

'This is My Beloved Son'
The Incarnation

“You, as a lover of mankind, have created me human. You had no need of my servitude, but rather I had need of Your Lordship. Because of the multitude of Your tender mercies, You have brought me into existence when I was not. You have raised heaven as a rule for me, and established the earth for me to walk on. For my sake You have bound the sea, for my sake You have manifested the nature of animals. You have subjected everything under my feet. You have not left me in need of any of the works of Your honor. You are He who formed me and laid Your hand upon me. You inscribed in me the Image of Your authority. You have placed in me the gift of speech, and opened for me paradise to enjoy, and have given to me the learning of Your knowledge.”

- St. Gregory the Theologian

Man (men and women) is the crowning work of God’s creation, combining the visible and invisible worlds (St. Maximos the Confessor). Man is created the Image and Likeness of God (reason, authority over creation, nous/communion with God). Humans stand on two legs to look toward heaven (St. Gregory of Nyssa).

Man created from the dust of the earth, and God breathed life into him.

Woman created to be the beloved helper of Adam, without enmity or division.

“You, for the sake of goodness, brought man into existence out of non-existence, and put him in the paradise of joy.”

- St. Gregory the Theologian

The highest meaning of the ‘paradise of joy’ is communion with God.

The first humans were clothed in the glory of God, which they lost at the fall.

By eating of the fruit against God’s commandment, man made physical creation an end of enjoyment in itself, without reference to God’s commandment and thanksgiving to God (‘use’ vs. ‘enjoyment’ - St. Augustine).

“But when he disobeyed You, the true God who had created him, and was led astray by the deception of the serpent becoming subject to death through his own transgressions, You, O God, in Your righteous judgment, expelled him from paradise into this world, returning him to the earth from which he was taken, yet providing for him the salvation of regeneration in Your Christ.”

- St. Basil the Great

The order of human nature was reversed: instead of the body following the soul and the soul serving God, the soul followed the desires of the body, which sought enjoyment in earthly things apart from God.

The punishment of death of the body was given by God as a merciful punishment (allowing the soul to continue to exist) putting a limit to evil (St. Gregory of Nyssa) and calling man to repentance.

“The **first man**, being earthy, and of the earth, and having, placed in his own power, the **choice between good and evil**, being master of the inclination to each, was caught of bitter guile, and **having inclined to disobedience, falls to the earth**, the mother from whence he sprang, and over-mastered now at length by corruption and death, transmits the penalty to his whole race. The **evil growing and multiplying in us**, and our understanding ever descending to the worse, sin reigned, and **thus at length the nature of man was shewn bared of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.**”

- **St. Cyril of Alexandria**

In the very next generation recorded, the sin of rebellion against God led to the destruction of the Image of God in a fellow human through murder (Cain and Abel).

Through sin, humans joined in the pride of the devil, became addicted to earthly things, and were again dissolved bodily into the earth in death.

Because of the sinfulness of man, humanity lost the Holy Spirit and true communion with God.

“Thou didst will to **renew** him and to **restore** him to his first estate.”

- **St. Gregory the Theologian**

The work of Christ is to renew man's nature in the Likeness of God and restore him to communion with God.

Christ is the New Adam - all partook of death from Adam, and as many as partake of Christ are reborn to eternal life.



“He asked His disciples, saying, ‘**Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?**’ So they said, “Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”

He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’

Simon Peter answered and said, ‘**You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.**”

- **Matthew 16:13-16**

“From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.”

- **Matthew 16:21**

“Then Jesus said to His disciples, ‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.’”

- **Matthew 16:24, 28**



The confession of the Holy Apostle Peter was confirmed by the voice of God the Father.

“Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, **“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!”** And when the disciples heard, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid. But Jesus came and touched them and said, “Arise, and do not be afraid.” When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.”

