

# Catechism



## of the Orthodox Church VOLUME II

Holy Ascension Orthodox Mission  
Melbourne, Australia

**HOLY ASCENSION  
ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN MISSION**

**[holyascension.church](http://holyascension.church)**

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## Lesson 7B

### The Church Building

The Church is a mystic link between earth and Heaven, and so worship experienced in the Church is in response to this reality and points us to this reality. The Church building, the ordering of the divine services, their actions, movements, images, smells, prayers, and readings all act as a guide to lead us into the Throne Room, granting access to the Inaccessible.

#### Basic Layout

A basic Orthodox Church building is composed of three main spaces: a narthex, nave, and Sanctuary. These spaces are arranged adjacent to each other along an axis aligned West (the narthex and entry) to East (the Sanctuary) and are demarcated or separated from each other by means of walls or screens. The East-West orientation can be interpreted in several ways. It symbolizes the movement of the worshipper from the darkness of sin (the West) into the Light of Truth (the East). The Sanctuary lies to the East of the nave because Christ, the Light of the World, is symbolized by the rising sun. Or, as worshippers, we look for Christ to come again from the East (cf. Isaiah 41, Ezekiel 43).

#### Narthex

The narthex serves as the initial space on entry into the building and (at least traditionally) is used by the catechumens (candidates for Holy Baptism), energumens (demoniacs), penitents, non-Orthodox, and seekers who are not properly admitted amongst the congregation; it also

served as a place for the poor and the lame to sit and ask for alms. In most churches today, the narthex has lost this function and so should properly be only referred to as a vestibule (entry); it also now serves as a place to find catechetical materials, candles (a necessary part of Orthodox Worship), and a tray or box used to collect donations.

### **Nave**

The nave, architecturally, is the central, open space of a church. Although it is usually the largest space in the church, ideally it remains a relatively small space to emphasize and enhance the sense of community in worship. Traditionally the nave is the space reserved for baptized worshippers (choir, chanters, readers, and parishioners) in good standing. The name is derived from the Latin *navis*, a ship. In traditional Orthodox Churches, unlike Protestant or typical Roman churches, there are no pews; Scripturally and by the teachings of the Church Fathers worshippers stand before God (except at certain explicit moments of instruction or Psalm reading). However, chairs (newer churches), benches, or *stacidia* (like a highchair with a fold up seat with arm rests high enough to be used while standing) may be located along the west side or perimeters of the nave for use by the aged or infirm. In small monastery churches *stacidia* also provide a place to stand out of the way of monks performing liturgical duties, while symbolically they represent the coffin of the monk. Near the front of the nave is found the *amvon*, a raised platform from which the Gospels are read, sermons are preached, and Holy Communion is offered. Other appointments include Icons, murals, candle stands, lamps, and a chandelier (*horos*).

## **Sanctuary**

The Sanctuary is the entire space surrounding the main altar table, the side altar (*prothesis*) where the bread and wine for the Liturgy are prepared, the *diakonikon* where liturgical books, relics, and vestments are kept, and the seats for the clergy and the throne or *cathedra* for the bishop. The Sanctuary is separated from the nave by an iconostasis, and is a space reserved for the clergy (subdeacons, deacons, priests, and bishops). An apse is generally used to close the back of the Sanctuary.

## **Church Architectural Styles**

### **Linear or Tripartite (Basilica)**

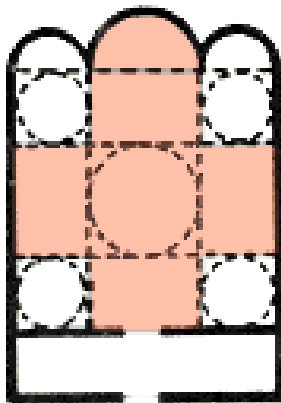
These churches are generally long and narrow, much like a ship (recall also the derivation of the word nave discussed above). And since life on earth can also be likened to a stormy sea, where we are tossed and turned by troubles and temptations, the Church is the ship which will bring us to the Heavenly Harbor.

### **Cruciform**

The shape of the Worship space in these churches is a cross, to remind us that we are saved by the Cross of Christ.

### **Cruciform Variation: Cross-in-Square**

The spatial representation of the Cross is retained in the Worship space, but the physical areas between adjacent arms of the cross are enclosed by the building structure. Generally, the spaces so enclosed are used in a supporting role (e.g., vestry or chapel).



### **Circular**

A circle is the symbol of Eternity (without beginning or end), meaning that the Church, which is the Body of Christ, lives forever.

### **Dome**

A dome is an all-embracing ceiling, revealing that in the Kingdom of God, and in the Church, “Christ unites all things in Himself, things in Heaven and things on earth” (Ephesians 1:10), and that in Him we are all “filled with all the fullness of God.” (Ephesians 3:19).

<b>Domes</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
1	Jesus Christ
3	Trinity
5	Jesus Christ and the Four Evangelists

7	Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit
9	Nine Orders of the Heavenly Powers
13	Jesus Christ and the 12 Apostles
25	The Throne of the Trinity with the 12 Prophets and 12 Apostles alongside (cf. Revelations 4:2-4)
33	Christ's 33 years on earth

In some cases, however, the number of domes may be used to reflect the number of altars present in the church (main and chapels).

The colors of the domes can also have meaning. Black means submission and is sometimes found in monasteries. Green refers to the Holy Trinity. Blue refers to Mary, the Mother of God. And gold refers to Jesus Christ. Gold domes of Russian churches are also said to be candles (which they can look like from a distance) burning up toward Heaven.

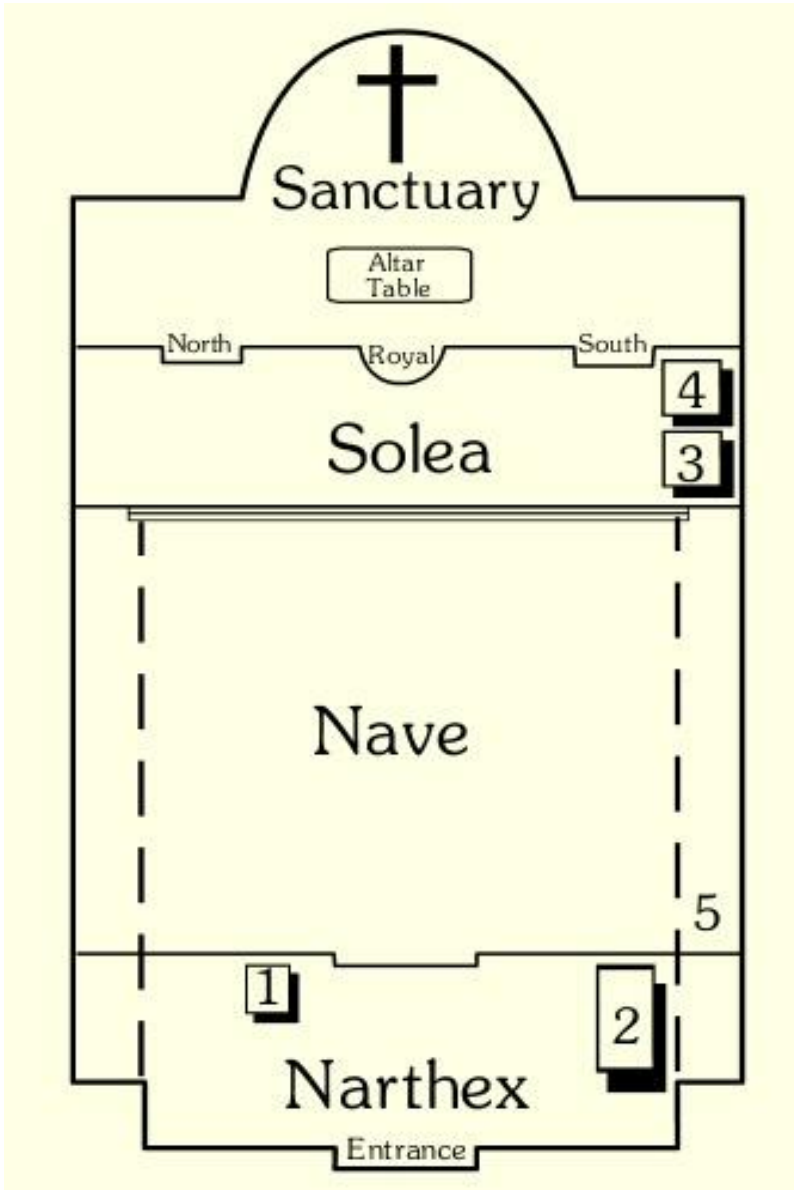
### **Conclusion**

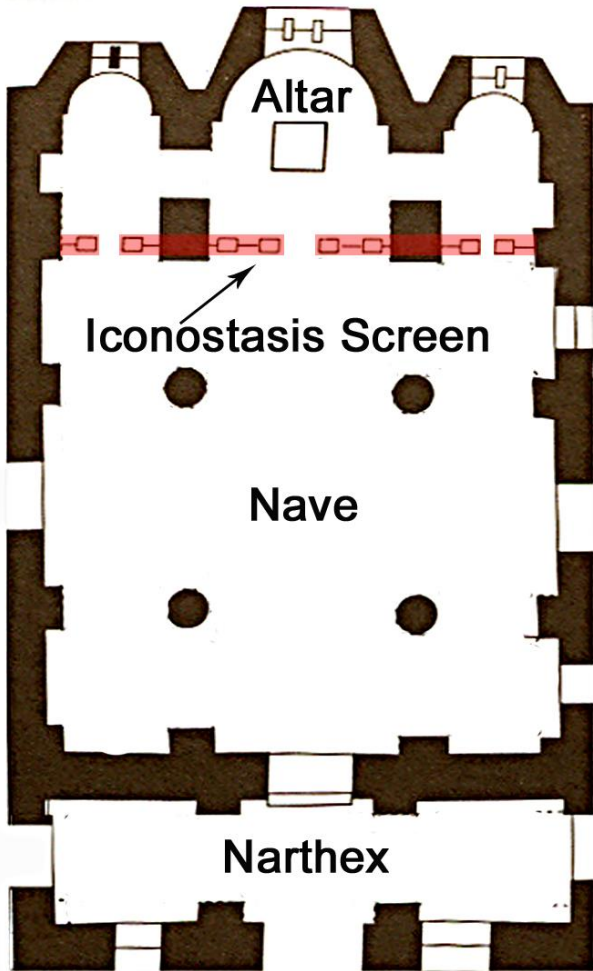
The church ("temple") is a special house consecrated to God — "the House of God" in which the Divine Services are conducted. In the church there abides the special grace or mercy of God, which is given to us through those who conduct the Divine Services, namely, the clergy (bishops, priests, and deacons).



