



Why is the cross the best known symbol of christianity?

Why is the celebration of the cross one of the five major feasts of our church?

Why is "**Khatchverats**" (the exaltation of the cross) considered by Armenians to be the most important of all the feasts dedicated to the Holy Cross?

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SOURP HAGOP ARMENIAN CHURCH'S MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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The Holy Cross And Armenian History

At the beginning of the seventh century, Jerusalem was conquered by Persia (modern day Iran). The Persians burned the Church of the Resurrection and plundered the Holy Cross.

Around 628 AD the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius, leading a coalition of forces including Armenian soldiers, marched against the Persians, defeated them and recovered the Holy Cross.

On its way back to Jerusalem, the Cross passed throughout Armenia held up high for all to see. It stopped at Garin (Erzeroum) and continued its way to Constantinople. The commemoration of this event started as the Feast of **Khatchverats**.

The Armenians participated in the struggles and victory for the recovery of the Holy Cross. The transportation of the Holy Cross over Armenian lands a blessed event.

Names celebrated on the day of Khatchverats are: Khatchig, Khatchadour and Khetcho

The three other feasts of the Holy Cross (Khatchi doner)

1) The apparition of the Holy Cross.

2) The Cross of Varak: This feast is only celebrated by the Armenian church, which commemorates the passing of the Holy Cross over the Armenian lands after its recovery.

3) The discovery of the Cross: According to story, the Empress Helena commissioned people to find the True Cross. After many years, they found three crosses in a heap of rubble in Jerusalem. When the body of a newly deceased woman was taken from a passing funeral procession and placed in front of each cross, she miraculously came to life in front of what was thereafter designated as the True Cross.

KHATCHVERATS SEPTEMBER 16, 2007

The word **Khatchverats** signifies raising the Cross with pride such that it may be seen and glorified by the people.

It is celebrated in the Armenian Church on the Sunday nearest September 14. The liturgy is marked with an



"**antadan**" service (blessing of the fields), during which the processional cross is adorned with basil (**rehan**), a symbol of royalty, referring to Christ as the Heavenly King. The four corners of the church, symbolizing the whole world are blessed.

As **Khatchverats** is a major feast, the Monday following it is "**merelots**" (Day of the dead); on this day it is customary to visit the graves of deceased family members, and have them blessed.

The Cross

"The Cross is not a symbolic ornament to wear as reminder of the crucifixion of Christ; rather, it is a way of participating in the act of crucifixion – that is, of sharing the suffering of others; and in sharing that suffering, manifesting our love in a supreme way."

The Cross, which was the tree of death, was transformed into the Holy Cross, which is the Tree of Life.

The Cross is our evidence that God has used His power to help us in our times of trial; to redeem us, guide us, support us and make us worthy of Him, in spite of our mortal tendency to defy Him.

Armenians take this power very seriously, as evidenced by a favourite saying "**Sourp Khatch yeghitsi indz oknagan**" (let the Holy Cross be my support).

Such veneration should not be confused with idolatry.

Naturally, to those who are not believers, such veneration of the Cross makes no sense at all. They cannot understand why so base an instrument could be at the centre of our worship. Armenians see in the Cross the instrument on which Christ sacrificed Himself in order to show His love for mankind.

Did you know?

- All crosses used in our church have been blessed and anointed at five points, the centre and four wings.
- The most common architectural layout of the Armenian Church is the cruciform.
- Armenian crosses do not feature the crucified body of Jesus, emphasizing His resurrection (Unlike the Catholic crucifix which bears the body of Christ).
- The appearance of vines as decorative motifs on the Armenian cross symbolizes the life generated from the cross.
- Babies are given crosses by their Godparents at the time of their baptism.
- In Montreal, the cross on Mount Royal commemorates the founding of the city by Jacques Cartier.

Towards The 50th Anniversary Of The Sourp Hagop Community

First Khatchverats: the church of St. Zotique was to be anointed on the 4th of June 1960 and named Sourp Hagop. Before this its name was "The First Armenian Apostolic Church". There, on the 13th of September 1959, the first feast of **Khatchverats** was celebrated.

