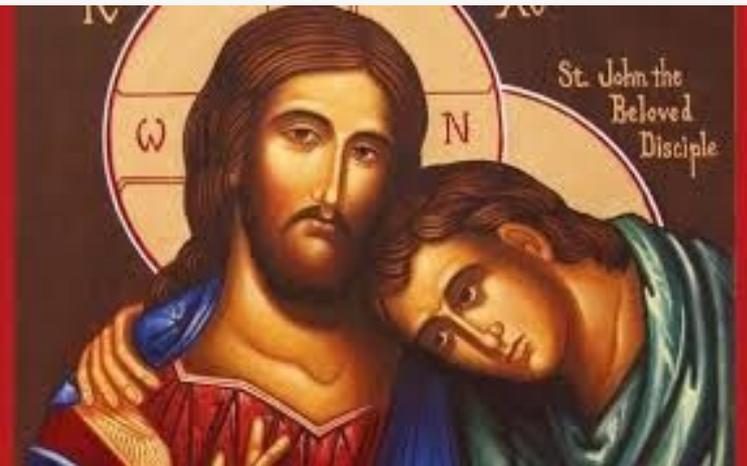


‘This is My Beloved Son’
The Incarnation, p2



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.**”

- **1 John 1:1-4**

“No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.”

- **John 1:18**

The theology of icons is grounded in Christ’s Incarnation - the Son reveals the Father by coming in the Flesh, and the saints reflect the Image of Christ formed in them by the Holy Spirit.



“ Icons... are to be kept in churches and honored with the same relative veneration as is shown to other material symbols, such as the 'precious and life-giving Cross' and the Book of the Gospels..”

- **350 Holy Fathers of the Seventh Ecumenical Council (Nicaea II)**



“It is most absurd and improper to depict in icons the Lord Sabaoth (that is to say, God the Father) with a grey beard and the Only-Begotten Son in His bosom with a dove between them, because no-one has seen the Father according to His Divinity, and the Father has no flesh, nor was the Son born in the flesh from the Father before the ages.”

- Synod of 1667 A.D. held in Moscow

“Icons are not idols but symbols, therefore when an Orthodox venerates an icon, he is not guilty of idolatry. He is not worshipping the symbol, but merely venerating it. Such veneration is not directed toward wood, or paint or stone, but towards the person depicted. Therefore relative honor is shown to material objects, but worship is due to God alone. I do not worship matter, but the Creator of matter, who for my sake became material and deigned to dwell in matter, who through matter effected my salvation...”

- St. John of Damascus

‘Douleia’ (veneration) vs. ‘Latreia’ (worship). ‘Veneration’ is paid to the Precious Cross, the Holy Gospels, and icons (including fellow human beings in this life who bear the Image of God, such as the clergy or brothers/sisters in Christ). ‘Worship’ is due only to God.

A symbol is something more than a mere picture - it is something that makes present the subject to our minds and hearts. Moreover, there is a connection between the one venerating and the subject of the icon in the Holy Spirit.

The subject of the icon hears our prayers in the Holy Spirit (no matter what language they spoke during their earthly life).

“We have icons in our houses, and venerate them, in order to show, amongst other things, that the eyes of God and of all the heavenly dwellers are constantly fixed upon us, and see not only all our acts, but also our words, thoughts and desires.”

- St. John of Kronstadt

Icons, in the experience of the Church, are ‘windows’ into heaven whereby we see eternal and heavenly realities, and (by the Holy Spirit) encounter the subjects depicted.

Icons are traditionally kept in an eastward-facing corner of the home. Candles or oil lamps are often kept in front of them, symbolizing the light of Christ,.

Orthodox venerate icons by crossing oneself and bowing or prostrating. In the most traditional practice, one bows three times to venerate an icon (sometimes twice before and once after, especially in Russian practice).

Note: we traditionally do not kneel or make prostrations on Sundays (Canon XX of Nicaea), since it is the day of Resurrection, and also from Holy Pascha until Pentecost.

“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.”

- **1 John 1:3**

“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**

In the Holy Icons, we see the images of those who are conformed to the ‘likeness of the Image of His glory’.