The external appearance of the church differs from other buildings in that there is a dome which symbolizes Heaven rising over the church. At the top of the dome is its peak, where the Cross stands, to the glory of the Head, Jesus Christ. Over the entrance to the church there is usually built a bell tower where the bells are hung. The ringing of the bells serves to summon the faithful to prayer — to the Divine Services, and to give notice of the most important parts of the service taking place in the church.

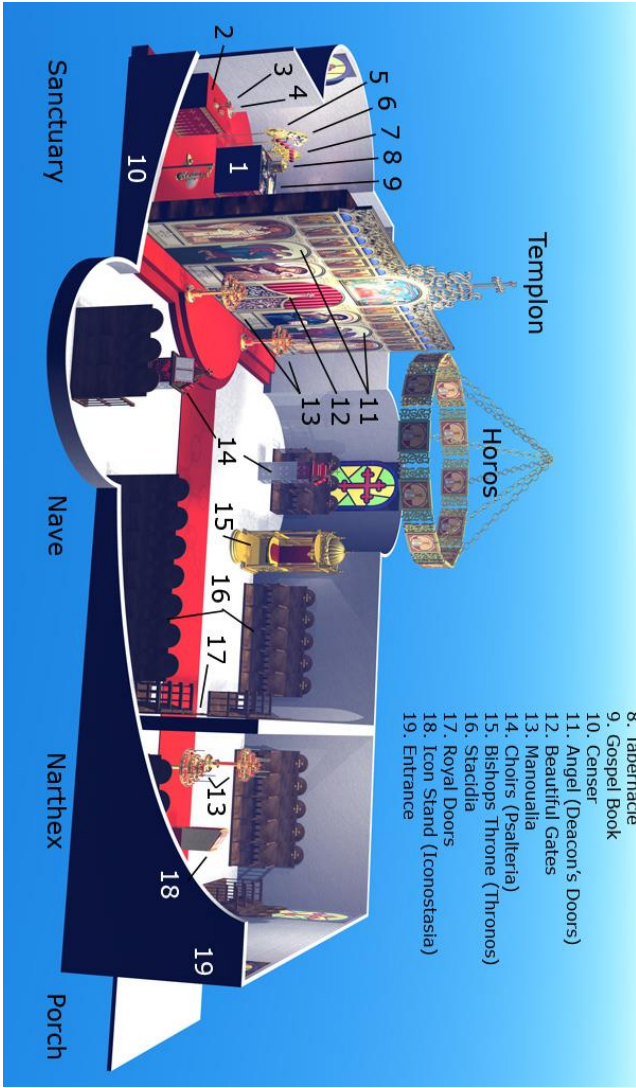
At the entrance to the church there is a porch (courtyard, or entrance way). The inside of the church is divided into three parts: 1) the narthex, 2) the church itself, or the nave, or middle part of the church, where the people stand, 3) the Altar, or Sanctuary, where the services are conducted by the clergy and where the most important part of the whole church is located — the Holy Table (Altar Table), on which the Mystery of the Holy Eucharist is celebrated.





**Traditional  
Byzantine (Orthodox)  
Church Plan**

**Dome**  
**Christ - Pantocratoros**  
**Ruler of the Universe**



1. Altar
2. table of Preparation
3. Chalice
4. Discos & Asterisk
5. Fans - Exiptera
6. Processional Cross
7. Candelabra
8. Tabernacle
9. Gospel Book
10. Censer
11. Angel (Deacon's Doors)
12. Beautiful Gates
13. Manoualia
14. Choirs (Psalteria)
15. Bishops Throne (Thronos)
16. Stacidia
17. Royal Doors
18. Icon Stand (Iconostasia)
19. Entrance



*Narthex*



*Solea with Left & Right Cliros and Ambon*



Nave



*Monastic Cliros Standing in Stalls (Stasidia)*





*Monastic Stasidia and Cliros*



*Bema*











*Altar*

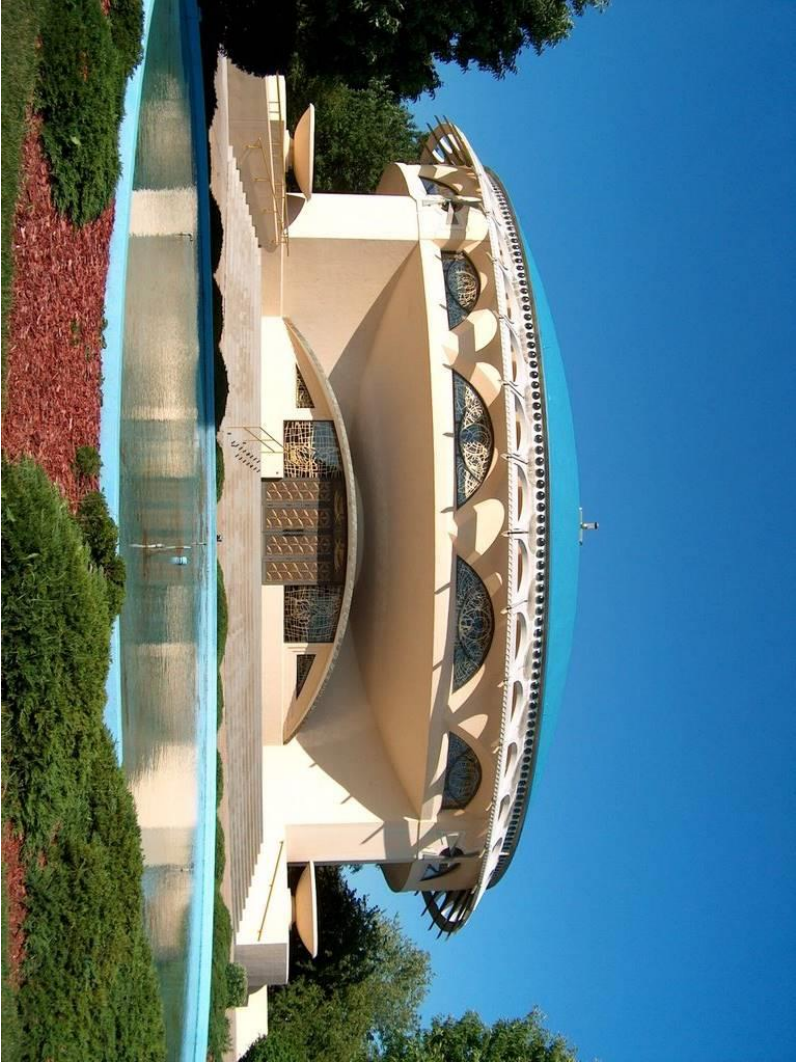


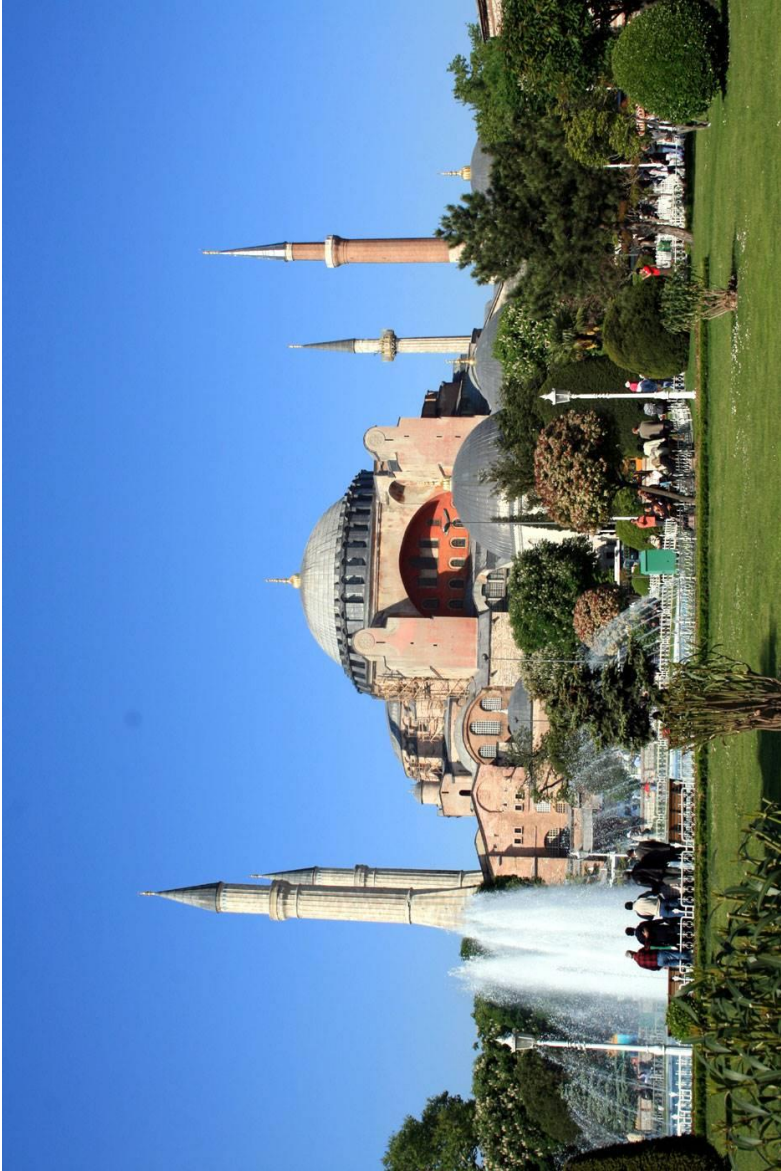
*Sanctuary, Altar, High Place, Cathedra*





