



*St Luke's in the City*

150 years - 2009

# **Celebrating at the Crossroads**

## **Feast of the Holy Cross**

13 September 2009

### FEAST OF THE HOLY CROSS

The early church, living in the triumph of Easter, showed no great interest in the cross as a sign or symbol. Apart from the fact that Crucifixion involved both public degradation and a lingering, agonising death by thirst and exhaustion, and that it was reserved for slaves and foreigners, especially in cases of robbery, rioting and sedition, the death of Jesus by crucifixion created an additional obstacle to any Jewish follower - Deuteronomy states, "Anyone hung on a tree is under God's curse." But in the fourth century the growth of pilgrimages to Palestine created an interest in places and things associated with Jesus. The Romans had destroyed Jerusalem in 135CE, and later built a new city, Aelia Capitolina, on the site. At that time the hill of Calvary was buried under tonnes of fill. In the early fourth century, the convert Emperor Constantine decided to erect a number of buildings to honour the principal places associated with Jesus. The excavations in Jerusalem for the new basilica, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, were supervised by the empress Helena, Constantine's mother. She discovered in the rubble a piece of wood that she identified as a relic of the true cross. The buildings housing this relic were dedicated on 14 September 335, the date which has given this feast its date in the church calendar.

*excerpt from Booth K (ed), **For All the Saints**, Common Life Liturgical Commission, 1996*