Fr. Arsen Simeonians, the pastor of Sourp Krikor Lousavorich Church of New York, would perform mass and preach on that day.



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HYMNE D'EXALTATION DE LA CROIX

Tu as tendu tes bras immaculés sur la croix, O Christ notre Dieu,
Et nous a donné le signe de la victoire :
Par lui conserve notre vie.

Par les ailes tendues de ta croix salvatrice du monde, O Christ notre Dieu,
Tu nous as donné un sceptre de puissance :
Par lui conserve notre vie.

À celui qui est mort en mangeant de l'arbre interdit
Tu as donné la vie par l'arbre de vie :
Par lui conserve notre vie.

HYMN OF THE EXALTATION OF THE CROSS

You stretched out Your immaculate arms on the Cross, O Christ our God,
And gave us the sign of victory:
By it preserve our life.

By the outstretched wings of Your world-saving cross,
O Christ our God,
You gave us a staff of power:
By it preserve our life.

To whom died eating of the forbidden tree
You gave life by the tree of life:
By it preserve our life.

ՇԱՐԱԿԱՆ Ս. ԽԱՉԻ ՎԵՐԱՑՄԱՆ

Դու՛ն քու անարատ բազուկներդ խաչին վրայ տարածեցիր, Քրիստոս Աստուած,
Եւ յաղթանակի նշան տուիր մեզի.
Ասով պահէ մեր կեանքը:

Դու՛ն աշխարհը փրկող բազկատարած խաչովդ, Քրիստոս Աստուած,
Զօրութեան գաւազան տուիր մեզի.
Ասով պահէ մեր կեանքը:

Դու՛ն յանցանքի ծառին ճաշակումէն մեռեալը
Կեանքի ծառով կենսագործեցիր.
Ասով պահէ մեր կեանքը:

ԲԱՑԱՏՐԱԿԱՆ

1 Սեպտեմբերին Նիկիոյ Ժողովին (325) տօնն է:

Անցեալ ամիս յիշեցինք Եփեսոսի միջ-եկեղեցական (écuménique) մեծ ժողովը, կամ ինչպէս կ'ըսուի՝ Տիեզերական Ժողովը: Եւ այդ առիթով, «Կանթեղ» բացատրեց, թէ Հայ եկեղեցին միայն երեք մեծ ժողովներ կ'ընդունի. Նիկիոյ, Կ. Պոլսոյ եւ Եփեսոսի: Բիզանդական եւ Հռոմէական եկեղեցիները այլ ժողովներ ալ կ'ընդունին իբր Տիեզերական: «Առանց հիմնական պատճառի չէ որ Հայ եկեղեցին իրաւունք ունեցաւ Եփեսոսի ժողովը (431) իբր վերջին Տիեզերականը նկատել եւ առջեւ չանցնիլ, որովհետեւ անով վերջացաւ բոլոր գլխաւոր եկեղեցիներու համամտութեան շրջանը» (Օրմանեան):

Քրիստոսի անձը մտալին վերլուծումներով չի յայտնուիր, այլ հաւատքի աչքով կը տեսնուի:

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ÉDITORIAL

L'église arménienne reconnaît les lendemains des cinq Fêtes Principales comme jours de souvenir.

Le jour du souvenir est une rétrospective, une célébration des vies et des souvenirs des défunts.

Réfléchissons non seulement aux vies de ceux qui sont morts, mais également à ceux qui sont toujours avec nous, appréciant et reconnaissant les souvenirs que nous prenons tant de mal à créer.

EDITORIAL

The Armenian Church recognizes the day following each of the five Great Feasts as a day of remembrance of the dead.

Remembrance day is a retrospective, a celebration of the lives and memories of the deceased.

May we reflect not only on the lives of those in the after-life, but also those that are still with us, appreciating and acknowledging the memories we work so hard to create.

Please note that this is a simplified explanation of the events in the Armenian church for the month of September. Veuillez noter que ces explications représentent une version simplifiée des cérémonies de l'église arménienne pour le mois de septembre.