*Church in Circular Form*





*Divine Wisdom (Hagia Sophia). Cross-in-Square Form*





*Largest Church in Greece. Cathedral of Apostle Andrew, Patras.*



*Largest Church in Serbia. Cathedral of St Sava, Belgrade.*



*Basilica Form*



*A (wooden) Orthodox church in Antarctica.*





*Single domed church in Georgia. Ark Form.*



*Baptistry*



*Baptistry*

## Lesson 8

### The Symbol of Faith

- Standard formula of faith required to maintain Orthodoxy
- 1st and 2<sup>nd</sup> Ecumenical Councils (Nicea 325, Constantinople 381)

"If you ask a man for change, he will give you a piece of philosophy concerning the Begotten and the Unbegotten; if you enquire the price of a loaf, he replies: "The Father is greater and the Son inferior," or if you ask whether the bath is ready, the answer you receive is that the Son was made out of nothing." -- St Gregory of Nyssa (c 335 – 395)

#### The Creed

- 1 - I believe in one God, Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and Earth and of all things visible and invisible.**

*Romans 10: 8-10; 1 John 4: 15; Deuteronomy 6: 4; Ephesians 4: 6; Matthew 6: 9; Exodus 6: 3; Genesis 1: 1; Colossians 1: 15-16.*

- 2- And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Only-begotten, begotten of the Father before all ages; Light of Light, true God of true God; begotten, not created; of one essence with the Father, by Whom all things were made;**

*Acts 11: 17; Matthew 14: 33, 16: 16; John 1: 18, 3: 16; John 1: 2; Psalm 27: 1, John 8: 12, Matthew 17: 2, 5; John 17: 1-5; John 10: 30; Hebrews 1: 1-2.*

- 3- Who for us men and for our salvation came down from the heavens, and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became man;**

*I Timothy 2: 4-5; John 6: 33, 35; Luke 1: 35; John 1: 14.*

- 4- And was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered and was buried;**

*Mark 15: 25; I Corinthians 15: 3; John 1: 14; Mark 8: 31; Luke 23: 53; I Corinthians 15: 4.*

- 5- And resurrected on the third day according to the Scriptures;**

*Luke 24: 1; 1 Cor. 15: 4.*

- 6- And ascended into the heavens, and sits at the right hand of the Father;**

*Luke 24: 51; Acts 1: 10; Mark 16: 19; Acts 7: 55.*

- 7- And coming again, with glory, to judge the living and the dead; and His kingdom will have no end.**

*Matthew 24: 27; Acts 10: 42; 2 I Timothy 4: 1; 2 Peter 1: 11.*

- 8- And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Creator of life; Who proceeds from the Father; Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; Who spoke through the prophets.**

*John 14: 26; Acts 5: 3-4; Genesis 1: 2; John 15: 26; Matthew 3: 16-17; I Samuel 19: 20; Ezekiel 11: 5, 13.*

- 9- In One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.**

*Matthew 16: 18; I Peter 2: 5, 9; Mark 16: 15; Acts 2: 42; Ephesians 2: 19-22.*

- 10- I confess one baptism for the remission of sins.**

*Ephesians 4: 5.*

- 11- I look forward to the resurrection of the dead,**

*John 11: 24; I Cor. 15: 12-49.*

- 12- and the life of the age to come. Amen.**

*Mark 10: 29-30; Psalm 106:48.*

**Nicea 325 (1<sup>st</sup> Ecumenical Council)**

Faith (I believe) – Article 1

One God (The Father, 1<sup>st</sup> Person Trinity) – Article 1

One God (The Son, 2<sup>nd</sup> Person Trinity) – Article 2

Creation (Creator of Heaven and Earth...) – Articles 1, 2

Angels, Demons & Souls (Visible & Invisible...) – Article 1

Man & Salvation – Article 3

Historical Crucifixion – Article 4

Christ's Resurrection – Article 5

Ascension – Article 6

Judgment, Eternity – Article 7

**Constantinople 381 (2<sup>nd</sup> Ecumenical Council)**

One God (The Holy Spirit, 3<sup>rd</sup> Person Trinity) – Article 8

The Church – Article 9

Baptism – Article 10

Our Resurrection – Article 11

Eternity – Article 12

## Lesson 9A

### Holy Tradition & Church Etiquette

The teaching on the soul's salvation is mainly concerned with our inner person which we will get to in later talks. Things like prayer, focusing the mind and heart on God through prayer, discerning God's will for us in our lives and so on. But besides our inner person, we also have an outer person, whose actions are visible to all. The Church gives us a whole series of precepts so that our outward behavior is profitable for us and edifying for others.

The Apostle Paul, in many passages in his epistles, advises the faithful to imitate him and his co-laborers: I beg you, therefore, be imitators of me. (I Corinthians 4:16); Be my imitators, even as I imitate Christ. Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things, and hold firm to the traditions as I delivered them to you. (I Corinthians 11:1-2); Brethren, be united in imitating me, and keep your eyes fixed on those who live this way, even as you have us as an example. (Philippians 3:17); What you learned, received, heard, and saw in me—practice these things (Philippians 4-9), etc. The Apostle speaks of the need to follow him but says little about how this is to be done. We are taught all this by the tradition of the Church. Those who followed the Apostles strictly preserved this tradition, for which the Apostle Paul praised: Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things, and hold firm to the traditions as I delivered them to



you. (I Corinthians 11:2). Later similar apostolic traditions were written down by their followers, the Holy Fathers.

Although there are in Scripture various directives for the proper conduct of a Christian and their relations with fellow believers, this subject is treated in greater detail by the Holy Fathers and later Church Writers, up to our own time. They write how one should behave in church and outside the church.

They emphasize Holy Tradition as the living continuity with the ancient Church. St John of Damascus says, “We do not change the everlasting boundaries which our fathers have set, but we keep the Tradition, just as we received it [On the Holy Icons, II, 12].”

Orthodox loyalty to Tradition [the things of the past] is not something mechanical or lifeless, however. Tradition is a personal encounter with Christ in the Holy Spirit,

Tradition is a living experience of the Holy Spirit in the present.

Our Lord tells us that when the Spirit of Truth comes, He will guide you into all the Truth (John 16:13) and this promise forms the basis of Orthodox respect for Holy Tradition.

So how well has this Tradition been preserved especially for us right here and now, 2000 years and a hemisphere removed from where it all began?

In the West, immigrants brought with them from their homelands an Orthodoxy which very quickly accommodated to the Christianity of the West, losing much of its essence and under the influence of such phenomena as the ecumenical movement, secular influences, and influences from other denominations. It came to think of itself not as the historical Church, the very Church of Christ, the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church as we confess and profess at every liturgy in the Creed, but as one of the many denominations and ecclesiastical bodies. As a result, Orthodoxy in the West is often an artificial version of traditional Orthodox Christianity.

So, because of this and because we are a new Orthodox community with people coming from diverse backgrounds and traditions, we need to catechize and re-catechize on an ongoing basis. Not just for the sake of those coming to Orthodoxy later in life, but also for those who are culturally Orthodox and entered the faith as infants but have not really known or been familiarized with their own faith. We need to learn afresh as well as unlearn habits and customs which may have crept in through pious, innocent ignorance.

Today we will just have an overview of Orthodox customs and traditions as we experience them through the Divine Liturgy since we only come together once a week for now due to our limited resources and lack of permanent location for our Mission. So, things like The Sign of the Cross, Venerating Icons, How to accept and receive blessing from priest...etc.

Later in subsequent talks we can go into each aspect in greater detail.

Prepare for Liturgy from the night before.

Proper Attire. Don't track dirt inside.

Punctuality.

Enter the church – Sacred Space. Not worldly.

Quiet prayer. Sign of the Cross. Candles. Venerate Icons. Take your place.

Postures of worship.

When priest blesses or deacon censens. Bow.

Sit for Epistle. Instruction.

Stand for Gospel. Living Word of God.

Stand for Anaphora/Elevation. Creed. Lord's Prayer. Communion.

How to receive Communion.

How to receive blessing from priest individually.

Do not cross legs.

We stand, serve and worship before the altar of the Pantokrator the Lord Almighty and All-Powerful, we must

always display, **manifest**, and create an atmosphere where there is a **distinct sense** of being in the **presence of God**.

We must always be **mindful** that we are **constantly** in the **heavenly presence**.

Everything in a Divine Service **must** be **centered** in the **worship** of the **Pantokrator**. The clergy serving, the people reverently standing, and the choir singing orderly and piously.

The way Orthodox worship, and the Orthodox Church's Divine Services **must reflect the majesty of God** as revealed from the heavens.

