

The Elevation of the Cross, celebrated on the fourteenth of September, commemorates the finding of Christ's Cross by Saint Helen, the mother of the Emperor Constantine in the fourth century; and, after it was taken by the Persians, of its recovery by the Emperor Heraclius in the seventh century at which time it was "elevated" in the Church of the Resurrection in Jerusalem. From this latter event the "universal elevation" of the Cross was celebrated annually in all of the churches of the Christian Empire.

The day of the Elevation of the Cross became, as it were, the national holiday of the Eastern Christian Empire similar to the Fourth of July in the United States. The Cross, the official emblem of the Empire which was placed on all public buildings and uniforms, was officially elevated on this day by the bishops and priests. They blessed the four directions of the universe with the Cross, while the faithful repeated the chanting of "Lord have mercy." This ritual is still done in the churches today after the solemn presentation and elevation of the Cross at the end of the Vigil service of the holy day following the Great Doxology of Matins.

The troparion of the feast which was, one might say, the "national anthem" sung on all public occasions in the Christian Empires of Byzantium and Russia, originally petitioned God to save the people, to grant victory in war and to preserve the empire "by the virtue of the Cross." Today the troparion, and all the hymns of the day, are "spiritualized" as the "adversaries" become the spiritually wicked and sinful including the devil and his armies, and "Orthodox Christians" replace the names of ruling officials of the Empire.

As Thou was mercifully crucified for our sake, grant mercy to those who are called by Thy name; make all Orthodox Christians glad by Thy power, granting them victories over their adversaries, by bestowing on them the invincible trophy, Thy weapon of peace (Kontakion).

The holy day of the Elevation of the Cross, although it has an obviously "political" origin, has a place of great significance in the Church today. It remains with us as a day of fasting and prayer, a day when we recall that the Cross is the only sign worthy of our total allegiance, and that our salvation comes not by "victories" of any earthly sort but by the only true and lasting victory of the crucifixion of Christ and our co-crucifixion with him.

When we elevate the Cross and bow down before it in veneration and worship to God, we proclaim that we belong to the Kingdom "not of this world," and that our only true and enduring citizenship is with the saints in the "city of God" (Eph 2:19; Heb 11:10; Rev 21-22).

Before the Cross, we bow down in worship, O Master, and Thy holy resurrection, we glorify (Hymn of Veneration before the Cross).

This central hymn of the Elevation of the Cross which lasts for eight days in the Church is sung many times. It replaces the Thrice-Holy of the Divine Liturgy. The normal antiphons are also replaced by special verses from the psalms which have direct reference to Christ's crucifixion on the Cross (Ps 22, 74, 99). The long gospel reading at the Divine Liturgy is the passion account from John's gospel.

Thus, at the Elevation of the Cross the Christians make their official rededication to the crucified Lord and pledge their undivided allegiance to him by the adoration of his holy feet nailed to the life-creating Cross. This is the meaning of this holy day of fasting and repentance in the Church today.

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Christ is in our
midst!

He is and always
will be!

Universal Exaltation of the
Precious and Life-Giving
Cross

*O Lord, save Your people,
And bless You inheritance.
Grant victories to the Orthodox Christians
Over their adversaries.
And by virtue of Your Cross,
Preserve Your habitation.*

Troparion - Life-Giving Cross

On this day the Church remembers:

Sunday After the Elevation of the Cross • Afterfeast of the Elevation of the Cross. St. Eumenes, Bishop of Gortyna (6th c.) • Martyr Ariadne of Phrygia (2nd c.) • Martyrs Sophia and Irene of Egypt (3rd c.) • Martyr Castor of Alexandria. Greatmartyr Prince Bidzini and Martyrs Princes Elizabar and Shalvi, of Georgia (1660).

September 18, 2011

Tone 5 of the Octoechos.

14th Sunday after Pentecost

Today's Bulletin Sponsors are:**For health of:**

Natalie Kelin, offered by her daughter, Nina

Birthdays wishes for **Nina**, offered by Charles

Walter Stefy on his birthday, offered by Lore Stefy.

Readings:

- 1 Corinthians 1:18-24 (Cross)
- **John 19:6-11, 13-20, 25-28, 30-35 (Cross)**
 - 2 Corinthians 1:21-2:4 (14th Sunday)
 - Matthew 22:1-14 (14th Sunday)

At that time, the chief priests and the officers saw him, they cried out, "Crucify him, crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and crucify him, for I find no crime in him." The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and by that law he ought to die, because he has made himself the Son of God." When Pilate heard these words, he was the more afraid; he entered the praetorium again and said to Jesus, "Where are you from?" But Jesus gave no answer. Pilate therefore said to him, "You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have power to release you, and power to crucify you?" Jesus answered him, "You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above; therefore he who delivered me to you has the greater sin."

When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Pavement, and in Hebrew, Gab'batha. Now it was the day of Preparation of the Passover; it was about the sixth hour. He said to the Jews, "Behold your King!" They cried out, "Away with him, away with him, crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar." Then he handed him over to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus, and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called the place of a skull, which is called in Hebrew Gol'gotha. There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them. Pilate also wrote a title and put it on the cross; it read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." Many of the Jews read this title, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, in Latin, and in Greek.

So the soldiers did this. But standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Mag'dalene. When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home. After this Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfil the scripture), "I thirst."

When Jesus had received the vinegar, he said, "It is finished"; and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. Since it was the day of Preparation, in order to prevent

the bodies from remaining on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with him; but when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. He who saw it has borne witness--his testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth--that you also may believe.

Announcements:

- The next meeting of the Parish Council will be next Sunday, September 25th after coffee hour.
- Sunday School will begin next Sunday, September 25th at 9:30 am.

Upcoming Sisterhood Events

- The Sisterhood of the Mother of God will be having a covered dish luncheon on Sunday October 2nd in honor of their Feast Day. Cost is \$5.00 for adults. A sign-up sheet will be posted today.
- Next Sisterhood meeting will be October 9th after coffee hour.

Special Announcements:

- Upcoming bulletins can be sponsored; this can be done with the signup sheet at the candle stand.
- Special Announcements for the bulletin can be submitted by E-Mail to: Bulletin@ChurchMotherOfGod.org