

*Pope Shenouda III series*  
8

***THE FEAST  
OF  
THE CROSS***

***BY HIS HOLINESS AMBA SHENOUDA III,  
POPE AND PATRIARCH OF ALEXANDRIA  
AND OF THE APOSTOLIC SEE OF  
ALL THE PREDICATION OF SAINT MARK***

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***Author: His Holiness Pope Shenouda III***  
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***His Holiness Pope Shenouda III***  
***Pope and Patriarch of the See of Alexandria and of all the***  
***Predication of the Evangelist St. Mark***

*In the Name of  
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
the One God,  
Amen*

*In this pamphlet, you read about:  
The importance and the spiritual significance  
of the Cross.  
The Cross in the life of Christ.  
The Cross in the lives of the apostles  
and all the saints  
and in the lives of the fathers monks.  
The glories of the Cross.  
The spiritual meanings of the Cross.  
The theological and doctrinal meanings.  
How to bear a cross in practical life.  
Saint Helen who discovered the Cross.*

*Pope Shenouda III*

*The Church celebrates the feast of the Cross on the 17th of Tot, (27th or 28th of September), the day of the apparition of the Cross to the Emperor Constantin, and on the 10th of Baramhat (19th of March), the day when the Empress Helen found the wood of the Holy Cross.*

We want to-day to speak about the spiritual meaning of the Cross, and about the importance and benediction of the Cross, in our lives.

*The Cross is every difficulty which we suffer in view of our love for God, or for our love for people, for the Kingdom of God in general.*

## ***THE LORD CHRIST AND THE CROSS***

The Lord invited to bear the Cross and said: "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Matt. 16:24) (Mark 8:34). And He said to the rich young man: "Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, ..... and come, take up the cross, and follow Me" (Mark 10:21).

*He made the bearing of the Cross a condition for the discipleship to Him.*

He said: "And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:27).

*He Himself, during all the period of His Incarnation on earth, lived bearing the Cross.*

Since His Nativity, Herod wanted to kill Him, and He run away with His mother to Egypt. When He began his mission, he suffered the fatigue of the service, and had "nowhere to lay His head" (Luke 9: 58). He lived a life of pain, so that Isaiah said about Him that He is: "A Man of sorrow and acquainted with grief" (Isaiah 53:3). He was bitterly persecuted by the Jews. Once they "took up stones again to stone Him" (John 10:31). Another time they wanted to "throw Him down over the cliff" (Luke 4:29). As for their insults and their accusation of Him, they are very numerous. All these are crosses which are other than the Cross on which He was crucified.....

## ***THE CROSS IN THE LIVES OF SAINTS***

*The disciples of Christ also placed the Cross before their eyes.*

They preached continually..... and said about that: "but we preach Christ crucified" although He is "to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness" (1 Cor. 1:23). The apostle saint Paul said: "For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2). He rather boasted in the Cross saying: "But God

forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world" (Gal. 6:14).

Even the angel who announced the Resurrection, used this expression " Jesus who was crucified". He said to the two Mariam: "I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. he is not here; for He is risen, as He said" (Matt. 28:5). Thus he called Him "Jesus who was crucified" although He was already risen. The expression " who was crucified" remained attached to him, and our fathers the apostles used it and concentrated their predication on it. As saint Peter said to the Jews "know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36).

***The Cross is the narrow gate in which the Lord invited us to enter (Matt.7:13).***

He said to us:

"In the world you will have tribulation" (John 16:33);

"And you will be hated by all for my name's sake" (Matt. 10:22);

"yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service" (John 16:2);

"If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you" (John 15:19).

Thus the apostle saint Paul taught: "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22).

***The life of the Cross is evident in the lives of the martyrs, the abbots, and the ascetics.***

In view of the faith, the martyrs and the confessors suffered unbearable torments and agonies. The majority of the early apostles and bishops marched in the way of martyrdom.

When the Lord called Saul of Tarsus to become an apostle for the gentiles, He said about him "For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake" (Acts 9:16). We can mention as an example, the apostolic saint Athanassius of the abbots and the cross which they carried. He was exiled three times and he was exposed to bad accusations; and saint John Chrysostom who was also exiled..... and the incarceration and ostracisation to which the fathers were exposed.