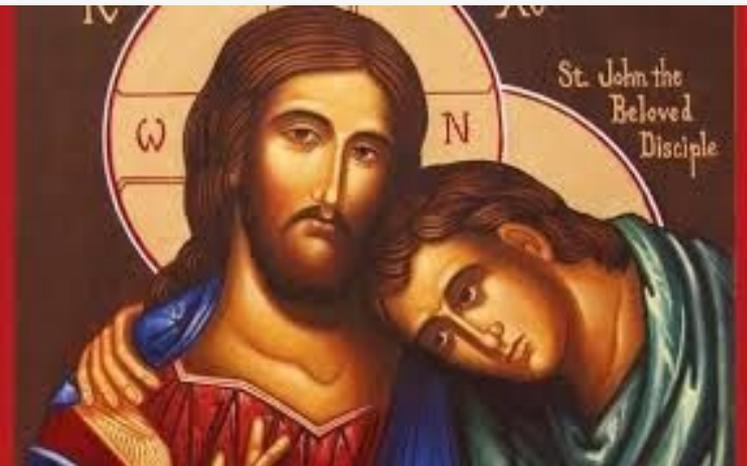
- **Matthew 17:1-8**



You were Transfigured on the mountain, O Christ our God,
And Your disciples beheld Your glory as far as they could bear it;
So that when they would behold You crucified,
They would understand that Your suffering was voluntary,
And would proclaim to the world,
That You are truly the Radiance of the Father!

- **Kontakion Hymn of the Transfiguration**

Natural vs. economic assumption (V. Lossky)



In the apostolic Holy Orthodox Church, we continue to hear (the Gospel), see (Christ in the icons and imagery), look upon and handle the Lord (in the Holy Mysteries).

“That which was **from the beginning**, which we have **heard**, which we have **seen** with our eyes, which we have **looked upon**, and our hands have **handled**, concerning the Word of life— **the life was manifested**, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was **manifested to us**— that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have **fellowship** with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write to you that your **joy** may be full.”

- 1 John 1:1-4

Correct understanding of who Christ is (Christology) undergirds the belief and joy of the Church in the saving work of Christ in the Cross and Resurrection.

Orthodox Christology is a criterion for communion in the Apostolic Church of Christ, the Holy Orthodox Church.



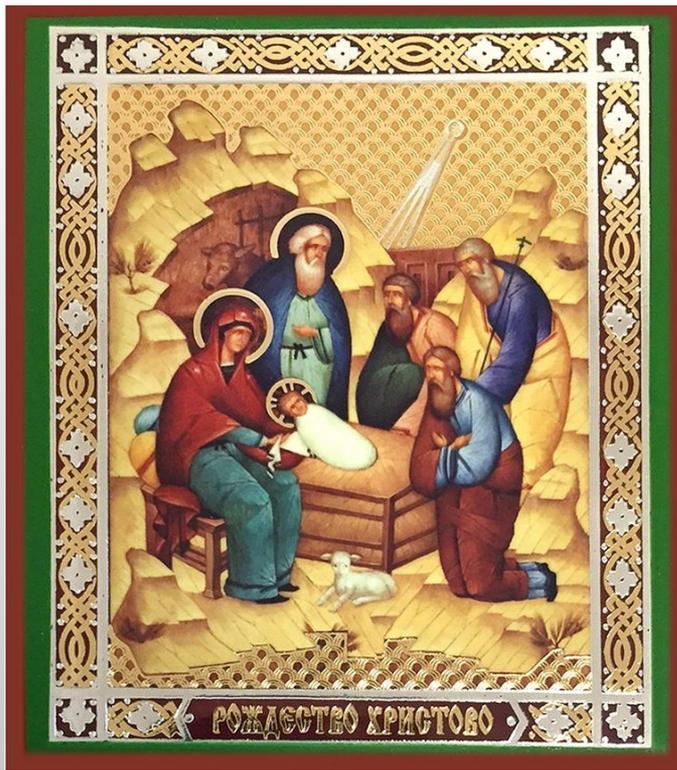
Reflected in liturgical symbolism of Bishop's omophorion (lost sheep) and staff (of the Good Shepherd)