Our fellowship in the Body of Christ is not limited by physical death (“God made you alive with Christ” - Ephesians 2:6).

The Church, through the temple and Divine service, acts upon the **entire man**, educates him wholly; acts upon his sight, hearing, smelling, feeling, taste, imagination, mind, and will, by the **splendour of the icons** and of the whole temple, by the **ringing of bells**, by the **singing of the choir**, by the **fragrance of the incense**, the **kissing of the Gospel**, of the **cross** and the **holy icons**, by the **prosphoras**, the **singing**, and sweet sound of the **readings of the Scriptures.**”

- **St. John of Kronstadt**

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

- **St. Gregory the Theologian**

The work of Christ in the Church is to renew man’s nature in the Likeness of God and restore him to communion with God. We participate holistically in the divine services, and we are transformed and united holistically with our loving God.



Red is often used to denote divinity.

Blue is used to denote humanity.

Note that on the icon of Christ, the red is underneath and the blue on top, while on the Theotokos it is reversed (i.e. Christ is God who assumed humanity, while the Theotokos is human and united to God by Grace).

The Greek letters around the head of Christ mean “The One Who Is” (Exodus 3:4).

The Greek letters at the top of the icon stand for “Jesus (IC) Christ (XC)” - Iesus Xristos.

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The Greek letters at the top of the icon stand for “Jesus (IC) Christ (XC)” - Iesus Xristos.

The icon of Christ is on the right of the church (traditionally the men’s side) and the Theotokos on the left (traditionally the women’s side).



The thin fingers, noses, and other features of the icons denote their non-attachment to the material things of the world and enjoyments of the physical senses.

The positioning of the fingers of Christ (the same as the bishop/priest uses to bless) also stand for IC XC (*Iesus Xristos* - Jesus Christ).

The Greek letters at the top of the icon stand for “Mother of God” - *Meeter Theou*.

The Christ child is depicted with adult features, showing that He is God from all eternity.

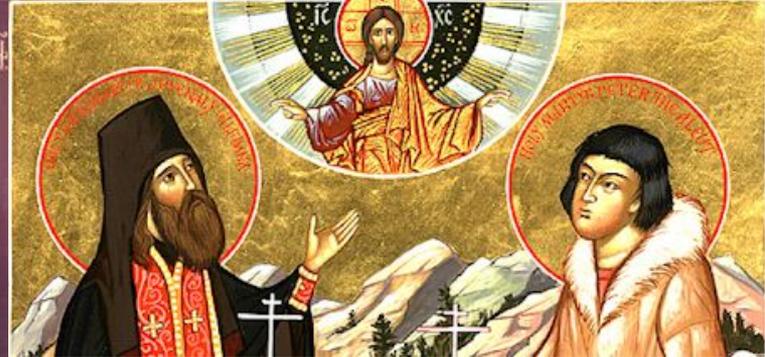
The three stars on the icon Of the Theotokos denote her ever-virginity before, during, and after giving birth to the Son of God Incarnate.



The icon of Christ the 'Pantocrator' (all-governing) traditionally adorns the principal dome of Orthodox churches.

Christ holds a closed book, indicating the end of the age and the judgment.

Icon of Christ in the the Church in Chora (modern Turkey)



St. Juvenaly of Alaska

**St. Mary Magdalene,
'Equal to the Apostles'**

**St. Anastasia
the Great Martyr**

**St. Ninos of Georgia,
'Equal to the Apostles'**

Icons of martyrs are often depicted in red robes (for the holy spilled blood of their confession). Sometimes hieromartyrs (clergy-martyrs) are depicted rather in their priestly vestments.

Two categories of saints hold crosses in iconography: martyrs and apostolic preachers (witnessing to the Truth).