At the small entrance, when we sing: "**Come let us worship and prostrate ourselves before Christ...**"

Mystically/Symbolically what does this mean? The bishop, the priest, in fact all who are participating in the procession of the small entrance are arriving and are being received in the name of the Lord. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. The bishop (priest) more so than everyone else is arriving in the name of the Lord. **He stands as a type of and in place of Christ – in the name of the Lord.**

But are we "blessed" as coming "in the name of the Lord?" Or have we checked out at that point, or any other time during the Services, by drifting into la-la land?

Therefore, it is of **extreme importance**, and **this cannot be stressed and emphasized enough**, that we are **always keeping** our **focus** on the **divine presence**.

As Orthodox Christians we understand, in a mystical and spiritual way, that we unite ourselves with those in the heavens (the angels and the faithful who have gone on before us). **Together** we lift our hands with humility and solemnity, but also in praise and with beauty, order, and grandeur, towards Him who sits on the heavenly throne. And we sing with those in the heavens, “Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Sabaoth/of hosts. Heaven and earth are filled with your glory.”

## Lesson 9B

### Orthodox Christian Spirituality

Spirituality in the Orthodox Church means the everyday activity of life in communion with God. The term spirituality refers not merely to the activity of man's spirit alone, his mind, heart, and soul, but it refers as well to the whole of man's life as inspired and guided by the Spirit of God. Every act of a Christian must be a spiritual act. Every thought must be spiritual, every word, every deed, every activity of the body, every action of the person. This means that all that a person thinks, says, and does must be inspired and guided by the Holy Spirit so that the will of God the Father might be accomplished as revealed and taught by Jesus Christ the Son of God.

*... whatever you do, do all to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10: 31).*

Doing all things to the glory of God is the meaning and substance of life for a human being. This "doing" is what Christian spirituality is about.

## Basics of Orthodox Christian Spirituality

1. Belief in Jesus Christ as our Lord, God and Savior with His Father and the Holy Spirit.
2. Daily Prayer: Morning, Noon, or Night; Develop a rule.
3. Weekly Worship: Sunday Divine Liturgy is the pinnacle of weekly worship.
4. Love of Neighbor: Everyone is your neighbor. Almsgiving: Sacrificial giving to needy.
5. Fasting: Weekly: Wednesdays, Fridays & Communion Fasts; Seasonal Fasts.
6. Sacramental Participation: Confession, Holy Communion, Holy Unction regularly.
7. Spiritual Reading: Daily. Scripture (Lectionary), Church Fathers, Lives of Saints...
8. Education: Catechism, Bible Study, Retreats, Seminars. (Active learning).
9. Support the Mission of the Church: Stewardship of time, talents, treasure.
10. Ethical/Moral Praxis & Purity: including thoughts, words, actions. (Active living).

## Lesson 10

### Icons

#### **Iconology not Iconography**

Orthodox Faithful prostrate themselves before icons, kiss them, and burn candles before them. Icons are censed by the Priest and carried in processions. So, they hold an important and special place in Orthodox worship and devotion. But what do these gestures and actions mean? What is the significance of Icons? Aren't they idols prohibited by the Old Testament?

These are just some questions we will try to cover today.

Some of the answers to these questions can be found in the writings of St John of Damascus (776), who wrote in the Mid-Eighth Century at the height of the iconoclast (anti-icon) controversies in the Church, controversies which were resolved only by the 7th Ecumenical Council (787), which borrowed heavily from these writings.

As St John points out, in ancient times God, being without form (incorporeal) and without limit (uncircumscribed), was never depicted, since it is impossible to represent that which is immaterial, has no shape, is indescribable and is unencompassable. Holy Scripture states categorically: No one has ever seen God (John 1: 18) and You cannot see My [God's] face, for man shall not see Me and live (Exodus 33: 20). The Lord forbade the Hebrews to fashion any likeness of the Divinity, saying: You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in Heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the



earth (Exodus 20: 4). Consequently, the Holy Apostle Paul also asserts: Since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divinity is like gold, silver, or stone, engraved by human art and imagination. (Acts 17: 29).

Tradition witnesses that the Orthodox Church had a clear understanding of the importance of Icons right from the beginning; and this understanding never changed.

It is derived from the teachings concerning the Incarnation of the Second Person of the Holy Trinity Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The use of Icons is grounded in the very essence of Christianity, since Christianity is the revelation by the God-Man not only of the Word of God, but also of the Image of God; for, as St John the Evangelist tells us, the Word became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1: 14).

And because the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, we can now portray Him pictorially, in our iconography. There is more Scripture which substantiates the validity of iconography:

St John the Evangelist proclaims, "No one has ever seen God; the only Son, Who is in the bosom of the Father, He has made Him known (John 1:18)." That is, He has revealed the Image or Icon of God. For being the brightness of [God's] glory, and the express image of [God's] person (Hebrews 1: 3), the Word of God in the Incarnation revealed to the world, in His own Divinity, the Image of the Father. When St Philip asks Jesus, "Lord, show us the Father," He answered him: "Have I been with you so long, and yet you do not know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father (John 14: 8, 9)." Thus, as the Son is in the bosom of the Father, likewise

after the Incarnation He is consubstantial or of the same nature with the Father, according to His divinity being the Father's Image, equal in honor to Him.

The truth expressed above, which is revealed in Christianity, thus forms the foundations of Christian pictorial art.

St John of Damascus further tells us that because the Word became flesh (John 1: 14), we are no longer in our infancy; we have grown up, we have been given by God the power of discrimination and we know what can be depicted and what is indescribable.

We can portray His inexpressible descent, His Nativity from the Blessed Virgin, His Baptism in the Jordan, His Transfiguration on Mount Tabor, His sufferings, death, and miracles. We can depict the Cross of Salvation, the Sepulcher or tomb, the Resurrection, and the Ascension, both in words and in colors. We can confidently represent God the Invisible not as an invisible being, but as one Who has made Himself visible for our sake by sharing in our flesh and blood.

**The Scriptures are considered an Icon. The Book of the Gospels is an Icon.**

According to St Basil the Great (379): As the word of Holy Scripture is an image, so the image is also a word, for, what the word transmits through the ear, that painting silently shows through the image [Discourse 19, On the 40 Martyrs]. In other words, the Icon contains and professes the same truth as the Gospels and therefore, like the Gospels, is based on exact data, and is not a human invention, for if it were

otherwise, Icons could not explain the Gospels nor correspond to them.

### **Are we worshipping the material: wood, colors, paints...etc.?**

As St John of Damascus asserts: In former times God who is without form or body, could never be depicted. But now that God is seen in the flesh conversing with men, I can make an image (icon) of the God whom I see. I do not worship matter; I worship the Creator of matter, who became matter for my sake, and made Himself to dwell in matter, who worked out my salvation through matter. I will never cease from honoring the matter through which my salvation has been effected. I honor it, but not as God. [On the Divine Images, trans. David Anderson. Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1980, Pg 23].

So, according to St John of Damascus, those who refuse to venerate an Icon also refuse to worship God's Son, Who is the living image and unchanging reflection of God the Invisible. "Be it known," he says, "that anyone who seeks to destroy the Icons of Christ or His Mother, the Blessed Theotokos, or any of the Saints, is the enemy of Christ, the Holy Mother of God, and the Saints, and is the defender of the Devil and his demons."

**Origins:** Pre-Christian styles from Egypt and Rome (Fayyum Portraits). The Mandylion. St Luke the iconographer.

Old Testament Iconography:

Ark of the Covenant                      Temple Veil with Cherubim  
Dura-Europos

Catacombs: Fish, Bread... etc.

**Purpose:** Didactic and Devotional.

“Painting can do for the illiterate what writing does for those who can read.” St Gregory the Great.

Theology in color and pictures.

**Icons painted/written strictly according to tradition:**

Iconographers are required to adhere to tradition, both of icon painting itself as well as of the church in general. This is consistent with the idea that Scripture itself was written according to Tradition. There are many references in Scripture to things that were passed on verbally but not written down. (2 Thessalonians 2: 15 – things passed on by mouth and letter, I Corinthians 11: 2 – urged to maintain traditions passed on to them).

Iconography deliberately does not resemble the art of the world but is other-worldly and transcendent. It instead reflects the transfigured, Heavenly reality. It functions as a channel of grace rather than mere decorative artwork. “The beauty of the church is different from the beauty of the world because it reflects the harmony of the age to come.” “An icon is thus the servant of the Holy Tradition of the Church, a servant of the Gospel, not a mere artistic device.”

“The icon is joined to its prototype because it portrays the person and carries their name. This is precisely what makes communion with the represented person possible, what makes them known.” When you honor the image, you honor the prototype.

## Latreia versus Proskynesis

St John of Damascus distinguishes between veneration and adoration using the terms absolute worship (adoration) and relative worship (veneration). He identifies five kinds of absolute worship:

1. Adoration – we give this to God alone
  - a. All will eventually worship, willingly or unwillingly (Philippians 2)
2. The awe and yearning we have for God
  - a. He is perfect and good.
  - b. He is admired, worshipped, glorified, and desired.
3. Thanksgiving for all good things
4. Beseeching God to listen to our needs and desires
5. Repentance and confession

In addition, he identifies seven kinds of relative worship or veneration. This kind of honor may be offered to created things.