“As a **good shepherd**, you have sought after that which had gone astray. As a true father, you have labored with me, I who had fallen. You have bandaged me with all the remedies that lead to life. You are He who sent to me the prophets for my sake, I the sick. You gave me the Law as a help, You are He who ministered salvation to me when I disobeyed Your Law. **As a true Light, You have shown upon the lost and the ignorant.**”

- **St. Gregory the Theologian**

“Becoming incarnate from a holy Virgin, He emptied Himself, taking the **form of a servant**, conforming to the body of our lowliness, **that He might change us into the likeness of the Image of His glory.**”

- **St. Basil the Great**



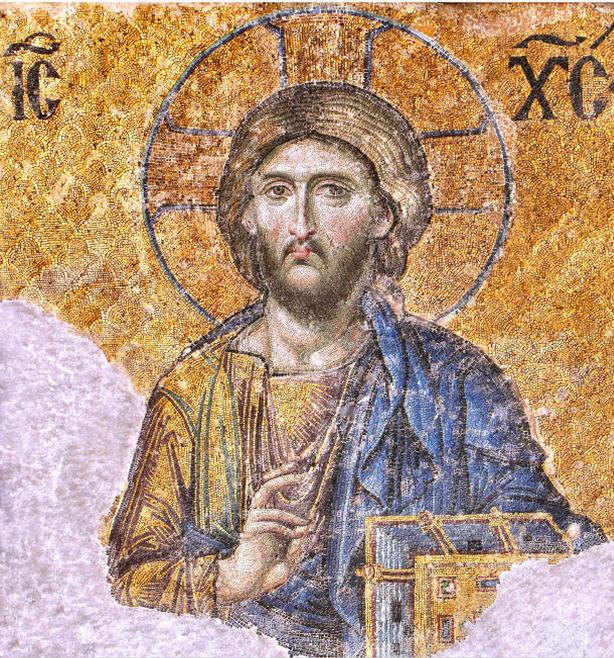
He who is Life by Nature joins our nature to Himself.

“You the **being at all times**, have come to us on the earth: **You came into the womb of the virgin**. You the infinite being God did not consider equality with God a thing to be grasped, but **emptied Yourself** and took the **form of a servant**, and **blessed my nature in Yourself** and fulfilled Your Law on my behalf . . .”

- St. Gregory the Theologian

Christ was born of the Theotokos without causing her pain or physical damage in birthgiving, just as He later passed through the stone on the door of the tomb and passed through the walls into the room to be with the Apostles after His Holy Resurrection.

He thereby reverses the ancient curse of pain childbearing, and the Theotokos also combines both virginity and motherhood in herself. She is a symbol of the Church, saying yes to God and receiving Christ into herself.



“Without confusion, change, division, or separation.”

- **520 Holy Fathers of the Council of Chalcedon**

“Only Begotten Son and Word of God, who art immortal,
Who for our salvation didst will to be incarnate of the holy
Theotokos and ever virgin Mary,
Who **without change** didst **become man** and **wast crucified**,
O Christ our God,
Trampling down death by death, **Who art one of the Holy
Trinity**,
Glorified with the Father and the Holy Spirit, save us.”

- **Hymn of the Pious Emperor Justinian**



Nature - the essence of a particular class of thing with its corresponding properties (e.g. the nature of tree - leaves, branches, etc.)