***As for the fathers monks, the Church surnames them "the cross bearers".***

They have borne the cross of solitude and aloofness from every human consolation, and the cross of ascetism in which they were denuded from every corporal desire. They suffered the pains of hunger, thirst, cold, heat, poverty, and penury, in view of the greatness of their love the King Christ. They also suffered the afflictions and the warfare of the

devils in various ways and kinds, as in the life of saint Antonios, and the lives of the the wandering anchorites.

## ***THE CROSS PRECEDES RESURRECTION***

Christ was elevated over the level of the earth in His Crucifixion.

He was also elevated over the level of the tomb in His Resurrection.

He was elevated over the level of all the world in His Ascension to heaven and in His sitting at the right side of the Father. He was rather elevated over the level of this heaven.

***These are degrees of elevation, all of which He had begun by the Cross.***

Rather before that, He was elevated over the level of self-preoccupation in His Nativity. He "made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant" (Philippians 2:7).

***The Cross of the Lord preceded His Resurrection; and His making Himself of no reputation preceded His glory.***

Pain always precedes the crowns. Thus the apostle saint Paul said:

***"if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together" (Rom. 8:17).***

Thus he showed us the value and the results of pain. He rather considered pain as a gift in life to us from God. He said:

***"For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake" (Philippians 1:29). Pain is considered to be a gift because of its crowns.***

Our Lord established the bearing of the cross as a condition to discipleship to Him. He said: "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up the cross, and follow Me" (Matt. 16:24). He said more than that: "And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:27).

***Such as the bearing of the cross is a condition for life with God, so also it is a test of seriousness and steadfastness in His way.***

The tribulations to which the faithful man is exposed during his life, are a test of the extent of his steadfastness in faith. Thus the Lord said: "in the world you will have tribulation" (John 16:33). While He was on his way to the Cross, He permitted that his disciples should encounter the bearing of the cross, so that the extent of their steadfastness should appear. He said: "Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat" (Luke 22:31).

***For this reason, the Holy Church has placed the martyrs in the highest order of saints***

because they were those who have suffered the cross more than all the others, in view of their constancy in the faith. The Church places also with them the confessors who confessed the faith and suffered many torments, although they did not obtain the crown of martyrdom.

***If you bear a cross, accept that joyfully because of the crowns which you will obtain, if you do not complain and do not doubt.***

It was said about the sufferings of Christ our Lord that He "for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12:2). Here we find the Cross with joy in enduring it, and glory resulting from it.....

***You will encounter many kinds of crosses. Among them, there are exertion, toleration, patience, fatigue in service and in repentance, and also discipline from God and from the fathers.....***

Do not grumble then, whenever you bear a cross; and do not think that spiritual life must be easy, and its way covered with flowers.

Otherwise, on what account will you be rewarded in eternity? And also, what is the meaning of the words of the Lord concerning the narrow gate (Matt. 7:13)?

## ***CHRISTIAN LIFE IS A CROSS***

***In fact, christian life is practically a journey to Golgotha; and christianity without a cross is really not christianity.***

Those who have received their good things on earth, will have no share in the Kingdom, as the story of the rich man and Lazarus explains to us (Luke 16:25). We say that, as regards individuals, just as we say it as regards groups and churches also. For christianity is a participation in the sufferings of Christ, as the apostle saint Paul said: "that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death" (Philippians 3:10). He said also about this participation in the sufferings:

***"I have been crucified with Christ, it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2:20).***

So that if you want to live with Christ, you must be crucified with Christ, or you must be crucified for Him, and suffer for Him, even if that would lead to die for Him also.

## ***THE CROSS AND ITS GLORIES***

***In christianity, you suffer, you find pleasure in suffering, and you obtain crowns for your suffering which is transformed into glory.***

Christianity is not a cross which you carry, and grumble and protest in your complaint! No, but it is the love of the cross, the love of suffering and sacrifice and fatigue for the Lord and for the expansion of His

kingdom. It was said about the Lord Christ: "who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame"(Heb.12:2).

The apostle saint Paul said: "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake" (2 Cor. 12:10).... And after having been scourged, the fathers apostles "departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name" (Acts 5:41)..... But about the glories of sufferings, the apostle says:

***"if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together" (Rom. 8:17).***

Therefore he said after that: "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18). And thus the apostle saint Peter said: "But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed" (1 Peter 3:14).

