

AUGUST TRADITIONS

August 1st - Procession of the Holy Cross of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ

Christians venerate the Cross to commemorate the gift of the Holy Cross of the Savior Who, by His death and resurrection provides everlasting life.

The tradition began in Constantinople, when Helen (the mother of Constantine) brought the relic of the Cross she found in Jerusalem back to Constantinople. The life-giving Cross was processed through the streets of Constantinople to heal the sick and since the sickness was cured, it has been carried through the City each year to commemorate the sanctification of the city. The procession takes place in August, as historically, illnesses were prevalent in the city during August.

The 1st procession in Constantinople was out the doors of the Church and through the City, every single day from the 1st of August until the 14th, in preparation for the celebrations of Our Lady's Dormition, August 15th.

When it is done in a parish Church, according to the Italo-Greek Rite, the veneration takes place three times outside the Church, and then the Cross is brought in and the people are blessed with it. It is usually celebrated after Vespers and before the Divine Liturgy.

However, the procession of the Holy Cross cannot go outside in many Churches and, therefore, the procession is held in the Church, venerated at four corners of the earth to which the Cross has been brought for the salvation of the world.

Many Byzantine Churches, and it is the tradition of the Italo-Greek Church, bless water on this day. Historically, the blessing of the water was used for pilgrimages for people to take and drink as it was the belief, always, that it would combat sickness and disease, from the time of Constantine until now.

By Fr. Francis Vivona