

The Mother of God and the Saints

Orthodox Christian Icons
at Maryhill Museum of Art

Holy Icons of the Orthodox Church: An Introduction

“Icon” is the Greek word for “image.” Orthodox icons contain information that is presented in a concentrated visual format using formal techniques and specific symbolism to direct the hearts and minds of individuals toward God. They are not merely decorative, but sacred objects connecting people to the figures and events they portray. Icons facilitate a two-way interaction: individuals use them for prayer and veneration, and in turn receive spiritual benefits through the efficacy of the pictured subjects.

Icons provide a means of honoring sacred personalities, of lifting one’s soul up through that individual, and of encouraging emulation of the saint’s piety. Earthbound humans asking a saint to intercede for them are petitioning a member of the Church Triumphant to pray for them in a way that emulates asking the same of a priest, friend, or fellow parishioner. Reference to this phenomenon is affirmed by the New Testament reference to the “great cloud of witnesses”—those who have gone before (Hebrews 12:1).

In an ecclesiastical context, icons are “open books to remind us of God.” Those lacking theological knowledge need only enter a church to see the mysteries of the Christian faith made visible. Icons—through representational imagery and colors—tell worshippers what history tells them through words. According to St. Photios, Patriarch of Constantinople (c. 820–891), “Just as speech is transmitted by hearing, so a form through sight is imprinted upon the tablets of the soul, giving ... a representation of knowledge consonant with piety.”

In Orthodox churches, icons typically appear on an iconostasis separating the sanctuary (altar area) from parishioners. Icons are also displayed on walls and special stands throughout the nave and narthex, where they receive the veneration of worshippers. Prayer corners in most Orthodox Christian

homes also contain icon collections. Family icons frequently include specific patron saints and other images that are important to members of the household.

Holy icons have been revered throughout most of church history because they make visible the physical incarnation of God in Christ and His grace made manifest in the saints. St. John of Damascus (c. 676–749) observed that the Old Testament forbids the creation of images of God. This was not a universal restriction on representational imagery because the desert Tabernacle and Solomon's Temple featured images of angels, plants, and animals (Exodus 25–26; 1 Kings 7:13–44). St. John argued that the Hebraic prohibition on images of God does not apply to Christians. He posited that because Christ assumed physical form, acquired a human body, and lived upon the earth, it was possible to portray Him. He said that to reject Christ's icon was to essentially deny his Incarnation.

In the fourth century, St. Basil the Great (c. 330–379), wrote that “the honor which is given to the icon passes over to the prototype.” The prototype being honored is then, in the final analysis, God, because God created man in His own image. Following a protracted debate about whether icons were forbidden “graven images,” the Seventh Ecumenical Council (787 AD) affirmed that icons are useful “so the incarnation of the Word of God is shown forth as real and not merely fantastic.” The Council also clearly stated that icons are not idols and that they are not themselves to be worshipped.

The early framers of Christian doctrine did not mandate exactly how icons should be painted. However, they did state that everything in an icon should illustrate a realm that is different from the material world and populated with people who have been regenerated into eternity. Iconography is meant to take the faithful beyond observed anatomy and a three-dimensional world of matter to a realm that is immaterial, spaceless, timeless, and eternal. Icons should express spiritual beauty, so the forms and colors found in them should not be what one sees in daily life.



Holy Trinity Serbian Orthodox Church in Butte, Montana (built 1904). A wooden iconostasis is in the middle distance. The frescoes were painted by six iconographers from Belgrade, Serbia, over a 14-month period in 2003–2006.

The visual structures of many historic icons show little variety because tradition mandates that new interpretations and artistic license should not be applied to the replication of centuries-old images. Practically speaking, select compositional rules were applied using specific geometric, rhythmic, and chromatic elements. Historic Byzantine forms were based upon the length of the nose. A subject's head was created using two radii of the nose module and the halo was determined by the addition of a third nose module. The nose length (first module) determined the space for the nose, eyes, and forehead. The second module indicated the volume of the head. The center of all the circles was located at the bridge of the nose and between the eyes; pupils were situated a half-nose module away from the center of the circle. Similar rules were in place when iconographers were creating figures with faces shown in three-quarter view.