Hence sufferings are accompanied by blessings. The Lord Christ has mentioned them saying: "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (Matt. 5: 11-12).

Here we find that the sufferings for the Lord are associated with joy and jubilation and with the celestial reward.

***Truly: because after the cross, there is resurrection and ascension, and also sitting at the right side of the Father.***

If christianity were only a cross, without glories, people would have been tired, and as the apostle said: "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable" (1 Cor. 15:19). But christians in their bearing of the cross, look at the eternal glories "while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:18).

***Therefore, with the external fatigue, there is peace and consolation.***

Saint Stephan at the time of his lapidation, saw the heavens opened, "and saw the glory of God" (Acts 7: 55,56). What joy had he at that time....!

There is another joy which the martyrs felt; it is that they had completed the days of their expatriation on earth and the moment of their encounter with the Lord approached.....Some of them saw the crowns and the glories..... and some others had holy visions that consoled them...

***We do not separate the cross from its rejoicing and its glories: also we do not separate it from the assistance and grace of God.***



The christian might carry a cross, but he does not carry it alone, and God does not leave him alone. There is a divine assistance that supports and upholds. It is that assistance which stood with the martyrs till they supported the sufferings, and which stands with the faithful in every tribulation. There is the encouraging expression of the Lord: "Do not be afraid ..... for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you" (Acts 18: 9,10); "Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:9).

"They will fight against you, but they shall not prevail against you. For I am with you", says the Lord, "to deliver you" (Jer. 1:19).

## ***THE LOVE OF CHRISTIANITY FOR THE CROSS***

*The cross is an emblem to which every christian clings because of its spiritual and doctrinal meanings.*

We suspend it on the churches, we include it in all our sculptures, we suspend it on our breasts, we make its sign on ourselves, we begin our prayers with it, we sign it on our food, we sanctify with it all that we possess. The men of the clergy carry it in their hands, and they bless the people with it. The cross is used in all the ecclesiastical sacraments, and in all the signings and the consecrations, in the belief that all the blessings of the New Testament came as a result of the Cross. The clothes of the clerical men are adorned with the cross, not just for ornamentation, but for its benediction and its power. We celebrate two feasts for the Cross, and we carry the cross during the processions and the celebrations.

*We see that there is a power in the signing of the Cross, which the devils dread.*

All the pains of the devil to ruin human beings, has been lost by means of the deliverance which was realised on the Cross. Therefore Satan dreads the sign of the cross..... on condition that the signing of the cross is done with faith and reverence. The apostle saint Paul said: "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor. 1:18).

That is why a christian fortifies himself with the signing of the cross.

## ***HOW TO BEAR PRACTICALLY YOUR CROSS***

***The cross is a sign of love, bestowal, sacrifice, and redemption, which you carry each time you are tired in view of the practice of these virtues.***

Try to get tired for the rest of another, and for his deliverance and his service; and be confident that God does never forget the fatigue of charity, "and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor" (1 Cor. 3:8)... Train yourself to give: whatever you bestow and support and sacrifice..... and train yourself to give from your necessities, as the blessed widow had done (Luke 21:4)..... Get tired in your service, because it is as much as you get tired, so much your love will appear, and therefore your sacrifice.

***2. The Cross is also a sign of sufferings and endurance:***

The sufferings which the Lord endured for us, whether the sufferings of the body, of which He said: "They pierced My hands and My feet; I can count all My bones" (Ps. 22: 16-17) ..... or the sufferings of shame which He joyfully endured for us, that is He was rejoicing for our salvation.

Therefore the apostle said about Him: "who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame" (Heb: 12:2). How great is the endurance when it is joyfully done. That is a lesson for us.

While you suffer a cross, if you endure the tribulation of the cross for the Lord, or if you encounter persecution because of your justice, or if you are hit with disease or weakness for that..... likewise if you endure the wearisome deeds of people without taking revenge for yourself, but rather you turn the other cheek, and you walk the second mile, and do not resist an evil person (Matt. 5:39), but rather you act with patience, ... and patience is a cross, ... whether your endurance is within the circle of the family, or in the field of service, or in relation to your work.