1. Places where God has rested – Holy Places (Why people go on Pilgrimages)
  - a. Includes people – Theotokos and the Saints
  - b. God dwells in them.
  - c. "...they are truly gods, not by nature but because they partake of the divine nature..."
2. Places where God has accomplished our salvation
  - a. Mount Sinai, Nazareth, the cave, and manger of Bethlehem, ...
3. Objects dedicated to God
  - a. E.g., the holy Gospel and other books
  - b. Patens, chalices, censers, candlesticks, altars
  - c. Daniel 5: 2 – Belshazzar made people serve wine in sacred vessels and God brought his kingdom to an end – signifying the sacredness of devotional items.
4. Images that were seen by prophets
  - a. Aaron's rod (prefigured the mystery of the virgin)
  - b. The Cross
5. Each other
  - a. We are God's inheritance and were made according to His image.
6. Those who have been given authority to rule over us
  - a. Pharaoh - Genesis 50: 18 – Joseph and his brothers prostrated themselves (Proskynesis) before Pharaoh.
7. Masters by their servants

“The icon becomes a meeting place, an existential encounter, a window through which we look on the Saints not as shadowy figures from a remote past but as contemporary brothers and sisters in Christ, members of the same household of God. We feel free to call on them through prayer for family support as they intercede to God on our behalf.

Compare-contrast: Photos/Keepsakes of loved ones.

How we venerate icons.

### **Summary**

As windows into the next world, icons serve to teach and remind us of the importance of the spiritual life. Without icons, our churches would very quickly become theaters full of spectators, rather than places where earth and Heaven meet, where the Angels and Saints join us in worshipping God the Holy Trinity, the Creator.

Orthodox icons are painted according to very specific patterns and regulations, which must be followed strictly by the iconographer. Many iconographers are monastics, though a lay person may also paint an icon under strict spiritual supervision.

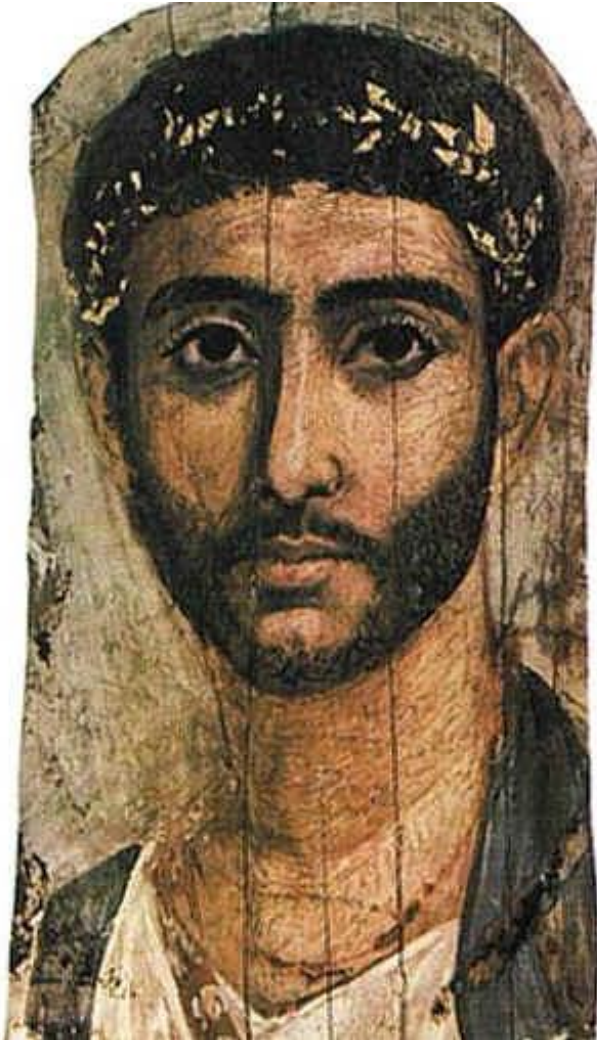
As for the reverence we should hold for icons: We should approach an icon with the same reverence and awe that we reserve for the Precious Cross and Holy Scripture. We venerate an icon to communicate the reverence, respect, and love which we hold for the subject of the icon.

Because icons are holy, there are particular ways they should be handled and displayed.

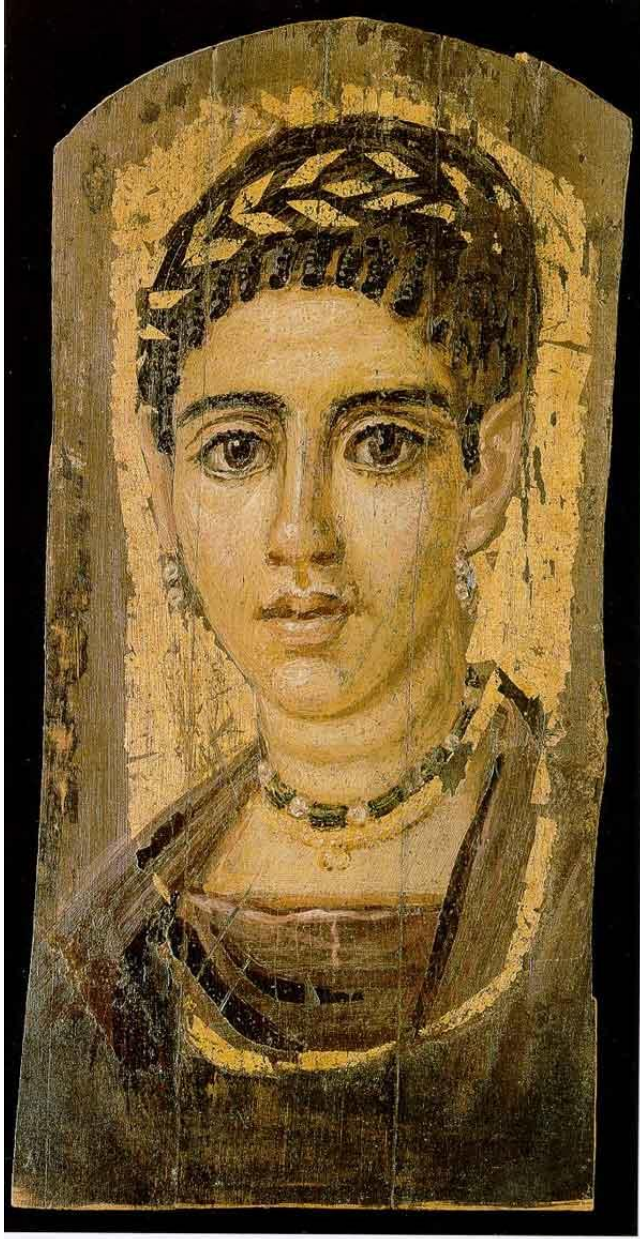
**At home:** The Orthodox Christian home is like a family church. We choose an Eastern wall or corner of a room to set up our icon corner. The icon corner is our family or home altar. We should always include in the icon corner an icon of Christ, the Theotokos and any saints whom we wish to venerate regularly. In front of the icons, safely out of reach of small children or pets, we should keep an oil lamp burning.

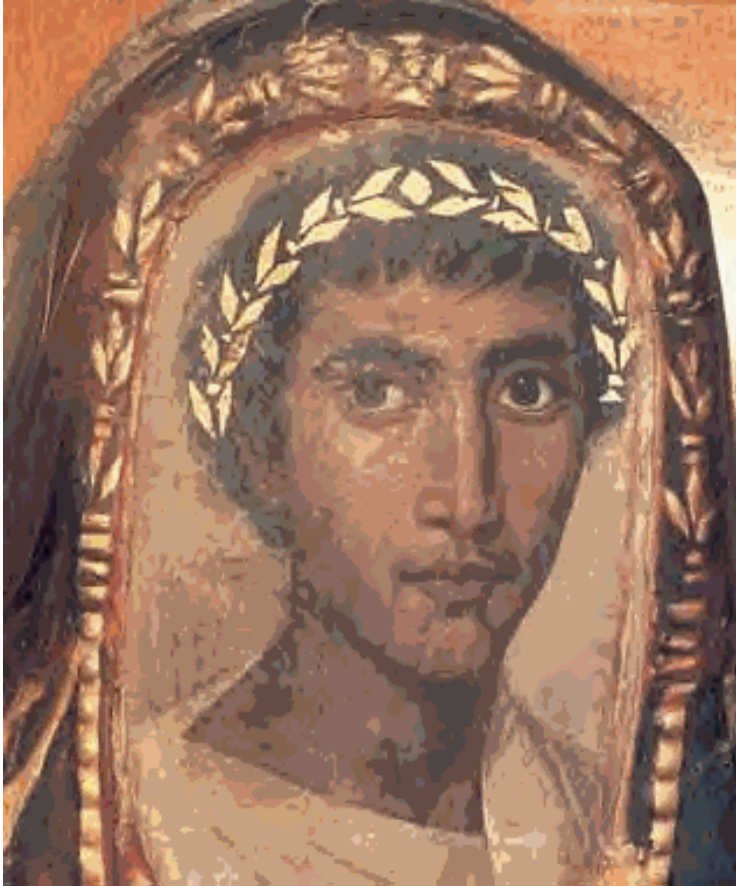
**When travelling:** Whenever we travel, we take a small diptych icon with us. These are small icons usually of Christ and the Theotokos, which are hinged together and folded up to protect the icons when packed in a suitcase. Whenever we stop for the night or take rest from our travels, we take out the icons and set them up in our hotel room or wherever else and it is even better when we know where East is so we can face East when we pray in front of our icons.

Icons are not intended to be realistic paintings of events but rather symbolic interpretations of the great spiritual qualities of the saints such as sacrifice, humility, devotion, faith, and love. Icons depicting saints must clearly indicate who the saint is (martyr, clergy, monastic, warrior, royalty...etc.) and the deeds leading to sainthood.





