



**The Exaltation of the Holy Cross**  
September 14

# The Exaltation of the Holy Cross

629 • Feast of Jesus

The Persian king Chosroes sacked Jerusalem and carried away its most precious treasure: the true Cross, which had been discovered by St. Helena and placed in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the great church over the spot where Jesus had died on the Cross and been buried in the unused tomb. The newly crowned Byzantine emperor Heraclius offered great prayers, fasted, and raised an army to reclaim all the cities that Chosroes had stolen and to regain the true Cross. God favored Heraclius, and the Byzantine emperor defeated his enemy and recovered Jesus' true Cross. The emperor and the people rejoiced that they would be able to return Jesus' Cross to Jerusalem, where it belonged.

Heraclius triumphantly marched back to Jerusalem in magnificence and splendor. He wore his golden crown and his robe of royal purple. To give thanks to God for his victory, he decided he would carry the true Cross through the gates and the streets of Jerusalem, just as Jesus had carried His Cross to His Crucifixion.

Heraclius bore the true Cross on his shoulder, but when he came to the gates of Jerusalem, he found himself blocked as if by some invisible force. He could not move forward through the gates!

Patriarch Zachary of Jerusalem explained to the emperor that he could not go forward because he desired to carry the Cross through Jerusalem dressed as an earthly king, in glory and riches. But Jesus, the King of Heaven and Earth, had humbled Himself to carry His Cross. Instead of splendid robes, Jesus had worn poor garments. Instead of a golden crown on His head, Jesus had worn a crown of thorns. Instead of wearing kingly shoes, Jesus had walked barefoot through Jerusalem's streets.

At Patriarch Zachary's words, the emperor laid aside his royal purple robe and his golden crown. He put on poor clothes and dressed his heart in humility. Once again, he bore the true Cross on his shoulder, and this time he was able to walk through the gates of Jerusalem bearing the true Cross of Jesus. With prayer and ceremony, Heraclius placed the Cross in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, where it belonged.

Like Heraclius and Patriarch Zachary, we must always remember to treat the Cross of Jesus with honor and humility. The Cross reminds us of Jesus' great sacrifice for us, and that is why it is an important symbol of our faith in Jesus. We make the Sign of the Cross before we pray, and we place crosses in our churches and our homes.

Dear Jesus, who died on the Cross for our sins, have mercy on us!