***3. You will bear a cross, if you crucify the flesh with its passions (Gal. 5:24).***

You make efforts to crucify a craving or a guilty desire, and you conquer yourself. You crucify your thoughts each time they want to make you wandering. Likewise you restrain your senses, you bridle your tongue, you constrain yourself, and forbid your body to take food, enduring hunger, keeping away from every appetising food, and from every corporal pleasure and from the love of money.

***4. You bear your cross in your self-denial, by taking the last place,***

by not seeking dignity, by your giving up your rights, by not taking your reward on earth, by preferring others to yourself in everything with love that "does not seek its own" (1 Cor. 13:5), by humility and renouncement, and by keeping away from praise and dignity.

***5. You bear your cross by bearing the sins of others, because our Lord the Christ has done so.***

There is no objection that you would bear the guilt of another one and be punished for that instead of him; or that you bear the responsibilities of another one, and to carry them on instead of him. And as saint Paul said to Philemon about Onesimus: "But if he has wronged you or owes anything, put that on my account. I, Paul, an writing with my own hand, I will repay" (Philemon 18-19)..... As much as you can, participate in the sufferings of others, and carry them in their place. Be a cyrenian bearing the cross of another.

## ***SPIRITUAL MEANINGS OF THE CROSS***

***When we make the sign of the cross, we remember many of the theological and spiritual meanings which are connected to it.***

1. We remember the love of God for us, who accepted death instead of us, in view of our salvation. ***"All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Is. 53:6)***. When we make the sign of the cross, we remember "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). "And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world" (1 John 2:2).

***2. And in the Cross, we remember our sins.***

Our sins which He has borne on the Cross, and for which He Incarnated and was crucified.....

With this remembrance, we become humiliated, our souls become contrite, and we thank for the price which He paid for us "For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor. 6:20).

***3. And in the Cross, we remember the divine justice:***

How forgiveness was not on account of justice. But the divine justice took his right on the Cross. We do not then consider sin as a slight matter, the sin whose price is such as that.

***4. In our signing of the Cross, we declare our discipleship to this crucified One.***

Those who take the cross simply by its spiritual meaning, inside the heart, without any apparent sign, do not openly manifest this discipleship which we declare by signing the cross, by carrying the cross on our breasts, by kissing the cross in front of everybody, by drawing it on our hands, and by raising it above the places in which we worship.

With all this, we openly declare our faith, and we are not ashamed of the Cross of Christ in front of people, but rather we boast of it, we hold fast to it, we celebrate feasts for it ..... Even without speaking, our plain aspect manifests our faith.....

***5. We do not make the sign of the cross on ourselves in a silent manner, but we say with that: In the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.***

Thus each time we declare our faith in the Holy Trinity who is One God for ever to eternity, amen. Thus the Holy Trinity is continually in our thoughts, and that is not available to those who do not make the sign of the cross as we do.

***6. In making the sign of the cross, we also declare our belief in Incarnation and Redemption:***

When we make the sign of the cross from upward to downward, and from the left side to the right side, we remember that God has come down from heaven downward to our earth, and transported people from the left side to the right side, from obscurity to light, and from death to life; and how many are the meditations which come to our hearts and minds from the signing of the cross!

***7. We remember forgiveness in the Cross,***

how our sins were forgiven on the Cross, and how our Lord addressed the heavenly Father saying (while He was on the Cross): "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" (Luc 23:34)....

***8. In the signing of the cross, there is a religious instruction for our sons and for others:***

Whoever makes the sign of the cross, when he prays, when he enters the church, when he eats, when he sleeps, and at every moment, he remembers the Cross. This remembrance is spiritually useful and scripturally desirable. In it there is also an instruction for people, that Christ was crucified, and an instruction specially for our small children who grow from their childhood being used to the cross.

***9. By making the sign of the cross we preach the death of the Lord for us, conforming to his commandment.***

This is the commandment of the Lord who has redeemed us, to preach His "death till He comes" (1 Cor. 11:26)..... In making the sign the cross we remember His death at all times, and we keep remembering Him till He comes.

We also remember Him in the sacrament of Eucharist. But this sacrament is not done every moment, while we can make the sign of the cross at every moment, remembering the death of Christ for our sake.....

