

Learning about the Ukrainian Catholic Church

Mary as Theotokos As a title for the Virgin Mary, Theotokos was recognized by the Eastern Church at the Third Ecumenical Council held at Ephesus in 431. It had already been in use for some time in the devotional and liturgical life of the Church. Theotokos literally translated means "The One who bore God" or "the God bearer" which is much more accurate, and profound than "Mother of God." Theotokos actually has no English equivalent, and is a title for Mary, and as such it should not be translated. "Theotokos" is theologically more significant and better describes the significance of Mary's role. The name Theotokos stresses the fact that the Child whom Mary bore was not a "simple man," not simply a human person, but the only-begotten Son of God, "One of the Holy Trinity," yet Incarnate. This is obviously the corner-stone of our Eastern Christian faith. The Eternal Son of God was made man. This constitutes the mystery of the divine Motherhood of the Virgin Mary. Calling Mary the Theotokos or the Mother of God was never meant to suggest that Mary was coeternal with God, or that she existed before Jesus Christ or God existed. The Church acknowledges the mystery in the words of this ancient hymn: "He whom the entire universe could not contain was contained within your womb, O Theotokos."

Mary "has found favor with God" (Luke 1:30). She was chosen and ordained to serve in the Mystery of the Incarnation. And by this eternal election or predestination she was in a sense set apart and given a unique privilege and position in the whole of mankind, nay in the whole of creation. She was given a transcendent rank, as it were. She was at once a representative of the human race, and set apart. She was put into a unique and unparalleled relation to God, to the Holy Trinity, even before the Incarnation, as the prospective Mother of the Incarnate Lord, just because it was not an ordinary historical happening, but an eventful consummation of the eternal decree of God. She has a unique position even in the divine plan of salvation. Through the Incarnation human nature was to be restored again into the fellowship with God which had been destroyed by the Fall. The sacred Humanity of Jesus was to be the bridge over the abyss of sin. Now, this humanity was to be taken of the Virgin Mary. The Incarnation itself was a new beginning in the destiny of man, a beginning of the new humanity.

From the most holy Theotokos we learn meekness, humility, purity, obedience, love, service to God and to mankind, faith and hope. No other ordinary human being has ever been called to such a great service as she was. No other person has ever received such grace from God or been made so holy by Him as she was. By God's grace and the work of the Holy Spirit, Mary was made to be the highest of all human kind, and lifted higher than all the angels. The angels stand close to God, but she had God dwelling in her womb. She held Him in her arms and bore Him in her heart in that special way that only a mother can.

Very Brief History of the Ukrainian Catholic Church

Eastern Christianity took a firm root in Ukraine in 988 when Vladimir, Prince of Kiev, embraced the Christian Faith and was baptized. Soon afterwards many missionaries from the Byzantine Empire arrived, having been sent by the Patriarch of Constantinople to preach the Gospel. When the Church of Rome and the Church of Constantinople severed ties with one another in 1054 (the Great Schism), the Church in Ukraine gradually followed suit and finally gave up the bonds of unity with Rome. When Ukrainian Orthodox bishops met at a council in Brest-Litovsk in 1595, seven bishops decided to re-establish communion with Rome. Guaranteed that their Byzantine tradition and Liturgy would be respected and recognized by Rome, they and many priests and lay faithful were re-united with the See of Rome, while others continued to remain Orthodox. In the 19th century many Ukrainian Catholics began to emigrate

to North America, bringing their pastors, traditions and liturgy to Canada and the United States. Under Communist rule, Catholics in Ukraine were persecuted, with many being imprisoned and murdered; in 1945 all the Ukrainian Catholic bishops were arrested or killed. Today the Ukrainian Catholic Church is the largest Eastern Catholic Church, with about 5 million faithful. It is led by His Beatitude Sviatoslav (Shevchuk), Major Archbishop of Kyiv-Galicia. His election was confirmed by Pope Benedict XVI on 25 March 2011.

