



The two feasts of the Cross

- The first feast is on Tout 17, (c. September 27). It commemorates the Church 's dedication to the Holy Cross which was built by Queen Helen, the mother of Emperor Constantine. The second feast is on Baramhat 10 (c. March 19) and commemorates the discovery of the Holy Cross through the same empress in A.D 326.
- During these two feasts the church conducts a procession similar to that of Palm-Sunday and uses the same tone in chanting (Shannon-Hosanna), as an announcement that the true cause of her is the openness of the hearts (the inner Jerusalem) to receive the Savior as the King who reigns within us.

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What is the meaning of drawing the sign of the cross on oneself?

- We make the sign of the cross in the following way: We unite the three fingers (thumb and two closest fingers (to signify the Holy Trinity) of the right hand and bring them to our forehead saying "In the name of the Father," honoring God the father, the Master of everyone. Next we lower our hand to the mid to lower section of the chest saying, "and of the Son," which denotes the descent of the Son of God to earth and His incarnation of the holy St. Mary for our salvation. Then we place our hand on our left shoulder and finish by crossing over to the right one saying, "and of the Holy Spirit" which expresses our faith in the reconciliation with God through the work and grace of the Holy Spirit that will deliver us from the left side to the right side (Mt 25:33)

The Cross in Christianity By the late Fr. Bishoy Kamel

"The church without a Cross, is like a bride without a groom"

- The Cross has weak appearance to the uninformed, but to the Christian, it is a weapon to overcome our worldly desires, and threats. With it we defeat Satan. "The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." (1Cor 1:18) Our teacher St. Paul tells us: "Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men and the weakness of God is stronger than men." (1Cor 1:25)
- The Cross is a power that transforms envy to love, revenge to forgiveness and flaunting to simplicity.
- The Cross was the strength of the Apostles while they preached: With the Cross they exorcised demons. With the Cross, they turned those who persecuted Christianity, to servants of God and preachers. With the Cross, they loved their enemies, prayed for them and blessed them. They faced so many threats and persecutions. They carried the cross in their lives. They were all martyred, except for St John. Their pure blood became the seed of faith for the rest of the world, through the power of the Lord of the Cross.
- The Cross is a condition to follow Christ: The Lord said: "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me". (Luke 9:23). Whoever desires to be Christian, he must endure pain and sacrifice much for the sake of Christ. Therefore Christians are Cross-bearers. They chose the narrow way (the only way) to enter the Kingdom of heaven to receive Heavenly rewards. If the Cross was not powerful, then how can people leave their worldly pleasures, desires and ranks and follow Christ?
- Although the Christian is always carrying his cross, he is always in a state of internal joy that is indescribable. St Paul used to sing and praise God in jail after he was beaten.

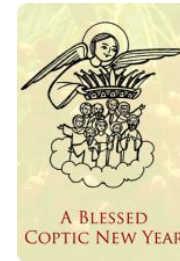


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"The blood of the martyrs is the seed of Christians."

Tertullian



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Father Mena Fam

The Veneration of the Holy Cross

- The cross is the principle symbol of the Christian religion recalling the crucifixion of Lord Jesus Christ and the redeeming benefits of His passion and death. Thus, the cross is a sign of both Lord Jesus Christ Himself and the faith of the Christians. This is the sign, which will appear in heaven before the second and final coming of Lord Jesus Christ, “Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” (Mt 24:30)
- Before the time of Emperor Constantine, Christians were not allowed to portray the cross and to openly display it for such actions might have exposed them to sever danger. After Constantine converted to Christianity in 337 AD, he abolished crucifixion as a death penalty out of respect and veneration to Lord Jesus Christ and the Christians were free to display the cross.

Light Words

- Count your blessings instead of your crosses.
- Count your gains instead of your losses.
- Count your joys instead of your woes.
- Count your friends instead of your foes.
- Count your smiles instead of your tears.
- Count your courage instead of your fears.
- Count your full years instead of your lean.
- Count your kind deeds instead of your mean.
- Count your health instead of your wealth.
- Count on God instead of yourself.

(Unknown Author)

- “If you want to live a happy life, tie it to a goal, not to people or things.”

- Happy moments, praise God.
- Difficult moments, seek God.
- Quiet moments, worship God.
- Painful moments, trust God.
- Every moment, thank God.

Martyrdom



- A martyr is one who gives his life for Christ, physically dying as a witness to the faith. “You shall be MY witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8)
- Martyr itself comes from the Greek μαρτυρος, which means “witness.” By traditional liturgical ranking, the martyrs are first among the saints.
- We are amazed how our fathers and our martyrs withstood their sufferings; how they were unshaken, how they conquered, and how their honored blood, which was shed, destroyed the weapons of the evil kings and rulers.
- Martyrdom is the story of Christianity from its inception. It was a price for spreading the Holy Gospel all over the world. The impact that a martyr's blood had was greater than any teaching or preaching. The concept of martyrdom is founded on a deep philosophy and a strong spiritual belief that a Christian's love and loyalty to the Lord Jesus Christ is so great that his life is easily spared if he's given a choice to make.
- Truly the Coptic Orthodox Church indeed is the church of martyrs. After the martyrdom of St. Mark in the year 68A.D, the Coptic Church enjoyed an almost unbroken peace until 202A.D. Later, the Church experienced twenty-one waves of persecution, with the fiercest one under the reign of Emperor Diocletian. During his reign, the Church offered countless martyrs – by some estimates between 500,000 and one million. For this reason, the Coptic Calendar begins in 284 A.D. , the first year of Diocletian's rule.
- Tertullian, a third century lawyer from North Africa, writes, “If the martyrs of the whole world were put on one arm of the balance and the martyrs of Egypt on the other, the balance would tilt in favor of the Egyptians.”



The sign of the Cross

- The Holy Cross is a sign of protection, holiness, salvation, worship, and blessing to believers everywhere.
- The scholar Tertullian wrote, “At every forward step and movement, at every going in and out, when we put on our clothes and shoes, when we bathe, when we sit at table, when we light the lamps, on couch, on seat, in all the ordinary actions of daily life, we trace upon the forehead the sign of the Cross.”
- St. Caesarius said, “Whenever you have to go anywhere, sign yourselves with the Name of Jesus Christ, say the Creed or the Lord's prayer and go your ways sure of the divine protection.”
- Since at least the second century, early Christians painted or nailed a cross on the eastern wall of a Christian dwelling so that they could face the cross while praying to the East.
- The Cross for early Christians was a great blessing. The scholar Tertullian understood Jacob's blessing of Ephraim and Manasseh as a type of the Cross, through which we are blessed.
- In the fourth century, the pilgrim Egeria describes how people would take the blessing of the bishop by kissing the cross in his hands.

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“Because, by the sacrifice of His body, He put an end to the verdict against us, as it has been through a man that death came upon all humans, so also by the Word of God, who became Man death was abolished and the resurrection of life was initiated.”

(St. Athanasius the Apostolic)