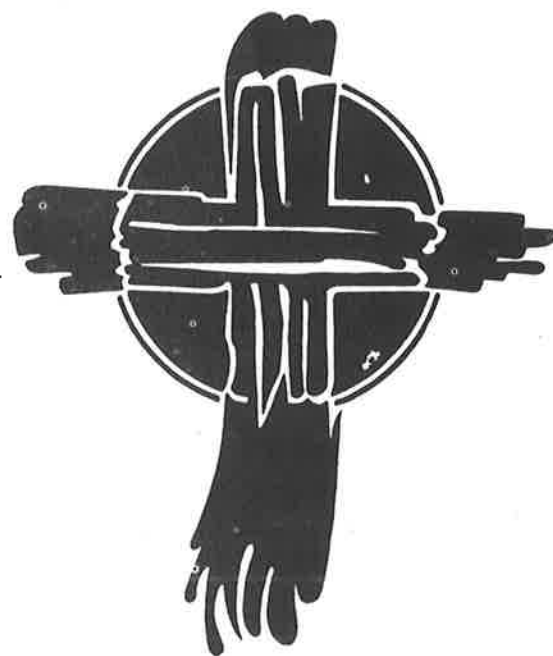


## Apparition of the Holy Cross, Sunday, May 9 Ye-rev-man Soorp Khach

There are four important feasts of the cross. In May, we remember the extraordinary appearance of a huge cross in the sky over Jerusalem in the 4th century. Take a moment during class and share the story with students as follows (adapt for your age group). As always, use it also as an opportunity to review and synthesize information students already know.

Today is a very special day in the church calendar; it's a feast of the cross, called "The Apparition of the Holy Cross." An apparition is a sudden or unusual sight. Now there are three other feasts of the cross (you can write these on the board as you discuss with class). Does anyone remember them? The first two took place earlier in the year, in September and October. The first was? *The Exaltation of the Holy Cross*. What do we know about this feast? (For this and other feasts use a 'web' diagram by writing the feast day in the middle and extending lines out of it—or asking a student recorder to do so). Yes, in (words in bold can be "webbed words/phrases") the **7th century**, the **Persians** captured the cross after devastating **Jerusalem**. The **Emperor Heracles** retrieved the cross with his armies and upon his return, passed through **Armenia** where the cross was periodically raised and venerated

by the crowds. The **Armenian army** was part of the Emperor's forces. Great. What's a second feast of the cross? The *Holy Cross of Varak*. Let's remember the story together. Okay, **St. Hripsime**, (remember her from the story of Armenia's conversion? She was fleeing from the Emperor Constantine) hid a piece of the true cross on a mountainside. The **monk Todik**, in the **7th century**, saw a vision in which 12 pillars appeared on top of **Mt. Varak** and a radiant cross sat in the middle of them. The vision came and rested over the Monastery of Varak. Later, **Catholicos Nersess the Builder** verified its authenticity and declared its discovery a feast day (the Sunday nearest September 28). The third feast day is called *The Discovery of the Holy Cross*. This commemorates the time when **Emperor Constantine's** mother **Queen Helena**, searched for the cross of Christ and finally uncovered three in a rubble heap in **Jerusalem** in **325 A.D.** To verify which of the three was our Lord's, she stopped a **funeral procession** and placed the deceased on each. On one, the corpse miraculously came to life; this was declared the cross of Christ. **The Church of the Holy Sepulchre** now sits on this site; the Armenian Church participates in the care and upkeep of its chapels and has her own



section with altars, where worship generally takes place on a daily basis.

All right, back to today's feast—"The Apparition of the Holy Cross." Let me tell you the story. On a Pentecost morning in the year 351, a huge brilliant cross appeared in the Jerusalem sky, stretching from Golgotha to the Mount of Olives. The apparition stayed in the sky for hours, causing a commotion among the city's bustling crowds who would stop and stare. Thousands saw it and were amazed. Imagine if that happened today! Well, the Archbishop of Jerusalem, Guregh (Cyril in English), wrote to the emperor Constantine II of Constantinople about this miraculous event. The Emperor's faith was greatly strengthened by this. We still read this letter during church on this feast day.