

# What is an icon?

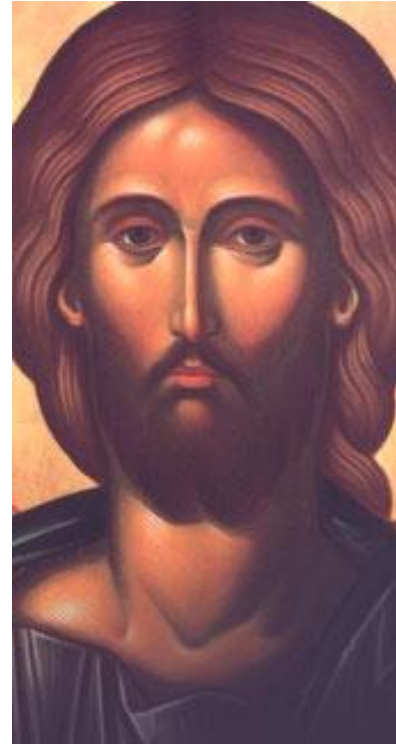
Christianity is the revelation not only of the Word of God but also the Image of God in the face of Christ. "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9).

The icon is a door through which we enter Reality. The purpose of an icon is to take us into the realm of the Spirit. The icon is not merely a work of art. It is a work of Christian witness. It offers us Truth as a vision, always remembering the words of the Gospel that "I am the...Truth" (John 14:6).

An icon is therefore an image of the invisible, a reflection of the Beyond. An icon is dogma and theology in colors. It is an expression of spiritual experience, of mystical life, of worship and surrender. It is a reflection of divine Beauty. It points us beyond itself and is a window upon eternity, a point at which the present world intersects with the Kingdom that is to come. Every icon is intended to be a marriage between the terrestrial and the celestial. And, through this window, not only do we look from this world into the Kingdom: our gaze is met by the eyes of another who looks out from the Kingdom and holds us in his or her gaze.



An icon is silent. But an icon's silence is not empty. The silence of an icon is the silence of Christ and invites prayer. It is prayer just to look attentively at an icon and let it speak to you out of the divine silence of His living Word. To gaze at an icon in the correct attitude of devotion is to acquire the proper orientation of our vision, thought, desire and will: the face of God in the face of Christ, the splendor of the Kingdom, the divine destiny that is the vocation of every living soul.



An icon radiates joy and peace. It is a luminous celebration of life, an expression of God's victory over sin and death.