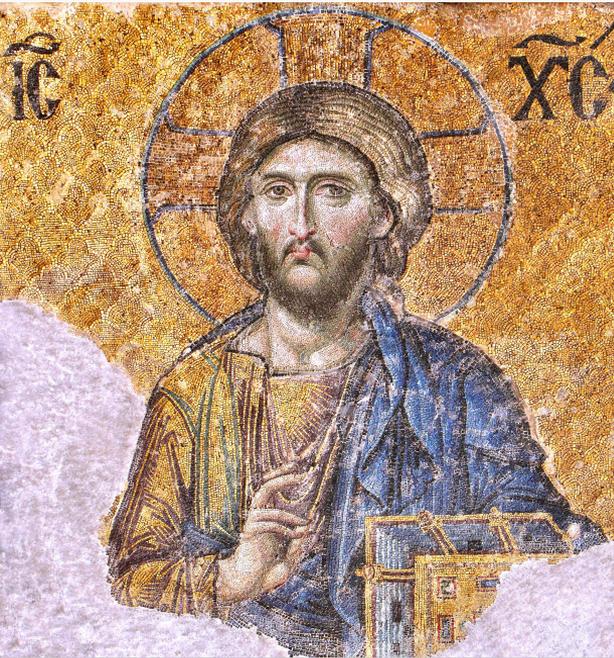
Hypostasis - the underlying/particular existence of a nature in a particular, concrete being (e.g. a particular tree)

The Son of God assumed a full human nature, though not a particular person (one 'subject' of His Person - the Son of God).

The Son of God joined his human nature from the Virgin to His Divinity in His own hypostasis (the human nature never had a separate existence apart from Him, but is His own human nature).

The human nature is complete - including a soul and a will. This is a natural, rather than a 'gnomic', will (St. Maximos the Confessor). One willing and acting subject - the Incarnate Son of God.

“For that which He has not assumed He has not healed.” - St. Gregory the Theologian



1. If anyone will not confess that the **Emmanuel is very God**, and that **therefore the Holy Virgin is the Mother of God**, inasmuch as in the flesh she bore the Word of God made flesh [as it is written, “The Word was made flesh”] let him be anathema.

2. If anyone shall not confess that the Word of God the Father is **united hypostatically to flesh**, and that with that flesh of his own, he is **one only Christ both God and man at the same time**: let him be anathema.

- **St. Cyril of Alexandria**

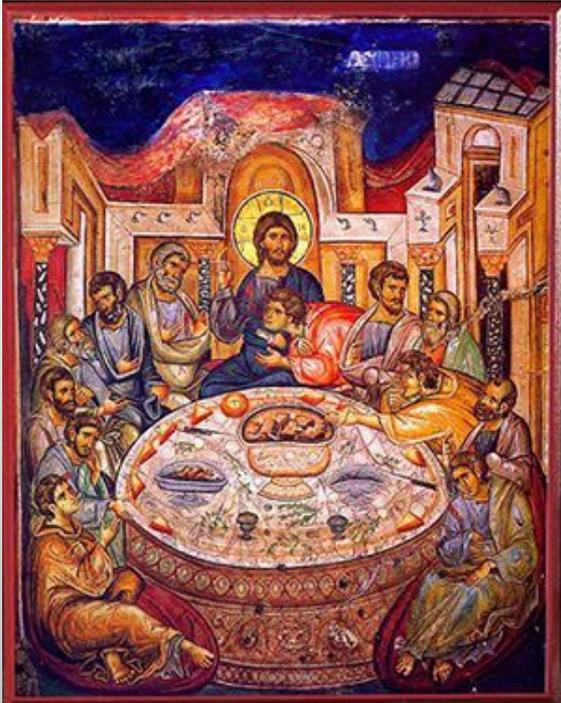


4. If anyone shall divide between two persons or subsistences those expressions which are contained in the Evangelical and Apostolical writings, or which have been said concerning Christ by the Saints, or by himself, and shall apply some to him as to a man separate from the Word of God, and shall apply others to the only Word of God the Father, on the ground that they are fit to be applied to God: let him be anathema.

