

Exaltation (Elevation) of the Holy Cross

After the Resurrection, the pagan Roman emperors wanted people to forget about the holy places where Christ was crucified and rose from the dead. Emperor Hadrian gave orders to cover over the ground of Golgotha and the Sepulchre and to build a pagan temple.

Eventually after almost 300 years, the Sepulchre of the Lord and the Life-Creating Cross were again discovered. This took place when the Emperor Constantine the Great conquered the Romans and became the new ruler of the Empire in the year 323. Constantine, who was at first a pagan too, later converted to Christianity and became a Saint. He had seen a vision of the Sign of the Cross, and written beneath: "By this you shall conquer."

St. Constantine wanted to find the Cross on which our Lord Jesus Christ was crucified. So he sent his mother, Empress Helen, to Jerusalem. An elderly Hebrew man by the name of Jude told her that the Cross was buried where the temple of Venus stood. She gave orders to destroy the pagan temple and statues. Workmen began to excavate the ground and soon the Tomb of the Lord was uncovered. Not far from it were three crosses.

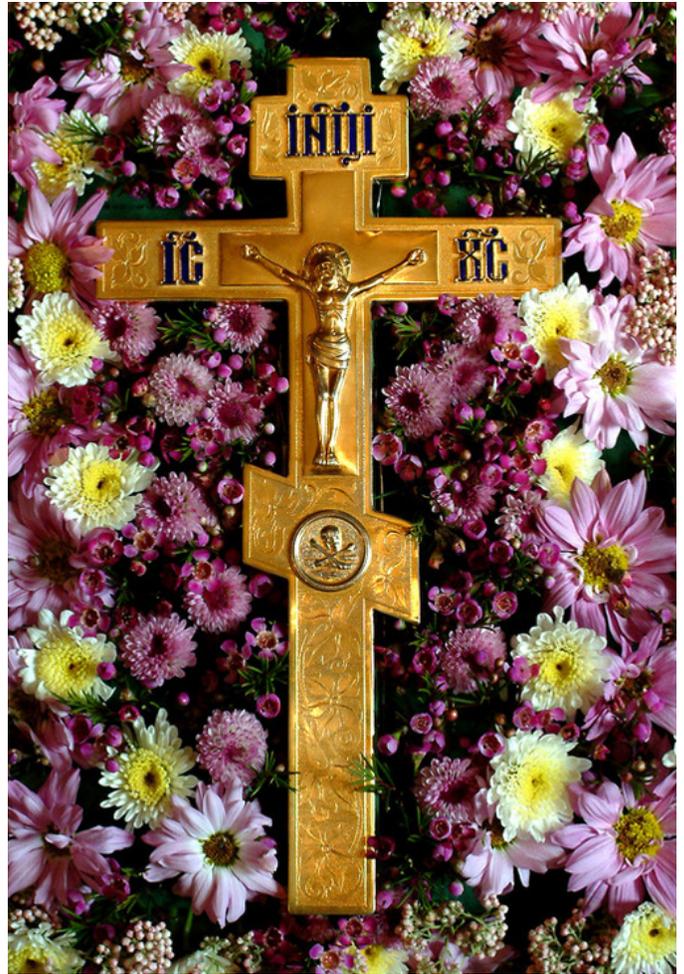
To determine which of the three crosses was the Cross of Christ, Patriarch Macarius touched each of the crosses to the body of a dead man. When the Cross of Christ touched the dead man, he rose from the dead. Seeing this miracle, people knew that the true Cross was found.

Christians came in a large crowd to venerate the Holy Cross. They asked St. Macarius to elevate (raise up) the Cross, so that those far off could see it. Then Patriarch Macarius and other Church leaders raised up the Cross, and the people, praying "Lord have mercy," bowed down before it. This event occurred in the year 326.

During the discovery of the Cross another miracle took place: a sick woman was healed instantly when the shadow of the Cross touched her. The elder Jude and other Jews then believed in Christ and were baptized. Jude received the Christian name Cyriacus and became Bishop of Jerusalem. He later died a martyr's death.

Empress Helen journeyed to the holy places connected with the earthly life of Christ and had more than 80 churches built, including at Bethlehem the birthplace of Christ, the Mount of Olives where Christ ascended to Heaven, and Gethsemane where Christ prayed and where the Virgin Mary had been buried. St. Helen took part of the Wood and nails to Constantinople. Emperor Constantine gave orders to build a church at Jerusalem in honor of the Resurrection of Christ, which includes the Tomb of Christ and Golgotha. The church was consecrated on September 13, 335. On the following day, September 14, the celebration of the Exaltation of the Venerable and Life-Creating Cross was established.

In a sermon on the Exaltation of the Cross, St. Andrew of Crete said: "The Cross is exalted, and everything true gathers together, the Cross is exalted, and the city makes solemn, and the people celebrate the feast."



**Before Thy Cross,
we bow down
in worship, O Master,
and Thy Holy Resurrection
we glorify!**

Troparion

**O Lord, save Thy people,
and bless Thine inheritance.
Grant victories
to the Orthodox Christians
over their adversaries,
and by virtue of Thy Cross,
preserve Thy habitation.**

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Saints Contatntine and Helen