The human figures seen in Russian icons are often executed in detail with narrow shoulders, long limbs, and big eyes. Individuals pictured in Greek icons frequently have more natural proportions and are created using more diverse colors. Historically, icons did not utilize linear perspective and the prominence of pictured characters was almost universally based on their importance in relation to each other. Main characters generally appear to be much larger than ancillary figures. Neither do icons reproduce outdoor elements as they appear in nature. Rocks may appear to defy gravity and vegetation is often stylized. Architectural elements are similarly portrayed. Expected building proportions are often ignored, as is the reasonable placement of doors and windows.

Church tradition records that in 987, Grand Prince Vladimir of Kievan Rus (c. 958–1015) sent out envoys to observe the religions of neighboring nations. The emissaries found fault with all these faiths, save for those who visited Constantinople and observed services in the Church of Hagia Sophia. They returned home and famously said, "We no longer knew whether we were in heaven or on earth.... We

only know that God dwells there among the people, and their service is fairer than the ceremonies of other nations.” Prince Vladimir was subsequently baptized, and mass baptisms occurred throughout Rus. This led to an alliance with the Byzantine Empire and the northward spread of Byzantine cultural elements. Byzantine iconography flourished in Russia and the influence of Greek icon painters was especially strong there from the 11th century to the beginning of the 15th century.

During the 15th and 16th centuries, Russian imagery drifted further away from Byzantine norms as iconographers embraced faces and forms that were uniquely Russian. In the 17th century, they further abandoned historic models because of the influence of religious prints and paintings from Catholic and Protestant Europe. One observer noted that Christ and the saints were subsequently shown with “puffy faces,” “thick arms,” “fat thighs,” and other features. He further argued that “icons must not be painted from living people” because icons are not portraits but prototypes of otherworldly, spiritualized figures.

Some traditionalists, called “Old Believers,” were separated from the Russian State Church in the 1660s. They continued creating old-style icons, while adherents of the State Church modified their practices. In the years following the Westernizing reforms of Peter the Great (1672–1725), Byzantine-style iconography largely disappeared in Russia.

Conversely, many mid-20th-century icon painters embraced what has been called the “Byzantine Revival Style.” Iconographer Photios Kontoglou (Greek, 1895–1965) was a proponent of this work and his influence is still felt in the Orthodox world. Kontoglou believed that the work of Cretan iconographers that was produced after the fall of Constantinople (1483) represented the high point in Greek icon painting and he looked to those iconographers when seeking prototypes for his revival style. Kontoglou embraced the spiritual qualities evident in works produced within the historic Byzantine tradition and referred to those depictions as “spotless archetypes”. They were:



The Russian Imperial family in a room with an icon corner, c. 1910. Left to right are Grand Duchess Tatiana, Empress Alexandra Feodorovna, Grand Duchess Anastasia, Grand Duchess Maria, Tsar Nicholas II, and Grand Duchess Olga.

... the result of centuries of spiritual life, Christian experience, genius, and work. The iconographers who developed them regarded their work as awesome, like the dogmas of the true Faith, and they worked with humility and piety on the models that had been handed down to them by earlier iconographers, avoiding all inopportune and inappropriate changes. Through long elaboration, these various representations were freed from everything superfluous and inconstant, and attained the greatest and most perfect expression and power.

After Greece won independence from the Ottoman Empire (1832), its artists turned to the West for artistic prototypes, and they adopted European—especially Italian Renaissance—forms and techniques. Efforts to create a spiritual aesthetic were replaced by the pursuit of naturalism, and egg tempera was replaced by oil paint. Period iconographers spurned ascetic and otherworldly forms in favor of perspective, true anatomical details, and physically beautiful subjects.

The Renaissance was fueled in part by Byzantine art that had made its way to Italy after the Sack of Constantinople (1204), but 19th-century Europeans looked upon the Byzantines as a lesser civilization and one that was not worthy of serious study. Byzantine art was thought to be a lower and almost barbaric form of expression. Kontoglou was opposed to this bias and in his “What Orthodox Iconography Is” essay, he articulated an opinion opposing iconography that was influenced by naturalism and humanism:

Ecclesiastical liturgical painting, the painting of worship, took its form above all from Byzantium, where it remained the mystical Ark of Christ’s religion and was called *hagiographia* or sacred painting. As with the other arts of the Church, the purpose of

hagiographia is not to give pleasure to our carnal sense of sight, but to transform it into a spiritual sense, so that in the visible things of this world we may see what surpasses this world.

