), and was dedicated to the Apostles Philip and James, though one tradition says an earlier church, also dedicated to Philip and James, was built on the same site by Julius I (337-352). After a flood in 865, it was rebuilt by Stephen VI (885-891) on a smaller scale. It was later enlarged by Martin V (1417-1431) and was referred to in one document as the Church of the Twelve Apostles, but this was an error, because St. Philip and St. James remain its titular saints.</i>
Ember Saturday of Advent	St. Peter at the Vatican	
Fourth Sunday of Advent	Holy Apostles	
Christmas Eve Day	St. Mary Major	
Christmas Midnight	St. Mary Major	
Christmas Dawn	St. Anastasia	<i>St. Anastasia, Sant' Anastasia, built at the foot of the Palatine Hill in the fourth century, was originally called titulus Anastasiae for its foundress, but was later renamed in honor of a Byzantine saint of the same name who had been martyred on Christmas Day. Another source says she was a Roman lady, that the church is built on the site of her family mansion. (In the Roman rite a commemorative prayer in her honor is inserted in the proper of the Dawn Mass of Christmas). The church was enlarged under Leo III (795-816), and two towers were added in 1721.</i>
Christmas Day	St. Mary Major	

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St. Stephen	St. Stephen on the Cœlian Hill	<i>St. Stephen on the Cœlian Hill, also known as the Sphinx of the Cœlius, in Italian called San[to] Stefano Rotondo. Round churches are not unusual today, but this was unusual for its time, when it was built by Pope Simplicius (468-483), because circular and polygonal plans were reserved for baptisteries and mausolea. It was supposed to be a copy of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, and forged a link between church architecture in the West and that of the Middle East.</i>
St. John	St. Mary Major	
Holy Innocents	St. Paul without the Walls	<i>St. Paul without [i.e. outside] the Walls, or, in Italian, San Paolo fuori le Mura, built by Constantine the Great on the burial site of St. Paul along the Via Ostia, a site which Paul himself must have seen as he was taken out of the city to be beheaded. By the end of the century the church had become too small for the vast numbers of pilgrims, and it was replaced in 390 by Pope Siricius. It was weakened over the centuries by earthquakes, and at least one fire, and was substantially rebuilt in the 19th century.</i>
Holy Name	St. Mary beyond the Tiber	<i>St. Mary beyond the Tiber, known in Italian as Santa Maria in Trastevere. The original church, dedicated to Mary, Mother of God, was built by Julius I (337-352) and was called titulus Julii or titulus Calixti. Gregory IV (828-844) repaired and enlarged this church, but by the twelfth century it had been extensively damaged by flooding, earthquakes, and fires, and Innocent II (1130-1143) substantially rebuilt it.</i>

Proper	Station	Notes <i>Notes given only the first time a church is named</i>
Septuagesima	St. Lawrence without the Walls	<i>St. Lawrence without [outside] the Walls, San Lorenzo fuori le Mura, like St. Paul's above, so called because it stood outside the original walls of the city. This church stands above and partly in the catacomb where Lawrence was buried after being roasted on a gridiron. This church also was built by Constantine the Great, but by the fifth century it was too small, and another church was built adjoining the first. By the sixth the first church was in ruins from barbarian plunderings, so the two churches were enlarged and rebuilt into one by Pelagius II (578-590), who moved the body of Lawrence into the church itself, and later the body of St. Stephen as well.</i>
Sexagesima	St. Paul's	
Quinquagesima	St. Peter's	
Ash Wednesday	St. Sabina	<i>St. Sabina, Santa Sabina, on the crown of the Aventine Hill, was built in the fifth century in honor of a Roman lady named Sabina, who in the days of persecution had established a private chapel in her home on this site. Early churches were not named for saints, but for benefactors, prefaced by the word titulus. So it was that this church, originally called titulus Sabinæ, later came to be known as Santa Sabina, without anything being known about the so-called St. Sabina.</i>
Thursday after Ash Wednesday	St. George in Velabro	<i>St. George in Velabro, San Giorgio in Velabro, at the foot of the Aventine Hill, was built by Leo II (681-683) on an earlier foundation about which nothing is known. The church was rebuilt extensively in the 12th century. Leo dedicated the church to Sts. George and Sebastian, uniting Greek and Latin loyalties. In the eighth century, Pope Zachary (741-752) brought the skull of St. George to the church, and from that time the name of the church's co-patron was forgotten.</i>

