

Thought for the day – Wednesday 15th September 2021

By Revd John Marshall

From Outlook the magazine of Holy Cross Haltwhistle.

On Holy Cross Day the church celebrates the cross as a symbol of triumph, as the sign of Christ's victory over death. Holy Cross Day goes right back to 14th September 335, and we have the mother of a Roman Emperor to thank for it. Helena was a devout Christian, and after her son Constantine, was converted, they agreed that she should travel from Rome to Israel, and seek out the places of special significance to Christians.

Of course, much of Jerusalem had been destroyed by the Romans around 135AD. But even so, Helena finally located what she believed to be the sites of the Crucifixion and of the Burial (and modern archaeologists think she may well be correct). The sites were so close together that she built one large church over them – the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. That church, built in honour of the Cross, was dedicated on 14th September 335.

The sign of the Cross has been used by Christians since early times. Tertullian, writing his *De Corona* (3:2) around AD 211, noted that Christians seldom did anything significant without making the sign of the cross.

What is its significance? Well, people often put their initials or some sort of personal mark on something to show it belongs to them. The Cross is the personal mark of our Lord Jesus Christ, and we mark it on ourselves as a sign that we belong to him. Even in the book of Revelation, we read that the servants of God are 'sealed' or 'marked' on their foreheads as a sign that they are His.

On Holy Cross Day, we recall Jesus' wonderful promise; "And when I am lifted up, I will draw all men unto me." (John 12.32)

Outlook September 2021