***10. In making the sign of the cross, we remember that the retribution of sin is death:***

because otherwise Christ would not have died; "we were dead in trespasses" (Eph. 2:5). But Christ died instead us upon the Cross and gave us life. Having paid the price on the Cross, He said to the Father: "Father, forgive them" (Luke 23:34).

***11. In making the sign of the cross, we remember the love of God for us:***

We remember that the cross is a sacrifice of love. "***For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life***" (John 3:16)..... and we remember that "God demonstrated His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us..... and we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son" (Rom. 5: 8,10).

In the Cross, we remember the love of God for us, because "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends" (John: 15:13).

***12. We make the sign of the cross because it gives us power.***

The apostle saint Paul felt that power of the Cross, and said: "by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world" (Gal. 6:14). And he also said: "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor. 1:18).

Note that he did not say that the crucifixion is the power of God, but he said that the simple word of the cross is the power of God.

Therefore when we make the sign of the cross, and when we mention the cross, we are filled with power; because we remember that the Lord trampled death by the cross, and He granted life to everybody, and forced and defeated Satan. Therefore....

***we make the sign of the cross, because Satan dreads it:***

All the labour of Satan since he fought Adam until the end of time, has been lost on the Cross, because the Lord has paid the price, and erased all the sins of people with His blood, for those who believe and obey. Therefore Satan whenever he sees the cross, he is terrified and remembers his greatest defeat and the loss of his labour, and so he is ashamed and runs away.

Thus all the sons of God constantly use the sign of the cross, considering that it is the sign of conquest and victory, that it is the power of God. As for our part, we are filled with power inside. But the enemy outside is scared.

And as in ancient times the bronze serpent was lifted up, as a healing for people and salvation from death, even so the Lord of glory was lifted up on the Cross. (John 3:14). Thus is the sign of the cross in its effect.

***14. We make the sign of the cross, and take its blessing:***

In ancient times, the cross was the sign of malediction and death because of sin..... But on the Cross, the Lord bore all our maledictions, in order to grant us the benediction of the reconciliation with God (Rom. 5:10), and the benediction of the new life. Therefore all the gracious things of the New Testament come from the Cross.

Therefore the clergy men use this cross in the giving of benediction, as an indication that the benediction is not issued from them personally, but from the cross of the Lord who has entrusted them to use it for granting benediction, and because they take their ministry from the ministry of Him who was crucified. All the blessings of the New Testament follow the cross of the Lord and its effect.

**15. *Therefore we use the cross in all the holy sacraments of Christianity,***

because they all have their source in the merits of the blood of Christ on the cross.

Without the cross, we could not deserve to come near to God as sons in Baptism; and we could not deserve the communion of his body and blood in the mystery of Eucharist (1 Cor. 11:26), and we could not enjoy the blessings of any mystery from the mysteries of the Church.

**16. *We pay attention to the Cross in order to remember our participation in it.***

We remember the word of the apostle saint Paul: "***I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me***" (Gal. 2:20). And also his word: "***that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death***" (Philippians 3:10). Here we ask ourselves when shall we enter into participation with the sufferings of the Lord and shall be crucified with Him.

***And here we remember the thief who was crucified with Him, and deserved to be with Him in paradise.*** Probably he is in paradise singing with the song that saint Paul said later "I have been crucified with Christ....."

All our wishes are that we ascend on the cross with Christ, and to boast about this cross which we remember now whenever we touch it with our senses.

**17. *We honor the cross, because it is a subject of joy for the Father:***

The Father who has accepted Christ on the cross with all joy, as a sin sacrifice and also as "a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the Lord" (Lev.1: 5,13,17).

The Lord Christ has satisfied the Father with the perfection of His life on earth, but He entered into the fullness of this satisfaction on the Cross, where He "became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:8).

Each time we look at the cross, we remember the perfection of obedience, and the perfection of subjection, in order to imitate the Lord Christ in his obedience, to the point of death.

As the cross was a subject of joy for the Father, so also it was a subject of joy as regards the Son who was crucified, of whom it was said: "who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame" (Heb. 12:2).