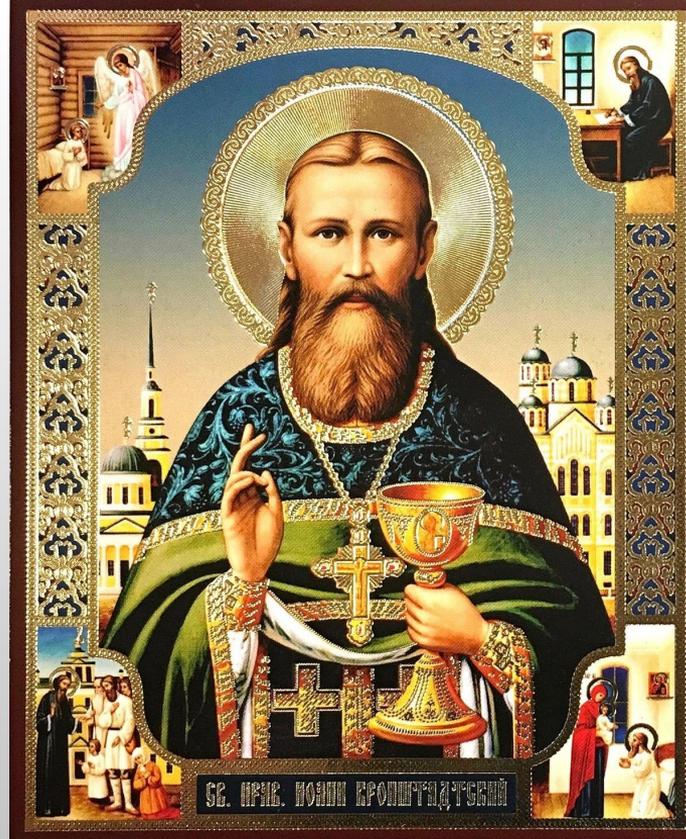
Alexander Schmorell (a student of strong Orthodox faith beheaded by the Nazis for resistance movement leadership)



St. Alexander Schmorell



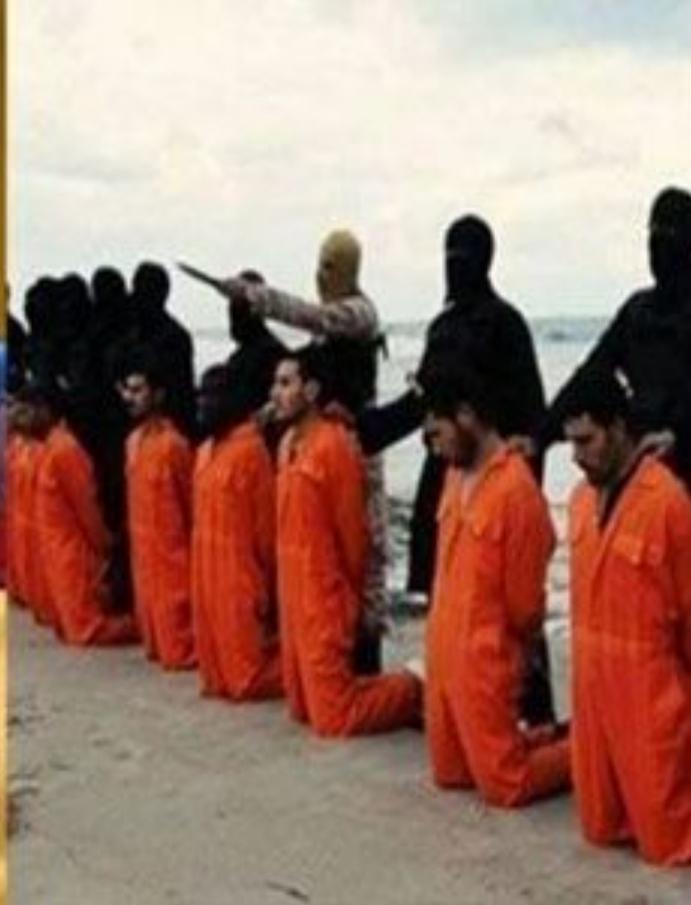
**St. John of Kronstadt (1829 - 1909)
with family**



