

Early in the fourth century the emperor Constantine took the Christian Church under his protection, and to show his imperial benevolence he ordered a grand church to be built in Jerusalem. The site he chose was Gol'gotha, the hill where Jesus of Nazareth was crucified and buried. It had once stood outside the city walls, but before the time of Constantine the hill had been levelled and buried under tons of debris. The entire area had to be excavated for Constantine's new church, and the emperor put his mother Helena in charge of the work. In the course of digging the labourers discovered a large beam; and the authorities soon decided that it was a remnant of the very same cross on which the Lord had been crucified. Portions of this beam were enshrined near the altar of the new church when it was dedicated in honour of the Resurrection on September fourteenth in the year 335; and ever since then, in the East and in the West, Christians have kept this date as Holy Cross Day.

Jesus was crucified at the time of year when people in the northern hemisphere prepare the earth for planting. But September is harvest, our time for reaping and sharing what the earth, under our care, has brought forth. Just so with our remembrance of the Holy Cross. On Good Friday we recalled its planting at the seedtime of the new creation; and now, on the verge of autumn, we look for Christ, the true Vine which the Cross supported, to bear the fruit of justice and mercy not only in our own lives but also in the dealings of the world.

See Readings, page 659.

## Sentence

Far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. *Galatians 6.14*

## Collect

Almighty God,  
whose Son our Saviour Jesus Christ  
was lifted high upon the cross  
that he might draw the whole world to himself,  
may we who rejoice in the mystery of our redemption  
have grace to take up our cross and follow him,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

## Readings

Numbers 21.4b-9 Psalm 98.1-5

*Refrain* The Lord has made known his victory. *Or v. 1 or CR 3*  
1 Corinthians 1.18-24 John 3.13-17

## Prayer over the Gifts

Merciful God,  
through the death of your beloved Son  
you transformed an instrument of shame  
into a sign of hope and glory.  
Receive all we offer you this day,  
and renew in us the mystery of his love;  
through the same Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory.

## Preface of Holy Week

## Prayer after Communion

Almighty God,  
we give thanks that you have made us partakers  
of the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord,  
who took our nature upon him  
and suffered death upon the cross for our redemption;  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.