

FEASTS OF THE CROSS

EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS

- Khatchverats, the greatest of the 4 celebrations of the Cross
- Observed on the Sunday nearest Sept 14 and the celebration extends for 7 consecutive days
- History Lesson:
 - Constantine builds a basilica at Golgotha dedicated to the Cross (The Martyrium, ?date)
 - St. Helena, his mother, finds the lost Cross of Christ in 326.
 - Constantine consecrates and dedicates the Martyrium where the discovered Cross is now being kept.
 - Yearly 8-day celebrations develop in Jerusalem to commemorate these events, consisting of church services in all of the shrines of the holy city *
 - The Persian army sacks Jerusalem in 614 AD and takes the Holy Cross away
 - The Eastern Roman (Byzantine) Emperor Heraclius battled repeatedly with Persian forces, finally liberating Jerusalem by 628 AD and personally returned the Holy Cross to Jerusalem. His return was marked by a procession where the Holy Cross was elevated for all to see.

FEASTS OF THE CROSS

EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS

- “Exaltation”: the state of praising highly or of raising something up to a superior position
 - Reminiscent of Heraclius’ recovery and veneration of the Holy Cross
- **Medz Antasdan** (Blessing of the Fields) service is held at 3pm and includes Scriptural readings, hymns, liturgical texts/rubrics that draw focus to the Holy Cross and Jesus Christ’s salvific work through the Cross.
 - Galations 6:14-18, John 3:13-21
 - Adorned on a tray with fragrant basil, the cross is carried around (Exaltation) to the four corners of the church in a cross-pattern (e→w, n—s>) with pauses for Gospel readings, 40 Der Voghormia’s, and blessings offered to that part of the world and what they symbolize.
 - Finally, the Veneration takes place in the chancel where the faithful approach the cross and kiss it.

FEASTS OF THE CROSS

KHATCHVERATZ



- Fun facts

- Heraclius was probably half-Armenian (father)
- Armenian forces were instrumental in Heraclius' success in defeating the Persians and recovering the Holy Cross
- The Holy Cross was carried from Mesopotamia through Armenia on its way back to Jerusalem, Heraclius dressed in sackcloth and barefoot to signify penance and piety
- Hymns composed especially for this day don't actually speak of its recapture but rather celebrate the "dedication" of the Church of the Holy Cross.
- What about the basil?

FEASTS OF THE CROSS

EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS

By venerating the Cross, we express our faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who died on a cross for our sins and destroyed the permanence of death for us by rising to new life. Whether it be by moving to the four compass points with the elevated cross, or enjoying the sweet smell of basil, or feeling the wetness of rose water against our faces, or simply listening to the carefully chosen words of the hymns and refrains for the day, we are reminded through all the senses of the sweetness of Christ's saving work on the Cross for our redemption.