

Rev. Fr. Leonard Goffine's
The Church's Year

INSTRUCTION OF THE FEAST OF
THE EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS

September 14



From what does this feast derive its name?

From the yearly commemoration of the erection of the holy cross, at Jerusalem, by Constantine the Great, son of St. Helena.

When was this festival celebrated with especial solemnity?

When the Cross which Cosroes, King of the Persians, had captured at the conquest of Jerusalem, and had for forty years in his power, was recaptured by the Emperor Heraclius, who carried it himself on his own shoulders to Mount Calvary into the Church of the Holy Cross.

What miracle occurred on this occasion?

When the emperor wished to carry the Cross on his own shoulders to Jerusalem, at the entrance of the city he stopped suddenly, finding it impossible to proceed. The patriarch Zachary suggested

to him to lay aside his imperial garments which did not accord with the humble appearance which Christ made when He bore His cross through the streets of that city. Hereupon the emperor laid aside his purple, crown and shoes, and devoutly proceeded with the cross to its appointed place.

Let us learn from this, how the divine Saviour dislikes extravagance in dress, and how in all humility and poverty we should follow Him who was poor and humble.

[For further Instruction on the Holy Cross, as also the Epistle of this day, see the Festival of the Finding of the Holy Cross.]

COLLECT O God, who dost gladden us this day with the yearly solemnity of the exaltation of the Holy Cross: grant, we beseech Thee, that as we have learnt to know its mystery on earth, so we may merit to taste in Heaven the reward of its redemption. Thro.' &c.

GOSPEL (*John XII. 31-36*) **AT THAT TIME**, Jesus said to the multitudes of the Jews: Now is the judgment of the world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself. (Now this he said, signifying what death he should die.) The multitude answered him: We have heard out of the law, that Christ abideth for ever: and how sayest thou: The Son of man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of man? Jesus therefore said to them: Yet a little while, the light is among you. Walk whilst you have the light, that the darkness overtake you not: and he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. Whilst you have the light, believe in the light, that you may be the children of light.

SHORT INSTRUCTION ON THE WAY OF THE CROSS

What is meant by the Way of the Cross?

THE Way of the Cross is a devotion, approved by the Pope, by which we meditate upon the passion and death of Christ, and especially upon His last way of sorrow to Mount Calvary.

How did this devotion originate?

The pathway which our Lord Jesus Christ had to follow from Jerusalem to Mount Calvary, was the real Way of the Cross. His holy Mother, and other pious women, as also the beloved disciple St. John, followed Him on this painful journey; (*Matt, XXVII. 56. John XIX. 25, 26.*) and the apostles and early Christians animated by veneration for these places, made sacred by the sufferings and death of Jesus, often traversed the same pathway. In the same spirit, in later times, many came from the most distant countries to Jerusalem to visit these sacred places to increase their devotion. In time, pictures, representing different scenes of the sufferings of our Lord, were erected along this route, and were called Stations; when the Saracens conquered the Holy Land, in consequence of which visits to it became dangerous, almost impossible, the Roman pontiffs permitted the erection of stations of the cross in other countries. The first to erect stations in their churches were members of the Franciscan Order, and by degrees this devotion, supported by the Roman pontiffs and favored by indulgences, spread throughout the entire Church. A pathway was sought which led to elevated ground; this elevation was called the Mount of the Cross or Mount Calvary, and along the route pictures representing our Lord's sufferings, as related by the

evangelists, or made known by tradition, were erected, or else the pictures were hung in churches, and the place where they stood, or the pictures themselves, were called stations; of these there are fourteen.

Is the practice of this devotion of the Way of the Cross of great value?

Next to the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and holy Communion, there is certainly no devotion which represents better to us the sufferings and death of Christ than the Way of the Cross. St. Albertus Magnus says: "A simple remembrance of Christ's sufferings is worth more than fasting on bread and water every Friday for a year, and scourging one's self unto blood." St. Bernard gives us the reason of this, when he says: "Who can consider the sufferings of Christ and be so void of religion as to remain untouched; so proud that he will not humble himself; so vindictive that he will not forgive; so fond of pleasure that he will not abstain from it; so hard-hearted that he will not repent of his sins?" And St. Augustine says: "What pride, what avarice, what anger can be cured otherwise than by the humility, the poverty, the patience of the Son of God? All these virtues are found in carefully meditating on that way of pain which our Saviour went, and along which we should follow Him." On this account several of the Popes, among others Clement XII. and Benedict XIV., have granted many indulgences to the performance of this devotion; indulgences which may be applied to the suffering souls in purgatory.

[For the manner of meditating on the sufferings of Christ, see the Instruction on Good Friday.]