

## Why Do We Venerate the Cross on Good Friday?

After that portion of the Good Friday Liturgy known as *The Solemn Orations*, in which the charity and zeal of the Church have embraced the whole universe of humanity, invoking upon them the merciful effusion of the Precious Blood, the Church turns next to her faithful children. Filled with holy indignation at the humiliations heaped upon her Jesus, she invites us to a solemn Act of Reparation: it is to consist in venerating that Cross which our Divine Lord has borne to the summit of Calvary, and to which He is to be fastened with nails. The Cross is a stumbling-block to the Jews, and foolishness to the Gentiles (1 Corinthians 1:23); but to us Christians it is the symbol of Jesus' victory, and the instrument of the world's redemption. It is worthy of our deepest veneration, because of the honor conferred upon it by the Son of God: He consecrated it by His own Blood, He worked our salvation by its means. No time could be more appropriate than this for honoring it with the humble tribute of our veneration.

The holy ceremony of venerating the Cross on Good Friday was first instituted in Jerusalem, in the 4th Century. Owing to the pious zeal of the Empress St. Helena [the mother of the Roman Emperor Constantine], the True Cross had then recently been discovered, to the immense joy of the whole Church. The faithful, as might be expected, were desirous of seeing this precious relic, and accordingly it was exposed every Good Friday. This brought a very great number of pilgrims to Jerusalem! An imitation of what was done on this day at Jerusalem was a natural result of pious desires of the faithful. It was about the 7th Century, that the practice of publicly venerating the Cross on Good Friday was introduced into other churches. True, it was but an "image" of the True Cross that these other churches could show to the people; but as the respect that is paid to the true Cross refers to Christ Himself, the faithful could offer Him a like homage of adoration, even though not having present before their eyes the actual sacred wood itself which had been consecrated by the Blood of Jesus. Such was the origin of the Good Friday Veneration of the Cross which holy Mother Church now invites us to participate.

During the Good Friday liturgy, the priest celebrant or deacon processes in with the Cross, stopping at 3 points (between the entrance door and the altar); partially unveiling and elevating the Cross, while he sings: *Behold the wood of the Cross on which hung the Savior [or salvation] of the world.* All present genuflect and adore the Cross, while the choir sings: *Come, let us adore.*

In the tradition of Church, the first exposition, represents the first preaching of the Cross, that, namely, which the Apostles made, when, for fear of the Jews, they dared not to speak of the great mystery except to a few faithful disciples of Jesus. The second exposition of the Cross signifies the Apostles' extending their preaching of the mystery of our redemption to the Jews, after the descent of the Holy Spirit; by which preaching they made many thousand converts, and planted the Church in the very midst of the Synagogue. The third and final manifestation represents the mystery of the Cross being preached to the whole world, when the Apostles, after being rejected by the majority of the Jewish people, turned towards the Gentiles, and preached Jesus crucified even far beyond the limits of the Roman Empire.

In conclusion, the Church is not satisfied with merely showing her children the Cross that has saved them; she invites them to approach, venerate, and kiss the holy wood of the Cross, upon which hung the Savior and source of our salvation.

(SR: <http://www.salvemariaregina.info/Reference/Good%20Friday.html>)