Questions and Answers about Fasting and Abstinence: (Taken from http://www.stnicholaschurch.ca/content_pages/ourfaith/art_faith010.FAQ.htm)

What is the difference between fasting and abstinence? Fasting means to go without food or drink for a determined period of time or to limit the amount of food one consumes. Abstinence is to abstain from eating certain foods, for a period of time.

What is the Church's teaching on fasting & abstinence? Following the Lord's teaching, the Church asks the faithful to fast on certain days and to abstain from meat and also from dairy products on certain days.

Is fasting not harmful to the body, given to us by God Himself? Fasting is going without food for a certain period of time. As any human appetite, food can become addictive, or take too much of our human focus. Fasting is an act of the will, whereby we willingly deny ourselves. Self denial helps us control our appetites.

Which days are fast days in the Ukrainian Catholic Church? After the Second Vatican Council, our Ukrainian Synod reduced the fast days to two: The First Day of Lent and Good Friday.

How are the faithful to observe a fast day? On fast days, we totally abstain from meat and dairy products and take only one full meal. Other meals should be of smaller proportions, like snacks.

Which days are days of abstinence in our Church? Ukrainian Catholics are obliged to abstain from meat on Fridays of the year and on the following days: The Beheading of St. John the Baptist (August 29), the Eve of Christmas (December 24), the Eve of Theophany (January 5), the Exaltation of the Holy Cross (September 14).

Why do we avoid only meat on days of abstinence? Centuries ago, the Church, using the Power of the Keys ("Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven." Mt 16:9), chose one particular food from which we can abstain without inordinate difficulty. It is simple to remember to avoid meat on a day of abstinence. In the modern world, we have all sorts of healthy food, other than meat, to choose from.

Are all the faithful obliged to fast and abstain? Our Church obliges only those from 14-59 years of age to fast and abstain on designated days. Many people over 60 choose to continue to observe the Church's regulations, which they and their families consistently practiced throughout their lives. Similarly, young children will eat the food that is served in the household.

What about the sick? Those who are seriously ill should not fast or abstain from meat, if it will harm them. God gave us the gift of our body; we must moderate our appetites with fasting and abstinence, but not harm that body.

What if you must attend an important meal on Friday? In many Christian countries, even in restaurants, fish is featured on Fridays. When others see us observing the Church regulations, we are setting a good example of how much we value our faith and its practices. In our own homes we must follow Church Law, but when invited to others' homes, we should never insult them by refusing what they have prepared for us.

Can a priest give dispensation to eat meat on a day of fasting or abstinence? Not just any priest, but

your own parish priest has the jurisdiction to dispense you. Dispensations should not be refused the faithful, except in grave necessity. The point of a dispensation is the self-denial of the will that a Christian must practice by approaching their spiritual father.

What if a feastday falls on a Friday? We are not obliged to fast or abstain on feastdays which are days of celebration. Check your calendar to be certain.

What about Fridays immediately following a Solemn Feast? Solemn Feasts of our Lord & our Lady are celebrated for a full eight days (octave). Thus, Fridays following Solemn Feasts are exempt from abstinence. We refer to those days as *zahalnytsia* or *Privileged*. The following Fridays are not Fast Days: The Friday after Easter; The Friday after Pentecost; The Friday after Christmas, The Friday after Theophany.

Should we limit our self-denial to obligatory fast days? Although the Church has greatly relaxed the obligation to fast and abstain, Christians should do so of their own free will, when and if they are able. More important than food, we need to control our other desires through other types of self-denial. Abstaining from sin is the goal of physical self-denial.

What other ways do we practice self-denial in Lent? Besides fasting and abstinence, throughout Great Lent we should refrain from joyous celebrations, dancing and other entertainments. When in doubt, you can approach your parish priest for a dispensation.

Doesn't fasting and abstinence belong to a culture of the past? No. Christ taught us that certain evils "can only be driven out by prayer and fasting" (Mt 17:21). Self-denial and penance are direct teachings of Christ and can never be changed by the Church. Pope John Paul II has often asked Catholics to fast for peace and for other important intentions.