Proper	Station	Notes <i>Notes given only the first time a church is named</i>
Friday after Ash Wednesday	Sts. John and Paul	<i>Sts. John and Paul, Santi Giovanni e Paolo, on the Caelian Hill, is named for two brothers executed in their own home by order of the Emperor Julian (the Apostate). The church was built in the fourth century on the same site. The house, along with the church, was a place of pilgrimage until the tenth century. Then the house, which was underground, was sealed off as structurally unsafe, and remained undiscovered until 1877.</i>
Saturday after Ash Wednesday	St. Trypho	<i>St. Trypho (San Trifone) no longer exists. The church was given to the Augustinians in 1287 by Pope Honorius IV (1285-1287), and was demolished in 1736 for the building of an Augustinian monastery. The present church of St. Augustine (Sant' Agostino), was built on the same site between 1479 and 1483, and replaced St. Trypho in the stational churches of Pope John XXIII.</i>
First Week in Lent		
Sunday	St. John Lateran	<i>The Basilica of St. John Lateran (San Giovanni in Laterano) is the cathedral for the Diocese of Rome. St. John's was the first church built by Constantine the Great, though it was then dedicated to Christ the Saviour, and was not until the 12th century that St. John the Baptist became popularly thought of as the church's patron. The name "in Laterano" came from the Roman family Laterani, who owned the land.</i>
Monday	St. Peter in Chains	<i>St. Peter in Chains, in Italian, San Pietro in Vincoli, on the Esqueline Hill, was founded in the fourth century, and given its present title by Pope Leo the Great (440-461), who received from the Empress Eudoxia the chain reputedly used to bind Peter in Jerusalem. The church was restored in the eighth century, and remodeled again in the fifteenth.</i>
Tuesday	St. Anastasia	
Ember Wednesday	St. Mary Major	

Proper	Station	Notes <i>Notes given only the first time a church is named</i>
Thursday	St. Lawrence in Panisperna	<i>St. Lawrence in Panisperna, another of the many churches in Rome dedicated to "Rome's third patron saint," is located on the site where Lawrence met his death by roasting on a gridiron, and dates from the eighth century. It was rebuilt by Boniface VIII (1294-1303), at which time the name "Panisperna" was added. This is possibly based on the distribution of bread and ham that was carried on at the church in memory of the beloved deacon who called the poor, the sick, the lame, and the blind "the Church's treasures."</i>
Ember Friday	Holy Apostles	
Ember Saturday	St. Peter at the Vatican	
Second Week in Lent		
Sunday	St. Mary in Domnica	<i>St. Mary in Domnica, another church on the Caelian Hill, dates from the eighth century. The title may have something to do with the land being an area of imperial dependence (dominica sotto prœdia), and it may have been built over the barracks of the Roman Fire Department.</i>
Monday	St. Clement	<i>St. Clement, Basilica di San Clemente, named for a first-century Christian who owned a tenement. He preserved the outward appearance of the building but altered its interior for a Christian meeting place. The early Christian community acquired the property, whether by purchase or bequest is not known. It is also not known who this Clement was or how he died. Pope Siricius (384-399) erected a basilica on the site and dedicated it to St. Clement, Bishop of Rome. The building was later partially destroyed, and its shell was filled in with rubble and a new structure raised over it in the 12th century. The original church was forgotten, and only rediscovered in the 19th century.</i>
Tuesday	St. Balbina	<i>Santa Balbina was first mentioned in the time of Gregory the Great (590-604), but there are indications of an earlier foundation, either Christian or pagan. The church is architecturally unusual. The interior was restored in 1928.</i>

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Wednesday	St. Cecilia	<i>Santa Cecilia, another important church in the shipping district of Trastevere (Trans-Tiber), which Constantine the Great had to reach via the Milvian Bridge, where he saw the vision which led him to legalize Christianity. Pope Paschal I (817-824) built this church to house the incorrupt body of St. Cecilia, which he found in the catacombs of St. Callistus. Seven centuries later the body had still not decayed, and a marble statue of the saint was placed beneath the altar.</i>
Thursday	St. Mary beyond the Tiber	
Friday	St. Vitalis	<i>St. Vitalis (San Vitale) was built by Innocent I (401-417) and dedicated to this saint who was martyred under Marcus Aurelius, along with his sons Gervase and Protase, but for many years it retained the name titulus Vestinae after the Roman lady who sold her jewels for its construction. It fell into neglect and disaster during the Avignon papacy, but was restored in 1475. It was given to the Jesuits in 1598, who restored it to parish status and had it adorned with frescoes depicting scenes of martyrdom.</i>
Saturday	Sts. Marcellinus and Peter	<i>Sancti Marcellino e Pietro, built by Pope Damasus (366-384), who as a child learned the details of the martyrdom of these two saints from their executioner. This man had been ordered to bury the bodies secretly, but a Christian woman, Lucilla, discovered their grave and had them reburied on the Via Labicana "ad duos lauros" (by the two bay trees). The church was built on the burial site, but by the 18th century was so damaged that it was demolished and replaced with the present church.</i>
Third Week of Lent		
Sunday	St. Lawrence without the Walls	