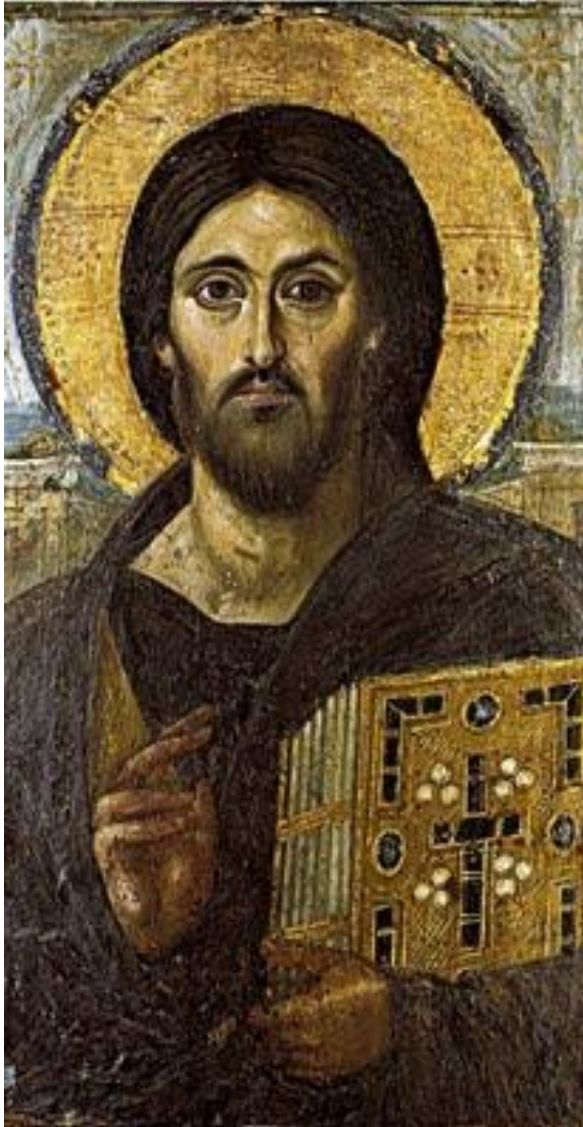




*Fayyum Portraits*



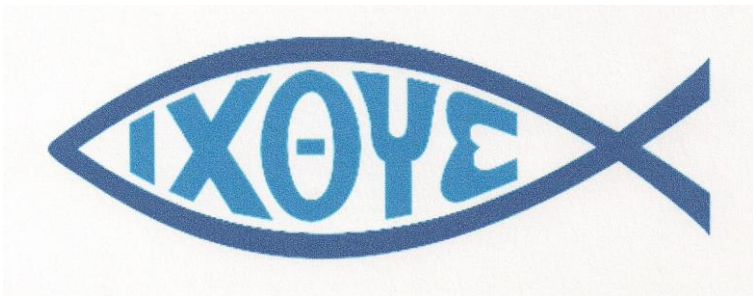
*Dura-Europos Synagogue, Syria. Moses leading the Israelites across the Red Sea, and a temple. c. 250AD.*