What is the Divine Liturgy?:

The essential elements of the public worship of the Catholic Church, in the Sacrifice of the Eucharist and the administration of the sacraments, are the same in all Catholic rites. What is called the "Mass" in the West is called "Divine Liturgy" in the Eastern Churches. It is an English translation of the Greek, "Thia Liturgia". Liturgy was the most important public act in the Ancient Greek world. We call the Liturgy Divine (or God's) because, through it, we partake of the Divine Nature; it is God's supreme act for humanity. In the Latin Rite, the Eucharistic Sacrifice became popularly known as *Missa* (Mass); a word spoken by the priest at the end of the Liturgy, "Ite, missa est" Go, you are sent forth (the Mass is finished). In the Divine Liturgy, the Sacrifice of Jesus' Body and Blood is re-enacted and re-presented to the Church by the Lord Himself, Who is our Eternal High Priest. He uses the ordained priesthood as his instrument, as he uses bread and wine, to enable us to approach Him. The Sacrifice of Calvary is the act that redeemed the world from the slavery of sin. The rite celebrated in the Ukrainian Catholic Church is the Byzantine rite, which originated in the ancient Church at Constantinople. The Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom is most often used within the Byzantine rite, but is not the only Liturgy available. Worship in the Ukrainian Catholic Church is characterized by a great sense of God's holiness, a reverence for the sacred, a humble dependence on the power and mercy of God and faith in the intercessory power of the Mother of God and all the Saints. There is a strong tradition of congregational singing without instrumentation, with traditional melodies adopted to our liturgical texts. In Canada, the majority of the Divine Liturgy is said in English, with some Churches still saying the Liturgy in Ukrainian.

The Liturgy consists of three main parts: 1. The Preparation, during which the priest prepares the bread and chalice for Communion. 2. The Liturgy of the Word, which includes particular readings, prayers and a homily. 3. The Liturgy of Sacrifice, the main part of Divine Liturgy when the Creed is recited, the Holy Gifts are Consecrated and Communion is received.

The “theology” of the Divine Liturgy is one of spiritual ascent. Many have described the atmosphere at a Liturgy as “Heaven on earth”; however, this is not quite correct. Heaven came down to earth when the Son of God became man. Now, because of Christ’s Resurrection and Ascension into Heaven, the Kingdom of God does not come down to earth; instead, earth has the potential of being raised up to Heaven. For the person who is willing to open his heart and soul to the spiritual dynamics of the Divine Liturgy, this mystical ascension is a very real event. Like the steps of a stairway, or rungs of a ladder, every litany, every hymn, every prayer and Scripture passage of the service takes us one step closer to the Heavenly Kingdom. We begin our spiritual ascent by singing the earthly hymns found in the Old Testament Psalms, and soon we join the choirs of Angels and Saints in their heavenly “Thrice Holy Hymn” of praise to the Lord. Eventually, we will ask that God, our Lord and Creator, accept us as His children and allow us to call upon Him as “Our Father.” We then conclude our spiritual journey to God’s Holy Domain in the Liturgy by approaching Christ Himself, the King of Kings, and partaking of His Precious Body and Blood. In this way, we unite ourselves with Him, and become heirs to His Kingdom. Worshippers must understand that they are not simply an audience. As we read the prayers and hymns of the service, we will find two words repeatedly appearing, “WE” and “US”: “Let us pray to the Lord”, “We praise Thee. We bless Thee.” The prayers of the Divine Liturgy are our prayers; unless we actively participate in them, the mystical gifts, which the Liturgy offers, are ineffective for us subjectively. “Active participation” means being aware of what is taking place during the service while we sing, read, serve with the priest, or simply stand and pray the Liturgy in the silence of our hearts. Active participation means praying to God when we hear the call “Let us pray to the Lord,” paying attention upon hearing, “Let us be attentive,” and making the effort sincerely to “lay aside all cares of life” as we sing the Cherubic Hymn. Most of all, active participation means being prepared to complete the Liturgical journey; that is, it means being ready to come forth and receive the Body and Blood of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ when we hear the call, “With the fear of God and with faith approach.”

How should we be praying as Ukrainian Catholics?

