



*The Trinity*

*by Andrei Rublev (15<sup>th</sup> C.)*

*Depicts the 3 angels who visited Abraham  
by the Oak of Mamre*

# ICONS IN ORTHODOXY

Reference : [A Brush with God, an Icon Workbook](#), by Peter Pearson

- Icon mean image—in Byzantine art, the image of a person or event is depicted in accord with specific, traditional rules
- An image can only capture one dimension of the individual which it portrays
- It assists us in our spiritual excursion
- Icons are created to bring alive the mysteries beyond the image itself—to take one's eyes off the image substance and see the greater image beneath—transparency is key—the ultimate underlying meaning and image is God Himself



Spiritual splendor, not physical beauty is emphasized

Translucent colors reflect light off the background to the eye of the viewer

*The Nativity  
of our Lord*

**Objective**

**The Spiritual Tradition of Iconography**

- Perspective has been altered to be the reverse of what is the visual norm—WE become the vanishing point, not the horizon
  - WE are the small pinpoint, no longer the center of the universe—God and his realm now are our focal point
  - Icons deny our self-importance
  - Our earthly reality is challenged
  - They speak of things we have never seen, experienced, heard, imagined

*The  
Annunciation*



- Icons are about prayer—and invite us to move more deeply into prayer
- Icons play an important role in liturgy in that they remind us of God’s presence through Christ, the Theotokos, angels and saints
- They are the unseen “cloud of witnesses” of all places and all times
- The boundaries between Heaven and Earth dissolve
- Wandering earthly minds are focused
- We are not alone in our lives
- God’s grace is present in the icon images they show us how people appear when God puts the finishing touches on them



Prayer

The Spiritual Tradition of Iconography



A figure at rest within Itself.  
The blue garment almost hidden  
by a shimmering - ethereal  
robe.

**- The Father -**

The One who is Creator who  
cannot be seen by His human  
creatures. Both hands clasp the  
staff--  
All authority in heaven and on  
earth belong to the Father.

Behind the figure is a house  
the dwelling place of God.  
"In my Father's House are many  
mansions -  
I go to prepare a place for you..."

The figure wears  
the blue of  
divinity.  
The brown  
garment speaks of  
the earth - of His  
humanity.  
The gold stripe  
speaks of  
kingship.

**- The Christ -**

The Christ figure  
rests two fingers  
on the table -  
laying onto it His  
divine and His  
human nature.  
He points to a cup  
filled with wine...

Behind the figure  
is a tree. This  
could be the oak  
tree at Mamre  
under which the  
three angelic  
visitors rested.



The hospitality of  
Abraham and  
Sarah was  
rewarded in the  
gift of a son.

It may also be the  
tree of life in  
Revelation bearing  
twelve kinds of  
fruit one for each  
month of the year  
and the leaves of  
this tree are for the  
healing of the  
nations...

The Christ figure in  
turn inclines  
towards the figure  
on the left and we  
are drawn to gaze  
there too.

A blue robe speaking of  
divinity -  
- A green robe representing  
new life -

**- The Spirit -**

The Spirit touches the table  
- earthing the divine life of  
God.

"Lord, You are holy indeed,  
the fountain of all holiness.  
Let Your Spirit come upon  
these gifts to make them  
holy...."

There is a mountain in the  
background. Mountains are  
places where people often  
encountered God - places  
where heaven and earth  
seem to touch. Moses met  
God on mountains. Jesus  
was transfigured whilst in  
prayer on a mountain.

The Spirit inclines - drawing  
our gaze to the central  
figure - representing Christ.



*The Trinity*

by Andrei Rublev (15<sup>th</sup> C.)

*Depicts the 3 angels who visited Abraham by the  
Oak of Mamre—all faces are the same  
indicating "One in essence and inseparable."*

Icon Text Courtesy of Wellspring Website

**Image and  
Scriptures**

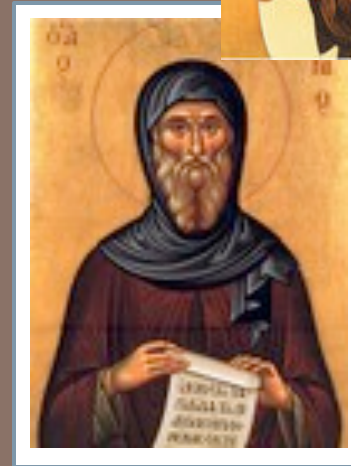
**The Spiritual Tradition of Iconography**

# Color is Extremely Important

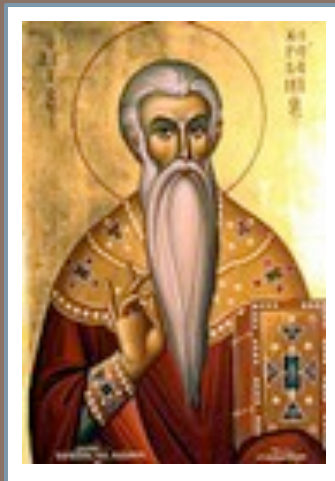
- The Gospel is conveyed by the icon in color and line
  - Ascetics and monastics are clothed in dark earth tones
  - Intentional poverty and self-denial



