



Good day Worthy Knights, in this part 51, the Twelve Grand Points of the Cross 6th to 10th.

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

6. The Building of the church of the Holy Sepulchre by Constantine after the finding of the Cross.

Emperor Constantine ordered in about 325–326 that that the temple of Venus be demolished and the soil - which had provided a flat surface for the temple - be removed and instructed Saint Macarius, Bishop of Jerusalem, to build a church on the site.

Just as the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem (also founded by Constantine and Helena) commemorated the birth of Jesus, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre would commemorate his death and resurrection.

Constantine's church was built as two connected churches, a hundred paces long and sixty wide, over the two different holy sites, encompassing both the tomb and the place of crucifixion including a great basilica (the Martyrium), an enclosed colonnaded atrium (the Triportico) with the traditional site of Golgotha in one corner, and a rotunda, called the Anastasis ('Resurrection'), which contained the remains of a rock-cut room that Helena and Macarius identified as the burial site of Jesus.

The rock face at the west end of the building was cut away. Constantine arranged for the rock face to be removed from around the tomb, without harming it, in order to isolate the tomb; in the centre of the rotunda is a small building called the Kouvouklion (Κουβούκλιον; Modern Greek for small compartment) or Aedicule (from Latin: aediculum, small building), which encloses this tomb.

It is not currently possible to see it as the remains are completely enveloped by a marble sheath. There is a superb cupola over the sepulchre. By 335 the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre was completed and relics of the Cross were being venerated there.

The silver reliquary of the Cross that was left at the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre in the care of the bishop of Jerusalem was exhibited periodically to the faithful. In 380 a nun named Egeria who was travelling on pilgrimage described the veneration of the True Cross at Jerusalem in a long letter, in which she described how the reliquary is brought forth and opened and the Cross and the Titulus placed upon a table.

The faithful kiss the sacred wood which is guarded by deacons lest someone tries to bite off a splinter. Other fragments of the Cross were further broken up, and the pieces were widely distributed Egeria's account testifies to how highly these relics of the crucifixion were prized. Saint John Chrysostomos relates that fragments of the True Cross were kept in golden reliquaries and worn upon the persons.

'In the small part is power of the whole cross', so say an inscription in the Felix Basilica of Nola, built by bishop Paulinus at the beginning of 5th century. The cross particle was inserted in the altar. Around the year 455, Juvenal Patriarch of Jerusalem sent to Pope Leo I a fragment of the precious wood.

7. The two festivals of the Christian Church: that of the discovery of the true cross and that of the exaltation of the cross

From the beginning of about the seventh century, the Feast of the Cross was celebrated on May 3. This date is the feast of the discovery of the true Cross, commemorating the finding.

The 14th of September is the feast of the exaltation of the Cross and is also the anniversary of the dedication of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and includes commemoration of the rescue of the True Cross from the Persians in 628, which we see in the ninth point.

8. The seizure of the cross by one of the heathen monarchs

In 614 the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, built by Constantine, was damaged by fire when the Persians under the Sassanid Emperor Khosrau II ('Chosroes') invaded Damascus and Jerusalem and captured the Cross and carried it away in triumph.

9. The restoration of the cross

Thirteen years later, in 628, the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius defeated Khosrau and regained the relic. As Heraclius approached the capital Khosrau fled without offering resistance and Khosrau's eldest son was proclaimed king.

As a goodwill gesture he sent the True Cross with a peace negotiator to sue for peace.

10. The carrying of the cross of Christ after its recovery by the Emperor Heraclius in his imperial robes and pomp

Heraclius placed the cross at first in Constantinople, and after a tour of the Empire he returned the cross on March 21, 630 to Jerusalem. This scene is usually depicted with Heraclius shown while carrying the cross.

He insisted on doing this as he entered Jerusalem, against the advice of the Patriarch. At first, when he was on horseback, the burden was too heavy.

