

Celebrated in the Armenian Church: The Sunday nearest September 14; the liturgy is marked with an "antastan" service (blessing of the fields) during which the processional cross is adorned with basil (a symbol of royalty) and the four corners of the church are blessed as a symbol for all the world.

Holy Cross of Varak
(Varaka Khach)
Sunday, September 28

Importance: An authentic relic of the cross is cradled in Armenian soil; a cross feast unique to the Armenian Church.

What: In the 3rd century, the nun Hripsime buried a piece of the cross on Mt. Varak in historic Armenia as a way of protecting it from the soldiers of Emperor Constantine who were pursuing her. Centuries later, a monk by the name of Todik had a dream of a church on Mt. Varak with 12 pillars in the center of which was a radiant cross. The cross then came to rest over the altar of the monastery of Varak where Todik discovered the cross relic. When told the news by the monk, Catholicos Nersess (the Builder) came to Varak, verified the relic's authenticity, and established a feast in honor of the discovery.

When: 650 A.D.

Who: The monk Todik

Where: Mt. Varak in historic Armenia

Celebrated in the Armenian Church: Nearest Sunday to September 28, always two weeks after the Exaltation.

Discovery of the Holy Cross
(Kyood Khach)
Sunday, October 26

Importance: The rediscovery of all three of the crosses of Golgotha—our Lord's and the two on which the thieves were hung.

What: Empress Helena, the mother of Constantine, commissioned an army to find the true cross. After many years, they found three in

Jerusalem in a rubble heap. When the body of a deceased man was taken from a passing funeral procession and placed before each cross, the man miraculously came to life on what was thereafter designated as the one True Cross.

When: 327 A.D.

Who: Empress Helena

Where: Jerusalem

Celebrated in the Armenian Church: The closest Sunday to October 26

ACTIVITIES

Early elementary: Use the cross form to trace crosses onto cardboard. Use craft glue to decorate crosses with shells, pasta shapes, buttons, or any other item you can buy in bulk from a craft store.

Upper elementary: Tell the story and pause at appropriate words to have students circle them in the Word Search.

Junior and Senior High: Reproduce cross page. As you tell the story, have students jot down key words and events. Ask them to retell the story of each feast. They might also enjoy the word search. Have it on their desks when they enter the classroom as a "pre-session starter."

