

# Lift High the Cross!

By Archbishop Michael J. Sheehan

September 2014 People of God

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The Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross is on September 14, 2014. This feast day has special significance to the Knights and Ladies of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem; but should impact every single Christian. This day is also called the Triumph of the Cross, Elevation of the Cross, Holy Cross Day, Holy Rood Day or Roodmas.

The Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross celebrates two historical events: the discovery of the True Cross by St. Helena, the mother of the Emperor Constantine, in 320 under the temple of Venus in Jerusalem; and the dedication in 335 of the basilica and shrine built on Calvary by Constantine, which marks the site of the Crucifixion. The basilica, named the Martyrium and the shrine named the Calvarium, were both destroyed by the Persians in 614. The Church of the Holy Sepulcher which now stands on the site was built by the crusaders in 1149. The main significance of the feast however is the celebration and commemoration of God's salvific death on the cross and His Resurrection through which death was defeated and the doors to Heaven open.

When Moses lifted up the bronze serpent over the people, it was a foreshadowing of the salvation through Jesus when He was lifted up on the Cross. Our church sings of the triumph of the cross, the instrument of our redemption. To follow Jesus Christ, we must take up His cross, follow Him and become obedient until death, even if it means death on the cross. We identify with Christ on the cross and become co-redeemers, sharing in His cross.

We make the sign of the cross before prayer which helps to fix our minds and hearts to God. After prayer we make the sign of the cross to keep close to God. The sign of the cross is our strength and protection during trials and temptations. At baptism we are sealed with the sign of the cross, signifying the fullness of redemption and that we belong to Christ. Let us look to the cross frequently, and realize that when we make the sign of the cross, we give our entire self to God — our wills, hearts, minds, bodies, souls, thoughts, and deeds. This will help us to stay focused on the fact that we were created in the image and likeness of God and that we are to love Him above all else!