In the Eastern Christian Church all prayer is Trinitarian. We pray in the Holy Spirit, through Jesus the Son of God, and in his name, to God the Father. We call God “our Father” because Jesus has taught us and enabled us to do so. We have the capability of addressing God as Father because we are made sons of God by the Holy Spirit (see Rom 8). In the Church we also address prayers to Christ and the Holy Spirit, the Divine Persons who are one with God the Father and exist eternally in perfect unity with him, sharing his divine being and will. In the Church we also pray to the saints—not in the same way as we pray to the Persons of the Holy Trinity, but as our helpers, intercessors, and fellow-members of the Church who are already glorified with God in his divine presence. Foremost among the saints and first among the mere humans who are glorified in God’s Kingdom is Mary, the Theotokos and Queen of Heaven, the leader among our saintly intercessors before God. We can also pray to the holy angels to plead our cause before God.

The purpose of prayer is to have communion with God and to be made capable of accomplishing his Will. Christians pray to enable themselves to know God and to do his commandments. Unless a person is willing to change himself and to conform himself to Christ in the fulfillment of his commandments, he has no reason or purpose to pray. According to the saints, it is even spiritually dangerous to pray to God without the intention of responding and moving along the path that prayer will take us. Praying is not merely repeating the words of prayers. Saying prayers is not the same as praying. Prayer should be done secretly, briefly, regularly, without many words, with trust in God that he hears, and with the willingness

to do what God shows us to do (see Mt 6:5-15; Lk 11 and 18; Jn 14-17).

The prayers of a person at home differ from those in church, since personal prayer is not the same as the communal prayer of the Church. The two types of prayer are different and should not be confused. When we go to church to pray, we do not go there to say our private prayers. Our private prayers should be said at home, in our room, in secret, and not in church (Mt 6:5-6). This does not mean that we do not bring our personal cares, desires, troubles, questions and joys to the prayer of the Church. We certainly can, and we do. But we bring ourselves and our concerns to church to unite them to the prayer of the Church, to the eternal prayer of Christ, the Mother of God, the saints and the brothers and sisters of our own particular church community.

In church we pray with others, and we should therefore discipline ourselves to pray all together as one body in the unity of one mind, one heart and one soul. Once again this does not mean that our prayers in church should cease to be personal and unique; we must definitely put ourselves into our churchly prayer. In the Church, however, each one must put his own person with his own personal uniqueness into the common prayer of Christ with his Body. This is what enriches the prayer of the Church and makes it meaningful and beautiful and, we might even say, "easy" to perform. The difficulty of many church services is that they are prayers of isolated individuals who are only physically, and not spiritually, united together. The formal Church services are normally rather long in our Church. This is so because we go to church not merely to pray. We go to church to be together, to sing together, to meditate the meaning, of the faith together, to learn together and to have union and communion together with God. This is particularly true of the Divine Liturgy of the Church. The church services are not designed for silent prayer. They exist for the prayerful fellowship of all God's people with each other, with Christ and with God.

What are Icons?

What is an icon? The word "icon" means "image," but since the early centuries of Christianity, the word "icon" is normally used to refer to images with a religious content, meaning and use. Most icons are two-dimensional; mosaics, paintings, enamels, miniatures, but ancient three dimensional icons also exist. Many people assume an icon must be in a Byzantine or Russian style. Many icons are, but many are not; other Orthodox Christian cultures have their own traditional styles of art, and many icons exist painted in a Western style. It is not style that makes a painting an icon, it is subject, meaning and use. An icon is always the representation of a religious subject, but not every representation of a religious subject is an icon. An icon is not simply the representation of a religious subject, it is a representation with a religious meaning, and if it is an Orthodox icon it must have an orthodox meaning. The icon must not only represent a religious subject in an orthodox way, it is to be an image for religious use. Icons are part of the Church's preaching and part of the Church's prayer. The true iconographer prepares for the work of icon-making with prayer, fasting and study. The Church must be able to own and worship the image the iconographer produces. The icon must be truth.

