September 14

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The exaltation of the Cross

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Today the universal Church celebrates the Exaltation of the Cross.
This feast's earliest origins can be traced back to the ancient Good Friday tradition of venerating the instrument used to execute the Messiah. This custom is attested by the pilgrim Eteria, in her diary of travels to holy sites. Later, this feast commemorated the day on which Christ's Cross was thought to have been found. The memorial spread to the West during the reform of Pope Sergius I, who was of Eastern ancestry. The date of September 14 marked the dedication of the basilica of the Anastasis (Resurrection), which was built in the first half of the fourth century between Golgotha and the Holy Sepulcher.
The Eastern and Western churches give different accents to their celebration of the Exaltation, but there has always been full agreement in contemplating the Cross as an instrument of universal redemption. "We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you, because with your holy Cross you have redeemed the world," sing Latin celebrants in the Gospel antiphon. In the Byzantine liturgy, the priest raises the Cross towards each of the earth's four cardinal points as the faithful sing, "Lord, have mercy," expressing their faith that salvation has reached the ends of the earth through the Cross.
The Cross is and will always be the one place where God's true image can be contemplated, as he bends down to embrace men and women in their suffering. As Christians celebrate this feast, they remember the true beatitude of every disciple, who is called to fullness of life through participation in the Son of God's paschal journey.

PRAYER

Holy Father,
who willed that humanity be saved
through your Son Jesus' death on the cross,
grant that your Church may see each of its trials
as a share in Christ's sufferings:
then all of the earth's peoples will see
the sign of the Son of Man appear in history,
the cross of salvation and blessing.
Through Christ our only Lord.

BIBLICAL READINGS

1 Cor 1:18-25 (vigil); Num 21:4-9; Phil 2:6-I1; Jn 3:13-17 (or Jn 19:25-27)

THE CHURCHES REMEMBER...

ANGLICANS:
Giorno della santa Croce

WESTERN CATHOLICS:
The exaltation of the holy Cross (Roman and Ambrosian calendars)
Cyprian (d. 258), bishop (Spanish-Mozarabic calendar)

COPTS AND ETHIOPIANS (4 tut/maskaram):
Joshua (2nd millenium BCE), son of Nun (Coptic Church)

LUTHERANS:
The exaltation of the Cross
Cyprian, doctor of the church and martyr in North Africa

MARONITES:
The exaltation of the holy Cross

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS AND GREEK CATHOLICS:
Universal exaltation of the precious and life-giving Cross
Dormition of John Chrysostom (d. 407), archbishop of Constantinople

WEST SYRIAN ORTHODOX:
Feast of the holy Cross

EAST SYRIAN ORTHODOX:
The exaltation of the holy Cross

OLD CATHOLICS:
The holy Cross