

15TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST—Tone 6

Afterfeast of the Elevation of the Cross. Sunday after the Elevation. Martyr Sophia and Her Three Daughters.

Vespers

At "Lord, I Call", sing the stichera verses (4) of the Resurrection in Tone 6.

Then the following stichera for the Feast in Tone 4.

When You were raised upon the Cross, O Master, You raised the entire fallen nature of Adam with Yourself. Therefore, with Your strength, we raise up Your all-pure Cross. We entreat You, O Most High, the Lover of mankind, crying out: "As our merciful God, save those who venerate the honorable, light-bearing and divine exaltation of Your Cross!"

Gazing now upon Your footstool; the place where Your all-pure feet have stood, we sing psalms today, O Master, honoring Your all-precious Cross with love! We elevate it with devotion, entreating You and crying out: "You have sanctified all by Your divine Cross, O Most High! Reveal us to be partakers of Your ineffable compassion and grace!"

We bow down before Your all-holy Cross, O Christ, as before an invincible trophy, an impregnable shield and divine scepter, for by it the world has been saved. Adam dances on its behalf. We mortals assemble and give it honor, offering praise in hymns. As we celebrate its elevation, we ask for purification.

Then the following stichera (3) for The Martyrs in Tone 4

The virgin maidens, bound to one another by the law of nature, manifestly made stronger by love of the Creator, loosed the bonds of deception with faith. They valiantly trampled the Enemy and were radiantly adorned with fair crowns of victory. Now they rejoice, dwelling in the heavenly bridal chamber.

The all-praised Faith and glorious Love together with divinely wise Hope, revealed themselves to be namesakes of the most

splendid virtues. As athletes, they overthrew the Evil One who had deceived our First Mother with guile. Now they are deified and dwell in Paradise where they fervently pray for us all.

Faith, Hope and Love, the daughters of Sophia, sought with faith the beauty of the Bridegroom. They united themselves to Him, adorning themselves with divine wounds; they despised the fire, manifold tortures and a shameful death. Through their prayers, O Lord, deliver us from evils!

After “Glory...” in Tone 2 (Feast)

The divine treasure which was hidden in the ground, the life-giving Cross, was revealed in the heavens to the pious emperor, spiritually displaying an edict of victory over his enemies. Rejoicing in it with faith and love, he hastened to raise it up where it would be visible, zealously drawing it forth from the bosom of the earth for the deliverance of the world and the salvation of our souls.

After “Now and ever...” sing the Dogmatic in Tone 4

Who will not bless thee, O most holy Virgin? Who will not sing of thy most pure childbearing? The only-begotten Son shone timelessly from the Father, but from thee He was ineffably incarnate: God by nature, yet Man for our sake! Not two persons but One, known in two natures. Entreat Him, O pure and all-blessed Lady,// to have mercy on our souls!

At the Aposticha, sing the verses of the Resurrection in Tone 6.

After “Glory ... now and ever...” in Tone 1 (Feast)

Moses prefigured the power of Your precious Cross, O Christ, when he put to flight his adversary, Amalek, in the wilderness of Sinai; for when he stretched out his arms in the form of a cross, the people prevailed. Now the outcome of these deeds has come to pass for us. Today the Cross is exalted, and the demons are put to flight. Today all creation has been set free from corruption, for through the Cross all the gifts of grace have shone upon us. Therefore, rejoicing, we all fall before You and cry: “How marvelous are Your works, O Lord! Glory to You!”

Resurrectional Troparion, Tone 6

The Angelic Powers were at Thy tomb; the guards became as dead men. Mary stood by Thy grave, seeking Thy most pure body. Thou didst capture hell not being tempted by it. Thou didst come to the Virgin, granting life.// O Lord, Who didst rise from the dead, glory to Thee.

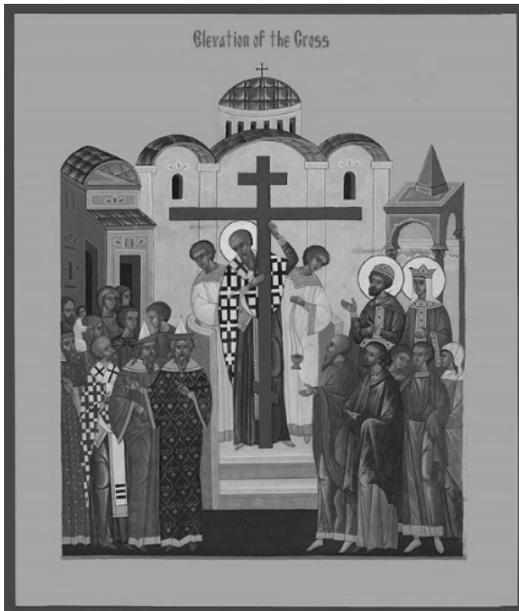
Troparion, Tone 1 (Cross)

O Lord, save Thy people and bless Thine inheritance! Grant victories to the Orthodox Christians over their adversaries; and by virtue of Thy Cross, preserve Thy habitation!

Troparion, Tone 5 (Martyrs)

You blossomed in the courts of the Lord as a fruitful olive tree, holy martyr Sophia; in your contest you offered to Christ the sweet fruit of your womb, your daughters Faith, Hope, and Love.// Together with them intercede for us all!

Rejoice, O Virgin Theotokos



On September 14 we commemorated: The Elevation of the Venerable and Life-Creating Cross of the Lord. The pagan Roman emperors tried to completely eradicate from human memory the holy places where our Lord Jesus Christ suffered and was resurrected for mankind. The Emperor Hadrian (117-138) gave orders to cover over the ground of Golgotha and the Sepulcher of the Lord, and to build a temple of the pagan goddess Venus and a statue of Jupiter.

