



GRAND MAGISTERIUM – VATICAN
EQUESTRIAN ORDER OF
THE HOLY SEPULCHRE OF JERUSALEM

At the service of the living stones in the Holy Land

The Cross and the Resurrection of Christ

A meditation by Mgr Fortunato Frezza, Master of Ceremonies of the Grand Magisterium of the Order, on the occasion of the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross



In the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre, pilgrims can gather around not only the sepulchre of the Risen Christ but, not far from there, higher up, also on the site of the crucifixion at Golgotha, where the Cross of the Lord is represented. And so a single place of worship unifies these two sacred sites, under the same roof, as Golgotha and the Sepulchre are inseparable.

On this day the Eastern Church celebrates the Cross with a solemnity comparable to that of Easter. Constantine had built a Basilica in Jerusalem, at Golgotha, and another on the Sepulchre of the Risen Christ. **Today, Golgotha and the Sepulchre are under the same roof, because Golgotha and the Sepulchre are inseparable**, like the Cross and the tomb stone.

Andrew, Bishop of Crete, where he died in 740AD, and a member of the clergy in Jerusalem, looks to the Cross and exclaims with enthusiastic words: "Today we celebrate the feast of the Holy Cross, by which darkness was chased away and light returned. **Celebrate the feast of the Holy Cross and we ourselves, together with the crucified, will rise again and be transformed.**"

The Cross is the source of light and ultimate dignity. For us today, Knights and Dames, the Cross is empty like the tomb, because Christ is risen. On the cross we venerate his redeeming blood; in the tomb we adore his glorious body. For us too, this day, like the feast of Easter, is important. **The Cross leads to the tomb, and the tomb to the cradle of the Resurrection.**

I embrace you, Cross of death. I hail you, sepulchre of everlasting life.

The cross without the crucified is like the empty sepulchre

In effect, we are taken from the world of sin and raised to the heights. **The richness of the cross is great and he who possesses it possesses a true treasure.** And rightly we call it Holy, because in name and in works it is the most precious of all goods. And in it resides our whole salvation. It is the way to return to our original state.

Furthermore, if there were no Cross, there would be no Christ crucified. If there were no Cross, Life would not have been hung on the wood. And if Life had not been nailed to the wood, the rivers of immortality would not have flowed from His side, blood and water, which purify the world. The sentence of condemnation because of our sin would not have been wiped out, we would not have received freedom, we could not enjoy the tree of life, and Paradise could not be opened to us. **If we did not have the cross, death would not have been vanquished,** Hell would not have been plundered.

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The Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross

On 14 September, The Catholic and the Orthodox Churchs celebrate the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross.

“We are celebrating the Feast of the Cross which drove away darkness and brought in the light. As we keep this Feast, we are lifted up with the crucified Christ, leaving behind us earth and sin so that we may gain the things above”. (From the “Discourses” of Saint Andrew of Crete, Bishop – Discourse 10 on the Exaltation of the Holy Cross).

The Bishop of Jerusalem, Macarius, was ordered by the Emperor Constantine and his mother Saint Helena to build two basilicas in Jerusalem, one on Golgotha and the other on the Holy Sepulchre. The mother of the Emperor had ordered excavations on Golgotha and it was there they found the cross that was identified to be the true cross of Christ. On 14 September therefore, it is not the commemoration of the dedication of the two basilicas, which took place in the year 335, which we celebrate, but rather the triumph of the Cross, sign and instrument of salvation.