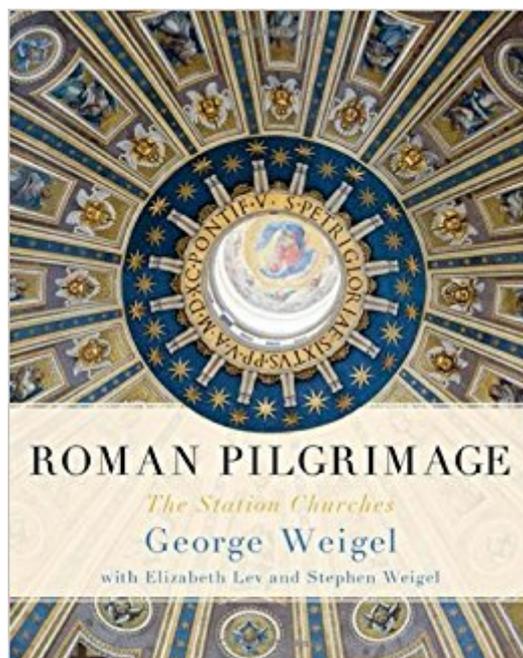


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# Roman Pilgrimage: The Station Churches



## Synopsis

The annual Lenten pilgrimage to dozens of Rome's most striking churches is a sacred tradition dating back almost two millennia, to the earliest days of Christianity. Along this historic spiritual pathway, today's pilgrims confront the mysteries of the Christian faith through a program of biblical and early Christian readings amplified by some of the greatest art and architecture of western civilization. In *Roman Pilgrimage*, bestselling theologian and papal biographer George Weigel, art historian Elizabeth Lev, and photographer Stephen Weigel lead readers through this unique religious and aesthetic journey with magnificent photographs and revealing commentaries on the pilgrimage's liturgies, art, and architecture. Through reflections on each day's readings about faith and doubt, heroism and weakness, self-examination and conversion, sin and grace, Rome's familiar sites take on a new resonance. And along that same historical path, typically unexplored treasures; artifacts of ancient history and hidden artistic wonders; appear in their original luster, revealing new dimensions of one of the world's most intriguing and multi-layered cities. A compelling guide to the Eternal City, the Lenten Season, and the itinerary of conversion that is Christian life throughout the year, *Roman Pilgrimage* reminds readers that the imitation of Christ through faith, hope, and love is the template of all true discipleship, as the exquisite beauty of the Roman station churches invites reflection on the deepest truths of Christianity.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Lent will never be the same for those who engage this book's invitation to join in spirit those fortunate enough to make the "Roman Pilgrimage" in person. George Weigel's reflections on the liturgical readings for each day of Lent (and the Octave of Easter) draw from deep wells of theology, history, and literature, while Elizabeth Lev's lucid essays on the Station Churches provide their own invitation to consider how zeal for "the House of the Lord" is a centuries-old constant in the pilgrim life of the Church. I agree that the fine work of photographer Stephen Weigel is a bit short-changed in the bound volume's conversion of many photos to black and white. However, there are also ample color plates beautifully capturing what is inevitably a fraction of the rich detail in these Churches. As elsewhere noted, the Kindle edition displays all photographs in full color; also the MP3 version includes a supplemental PDF of young Mr. Weigel's work. For those in Apple-land, the iBooks version would, I am sure, look splendid on a 27-inch screen! Those who quibble here with the aesthetics may be missing the point of the book: to invite all Catholics, indeed, all Christians and men and women of good will, to set aside Lent, in a manner largely lost in recent decades, as a time for profound reflection on the realities of sin, conversion, redemption, and, ultimately, the joy of a life animated by, and lived in, imitation of Christ. While this is always primarily a matter of the "interior life," the book reminds us that the places and things of this Earth are the essential context in which that journey takes place. This manner of "going out," especially when made in communion with fellow pilgrims, is the key to a Lent well-observed.

This book is disappointing. Although the book is ostensibly about the ancient Lenten station churches of Rome, the bulk of the book is devoted to George Weigel's commentary on the liturgical readings for each day of Lent. He has little to say about the station churches themselves. Each church receives a brief one-page description from the art historian Elizabeth Lev. I suppose this is better than nothing, but these short descriptions contain some surprising errors and omissions. For example, Ms. Lev claims that Santo Stefano Rotondo was originally built in the early fifth century. In reality, it was built several decades later. The description of San Sisto Vecchio omits the legend that the church was built on the spot where Pope St. Sixtus II, while on his way to be executed, met his deacon, St. Lawrence. This story would be of interest to any pilgrim visiting the church. The book contains a few color photographs of the churches, some of which you are unlikely to find elsewhere. However, I had expected the book to have far more color photos than it does. It is also irritating that the churches are identified solely by their English names even though the churches are far better known, even in the English-speaking world, by their Italian names. If you go to Rome and ask a local for directions to "St. Peter in Chains", he or she isn't likely going to have a clue what you're

talking about. I cannot help but feel that this book was put together hurriedly and was carelessly edited. You will like this book if you are interested in Mr. Weigel's commentary on the Lenten liturgical readings. However, for information on the station churches themselves, you would do better to read any number of books on Roman art and architecture, as well as general tourist guidebooks and internet sites.

This is a beautiful book in every respect, and Weigel's exquisite meditations on each day of Lent are an invitation to an ever deeper conversion to Christ. The Station Churches of Rome are one of the greatest hidden treasures of the Catholic Church, and this book opens the doors to those churches and to the liturgical riches of Lent. All the photos in the Kindle version are high res and in color, so this is one instance in which the e-book is perhaps of greater value than the paper version. Any Christian seeking a deeper and more mature spiritual life will find a splendid companion on the way in "Roman Pilgrimage."

I thought this book would be a keeper - it has been put together in sections w/colored photo inserts. Three of these have been glued to previous written page & cannot be opened without tearing page; the last section of written pages is p. 308; then 2 pages of colored photos; the section from that page to the end of the book has broken away from binding. I have never received a book from in this condition. I will not go through the hassle of returning this book, and will never again purchase books published by Basic Books/Perseus Group. I coordinate a small faith group at church, many of whom are customers; we were considering its use this coming Lenten season. I realize this is not 's fault; just thought you should know the poor quality of book. mb

This book's idea of spending each day of Lent relating it to a physical church in Rome was well done and a unique way to experience a Lenten devotion. Up to this point I, like a typical Catholic, would have focused my Lenten devotion on the daily readings, the Stations of the Cross, the Seven Last Words, and so on. This book reminds us that the 'corporate' Church also includes the dimension of pilgrims and martyrs and their legacy in our Lenten journey. The book includes numerous threads of discussion from Pope JP2 and Pope Benedict XVI in the daily meditations on each station church, as well as interesting details on the architecture and history of the sites. It provides a beneficial reminder that the Church as Body of Christ has withstood much in the way of trials over the centuries since Calvary, and that salvation history includes a physical dimension that one can visit, in addition to the Word and Tradition that we all know and (hopefully) love. There are

some color pictures of the sites, but the majority of the shots are monochrome. This is my only disappointment with the book. I assume that to publish the work using all color pictures would have driven the cost up too much. All in all, a very good conservative, orthodox book for those Catholics wanting a structured and unique way to live their Lenten devotion.

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