The production of icons is a mode of prayer; they come from prayer to be used in prayer and worship. Icons have an important role in the decoration of church buildings, in the church's worship and in personal devotion. They play several roles: Icons teach: they represent sacred persons, sacred events, they show us the reality of the Divine Kingdom. They teach history, doctrine, morality and theology. They remind us what we are and what we should be. They show us the importance of matter and of material things. They show us the transfiguration of matter under the power of the Holy Spirit. Icons challenge: we see the saints, transfigured by God's grace and by their own free response to Him. we are

challenged to follow in their footsteps. Icons witness: the icon of Christ witnesses to the Incarnation. The Divine logos came down into our humanity; He is human as we are human. Humans can be portrayed; portraying the incarnate Logos, Jesus Christ, we witness to His true humanity. The icon is a doorway to the awareness of presence and the love of Christ and His saints and angels. Christ dwells in us by His grace, and the saints and angels are already present with us, through their love and their prayers; the icon reminds us, and makes us aware of that presence.

Spiritual Characteristics of Icons:

We do not adore images; adoration [latreia] is due to God alone, but we do venerate and reverence them. The saints, as deified human beings are also venerated, and with a higher kind of veneration than are their images, but no saint, not even the Theotokos herself, is ever worshipped as we worship God. Icons allow us a glimpse of the Kingdom of God, a vision the Word of God in human form, of humanity deified in the saints, of matter transfigured by the power of the Spirit. Icons are windows onto aspects of reality we cannot normally see, and help us awake our spiritual senses so that we become more vividly aware of the Divine energies that suffuse and uphold all Creation.

Icons can be effective in recalling us to the presence of Christ - the icon can serve as a reminder that He truly is here. Each specific icon type carries its own message about Him. The Pantocrator reminds us that the Christ who is present here is the Almighty, the Creator and Sustained of the Universe, the Upholder of All. The icon of Christ the Teacher reminds us that it is He who teaches, through the Gospels, the Church's proclamation of the Good News, through prayer, if our spiritual senses are awake to hear Him, through the people we meet, the situations we face. The icon of the Panteleimon, the All-Merciful, reminds us that nothing we have done is beyond His forgiveness; the Christ Who is present to us offers forgiveness and transformation, if we will accept it. The icon of the Crucified reminds us of the unlimited love of the Son of God who assumes our human nature in order to let us share His divine nature. He has entered into our humanity in its fullness, into our joys and sufferings, even into degradation and death; there is no part of our life where Christ is not. The Anastasis reminds us that Christ has descended into death to free the whole of humanity from the entrapping power of death, from the fear of death and from the compulsion to sin.

Because icons are physical objects, they serve as invitations to keep our eyes open when we pray. While prayer may often be, in Thomas Merton's words, "like a face-to-face meeting in the dark," cutting a major link with the physical world by closing your eyes is not a precondition of prayer. Icons help solve a very simple problem: If I am to pray with open eyes, what should I be looking at? It doesn't have to be icons, but icons are a good and helpful choice. They serve as bridges to Christ, as links with the saints, as reminders of pivotal events in the history of salvation. Once you have an icon, it requires a place. There should be an "icon corner" in the place you live; an area where one or several icons are placed that serves as a regular center of prayer. Icons can be placed in other areas of your home. If there is an icon near the table where meals are served, you may want to begin and end your meals by praying and facing the icon while reciting a prayer before and after the meal. If it is good to have an icon in every bedroom and kitchen.

At its simplest, acts of veneration refer to the way believing people respectfully interact with and honor the subjects depicted in icons – the prototypes, not the painted boards themselves. This veneration is a kinesthetic language that involves the senses; it is the physical part of prayer. We are reminded through

physical acts of veneration that not only the mind prays, but the whole person – body, mind, and spirit. Our physical selves are as much a part of His much-loved creation as our cerebral and spiritual selves.

Bowing and making prostrations before icons are common gestures many people use to express respect. Bows are still used as signs of friendship or honor toward other people in many Middle-eastern and Asian cultures. Another act of veneration, that of forming the sign of the cross on one's body before an icon, reflects several important beliefs: recognition of the holiness of the icon as a sacred object in itself, conviction regarding the subject's sanctity, and a general acknowledgement of Christian faith. God loves spontaneous acts of worship and love; we are free to kiss the icons, just as we might kiss the photo of someone we love. Candles can also be placed before icons. These candles serve as visual markers for peoples' prayers, and remind them of the warmth and light that Christ brings to human experience. But the most important component of any act of veneration is an open, trusting heart toward God, and faith in His love for us. Without the right attitude, the rest means little.

