

## Exaltation of the Holy Cross

Feastday: September 14

This feast was observed in Rome before the end of the seventh century. It commemorates the recovery of the Holy Cross, which had been placed on Mt. Calvary by St. Helena and preserved in Jerusalem, but then had fallen into the hands of Chosroas, King of the Persians. The precious relic was recovered and returned to Jerusalem by Emperor Heraclius in 629.

The lessons from the Breviary tell us that Emperor Heraclius carried the Cross back to Jerusalem on his shoulders. He was clothed with costly garments and with ornaments of precious stones. But at the entrance to Mt. Calvary a strange incident occurred. Try as hard as he would, he could not go forward. Zacharias, the Bishop of Jerusalem, then said to the astonished monarch: "Consider, O Emperor, that with these triumphal ornaments you are far from resembling Jesus carrying His Cross." The Emperor then put on a penitential garb and continued the journey.

Historically today is also the feast of St. Notburga, a peasant who lived in the Tyrol, Austria and St. Maternus, Bishop of Cologne.

It is also historically the feast of St. Peter of Tarentaise, the abbot at a Cistercian monastery. He replaced a very corrupt bishop when he was appointed archbishop of Tarentaise. He accepted his new position with enthusiasm and eagerness. Peter reformed his archdiocese, replaced corrupt clergy, and ministered to the poor. After around 10 years as archbishop, Peter "fell off the radar." When he was located, he was living simply as a lay brother in Switzerland. He returned to his duties as archbishop and once again began to assist the poor.

## Triumph of the Cross

This day is also called the Exaltation of the Cross, Elevation of the Cross, Holy Cross Day, Holy Rood Day, or Roodmas. The liturgy of the Cross is a triumphant liturgy. 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 Mother Church sings of the triumph of the Cross, the instrument of our redemption. To follow 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 made 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. During trials and temptations our strength and protection is the Sign of the Cross. 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 realise that when we make the Sign of the Cross we give our entire self to God — mind, soul, heart, body, will, thoughts.

*O cross, you are the glorious sign of victory.*

*Through your power may we share in the triumph of Christ Jesus.*

**Symbol:** The cross of triumph is usually pictured as a globe with the cross on top, symbolic of the triumph of our Saviour over the sin of the world, and world conquest of His Gospel through the means of a grace (cross and orb).