Hence this art is not theatrically illusionistic. Illusionistic art came into being in Italy during the so-called Renaissance because this art was the expression of a Christianity which, deformed by philosophy, had become a materialistic, worldly form of knowledge, and of the Western Church, which had become a worldly system....

Maryhill Museum of Art is home to a collection of more than 25 icons, as well as diverse ecclesiastical textiles and metalwork. The collection began in 1926, with a gift of Russian icons from Queen Marie of Romania, and it has continued to grow. The works shown in this exhibition are limited to representations of the Mother of God and select Christian saints. They include Russian, Greek, and Romanian examples created in a variety of styles dating from the 18th century to the early 21st century.

Some of the individual descriptions shared here owe a debt to A. Dean McKenzie's *Mystical Mirrors: Russian Icons in the Maryhill Museum of Art*, which was published in 1986. David Coomler, consultant in icons and iconography of the Eastern Church, also provided valuable insights.

On the pages that follow, discussion of specific icons precede images of the icons themselves.

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Some Definitions

Akathist: A hymn dedicated to a saint, the Mother of God, a holy event, or one of the persons of the Holy Trinity. The word itself means “not sitting” because during the chanting of the hymn, congregants are standing.

Apolytikion: A dismissal hymn (troparion). The apolytikion summarizes the feast being celebrated that day.

Gregorian calendar: This calendar was introduced in October 1582 by Pope Gregory XIII, to make minor modification to the Julian calendar. It is used by many Orthodox jurisdictions.

Iconostasis: A wall of icons in an Orthodox church that separates the nave from the sanctuary.

Julian calendar: A calendar proposed by Julius Caesar in 46 BC that has mostly been superseded by the Gregorian calendar. Julian calendar dates are sometimes designated “Old Style” or called “Old Calendar,” and they now occur 13 days after the same dates on the Gregorian calendar. In 2100, that gap will extend to 14 days. The Orthodox Church still relies on the Julian Calendar for determining the dates of Pascha and Great Lent, but many jurisdictions rely upon the Gregorian calendar for setting dates for all their other feasts.

Kontakion: Thematic hymns that are abbreviated versions of poetic homilies with numerous stanzas. These were in use in Byzantine worship after about the 6th century.

Pascha: “Pascha” is the Orthodox name for Easter and is a Greek translation of the Hebrew term “Passover.” 1 Corinthians 5:7 says: “For Christ, our paschal lamb, has been sacrificed. Let us therefore celebrate the festival....”

Synaxis: The word generally refers to a gathering to celebrate the Divine Liturgy on the day following a major feast. A synaxis honors the saints involved in the primary celebration (e.g., the Synaxis of St. John the Baptist is celebrated on January 7, the day after Holy Theophany).

Theotokos: A title for the Mother of God, meaning “God-bearer,” that has been in use since the 3rd century.

Troparion: A short hymn comprised of a single stanza or one of a series of stanzas.

The Annunciation

Unidentified iconographer (Greek, active 19th century)

The Annunciation narrative appears in the Gospel of Luke 1:27–38. In it, the Angel Gabriel appears to the Virgin Mary and says, “You will conceive and give birth to a son....” to which she ultimately replies, “I am the Lord’s servant ... May your word to me be fulfilled.” (NIV)

The Orthodox Church celebrates the Annunciation as one of its 12 Great Feasts and it is celebrated on March 25/April 7. The Church Fathers chose the date to be exactly nine months prior to the Feast of the Nativity of Christ (Christmas). The Annunciation normally occurs during Great Lent, and the seasonal fasting restrictions are lessened on that day (the eating of fish is allowed).

The building shown at the bottom of this icon is the Panagia Evangelistria Church (Our Lady of Good Tidings) on the Greek island of Tinos, which is located about four hours by boat from Athens. The icon of the Annunciation that is housed in that church was miraculously found in 1823 through the vision of a nun (St. Pelagia) from a neighboring monastery. It has since performed numerous miracles. The church was dedicated in 1825 at the place where the icon was found.

The Panagia Megalochari is the patron saint of Tinos and she is also considered as the protector of all Greece. The name “Megalochari” means “with all graces” but the church is dedicated to the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary. This church is the most popular pilgrimage site in Greece and attracts more than one million visitors a year.