Icons can seem complicated or strange at first. Take time to come present to the icon, to simply gaze, allowing both your sense of sight as well as the longings of your heart to interact with what the icon presents to you in a particular moment. Icons have a way of teaching the heart spiritual truths the mind cannot.

Icons are painted in reverse, or Byzantine, perspective, in which the further away objects in the icon are, the larger they are drawn, diverging against the horizon, rather than converging as in linear perspective. This technique is meant to bring the subject matter in the icon perpetually into the present, into the immediate experience of the viewer. Reverse perspective serves as a reminder that since God is omnipresent and outside earthly time and place, his view converges from everywhere simultaneously. We are to put ourselves in relationship to the world within the icon, not expect that world to adapt to us. Like other features, iconic landscapes are not meant to be realistic, but symbolic. Mountains in icons are not peaked, but flat, symbolizing all creation bowing down to Christ (Luke 3:5). Even iconographic depictions of events from Christ's earthly life are meant to remind us that those events are ultimately of an eternal, transcendent nature, and not merely historical.

Unlike much of western religious art, human subjects in icons are not meant to look precisely like the people portrayed did in real life. Icons are spiritual portraits, meant to emphasize the stillness of the subjects' souls, as well as their "passionlessness" (freedom from sin and struggle) in the presence of God. Eyes tend to dominate the faces of iconic subjects, acting as reflections of the serene selves within. We are naturally attracted to a person's eyes, so this helps our focus in prayer and our heart's connection with Christ or the saint within the icon. Fr. Henri Nouwen says of the eyes in the icon of the Vladimir Mother of God: "Her eyes gaze upon the infinite spaces of the heart where joy and sorrow are no longer contrasting emotions, but are transcended in spiritual unity." Halos and gold backgrounds remind us that the people depicted there live in the presence of God's unearthly and uncreated light. The figures in some icons appear to be floating in a veritable sea of gold. We are reminded again of another world and of another reality beyond the one we know. Certain pictorial features within an icon, such as the small axe in the foreground of the icon of St. John the Baptist, remind us of pivotal events or ministries from that person's earthly life. A cross held in a saint's hand tells us that this person was martyred for his or her faith.

How to Pray with Icons:

Icons are soul windows, entrances into the presence of the Holy. Icons serve as invitations to keep eyes open while one prays. It is prayer to just look attentively at an icon and let God speak. The profound beauty of an icon is gentle. It does not force its way. It asks for time spent before it in stillness....gazing. More importantly it invites the one praying to be gazed upon by it. One is invited to enter into the icon and come closer to the Holy One portrayed. Icons are a reminder of God's unconditional love.

To pray with icons, one needs to be comfortable, quiet and attentive. The process of Lectio divina (Holy reading) can be used.

The 5 key steps are:

1. Ready – Sit comfortably and still the body. Focus on breathing. 2. Read – Take time to look closely at the icon. What do you see? See 'the more". Take time. 3. Read and Reflect – What is the icon calling you to be? What is the message for you? What do you hear? 4. Read and Respond- Read the icon once more by gazing on it. Respond in prayer. Write/draw thoughts and prayers if you journal.... 5. Read and Rest- let the image of the icon rest in your heart. BE..... Give time for this to happen!!!

Another simple way to pray with an icon would be the use of the Y Chart. What do you see? What do you hear? What do you feel? Icons can lead us into the inner room of prayer. In busy times it can be just a glance at the icon or a ritual where one touches the icon gently either before a challenging task or at the end of a day.