St. John of Kronstadt



Icon of Coptic Martyrs in Libya



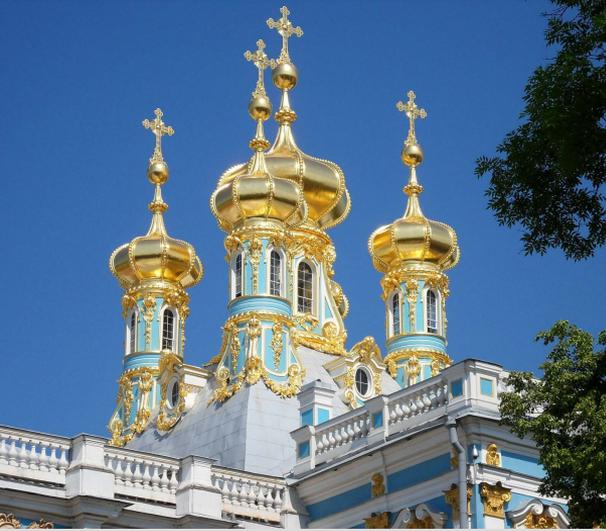
Immediately prior to their holy martyrdom (2015)



St. Raphael of Brooklyn (1860-1915)



Icon of St. Raphael of Brooklyn



Gold domes for Christ the King



**Green domes for the
Life-Giving Trinity**

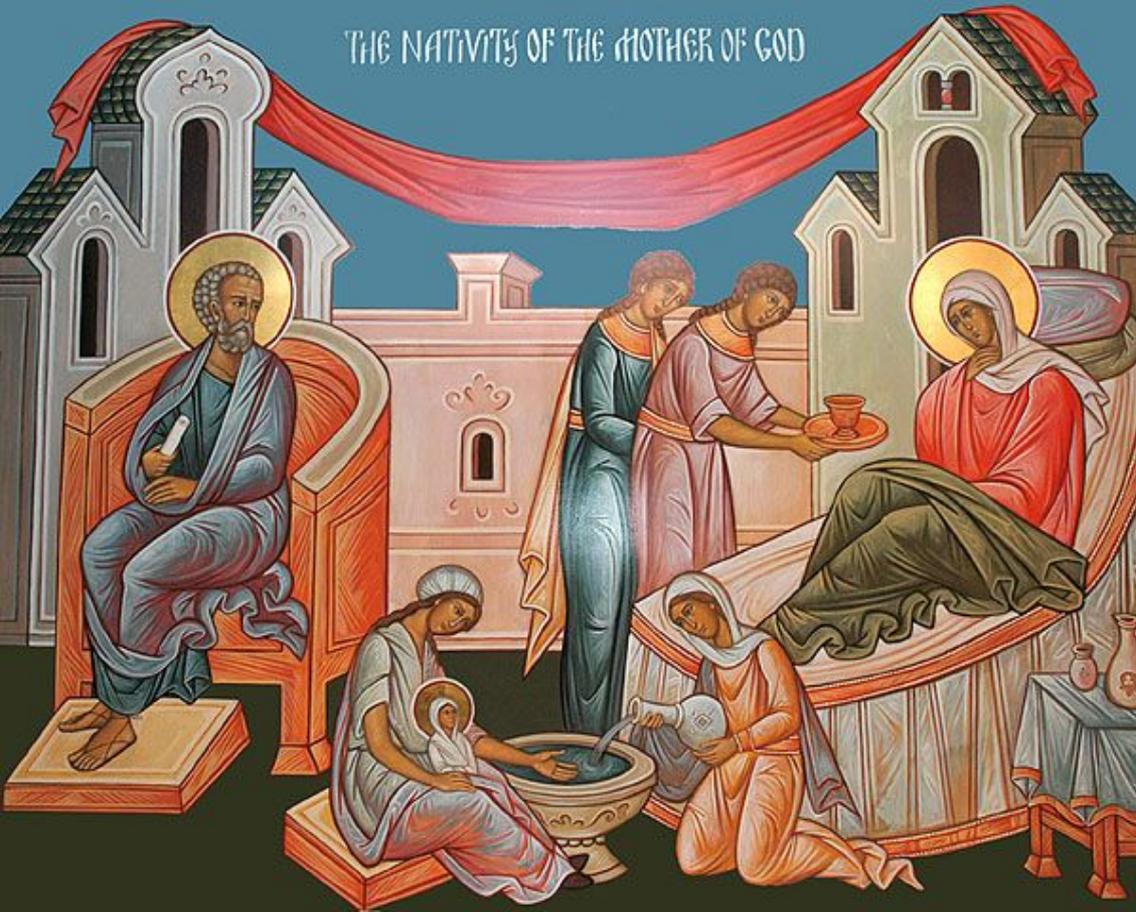


**Blue domes with gold stars for the
Theotokos ('more spacious than the
heavens')**

Onion domes are seen either singularly (for Christ) or in groups of three (for the Holy Trinity), five (for Christ and the four Evangelists, nine (for the nine heavenly ranks of angels - Seraphim, Cherubim, Thrones, Dominions, Powers, Authorities, Rulers, Archangels, and Angels), or thirteen (for Christ and the Twelve Apostles).