Pagans gathered at this place and offered sacrifice to idols there. Eventually after 300 years, by Divine Providence, the great Christian sacred remains, the Sepulcher of the Lord and the Life-Creating Cross were again discovered and opened for veneration. This took place under the Emperor Constantine the Great (306-337) after his victory in the year 312 over Maxentius, ruler of the Western part of the Roman Empire, and over Licinius, ruler of its Eastern part. In the year 323 Constantine became the sole ruler of the vast Roman Empire.

In 313 he had issued the Edict of Milan, by which the Christian religion was legalized and the persecutions against Christians in the Western half of the empire were stopped. The ruler Licinius, although he had signed the Edict of Milan to oblige Constantine, still fanatically continued the persecutions against Christians. Only after his conclusive defeat did the 313 Edict of toleration extend also to the Eastern part of the empire. The Holy Equal of the Apostles Emperor Constantine, having gained victory over his enemies in three wars with God's assistance, had seen in the heavens the Sign of the Cross, and written beneath: "By this you shall conquer."

Ardently desiring to find the Cross on which our Lord Jesus Christ was crucified, St Constantine sent his mother, the pious Empress Helen (May 21), to Jerusalem, providing her with a letter to St Macarius, Patriarch of Jerusalem.

Although the holy empress Helen was already in her declining years, she set about completing the task with enthusiasm. The empress gave orders to destroy the pagan temple and the statues in Jerusalem. Searching for the Life-Creating Cross, she made inquiry

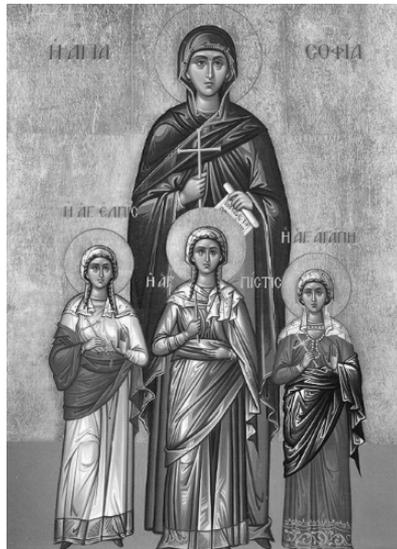
of Christians and Jews, but for a long time her search remained unsuccessful.

Finally, they directed her to a certain elderly Hebrew by the name of Jude who stated that the Cross was buried where the temple of Venus stood. They demolished the pagan temple and, after praying, they began to excavate the ground. Soon the Tomb of the Lord was uncovered. Not far from it were three crosses, a board with the inscription ordered by Pilate, and four nails which had pierced the Lord's Body (March 6).

In order to discern on which of the three crosses the Savior was crucified, Patriarch Macarius alternately touched the crosses to a corpse. When the Cross of the Lord touched the dead one, he came to life. Having beheld the raising of the dead man, everyone was convinced that the Life-Creating Cross was found.

Christians came in a huge throng to venerate the Holy Cross, beseeching St Macarius to elevate the Cross, so that even those far off might reverently contemplate it. Then the Patriarch and other spiritual leaders raised up the Holy Cross, and the people, saying "Lord have mercy," reverently prostrated before the Venerable Wood. This solemn event occurred in the year 326.

Today we commemorate: the Afterfeast of the Elevation of the Cross. From September 15 until the Leavetaking, we sing "O come, let us worship and fall down before Christ. O son of God crucified in the flesh, save us who sing to Thee: Alleluia" at weekday Liturgies following the Little Entrance.



Today we commemorate: The Holy Martyrs Saint Sophia and her Daughters Faith, Hope and Love were born in Italy. Their mother was a pious Christian widow who named her daughters for the three Christian virtues. Faith was twelve, Hope was ten, and Love was nine. Saint Sophia raised them in the love of the Lord Jesus Christ. Saint Sophia and her daughters did not hide their faith in Christ, but openly confessed it before everyone.

An official named Antiochus denounced them to the emperor Hadrian (117-138), who ordered that they be brought to Rome. Realizing that they would be taken before the emperor, the holy virgins prayed fervently to the Lord Jesus Christ, asking that He give them the strength not to fear torture and death. When the holy virgins and their mother came before the emperor, everyone present was amazed at their composure. They looked as though they had been brought to some happy festival, rather than to torture. Summoning each of the sisters in turn, Hadrian urged them to offer sacrifice to the goddess Artemis. The young girls remained unyielding. Then the emperor ordered them to be tortured. They burned the holy virgins over an iron grating, then threw them into a red-hot oven, and finally into a cauldron with boiling tar, but the Lord preserved them.

The youngest child, Love, was tied to a wheel and they beat her with rods until her body was covered all over with bloody welts. After undergoing unspeakable torments, the holy virgins glorified their Heavenly Bridegroom and remained steadfast in the Faith. They subjected Saint Sophia to another grievous torture: the mother was forced to watch the suffering of her daughters. She displayed adamant courage, and urged her daughters to endure their torments for the sake of the Heavenly Bridegroom. All three maidens were beheaded, and joyfully bent their necks beneath the sword. In order to intensify Saint Sophia's inner suffering, the emperor permitted her to take the bodies of her daughters. She placed their remains in coffins and loaded them on a wagon. She drove beyond the city limits and reverently buried them on a high hill. Saint Sophia sat there by the graves of her daughters for three days, and finally she gave up her soul to the Lord. Even though she did not suffer for Christ in the flesh, she was not deprived of a martyr's crown. Instead, she suffered in her heart. Believers buried her body there beside her daughters.

The relics of the holy martyrs have rested at El'zasa, in the church of Esho since the year 777.