Proper	Station	Notes <i>Notes given only the first time a church is named</i>
Monday	St. Mark	<i>St. Mark (San Marco) dates from the brief papacy of Mark I (January-October, 336). In the Middle Ages it was believed that the church was located on the site of the house where the Evangelist wrote his gospel, but there is no evidence for this opinion. The altar contains relics of the Evangelist and the Pope of the same name. Adrian I (772-795) restored the church, as did Gregory IV (828-844), and a portico was added by Paul II (1464-1471).</i>
Tuesday	St. Pudentiana	<p><i>St. Pudentiana (Santa Pudenziana) was built by Innocent I (401-417) on the foundation of what was probably the home of Senator Pudens and his wife Priscilla, St. Peter's hosts when he lived in Rome. Their son, Pudens the Younger, married Claudia Rufina (mentioned by Paul in 2 Timothy), who became parents of two sons, Timotheus and Novatus, and possibly, though not certainly, of two daughters, Pudentiana and Praxedes. These last two named may be the Pudentiana of this church and the Praxedes mentioned below (Monday in Holy Week). The church itself was known as titulus Pudentis for the family of Pudens until Innocent introduced the title Ecclesia Pudenziana.</i></p> <p><i>Beginning in 1933, Pope Pius XI (1922-1939) allowed another church, St. Agatha of the Goths, to share the liturgical station with St. Pudentiana. Sant' Agata dei Goti was built under the administration of the barbarian general Ricimer, who is buried in it. The relics of St. Agatha are in the church, but she was in no way connected with the Goths.</i></p>
Wednesday	St. Xystus	<i>St. Xystus, also known as St. Sixtus, or, in Italian, San Sisto Vecchio, was named for Pope Sixtus II (257-258), and dates from the fifth century. The term "vecchio" distinguishes it from another church by the same name, built on the Quirinal Hill in the sixteenth century. The older church was also known as titulus Tigridae, after its foundress.</i>

Proper	Station	Notes <i>Notes given only the first time a church is named</i>
Thursday	Sts. Cosmas and Damian	<i>Sts. Cosmas and Damian (Santi Cosma e Damiano) at the Roman Forum is made up of two pagan buildings converted into a church by Pope Felix IV (526-530), a circular building of undetermined use built by the Emperor Maxentius in the fourth century, and the rectangular Templum Aemæ Urbis, the archives of the Planning Commission. This was the earliest such conversion in Rome, and required permission from the Gothic King Theodoric.</i>
Friday	St. Lawrence in Lucina	<i>St. Lawrence in Lucina was named for the foundress Lucina, whose home once stood on the site. It dates from the fourth century.</i>
Saturday	St. Susanna	<i>St. Susanna, named for the third century martyr under Diocletian, probably dates from the fourth century, and was largely rebuilt in the ninth century, again in the sixteenth. It has services in English, and is the church of the American colony in Rome.</i>
Fourth Week in Lent		
Sunday	Holy Cross in Jerusalem	
Monday	Four Crowned Saints	<i>The Four Crowned Saints, or in Italian, Sancti Quattro Coronati, named for four Roman soldiers, "crowned" with martyrdom by the Emperor Diocletian for refusing to pay divine honors to the statues of the gods. The existing structure dates from Leo IV (847-855), but there was almost certainly an earlier foundation, possibly dating back to Sylvester I (314-335). The cloisters were added by the Benedictines in the 12th century.</i>
Tuesday	Sts. Lawrence in Damasus	<i>St. Lawrence in Damasus, in Italian, San Lorenzo in Damaso, located within the precincts of the 15th-century Palazzo Cancelleria. The original church, built by Pope Damasus I (366-384) on his own family property, was demolished for the building of the palace, and the present church dates from 1656.</i>
Wednesday	St. Paul without the Walls	

Proper	Station	Notes <i>Notes given only the first time a church is named</i>
Thursday	Sts. Sylvester and Martin	<i>The church referred to as Sts. Sylvester and Martin is actually known in Italian as San Martino ai Monti, dedicated to St. Martin of Tours, but it was built upon the foundation of an oratory built by Pope Sylvester I (314-335).</i>
Friday	St. Eusebius	<i>St. Eusebius (Sant' Eusebio), named for a priest who was martyred under Constantius in 357. The earliest mention of a church appears in a record of its roof being repaired in the seventh century. It was rebuilt by Gregory IX (1227-1241), and changed considerably in the eighteenth century.</i>
Saturday	St. Nicholas at the Prison	<i>The Church of St. Nicholas was built on the foundation of a pagan temple which may have been built as early as 165 B.C. Its name (San Nicolà in Carcere) is probably derived from the medieval jail of Porta Leone nearby, and from the fact that St. Nicholas is patron of prisoners as well as sailors and children.</i>
Fifth Week in Lent		
Sunday	St. Peter at the Vatican	
Monday	St. Chrysogonus	<i>St. Chrysogonus (San Crisogono), another famous church of the Trastevere district, dates from the twelfth century, but was built on the site of an earlier church from the fourth century.</i>
Tuesday	St. Cyriacus	<i>The Church of St. Cyriacus was destroyed in the seventeenth century, and its liturgical station was transferred to Santa Maria in Via Lata (St. Mary in Broad Street), which dates from the fifteenth century.</i>
Wednesday	St. Marcellus	<i>St. Marcellus, called in Italian, San Marcello al Corso, dates from 308, when an oratory occupied the site. The basilica dates from 418, but was rebuilt in the 16th century.</i>

