14/09/2021

The Elevation of the Precious Cross



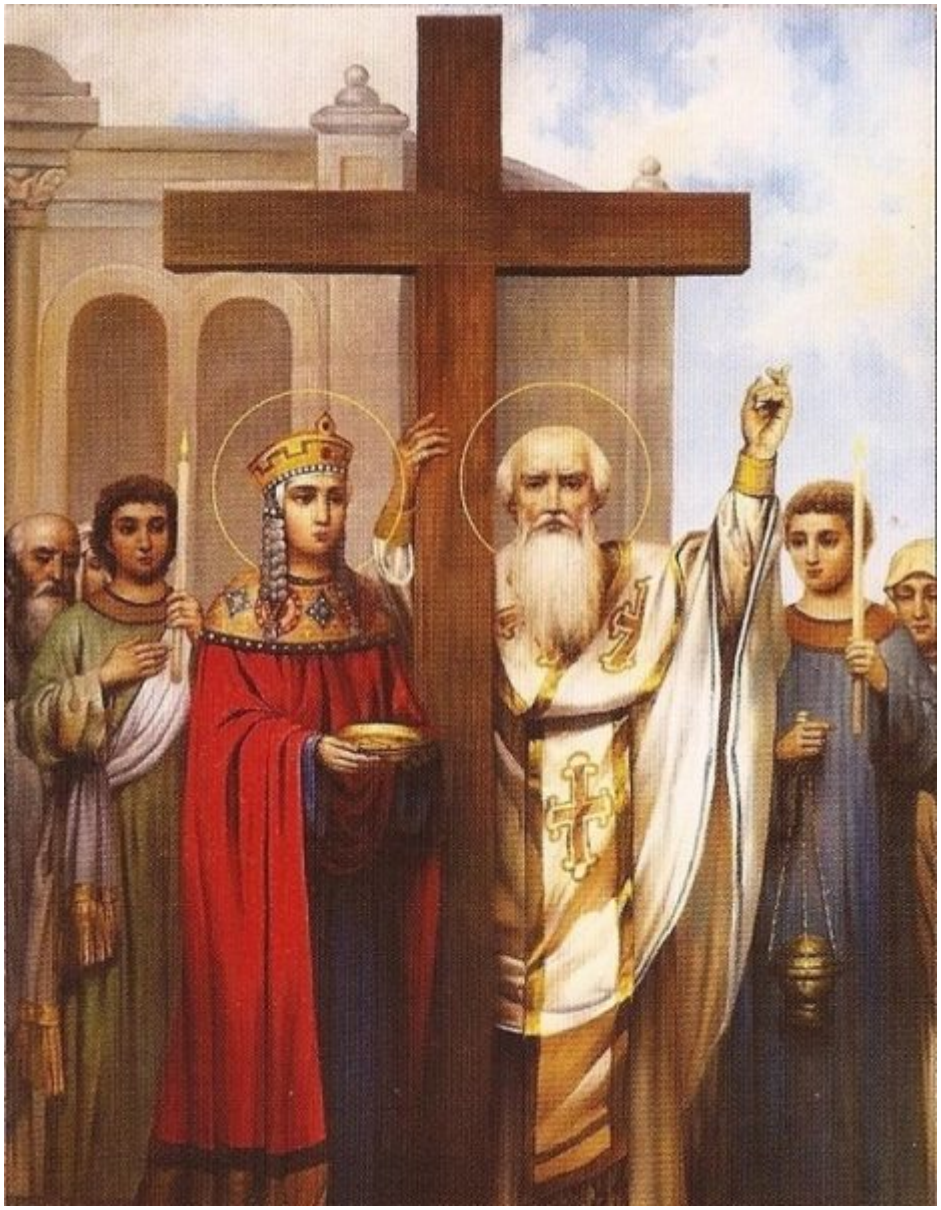
Fr. Gennadios Manolis, Theologian

The Lord’s Precious Cross is the supreme symbol of sacrifice and sanctification for the Church of Christ, Who was crucified and then rose, because the Cross, together with the Resurrection, are the two pillars which support the life for the Church and its members.

The honour paid by the Orthodox Church to the Precious Cross on 14 September (though not only on that day) began in the very first, Apostolic years, through the Apostles themselves and the Fathers who followed them. Today, the Orthodox Church preserves intact the Biblical (Old Testament and New) and Patristic teaching and accords the Cross of Christ due honour as the outstanding instrument and symbol of the redemption of the human race.
In 326, after the 1st Ecumenical Synod, Helen, the mother of Constantine the Great, went to the Holy Land, where she began the construction of fine churches in those places at which, according to tradition, events linked to the presence of the Lord on earth and other Biblical occurrences had taken place. Central among them was the Lord’s Holy Sepulchre. During the second destruction of Jerusalem, in 135, the emperor Hadrian had built a temple to Aphrodite on this spot. He’d earthed over the sites of Golgotha and the tomb in order to prevent Christians visiting

them. Saint Helen engaged in endeavours to discover the Precious Cross. After painstaking excavations, they finally found three crosses: the Lord’s and those of the robbers. Then according to Church tradition, Bishop Makarios of Jerusalem, having first said a prayer, touched the body of a dead woman with all three crosses. When the third cross, the Lord’s, was laid on her, she revived.

According to Church tradition, Saint Helen embraced the Cross immediately after its discovery and gave it over to Bishop Makarios. The news spread to all parts of Jerusalem. A whole host of believers crowded to touch the Precious Cross, but because of the sheer weight of numbers, the bishop raised the Cross on high and blessed those present with it. On the same day, we celebrate the second Elevation of the Cross, which occurred a few years later, in 335, the day after the inauguration of the church of the Resurrection.



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