A prayer rule is the outline of our daily prayer routine. It is important to have a thought out rule. Casually going to your place for prayer and simply talking with God is not the best way to begin to develop your prayer life. We will find that we end up babbling in front of our God. We can take advantage of the centuries of wisdom and being by using proven prayers that will lift us up in our way of communicating with God. A prayer rule should first specify the place and time of prayer. Then it should outline the sequence of your prayers and the specific prayers you will say. Below is an example of a beginners prayer rule:

Morning and Evening Prayer: Place: In the icon corner at your home, Time: Morning and Evening for 20 minutes each time. Begin by lighting a candle, and making three prostrations and then stand quietly to collect yourself in your heart

Examples of Prayers to use: Trisagion Prayer (Beginning with Holy God), One of six Morning or Evening Psalms, Intercessions for the living and the dead, Psalm 51 and confession of our sinfulness, Doxology and the morning or evening prayer, Personal dialogue with God, Jesus prayer - repeat 100 times. Reflect quietly on the tasks of the day and prepare yourself for the difficulties you might face asking God to help you, Dismissal prayer.

Other Facts about Icons:

What do colors represent in iconography? In iconography there are two distinct categories of colors. First there is white, red, green and blue, used to express life, purity, peace and goodness. The second category of colors is black, brown, grey and yellow, and they are used to express danger and impurity. White: is the color that represents eternal life and purity. Blue: represents celestial beings, God's dwelling place, the sky. Red: symbolizes activity. In Hebrew thought, red represents life. We find it

mentioned in several books of the Old Testament: in the Second Book of Samuel, Saul dressed the daughters of Israel in red garments: "O daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet, with luxury..." (2 Samuel 1:24). In Proverbs we find that the perfect wife wears red, in the book of Jeremiah, Jerusalem beautifies herself in a red garment. The martyr's clothes are red, the clothing of the seraphims are red also. Red is also the color that depicts health, fire and the Last Judgment. Purple: purple is the symbol of royalty, wealth, power, and priestly dignity. In the book of Daniel we learn that the king dressed himself in purple, and in the Psalms it is mentioned that the king and the queen are robed in purple. Green: in the Holy Scriptures, green represents nature and vegetation, and it is thus representative of growth and fertility. It is mentioned in the Song of Songs and the Book of Jeremiah. In iconography it is used for the robes of martyrs and prophets. Brown: represents density and lack of radiance. Brown is composed of red, blue, green and black, and it is used to depict soil, rocks and buildings. It is also used as a symbol of poverty and renunciation for the dark garments of monks and ascetics. Black: represents absence of life; it symbolizes a void. It is the opposite of white. While white represents the fullness of life, black represents the lack of it. Monks and Great Schema monks wear black garments, as a symbol of their renunciation of all that is material. Yellow: representing sadness, it is used in the icon of the Savior being placed in the tomb. In Deuteronomy it is mentioned as a sign of misfortune, bad harvest and blight.

The First Icon: The first icon, the MANDYLION or The Holy Napkin, sometimes called "Made without hands" is said not only to have been an authentic likeness of Christ, but one which Christ Himself willingly produced. It was thus often cited both as proof of the reality of His Incarnation — as it had been in contact with His body — and as justification for the iconophile position that Christ Himself has endorsed the making of His image. The features of Christ's face on the Holy Napkin are those of the Pantocrator. It is not a bust because it only shows the head and part of the neck; no shoulders are seen. The face is painted as though it is imprinted on a horizontal fringed strip of white cloth, hence the name "napkin." The earliest surviving example is said to date from the 10th Century and it is at St. Catherine Monastery in Sinai. This icon has no fixed place in the decoration of a church. The image of the Holy Napkin was also known in the West under the name of The Veil of Veronica. The Veronica story is similar to that of King Abgar: Veronica was a woman who comforted Jesus as He was bearing the cross on the way to Golgotha. She offered Him a piece of cloth to wipe the blood and sweat off His face; later she found that she received a 'miraculous image. A building along Via Dolorosa in Jerusalem associated with Veronica is today the home of a community of sisters called "The Little Sisters of Jesus."

The icon and the one who enters the reality depicted in the icon witness to the eradication of evil which has infected man's achievements. To the ascetic who prays the icon communicates the meaning of life. Matter and Spirit, heaven and earth, are both united in the icon and in the one who has entered the reality it communicates. Already in the present they begin to manifest the future of creation when God will be in all.