- **St. Cyril of Alexandria**

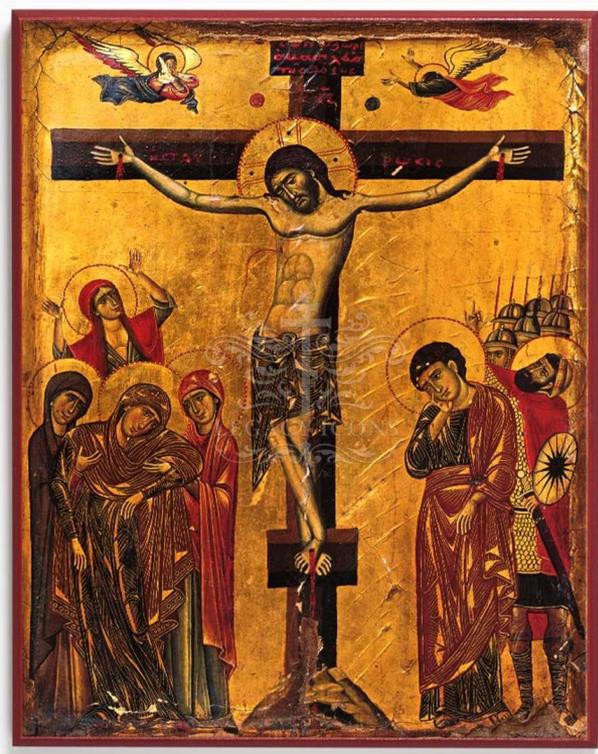
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‘In reference to’ humanity or divinity respectively (‘I thirst’ vs. ‘before Abraham was, I am’)

But not ‘from’ humanity vs. ‘from’ divinity - one Christ who speaks, the Son of God Incarnate.



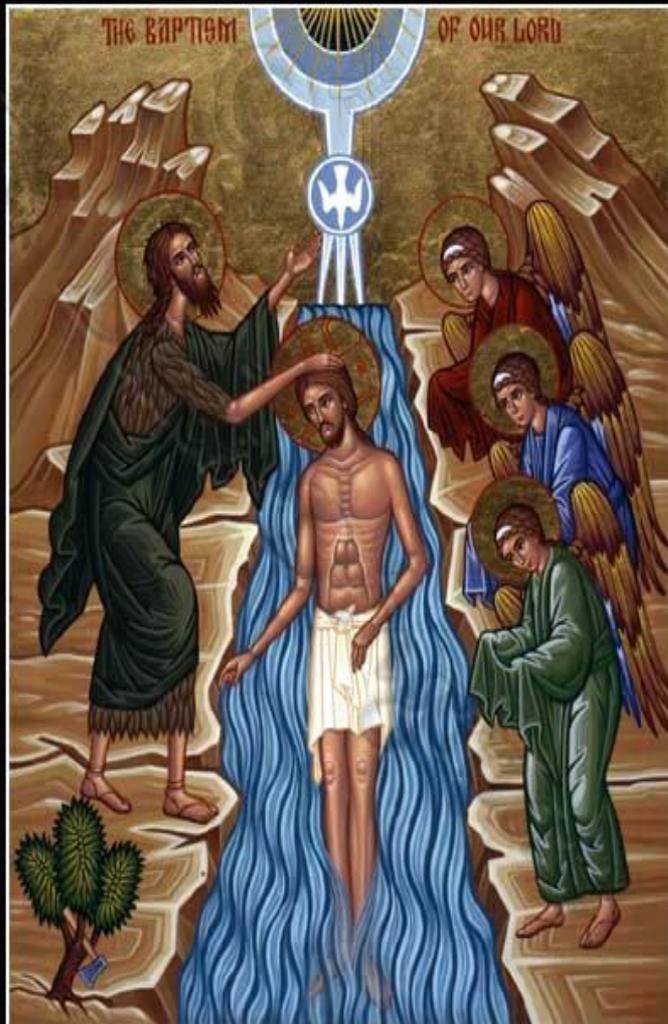
11. Whosoever shall not confess that **the Flesh of the Lord giveth life** and that it pertains to the Word of God the Father as his very own, but shall pretend that it belongs to another person who is united to him [i.e., the Word] only according to honour, and who has served as a dwelling for the divinity; and shall not rather confess, as we say, that **that Flesh giveth life because it is that of the Word who giveth life to all**: let him be anathema.