The inscription in the lower right corner says that this icon is offered for the servants of God Basil, George, Alexios, Michael, George, and Demetrios.



The Troparion of The Annunciation:

*Today is the beginning of our salvation,
The revelation of the eternal mystery!
The Son of God becomes the Son of the Virgin
as Gabriel announces the coming of Grace.
Together with him let us cry to the Theotokos:
Rejoice, O Full of Grace,
The Lord is with You!*

The Kontakion of The Annunciation:

*O Victorious Leader of Triumphant Hosts!
We, your servants, delivered from evil, sing our
grateful thanks to you, O Theotokos!
As you possess invincible might, set us free from
every calamity
So that we may sing: Rejoice, O unwedded Bride!*

Unidentified iconographer (Greek, active 19th century), **The Annunciation**, c. 1828, tempera on wooden panel, 35½" x 17¼"; Gift of Jay Bushway, Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art, 1987.3.1

The Sign Mother of God

Unidentified artists (Russian, active 19th century)

This icon depicts the Mother of God during the Annunciation, as she responds to the Angel Gabriel (Luke 1:38): “Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.” (KJV) The terms “Virgin of the Sign” and “Sign Mother of God” refer to the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14: “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” (KJV) The image is also referred to as “Platytera.” By containing the Creator of the Universe in her womb, Mary became (in Greek) *Platytera ton ouranon*, which means “More spacious than the heavens.” At the 431 Council of Ephesus (Third Ecumenical Council), it was determined that the Virgin Mary was to be called “Theotokos,” which translates as “God-bearer” (the one who gave birth to God).

“Our Lady of the Sign” was used as a Christian term as long ago as the early third century. Images of the Virgin Mary with her hands raised in prayer appears in Christian art dating to at least the 4th century. The iconography appeared within the Russian tradition as early as the 11th or 12th century. The Platytera image now frequently seen in the apse (and above the altars) of Orthodox churches.

Our Lady of the Sign is celebrated on a variety of dates each year and the main feast day is November 27. Additional feast days acknowledge specific, named wonderworking icons.

Although this icon cover is made from glass beads and glass stones, *rizas* (Russian: “robe”) or *oklads* (Russian: “covered”) are usually protective metal coverings. They are designed specifically for the icons that they cover and are most often made of gilt or silvered metal with openings revealing small portions of the painted surfaces—usually hands and faces.



Troparion of the Kursk Root Icon of the Mother of God of the Sign:

*Having obtained thee as an unassailable
rampart and wellspring of miracles,
O Most Pure Mother of God, thy servants
quell the assaults of enemies.
Wherefore, we pray to thee:
Grant peace to our land, and to our souls
great mercy.*

Kontakion of the Kursk Root Icon of the Mother of God of the Sign:

*Come you faithful,
Let us radiantly celebrate the wondrous
appearance of the most precious
Image of the Mother of God,
And drawing grace there from, let us cry
out with compunction:
Rejoice, O Mother of God, Blessed Mary,
Mother of God!*

Unidentified artists (Russian, active 19th century), ***The Sign Mother of God***, first half of the 19th century, egg tempera on board, glass beads, and glass jewels, 9" x 8"; Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art, 2017.41.1a&b

Vladimir Mother of God

Unidentified artists (Russian, active late 19th century)

Icons of the Vladimir Mother of God are revered throughout Russia. The mother and child subject is what is called an *Eleousa* type (from the Greek *Ἐλεούσα*, meaning tenderness or showing mercy) and this imagery is popular throughout both and eastern and western Christendom. The iconographic motif suggests a loving and affectionate relationship between the Virgin and the Christ Child.

According to Russian tradition, the original Vladimir Mother of God icon was painted by St. Luke the Evangelist, and it is the most famous icon that is attributed to him. The prototype icon traveled from Constantinople to Rus in 1131 and was taken to the city of Vladimir in 1155—where it became known as the “Vladimir Icon.” It was removed to Moscow in 1395.

The Vladimir Mother of God icon is considered miracle-working and it is celebrated on multiple feast days. The May 21/June 3 celebration commemorates the icon’s role in delivering Moscow from a Tatar invasion (1521). On June 23/July 6, the feast celebrates the miraculous saving of Moscow from a 1480 invasion by Ahmed Khan bin Küchük and his Great Horde. The August 26/September 8 feast honors the icon’s 1395 transfer from Vladimir to Moscow.