***Thus was the fullness of Christ's joy in His crucifixion. May we be like that.***

***18. In the cross, "we go forth to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach" (Heb. 13:12)***

with the same feelings which we have in the holy week.....and in that, we remember what was said about the prophet Moses: "esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt" (Heb. 11:26). The reproach of Christ is His crucifixion and His sufferings.

***19. On the cross, we remember the salvation which the thief who was crucified with the Lord obtained:***

That gives us a wonderful hope. How could a man be saved in the last hours of his life on earth, and get a promise to enter the paradise.

How the Lord with His spiritual influence on this thief, had been able to draw him to Himself, and remember his faith and his confession, without remembering any of his previous sins.

How great is that hope which was realised on the cross.

***20. We bear the cross which reminds us of His second coming:***

As it has been mentioned in the gospel about the end of the world and the coming of the Lord: "Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven" (that is the cross).....and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds....." (Matt. 24:30).

Let us remember the sign of the Son of Man on earth, so long as we expect this sign of His in heaven in His majestic coming.

***THE JUST QUEEN  
SAINT HELEN***

*We remember her on the occasion of  
the Feast of the Cross*



The Orthodox Coptic Church celebrates her feast on the 9th of Bashans, (the 17th of May), the day of her death in the year 327 AD, and we also remember her on the 17th of Tot, (the 27th or the 28th of September), the day of the feast of the Cross.

The Church also remembers her in the assembly of saints in the prayers of the "Psalmody", asking for her prayers and the prayers of her son the Emperor Constantin..... Our brothers the Orthodox Greeks build churches on her name, and they celebrate her feast and the feast of her son on the 21st of Ayar. The Latin Church celebrates her feast on the 18th of Aab (August).

Her son Emperor Constantin honored her. He gave her the surname "Augusta", meaning queen. He gave her the power over the Imperial treasures. She spent generously and liberally on the construction of churches. She gave to the poor and the needy persons and cities.

The historian Eusebius of Cesarea said about her, that during her wandering in the Eastern States, she presented numerous proofs of her magnanimity as an Empress, and of her imperial generosity upon the inhabitants of the various cities as communities and upon the individuals, as well as she offered many aids with the utmost lavishness. She gave money to some, and big quantities of clothes to others. She liberated some from prisons, or from the slavery of service in the mines. She delivered others from the violence of persecution, and brought back some others from exile (K3 F44).

She was very religious. She went to church, with simple modest clothes, although she was an empress, and she stood with all veneration among the masses. She was constant in her prayers, and she attended the religious celebrations, and lived as a worshipper more than she lived as a queen. She visited the holy places, bearing the fatigues of travel in her old age.

***The Lord suggested to her in a vision, to go to Jerusalem, and to search exactly for the place of the glorious Cross.***

She went there, and inquired, and discovered three crosses. Saint Macarius, the Bishop of Jerusalem, accompanied her. God manifested the holy cross with a miracle, as it appears in the synaxaire of the 17th of Tot.

She placed the cross in a golden box, and gave it to the bishop, and she kept a part of it for her son Constantin who placed some of the holy nails in his protective covering.

Saint Helen constructed a church in Behtlehem, at the cave where our Lord was born, and she built another one on the Mount of Olives, at the place of the Ascension of the Saviour.

She began the construction of the church of the Resurrection.....

Her son the emperor Constantin presented to her all that was necessary for her holy work. He sent letters in relation to that, to the governors and to the bishops.

This saint specified numerous unalienable properties for the churches and the monasteries, and for spending on the poor. She celebrated a feast in Jerusalem for the sacred virgins, and she herself served them.

She built a church on the name of the martyr saint Lucianos in the town where she was born, which her son called Helenopolis on her name Helen, in her honor.

This saint died in 327 AD at the age of 84 years. She wrote her testament to her son the Emperor, and to her grandsons the ceasars, inciting them to be firm in the life of faith and justice.

## ***SOME VERSETS TO BE STUDIED AND RECALLED FROM MEMORY ABOUT THE CROSS***

"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2:20).

"And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires" (Gal. 5:24).

"But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world" (Gal. 6:14).

"For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor. 1:18).

".....having made peace through te blood of His cross" (Col. 1:20).

"For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus-Christ and Him crucified" (1Cor. 2:2).

"And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:27).

"knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him" (Rom. 6:6).

"for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Cor. 2:8).