Did you know that Saint Helen found the True Cross beneath a mound of basil?

Saint Helen discovered the True Cross of Christ underneath a sweet-smelling herb we now call “basil.” Basil is derived from the Greek word (βασιλεύς) “basileus,” a title used for emperors, monarchs, and kings. Basil is considered “The King of Herbs” as Christ is “The King of Kings.”

After Emperor Saint Constantine the Great legalized Christianity, his mother, Saint Helen, made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. She was commissioned to restore holy sites from Christ’s life and to find the True Cross. She founded many churches with help from the Patriarch of Jerusalem, Saint Macarius.

A Jewish man named Jude knew the Cross was buried beneath the temple of Venus. Saint Helen then ordered the temple to be destroyed and the site excavated. They discovered Golgotha and the Lord’s Sepulchre. On May 3, 326 A.D., within the temple rubble and beneath the mound of basil, Saint Helen found three crosses, four nails, and a wooden plaque with the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin inscription: “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.” The Church celebrates the Finding of the Precious Cross on March 6.

To identify the True Cross of Christ, Saint Macarius prayed to God and told a dying woman to kiss each of the three crosses. Upon kissing the third cross, she was immediately healed. Coincidentally, a funeral procession was passing by, and the dead man’s body was placed on each of the crosses. When placed on the True Cross, he came back to life. Thus, the bitterness of death was overcome by the sweetness of the Life-Giving Cross.