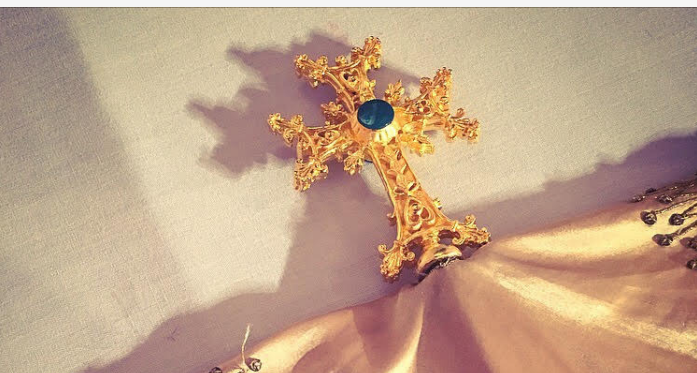


THE CROSS

Why do Armenians hold the Cross in such high esteem?

In Jesus' time, the execution on a cross was a death penalty reserved for criminals. We, human beings and creatures of God, nailed our Creator to such a cross. Yet, that very same cross that was meant to represent shame and humiliation was exalted and glorified with each drop of Christ's sacred blood. In His humility, Jesus willingly accepted His torture and death on the Cross, and through His Resurrection defeated death. Through His death and resurrection, Christ opened the path to eternity, granting us forgiveness and healing, giving us life eternal. As Christians, the Cross does not remind us of death, but of life and salvation in Jesus Christ!

Armenian crosses do not customarily depict the body of Christ, but rather feature motifs of life such as rays of light or wheat and grapes. Christ is alive, the cross is empty. Blessed is the resurrection of Christ!

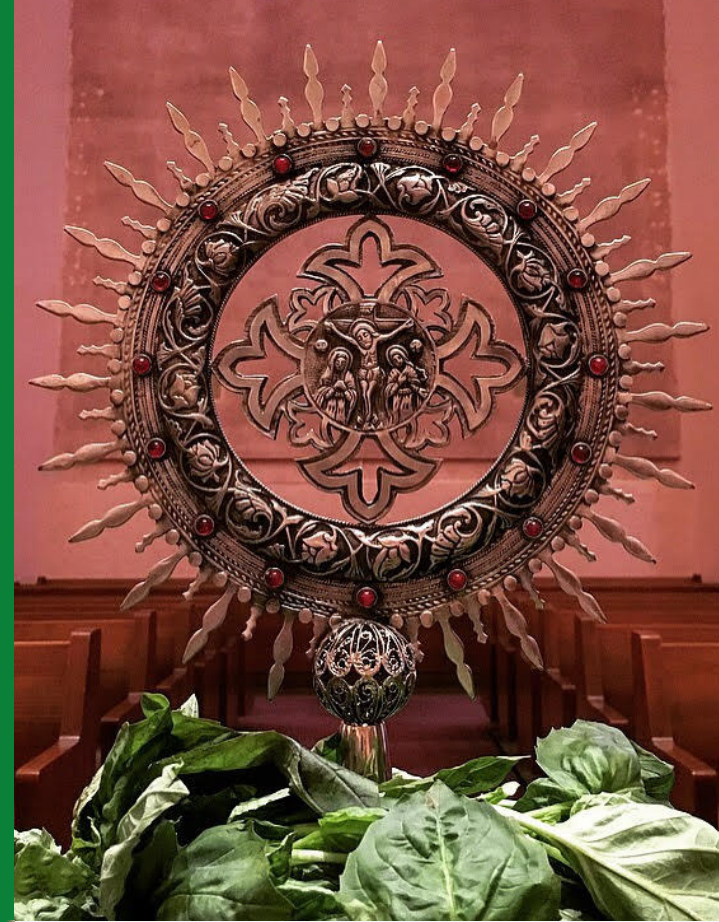


The Narod pamphlet is published by the Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston to provide the faithful significant information regarding the sacred traditions, rituals and services of the Armenian Apostolic Church. If you have questions regarding the topics covered in the Narod, please speak with our pastor, Fr. Vasken Kouzouian.

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NAROD

THE FEAST OF THE EXALTATION
OF THE HOLY CROSS

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Issue 6

BASIL (ROYAL)

An aromatic and fragrant green herb is used to adorn the Church on the feast day of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. Holding the Cross in his hands filled with basil, the priest elevates it and blesses the people and the four corners of the world. As a custom, the faithful take branches of basil home.

There is no biblical or liturgical explanation as to why we use basil on this day. According to local tradition, when the Cross was found by Queen Helena, part of the Cross was covered with basil, just as Christ's tomb was when the Apostles visited it after His resurrection.



Whatever the history of the feast, for Armenians the most important point has always been the meaning behind the exalted Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. It was on the Cross that Christ was crucified, shed His blood, and died for us, to heal and restore all of creation from the corruption of death. All of this, He did for us!

In his article published in The Treasury magazine, Fr. Daniel Findikyan sheds light on some misunderstandings about this holy feast. Looking at it through a liturgical lens, he focuses on church hymns and manuscripts and concludes that *none* of the hymns dedicated to this feast mention the 7th century victorious recapture of the Cross or Emperor Heraclius! By the beginning of the 5th century, there was an 8 day period commemorating the consecration of various Churches in Jerusalem. Both clergy and faithful attended these churches each day to celebrate Holy Badarak. The second day of this period, September 14th, was dedicated to the Church of the Holy Cross (today's Holy Sepulchre), when the relic of Christ's Cross was elevated among the people. This is the origin of the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross and the content of the hymns we still sing today.

Today, on the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross (the Sunday closest to September 14), Armenians all over the world decorate their churches with basil, celebrate Badarak, followed by the familiar Antasdan service, the blessing of the 4 corners of the world, allowing the triumphant fragrance of Christ's victory over death to spread throughout the world.

THE WHAT, WHEN, WHERE & WHY OF THIS GREAT FEAST!

Did you know that the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross (Khachverats/ **ԽԱՇՎԵՐԱՅԳ**) is considered to be one of the 5 major feasts in the Armenian Church, along with Christmas and Easter?

What is so significant about this feast that it has been given such importance by the Armenian Church?

Some say that it is based on three major events:

1. The elevation of the cross by St. James the Apostle, for veneration by the faithful.
2. The discovery of the Cross of Christ by Queen Helena after it was lost for centuries.
3. The recovery of the Cross by the Byzantines in the 7th century from the Persians by Emperor Heraclius (who was actually an Armenian).

However, historical documentations state that this feast was celebrated *before* the historic recapture of the 7th century.

"The life-giving tree of your Cross is a scepter of power for the life of mankind and hope for creation" (taken from a *Khachverats* hymn).