The interior design of most Orthodox churches is in the form of a cross or a ship (a symbol of the Church sailing toward the Kingdom of God).

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Nativity of the Theotokos (08 September)



**Universal Exaltation of the Precious and
Life-Giving Cross (14 September)**



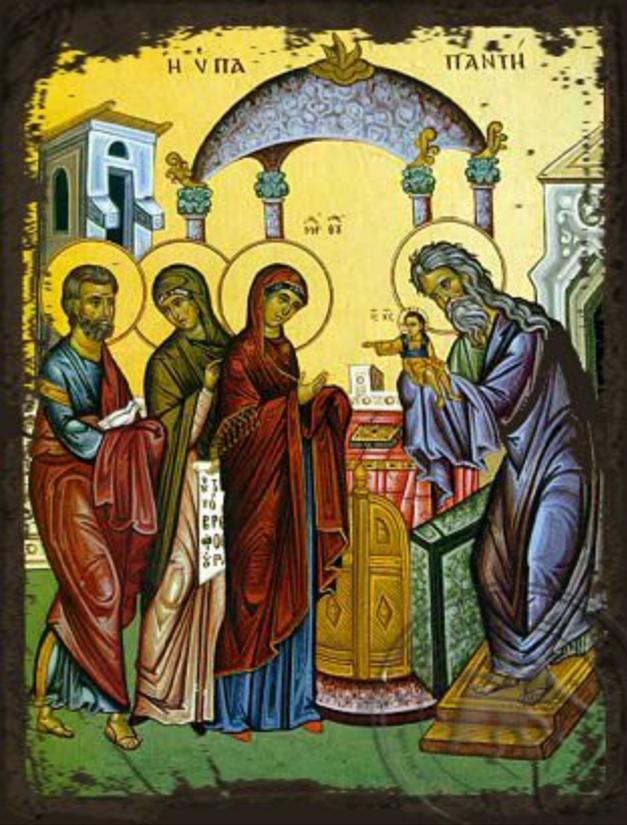
Presentation of the Theotokos in the Temple (21 November)



Nativity of Christ (Christmas - 25 December)



Holy Theophany (Baptism of Christ - 06 January)



Presentation of Christ in the Temple (02 February)



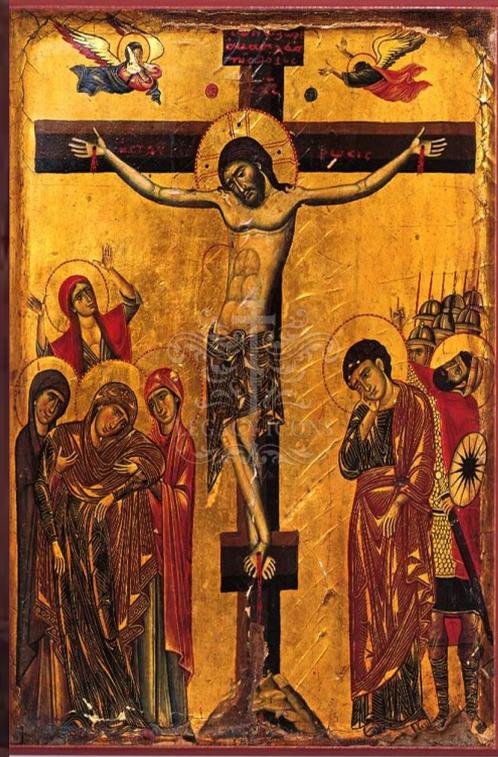
Annunciation (25 March)