- **St. Cyril of Alexandria**



12. Whosoever shall not recognize that **the Word of God suffered in the flesh**, that he **was crucified in the flesh**, and that likewise **in that same flesh he tasted death** and that he is become the first-begotten of the dead, for, as he is God, he is the life and it is he that giveth life: let him be anathema.

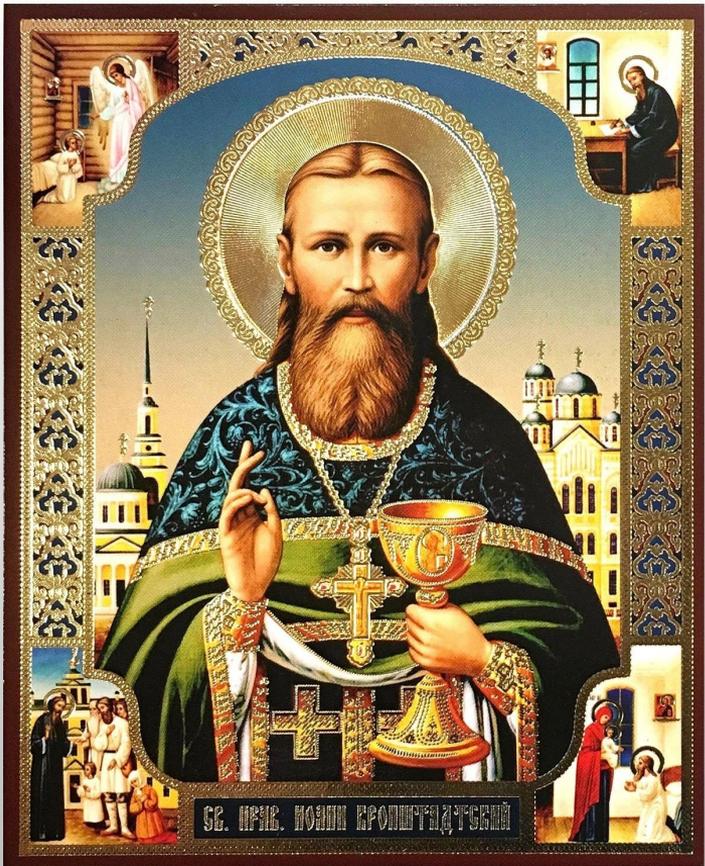
- **St. Cyril of Alexandria**



“But when the race of man had reached to an innumerable multitude, and **sin had dominion** over them all, manifoldly **despoiling each man’s soul, his nature was stripped of the ancient grace; the Spirit departed altogether**, and the reasonable creature fell into extremest folly, ignorant even of its Creator. But the Artificer of all, having endured a long season, at length pities the corrupted world, and being Good hastened to gather together to those above His runaway flock upon earth; and decreed to trans-element human nature **anew to the pristine Image through the Spirit . . .**

He Who knew no sin, might, by receiving as Man, preserve [the Holy Spirit] to our nature, and might **again inroot in us the grace which had left us**. For this reason, I deem, it was that the holy Baptist profitably added, I saw the Spirit descending from Heaven, and abode upon Him. For [the Holy Spirit]]had fled from us by reason of sin, but He Who knew no sin, became as one of us, **that the Spirit might be accustomed to abide in us**, having no occasion of departure or withdrawal in Him.”

- **St. Cyril of Alexandria**



“ . . . the Bread from Heaven, i.e., Christ, nourishing us unto **eternal life**, both through the supply of the **Holy Ghost**, and the participation of **His Own Flesh**, which **infuseth into us the participation of God**, and effaceth the deadness that cometh from the ancient curse.”

- **St. Cyril of Alexandria**

“O, how dearly our Lord Jesus Christ valued our soul and its salvation by coming down upon earth, by taking upon Himself our soul and body, by His awful sufferings, and by dying for us! And how do I value my soul and its eternal salvation? O, I do not know how to value it, and have not until now learned how to answer the love of my Savior . . .”

- **St. John of Kronstadt**

Questions / Discussion