*St. John of  
Damascus*



*Saint Antony*



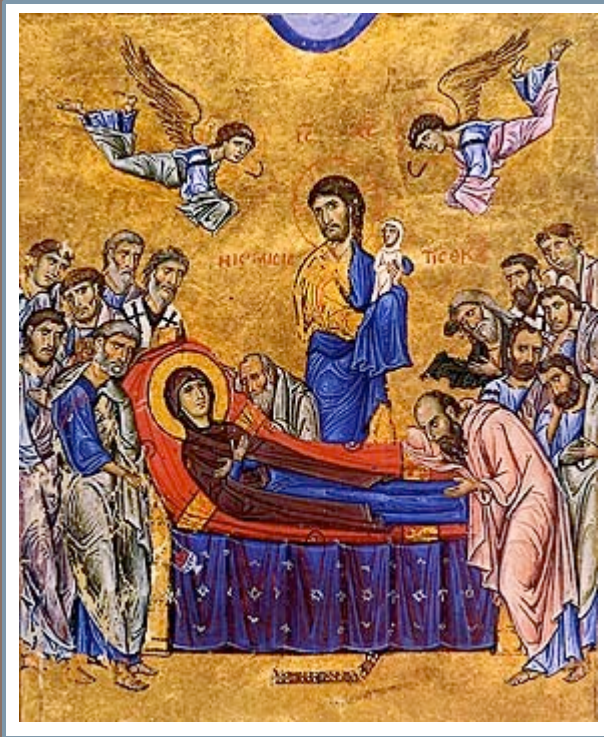
*Saint  
Haralambos  
the Priest  
Martyr*

- Martyrs wear bright red cloaks or the background is bright red to symbolize their shedding of blood as a witness to their faith

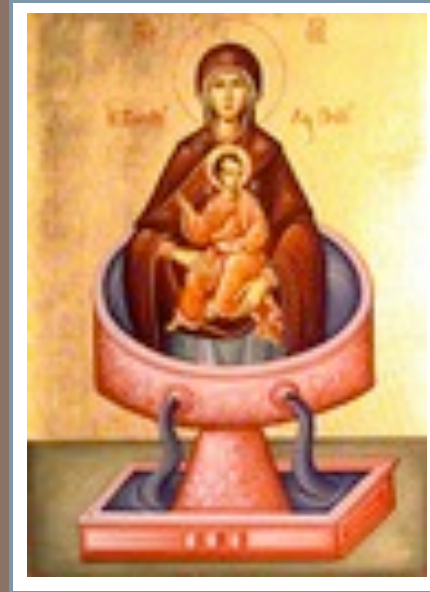
**Color**

**Byzantine Canon of Color**

- In the Theotokos, deep cherry red represents all that is human and earthly



*Dormition of the  
Theotokos*



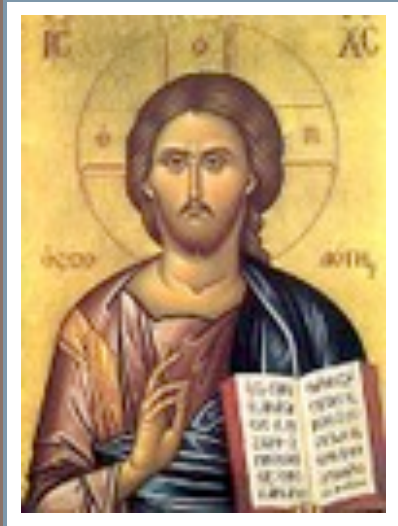
*Theotokos, the  
Life Giving  
Fountain*

- She also usually wears a blue inner garment to signify her carrying divinity within her humanity.

**Color**

**Byzantine Canon of Color**

- In Christ, the blue outer garment represents all that is transcendent and God



*Christ the Lifegiver*

- Christ usually has a deep red INNER garment to symbolize his humanity, swathed in the blue divinity



- White—Glory, transfiguration, resurrection

**Color**

**Byzantine Canon of Color**

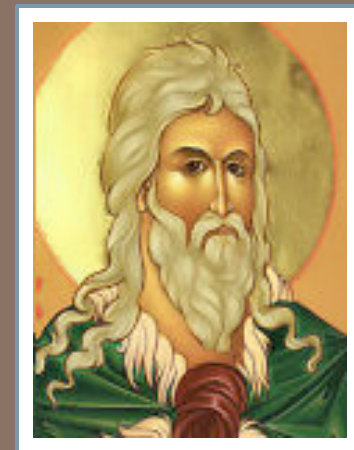
- Red—everything earthly, human, blood, fire, passion
  - Bright Red—martyrdom/witness to the faith
  - Deep Reds—closer to purple—Royalty



*St. John the Baptist*

- Earthy Yellow/ochre/oxides/gold leaf: The inconceivable light of God's presence

- Green—Life, hope, wisdom



*Prophet Elijah*

**Color**

**Byzantine Canon of Color**