This icon’s *riza* is an example of superior 19th-century ecclesiastical work. It is stamped with the artist’s/workshop’s hallmark (U E), date (1874), silver hallmark (84), and Moscow hallmark (St. George and the Dragon). According to the donor, the icon was brought to Jerusalem by a niece of Tsar Nicholas II. He purchased it in Lebanon.



**Troparion of the Meeting of the
Vladimir Icon of the Mother of God:**

*Today the most glorious city of Moscow
rejoices radiantly,*

*For it receives your wonderworking Icon
as a ray of the sun, O Lady.*

*Now, having recourse to it, we pray to you
and cry:*

*O most wondrous Lady Theotokos,
Pray to Christ our God, Who was
incarnate of you,*

*That this city and all cities and countries
be kept safe from all the assaults of the
enemy,*

*And that our souls may be saved, for He
is merciful.*

Unidentified artists (Russian, active late
19th century), **Vladimir Mother of God**, c.
1874, egg tempera on wood panel with
gilded silver cover, 13 $\frac{7}{8}$ " x 12 $\frac{1}{4}$ "; Gift of
Jay Bushway, Collection of Maryhill
Museum of Art, 1986.3.1

Mother of God, Joy to All Who Suffer

Unidentified iconographer (Russian, active 19th century)

According to Orthodox tradition, the prototype of this icon was deemed wonderworking in 1688. In that year, a woman in Moscow named Euphemia—sister of Patriarch Joachim—became seriously ill. She heard a voice tell her to pray before this icon—which was in the Church of the Transfiguration of the Savior—and she was healed. That icon was brought to St. Petersburg in 1711 and Tsarina Elizabeth Petrovna built an ornate church for it there. The image was popular throughout Russia during the 18th and 19th centuries, and the icon was used as a protection against all kinds of illness. Today, there are numerous copies of it, many of which have been proven to be wonderworking. The Orthodox Church celebrates this icon on October 24/November 6.

Here, the Mother of God stands on a cloud, wearing a crown, and holding a scepter in one hand with the crowned Christ Child in the other. The LORD SABAOth appears above, and suffering humans are gathered below her. The seven standing saints at left are Saints Zosima, Theodosia, Basil, Paul, Peter, Haralambos, and Antipas. At right are Saints Nikita, George, Anna, Cosmas and Damian, Nicholas, and John Chrysostom. The figures in the left-hand border are Saints Basil the Priest, Makarius, Demetrios, and Theodore the Monk. At far right are Saints Artemios, Anastasia, Basil, and Mary of Egypt.

The text across the top of the icon says, “Image of the Joy to All Who Suffer Most Holy Mother of God.” The text below the Mother of God is a troparion that reads, “To the Mother of God let us sinners now earnestly run, with humility falling down in repentance, crying from the depths of the soul: ‘O Lady, mercifully help us, and make haste, for we perish from the multitude of sins. Turn not your servant away empty, for you are our only hope.’”



From Kontakion II of the Akathist to the Mother of God, Joy to All Who Suffer: *Beholding the streams of wonders which pour forth from your holy icon, O most blessed Mother of God, in that you are the good helper of those who pray, the support of the oppressed, the hope of the hopeless, the consolation of those who grieve, the nourisher of the hungry, the clothing of the naked, the chastity of virgins, the guide of strangers, the assistance of those who labor, the restoration of sight to the blind, the clear hearing to the deaf, and the healing of the sick, in you we thankfully sing to God: Alleluia!*

Unidentified iconographer (Russian, active 19th century), ***Mother of God, Joy to All Who Suffer***, 19th century, egg tempera on wood panel, 27½" x 22½"; Gift of Marie, Queen of Romania, Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art, 1926.3.45

Mother of God, Joy to All Who Suffer

Unidentified iconographer (Russian, active 19th century)

Three different miracle-working Mother of God, Joy to All Who Suffer icons are celebrated by the Orthodox Church. They are commemorated on October 24 (the Moscow version); on July 23 (the St. Petersburg version); and November 19 (a related image). The St. Petersburg icon was glorified in 1888 when lightning struck the chapel in which it was housed. Despite its surroundings being consumed by fire, the icon survived intact and a dozen coins from a nearby collection box for the poor attached themselves to its face.

