



Good day Worthy Knights, in this part 49, the Twelve Grand Points of the Cross: 2nd and 3rd.

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RCC Lecture delivered in the Schola Palatina Conclave No 509, on 19 December A.D. 2015.

2. The journey of St. Helena from Rome to Jerusalem (cont'd)

It was in Palestine, as we learn from Eusebius (loc. cit., xlii), that she had resolved to bring to God, the King of kings, the homage and tribute of her devotion.

She lavished on that land her bounties and good deeds, she 'explored it with remarkable discernment', and 'visited it with the care and solicitude of the emperor himself'. Then, when she 'had shown due veneration to the footsteps of the Saviour', she had two churches erected for the worship of God: one was raised in Bethlehem near the Grotto of the Nativity, the other on the Mount of the Ascension, near Jerusalem. She also embellished the sacred grotto with rich ornaments.

This sojourn in Jerusalem proved the starting point of the legend first recorded by Rufinus as to the discovery of the Cross of Christ. Her princely munificence was such that, according to Eusebius, she assisted not only individuals but entire communities. The poor and destitute were the special objects of her charity.

She visited the churches everywhere with pious zeal and made them rich donations. It was thus that, in fulfilment of the Saviour's precept, she brought forth abundant fruit in word and deed. If Helena conducted herself in this manner while in the Holy Land, which is indeed testified to by Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea in Palestine, we should not doubt that she manifested the same piety and benevolence in those other cities of the empire in which she resided after her conversion.

Her memory in Rome is chiefly identified with the church of S. Croce in Gerusalemme. On the present location of this church formerly stood the Palatium Sessorianum, and nearby were the Thermae Helenianae, which baths derived their name from the Empress. Here two inscriptions were found composed in honour of Helena.

The Sessorium, which was near the site of the Lateran, probably served as Helena's residence when she stayed in Rome; so that it is quite possible for a Christian basilica to have been erected on this spot by Constantine, at her suggestion and in honour of the true Cross. When, according to Socrates' account (Church History I.17), the Emperor in 327 improved Drepanum, his mother's native town, and decreed that it should be called Helenopolis, it is probable that she returned from Palestine to her son who was then residing in the Orient.

Constantine was with her when she died, at the advanced age of eighty years or thereabouts. This must have been about the year 330, the last coins stamped with her name bore this date. She was buried in the Mausoleum of Helena, outside Rome on the Via Labicana. Her sarcophagus is on display in the Pio Clementino Vatican Museum, although the connection is often questioned, next to her is the sarcophagus of her granddaughter Saint Constantina (Saint Constance).

During her life, she gave many presents to the poor, released prisoners and mingled with the ordinary worshippers in modest attire. Her body was brought to Constantinople and laid to rest in the imperial vault of the church of the Apostles. It is presumed that her remains were transferred in 849 to the Abbey of Hautvillers, in the French Archdiocese of Reims.

She was revered as a saint, and the veneration spread, early in the ninth century, even to Western countries. Her feast falls on 18 August.



Helena' sarcophagus in the Museo Pio Clementino in Rome and the Golgotha today.

3. Her pious and diligent enquiry concerning the sacred spot Golgotha.

Jerusalem and the Holy Temple were destroyed by the Romans in August of AD 70, following the Jewish Revolt of 70 and Bar Kokhba's revolt of 132–135.

Jerusalem was re-built in 135 by the emperor Hadrian as Aelia Capitolina, a Pagan city.

The site of the Holy Sepulchre, originally a site of veneration for the Christian community in Jerusalem, became covered with earth and a temple of Venus was built on top. Over the site of the crucifixion was built a Pagan Temple and another Pagan Temple was erected on the Temple Mount itself, but in a curious way this preserved the sacred sites from being built upon by secular buildings.

Following his conversion in 312, the Emperor Constantine decided to alter the cityscape of Jerusalem and sent a letter to the Bishop of Jerusalem giving him instructions as to what he intended to do, to find the sites sacred to Christians and build churches to the Glory of God.

The Empress Helena travelled to the Holy Land in 326-28, founding churches and establishing relief agencies for the poor. Constantine directed his mother, to build churches upon sites, which commemorated the life of Jesus Christ; she was present in 326 at the construction of the church on the site, and involved herself in the excavations and construction. During the excavation, Helena rediscovered the True Cross, and a tomb, which exhibited a clear and visible proof that it was the tomb of Jesus.