Palm Sunday



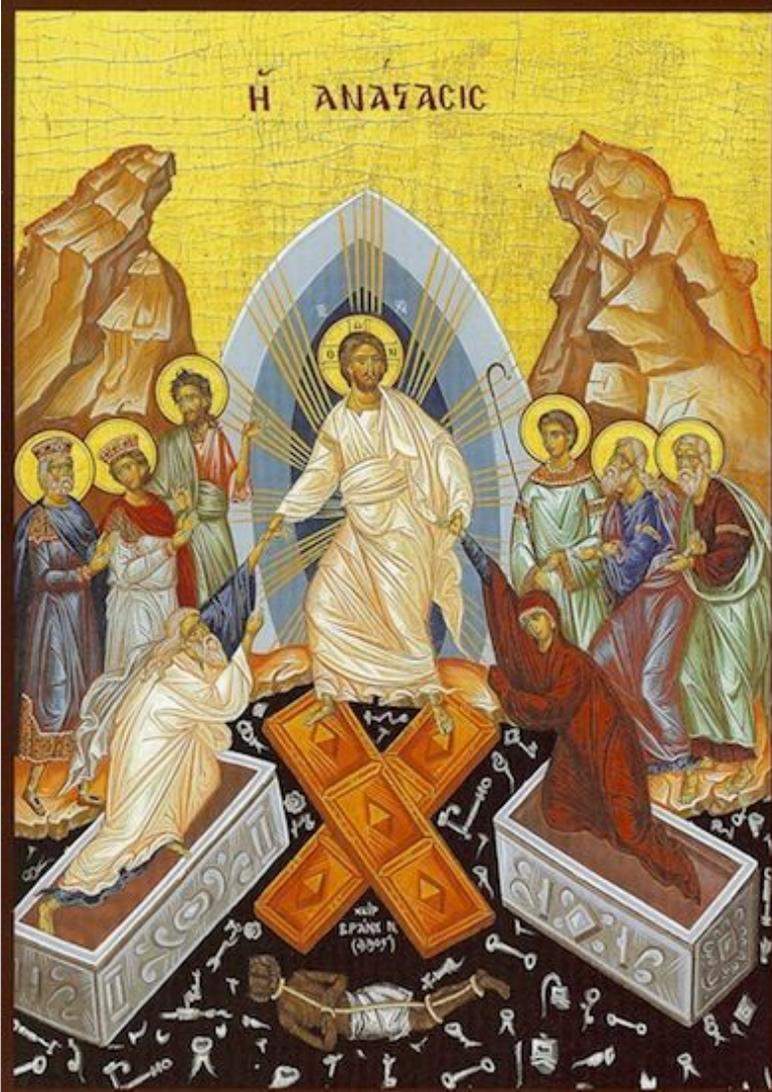
Holy Thursday



Holy Friday



Holy Pascha





Ascension of the Lord (40 days after Holy Pascha)



Holy Pentecost (50 days after Holy Pascha)



Transfiguration of Christ (06 August)



Transfiguration of Christ (06 August)



Dormition of the Theotokos (15 August)



Sameba (Holy Trinity) Cathedral
Tbilisi, Georgia



**Mariamiya (St. Mary) Cathedral
Patriarchate, Damascus**



**Agia Sophia (Church of Holy Wisdom)
Istanbul (Constantinople), Turkey**



**Mosaic in Agia Sophia (Church of Holy Wisdom)
Istanbul (Constantinople), Turkey**



**Holy Monastery of St. Catherine
Mount Sinai, Egypt**



**Chapel Atop Mount Sinai
Holy Monastery of St. Catherine
Mount Sinai, Egypt**



**Holy Monastery of Xenophontos
Mount Athos**

Questions / Discussion