*Pantocrator. St Catherine's Monastery, Mt Sinai. 6<sup>th</sup> Century.*



*Christ as Lamb (of God). Not an icon.*



*“Jesus Fish” Not an icon.*



*King Apkar of Edessa and the Holy Napkin (Mandylion)*

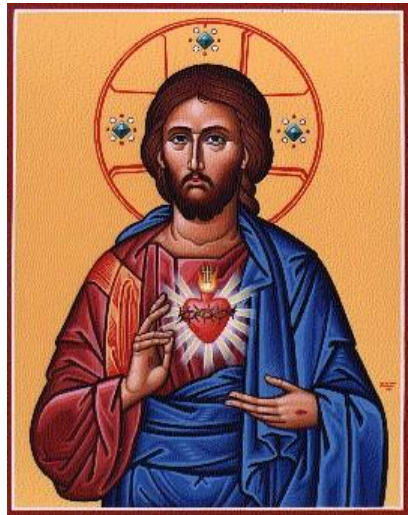


*Crucifixion (Figurine). Not an icon.*

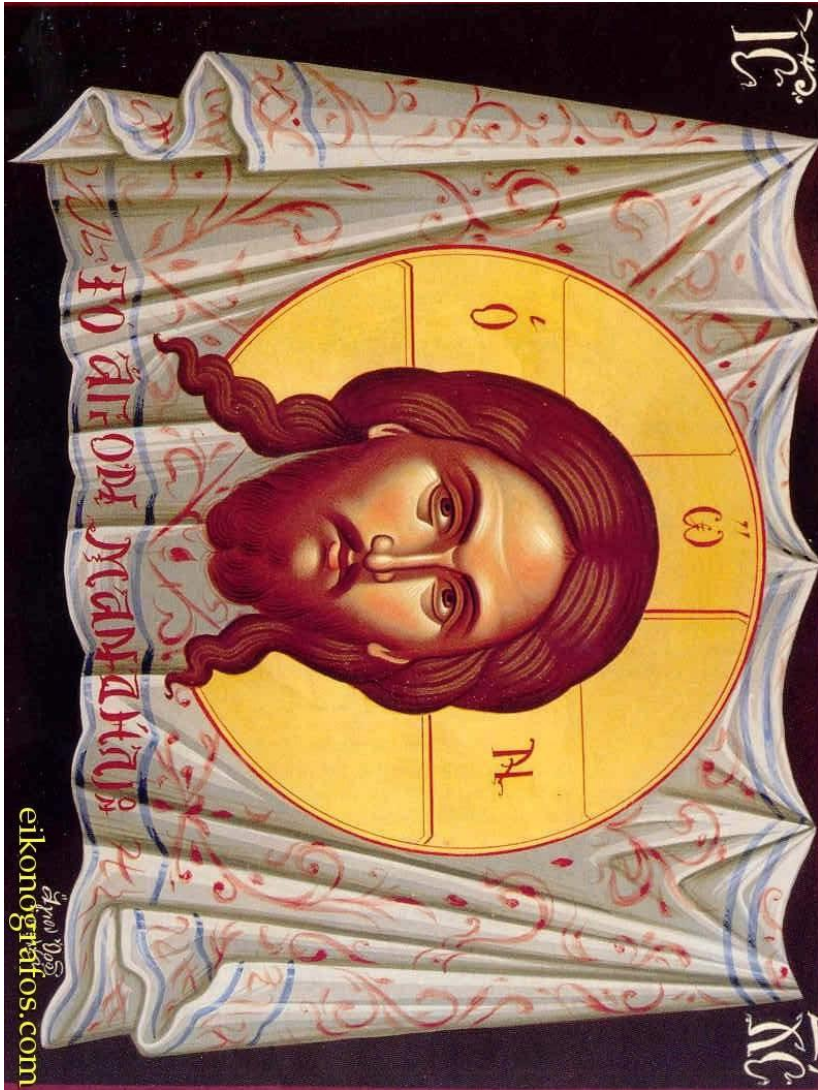


*Canonical Iconographical Portrayal of the Crucifixion*





*“Sacred/Immaculate Hearts.” Not icons.*



*Mandylion. Holy Napkin. One of the first icons.*



*Apostle Luke the Iconographer.*

*Portrayed the Theotokos in one of the earliest icons.*

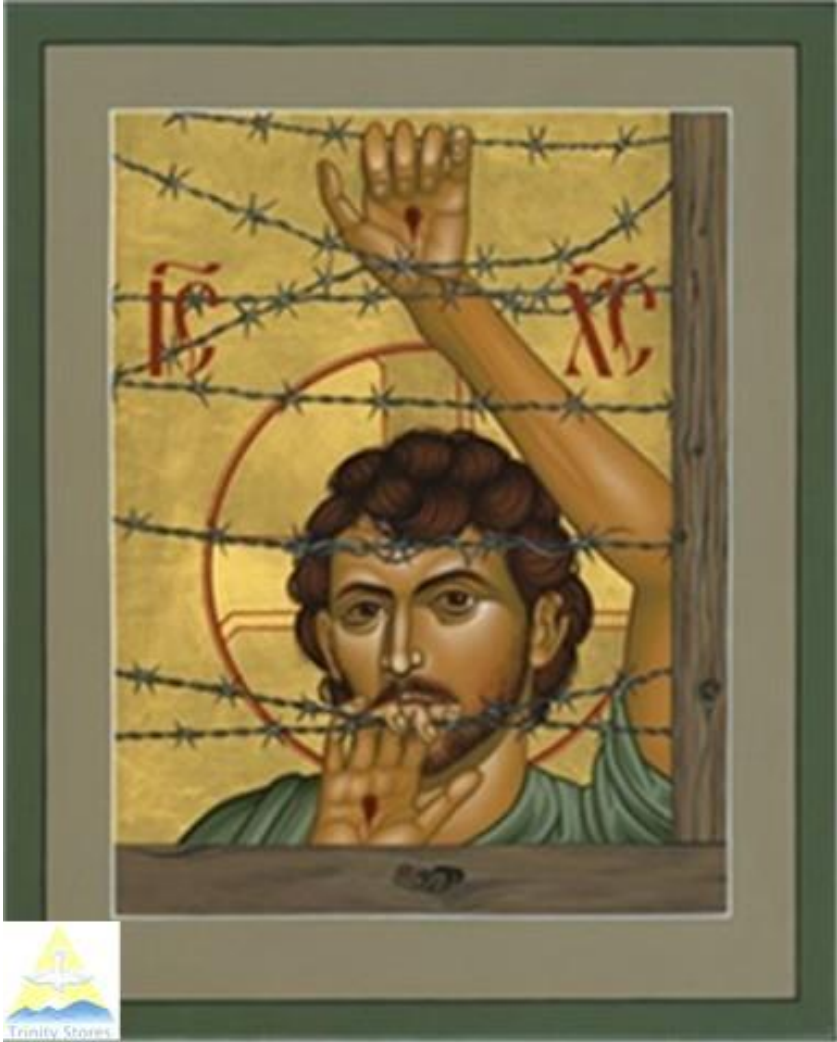


*Iconographic portrayal of an Orthodox Christian Priest.*

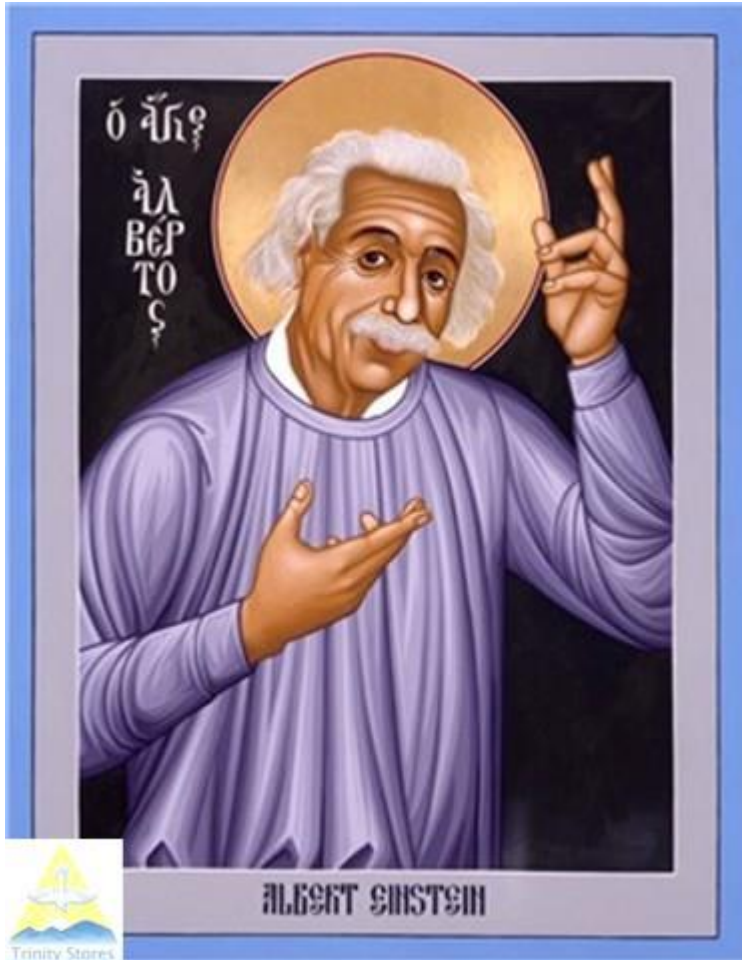
Icons are clearly labeled and titled. Figures portrayed clearly show their station in life (e.g. dressed as clergy, monastics, royalty, warriors, martyrs holding crosses, theologians/ascetics with scrolls...).