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Thursday	St. Apollinaris	<i>St. Apollinaris (Sant' Apollinare) dates from the sixth century and was rebuilt in the eighteenth century. Since 1933, St. Apollinaris shares its liturgical station with another church, Santa Francesca Romana (St. Frances of Rome), a church built in the ninth century and originally named Santa Maria Nuova, but renamed after St. Frances was canonized in 1608.</i>
Friday	St. Stephen on the Cœlian Hill	
Saturday	St. John before the Latin Gate	<i>St. John before the Latin Gate (San Giovanni a Porta Latina). According to tradition, St. John the Evangelist was plunged into a cauldron of boiling oil, escaped unharmed, and proceeded to exile in Patmos. This church, dating from the fifth century, commemorates the event (San Giovanni in Olio), though whether the locality as well, is disputed. The church stands by the Aurelian Wall, near the Porta Latina, hence the name. A portico was added in the 12th century.</i>
Holy Week		
Palm Sunday	St. John Lateran	
Monday	St. Praxedes	<i>St. Praxedes (Santa Prassede) was built by Pope Paschal I (817-824), but on the foundation of an earlier church, possibly dating from 491, and may stand on the site of her house. See St. Pudentiana, above (Tuesday in the Third Week of Lent).</i>
Tuesday	St. Prisca	<i>The Church of St. Prisca (Santa Prisca) stands on the eastern face of the Aventine Hill, on the site of a Mithraic temple. It was in existence by the year 499, but it is not clear when it was built, just as it is not clear who St. Prisca was. She may have been a 13-year-old girl beheaded in the amphitheater under Claudius II (268-270). Then she may have been buried in the tomb of Priscilla, who may have been the Priscilla mentioned in the letters of St. Paul. Or possibly not. A new roof was put on by Adrian I in the eighth century, and in 1456 it was shortened by four bays by Callistus III and the present unpretentious façade was put on.</i>
Wednesday	St. Mary Major	

Proper	Station	Notes <i>Notes given only the first time a church is named</i>
Maundy Thursday	St. John Lateran	
Good Friday	Holy Cross in Jerusalem	
Holy Saturday	St. John Lateran	
Eastertide		
Easter Day	St. Mary Major	
Monday	St. Peter at the Vatican	
Tuesday	St. Paul without the Walls	
Wednesday	St. Lawrence without the Walls	
Thursday	Holy Apostles	
Friday	St. Mary of the Martyrs in the Pantheon	<i>St. Mary of the Martyrs was a pagan temple dedicated by Agrippa in 27 B.C. to all the gods (hence, Pantheon). On 13 May 609, Pope Boniface IV (608-615) rededicated it to Mary, Queen of the Martyrs, and brought 28 cartloads of the bones of the martyrs from the catacombs and placed them under the altar. To commemorate the event, he instituted the Festival of All Saints to be kept on this date. It was subsequently moved to 1 November so that it would come after the harvest, because, as it turned out, not enough food was available for the vast number of pilgrims who flocked to Rome for the feast.</i>
Saturday	St. John Lateran	

Proper	Station	Notes <i>Notes given only the first time a church is named</i>
Second Sunday of Easter	St. Pancras	<i>St. Pancras, in Italian, San Pancrazio. A small church was built on this site soon after the death of Pancras, a martyr under Diocletian. It was decorated and enlarged under Siricius (383-399), and almost entirely rebuilt under Symmachus (498-514), who added baths for the refreshment of weary pilgrims. It was enlarged again under Adrian I (772-795) and again in the 18th century. It was plundered by the French in 1798 and the saint's ashes scattered. The building was abandoned, but reopened in 1815. It was wrecked again in 1849 by the Garibaldians, and restored again in 1934.</i>
Ascension Day	St. Peter at the Vatican	
Vigil of Pentecost	St. John Lateran	
Pentecost	St. Peter at the Vatican	
Ember Wednesday	St. Mary Major	
Ember Friday	Holy Apostles	
Ember Saturday	St. Peter at the Vatican	