In late 2020, Maryhill Museum of Art was given a version of a *Mother of God, Joy to All Who Suffer* icon that is smaller than the one that was part of Queen Marie of Romania's 1926 largesse. In both examples, the crowned Mother of God stands holding the crowned Christ Child in her left arm. The smaller icon shows her surrounded by six groups of supplicants with attending angels. Adjacent scrolls bear abbreviated inscriptions referencing specific needs. On the left (top to bottom) the scrolls mention [To the Wretched] Intercessor; [To the Sorrowing] Consolation; and [To the Ill] Healing. On the right-hand side, the scrolls refer to [Walking] To The Lamé; Clothing to the Naked; and Nursing to the Hungry. The inscriptions reflect intercessory aspects of the Mother of God as reflected in hymns that are sung to her and do not exactly link the specific texts to the suffering souls that are shown near them.

The left- and right-hand margins of this icon are populated with four patron saints, none of which are identified. Of the two men at left, the upper figure appears to be a hierarch. Two female saints are shown at right.



From the Akathist Hymn to the Theotokos, Joy of All Who Suffer:

...O disdain us not in our lowliness, most
blessed Lady,

For we lie upon the bed of affliction and cry
unto thee:

Rejoice, priceless treasury of mercy.

Rejoice, sole hope of the desperate.

Rejoice, healing of the body.

Rejoice, salvation of the soul.

Rejoice, unfailing strength of the infirm.

Rejoice, perpetual aid of the disabled.

Rejoice, thou who quickly assuageth the wrath
of God by thy supplications.

Rejoice, thou who dost tame our passions by
the power of thy prayers.

Rejoice, sight for the blind and hearing for the
deaf.

Rejoice, feet for the lame and speech for the
dumb....

Unidentified iconographer (Russian, active
19th century), ***Mother of God, Joy to All Who
Suffer***, 19th century, egg tempera on wood
panel, 12 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ "; Gift of the Estate of
Vladimir Kovalik, Collection of Maryhill
Museum of Art, 2020.16.2

Quadripartite Icon with Crucifixion

Unidentified iconographer (Russian, active 19th century)

The figure in the lower left quarter of this icon represents the Kazan Mother of God, a popular Russian image that miraculously appeared in 1579. She is considered the protector and great patron of the city of Kazan and the protectress of all Russia. The original Our Lady of Kazan icon was brought to Russia from Constantinople during the 13th century.

Christ Pantocrator (Almighty or All-Powerful), is seen at upper left. Christ as Pantocrator was one of the first images used by the ancient Christian Church. It remains a common figure in Eastern Orthodox iconography and appears today in the central dome of many Orthodox churches. The horizontal inscription here provides a Slavonic rendering of the title, "Pantocrator."

The Mother of God Bogolubskaya (upper right) was first painted in 1157 at the request of Grand Prince Andrei Bogolubski. The image commemorates an appearance to him by the Mother of God. The Mother of God is here holding an unrolled scroll. Before her are eleven saints, including Bogolubski and various Russian hierarchs and holy fools.

At lower right is St. Haralambos (Charalampos), a pious priest from Magnesia who was martyred in Antioch in Asia Minor in about the year 200. Russian sources refer to St. Haralambos as a bishop.

The Virgin Mary and two other Marys appear to the left of the crucified Christ. St. John the Evangelist and St. Longinus (the Roman centurion; see Matthew 27:54) appear to His right. Four small saints appear in the lateral borders. At upper and lower left are the martyr St. Chrysogonus and the hierarch St. Dorotheos. At upper and lower right are St. Gregory and St. Mary Magdalene.



Apolytikion for the Feast of the Holy and Glorious Hieromartyr Haralambos:

O wise Haralambos, you were proven an unshakable pillar of the Church of Christ; An ever-shining lamp of the universe. You shone in the world by your martyrdom. You delivered us from the moonless night of idolatry O blessed one. Wherefore, boldly intercede to Christ that we may be saved.

Kontakion of the Feast of the Holy and Glorious Hieromartyr Haralambos:

O Priest-martyr, athlete, champion Haralambos, Your relics are a priceless treasure of the Church. Wherefore she rejoices, Glorifying the Creator.