*Not an icon.*



*“Christ the Liberator.” Not an icon.*

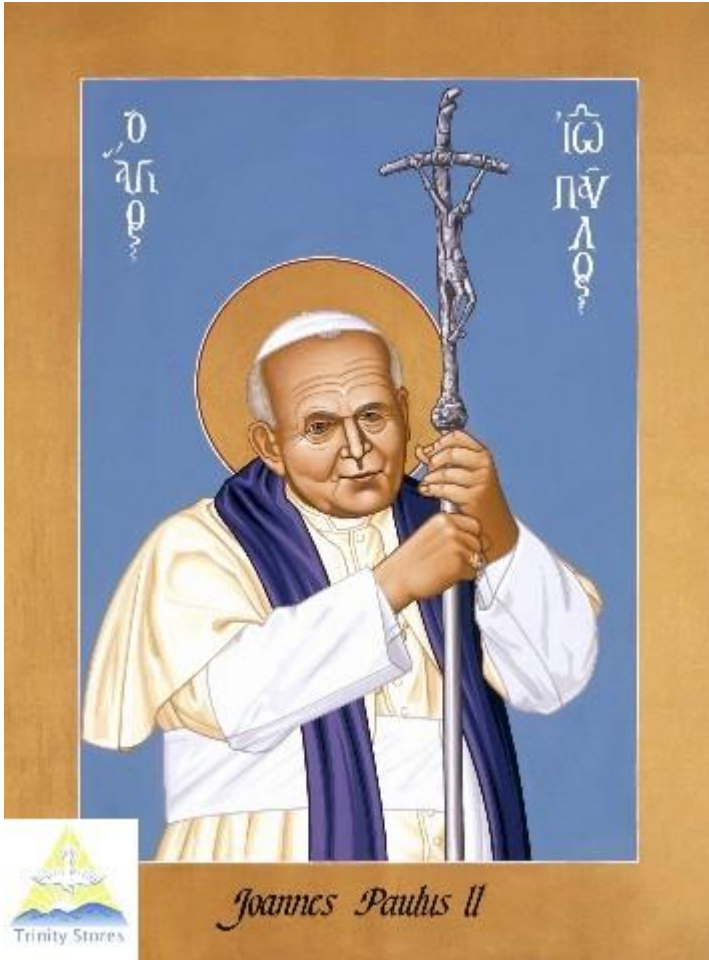


*Not an icon.*



*Not an icon.*

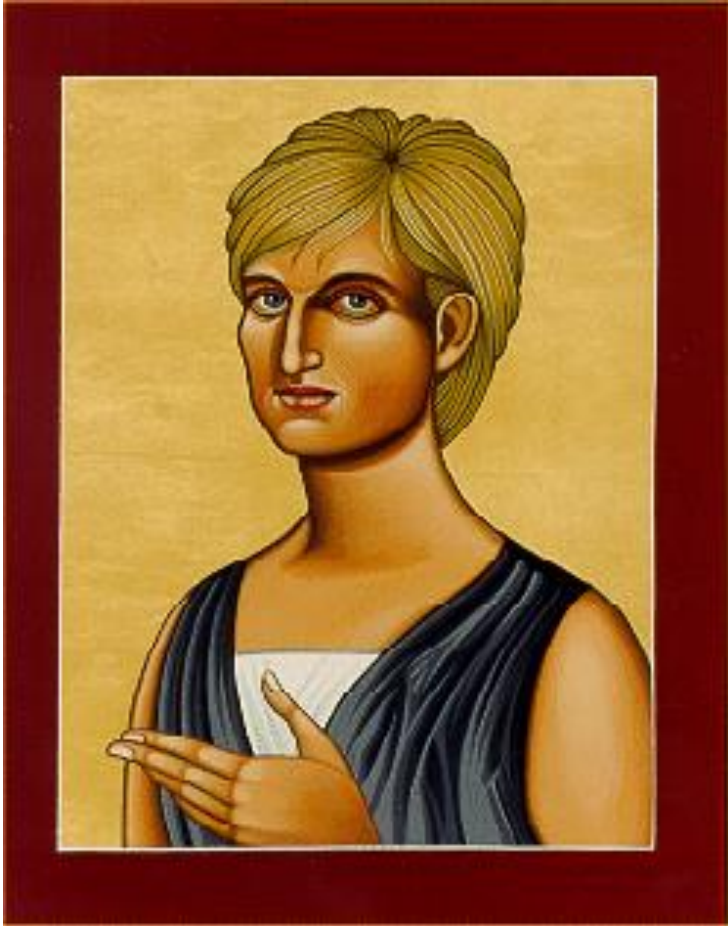




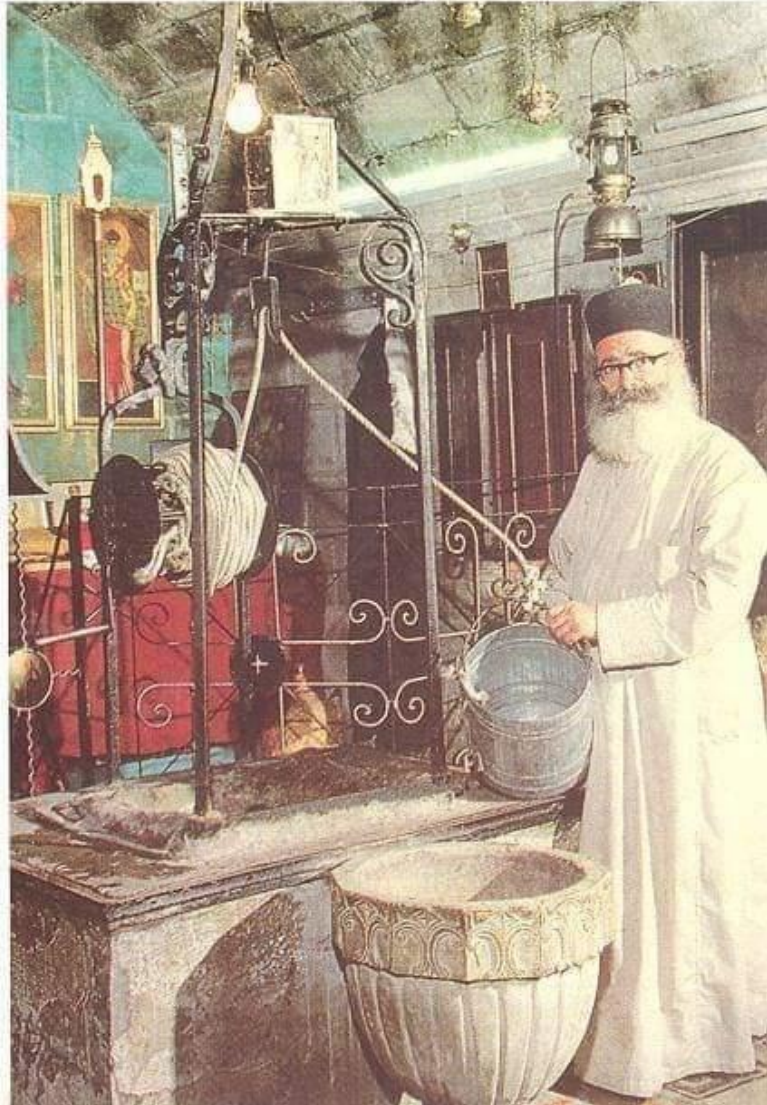
*Not an icon.*



*Not an icon.*



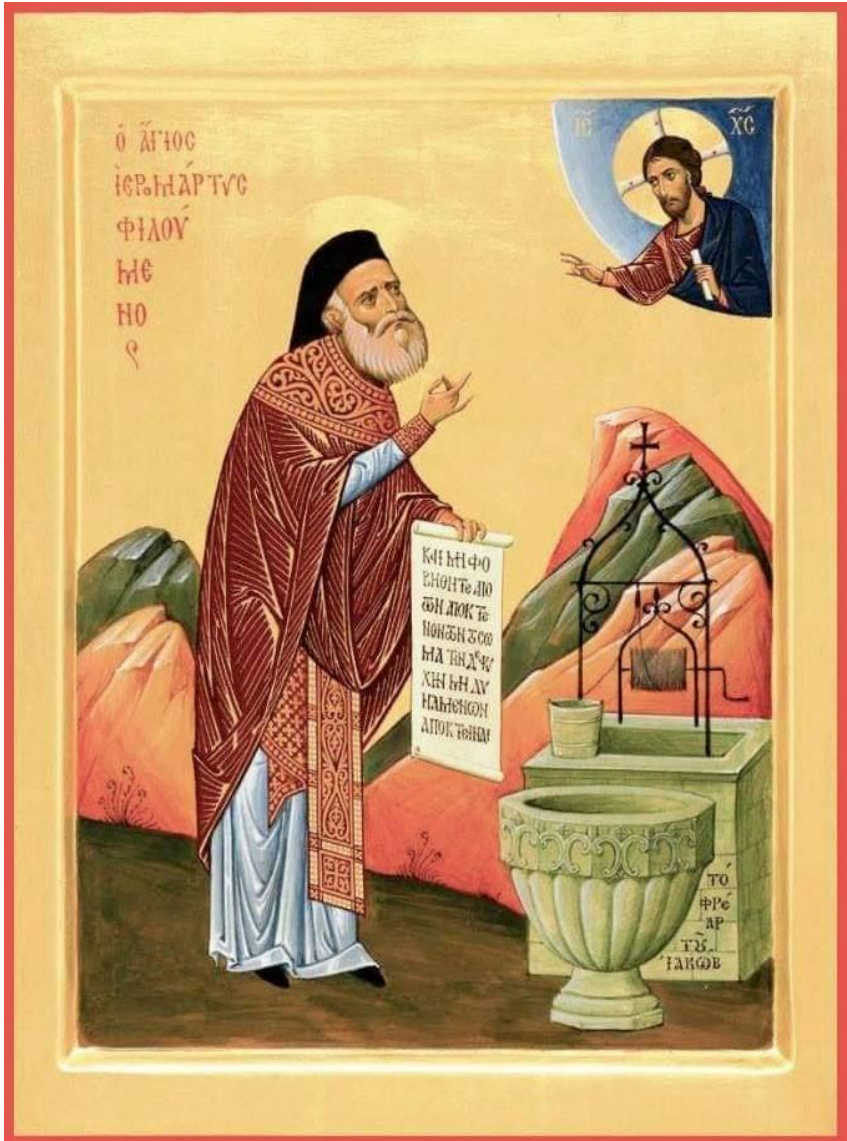
*Not an icon.*



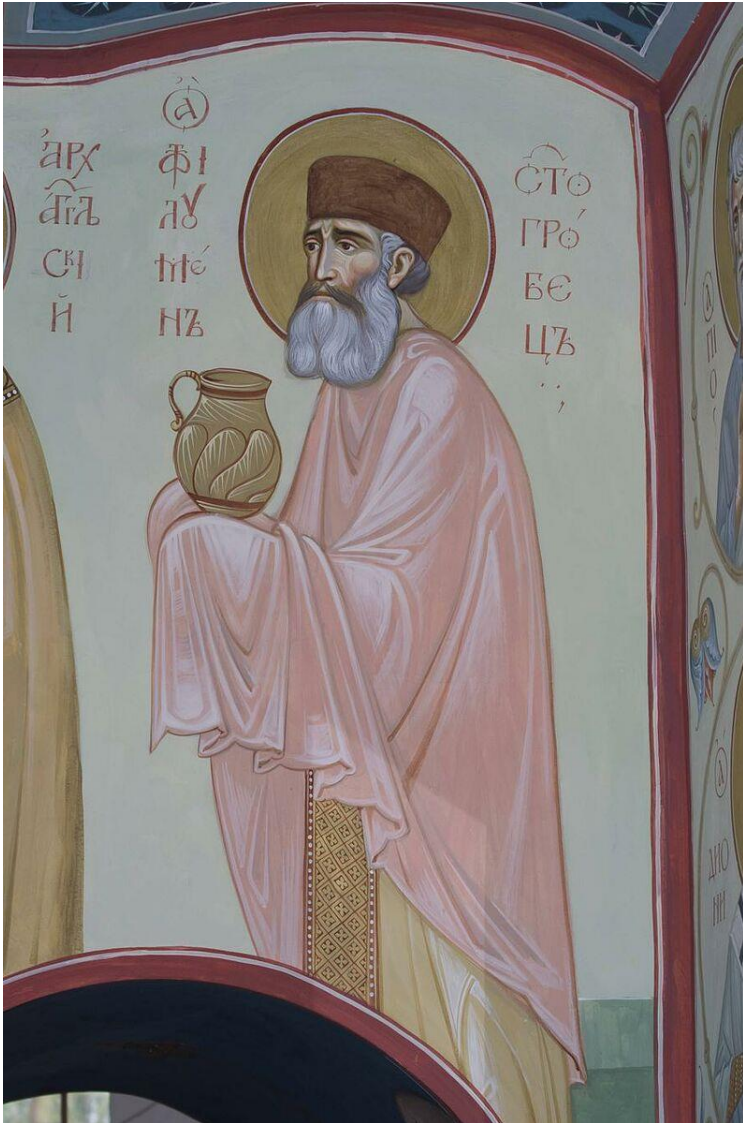
*Photo of Archimandrite Philoumenos.*



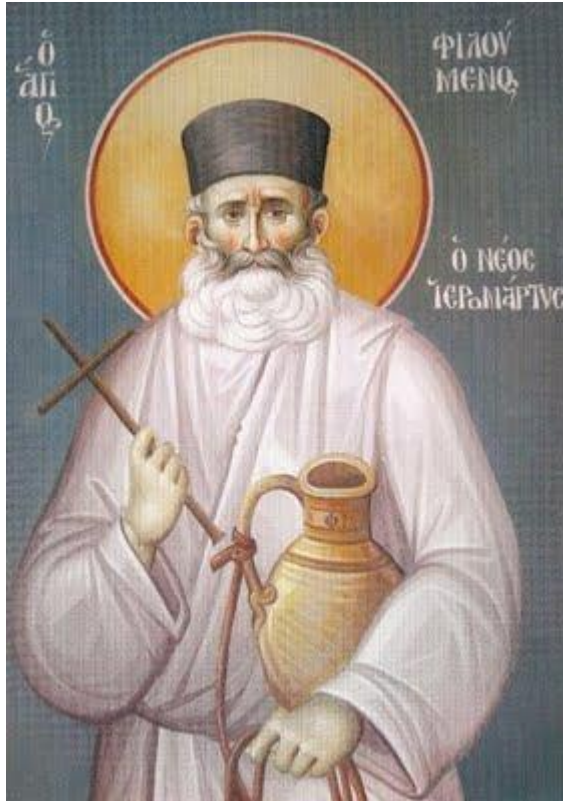
*Not an icon.*



Icon: Hieromartyr Philoumenos



*Icon Mural: Hieromartyr Philoumenos*



*Icon. Hieromartyr Philoumenos*





**Icon Screen:** Tier 1 = Local Saints, Tier 2 = Apostles, Tier 3 = Prophets. Middle = Last Supper 1, Deisis 2, Cross 3.

## **God the Father and Orthodox Iconography**

Icons depicting God the Father as an old, bearded man do not conform to the teachings of the Seventh Ecumenical Council.

God the Father is invisible and not able to be depicted. Since Christ was born of the indescribable Father, the Father cannot have an image.

But icons such as the “Ancient of Days” icon depict God the Father as an old man with a white beard, sometimes at the top of other icons. The Ancient of Days is not God the Father, but God the Son.

Russian “Trinity icons” sometimes show Christ and the Father sitting on two thrones with a dove between them.

Another “icon,” that depicts the Father, is the “Paternity icon.” It also depicts God the Father as an old man with a white beard with the young boy Jesus, sitting on his lap, holding a dove.



*Not an icon.*



*Not an icon.*



*"Paternity Icon"  
Not an icon.*



*Not an icon.*



*Not an icon.*



*Icon: Hospitality of Abraham*