

FORGOTTEN FACTS ABOUT THE HOLY CROSS ELEVATION

The Feast Day of the Elevation of the Holy Cross is an event whose details are engrained in the minds of all Orthodox Christians. We know of the pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 323A.D. led by St. Helen – mother of the Emperor Constantine – in search of our Lord’s Cross. We know that this feast received its name by virtue of the Cross being “elevated” for all to see by Patriarach Macarius after its discovery. But there are other facts about his blessed event that are often overlooked.

Who told St. Helen to search for the Cross in the place it was found?

Tradition tells us that it was a Jew named Jude who advised the Empress. It is said that after the Cross was found, Jude was so overcome by what he witnessed that he was immediately baptized into the Church, taking the name “Cyriacus”. He became a zealour follower of Christ – rising quickly to the office of Patriarch of Jerusalem.

What was initally done with the Cross? After its finding, St. Helen remained in Jerusalem, building churches in Gethsemane, Bethlehem and on the Mout of Olives. Her dream was to construct a great church over the place where our Lord was crucified and buried. She never lived to see her dream fulfilled, however, passing on into eternity before the church’s completion. It was not until September 13/26, AD that the magnificent Church of the Resurrection was formally consecrated. It coincided with the 30th Jubilee of Constantine’s glorious reign as Emperor. The Cross would remain in the church of the Resurrection for nearly 300 years, when King Chozroes conquered Jerusalem and carried it off to Persia. Fourteen years later, the Emperior Heraclius was able to bring it back to its rightful place in the great cathedral.