

On 14th of September the Liturgy keeps a Feast which is known as the **EXALTATION** of the Holy Cross. Now the word to 'exalt' can mean to highlight, to focus on, or to praise – and naturally we do all these things because the holy cross is the sign of the love of Jesus which is total self-giving. The cross is the sign with which we mark ourselves at the beginning and end of the Mass and indeed we use the sign of the cross to mark our forehead, lips and heart as we prepare to listen to the words and wisdom of the Gospel.

To exalt can also mean to 'raise up' and this particular meaning comes to mind for this Feast because it commemorates the 'raising up' or the discovery of the relic of the cross on which Jesus died in Jerusalem. Tradition tells us that it was discovered by Helena, mother of the Emperor Constantine and soon after its discovery (around 320ad) the Emperor built a Basilica in Jerusalem to mark the site of the Crucifixion and Resurrection and , rebuilt by the Crusaders in the 12th century, the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre is still a centre for pilgrimage today.

This Feast therefore links us back to the church in Jerusalem – which is a very real way can be called our 'Mother' church. It is good to support the Christian Community in Jerusalem both with prayer, with our physical presence through pilgrimage and with our material assistance (see Saint Paul's letter to the church in Corinth 1 Cor 16:1-4) because that city and its people are a precious witness to the Passion, Resurrection and the giving of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

The entrance antiphon for the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross is:

"We should glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom is our salvation, life and resurrection, through whom we are saved and delivered."

Be it a Crucifix on the wall, an Icon or perhaps a painting, our churches and places for public prayer will have depictions of the holy cross : it is commendable that we do the same in our own homes as an assistance to our personal prayer and also as a witness to our faith.

Father Philip