



## ST. ROCH

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hammer, while holding Jesus' feet in place on the cross.

► Station 13 (Jesus is Taken from the Cross): Mary bears the brunt of the weight of her son's lifeless body – she holds him under his armpits – while another woman lifts Jesus at his legs. Two men, including St. John, look on. Women also play major roles in the previous station – Jesus Dies on the Cross – with the sculptor including only female mourners in the grouping.

### Stations were a priestly wish

According to research conducted by Sherri Peppo, director of New Orleans Catholic Cemeteries, St. Roch's riveting stations of the cross were the vision of Father Peter Leonard Thevis, who became pastor of Holy Trinity Church in Bywater in 1868, the year his predecessor, Father Ignatius Scheck, succumbed to yellow fever.

Father Thevis wished to develop a cemetery for his parishioners and promised to dedicate a chapel to St. Roch if none of his parishioners perished from yellow fever in the ensuing year.

Father Thevis carried out his promise by having the St. Roch Campo Santo Chapel and Shrine built. The chapel's official dedication was on Aug. 16, 1876, and its first Mass celebrated on All Souls' Day of that year.

Father Thevis died in 1893, before realizing his plan to replace St. Roch's original terra-cotta stations of the cross with marble ones. The priest's dream came to fruition posthumously – in 1948 – when the marble statues, donated by local families, arrived in New Orleans from Italy.

Their sculptor is unknown.

The faithful can make a personal Way of the Cross every day of the year, except Mardi Gras, during the cem-

etry's opening hours of 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Priests and deacons lead a popular Way of the Cross at St. Roch on Good Friday.

"Over 100 years (after St. Roch Cemetery was built), the tradition of praying the Way of the Cross on Good Friday continues with many Catholic devotees who cherish attending this holy service in St. Roch Cemetery," Peppo said. "It is a heartfelt blessing to witness over a couple of hundred devotees walk, pray and sing in this small, quaint, historic cemetery."

The man who made St. Roch's stations a reality – Father Thevis – is interred in the chapel, below the marble floor in front of the altar.

St. Patrick Cemetery in New Orleans also has stations of the cross – smaller, bronze-painted statues that sit atop columns.



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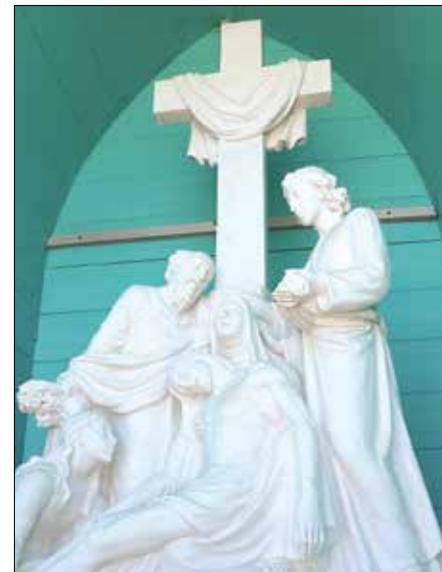
The callousness of Jesus' captors is palpable in the station showing Jesus being stripped of his garments, above. At right, Mary, assisted by another woman, take Jesus from the cross.

This walk begins in the front of St. Patrick No. 3 on City Park Avenue, continues in St. Patrick No. 2, and ends in St. Patrick No. 3, near the gate at Bernadotte and Palmyra streets.

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Mary breaks down (above) as her son is placed in the tomb. The St. Roch stations of the cross are sheltered inside house-like niches, directly adjacent to the vaults of the deceased, left. Visitors to St. Roch may walk the Way of the Cross any day of the year, except Mardi Gras, during the cemetery's opening hours of 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. The cemetery's most popular day is Good Friday, when priests and deacons lead the Way of the Cross.



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