Unidentified iconographer (Russian, active 19th century), **Quadripartite Icon with Crucifixion**, 19th century, egg tempera and gold leaf on wood panel, 20 $\frac{7}{8}$ " x 17 $\frac{1}{4}$ "; Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art, 0-338

Quadripartite Icon with Mandyllion

Unidentified iconographer (Russian, active late 19th century)

The Mother of God, The Life-Giving Spring (or Well of Living Water) appears in the upper left corner of this icon. The feast day of the Life-Giving Spring is commemorated on the Friday after Pascha. The Life-Giving Spring icon of the Most Holy Theotokos is commemorated on April 4.

In the upper right-hand quadrant shows an icon of the Mother of God of Unexpected Joy. It reproduces the story of a man who was praying to the icon as he contemplated committing a misdeed. Noticing wounds on the Mother and Child, he asked, “Who has done this?” The Virgin replied, “You and other sinners.” This conversation is shown coming from the mouths of the man and Virgin. The inscription below the icon—which provides the context—says, “A sinner was in the habit of praying daily to the most Holy Virgin, reciting the words of the archangel.”

At lower right is the “Fiery Visage” or “Fire-Appearing” Mother of God. The Orthodox Church interprets the burning bush that Moses saw on Mount Sinai, the survival of the three Hebrews youths in the fiery furnace of Nebuchadnezzar, and other stories as prefiguring the Virgin, who carried God in her womb yet was not harmed. The Kazan Mother of God appears in the lower left. Our Lady of Kazan is considered the protectress of all Russia and of the Tsarist house of the Romanovs. Miracles have been attributed to this icon since 1579, when the image was dug up by a young girl. The Mandyllion (Not Made by Hands) icon at center shows a cloth bearing a miraculous image of Christ's face.

St. Theodore the Righteous, St. Peter the Apostle, St. John the Evangelist, and the Archangel Michael appear in the left-hand margin. St. Mary of Egypt, St. Eudocia, St. Paraskevi, and St. Haralambos may be seen at the extreme right.



The Apolytikon of the Mother of God of the Life-Giving Spring:

*As a life-giving fount, thou didst conceive the
Dew that is transcendent in essence,
O Virgin Maid, and thou hast welled forth for our
sakes the nectar of joy eternal,
Which doth pour forth from thy fount with the
water that springeth up
Unto everlasting life in unending and mighty
streams;
Wherein, taking delight, we all cry out:
Rejoice, O thou Spring of life for all men.*

Unidentified iconographer (Russian, active late 19th century), **Quadripartite Icon with Mandyllion**, late 19th century, egg tempera on wood panel, 27 $\frac{5}{8}$ " x 22 $\frac{1}{2}$ "; Gift of Marie, Queen of Romania, Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art, 1926.3.430

Quadripartite Icon with Crucifixion

Unidentified iconographer (Russian, active late 19th century)

The upper left corner of this icon contains an image of the Mother of God, Joy to All Who Suffer. At bottom left, St. Peter the Apostle holds a scroll saying, “Great is the name of the Holy Trinity! Holy Mother of God, help us!” At bottom right, the Prophet Job holds a scroll inscribed, “Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?” (Job 2:10 [NIV]). The fragmentary texts on the scrolls held by the angels above her say, “Thus says the LORD: Suffering/Pain....” (left) and “Rejoice and be glad, for....” (right). The scroll above the left-hand angel says, “To all who suffer and are offended....” The scroll in the upper right-hand corner says, “To all you who suffer, joy....”

The top right quadrant shows Saints Quiricus and Julitta, who were martyred in Tarsus in Asia Minor in about 305. The duo was from Iconium in Asia Minor. As a young widow, Saint Julitta was tasked with raising her three-year-old son, Quiricus (Cyricus). During Emperor Diocletian’s persecution of Christians (303–313), she left Iconium with her son and two servants. While living in Tarsus, she was recognized as a Christian, was arrested, and brought to trial before the Roman governor, Alexander. While his mother was being tortured, Quiricus cried, and when the governor sought to comfort him, Quiricus proclaimed that he too was a Christian. The governor then kicked him down some stone steps and the child died. Julitta’s torture continued, and she was ultimately beheaded. In the icon, Cyricus and Julitta both hold martyr’s crosses, and they are surrounded by scenes from their lives, including the birth of Quiricus, the confrontation with the governor Alexander, and the flogging and beheading of Julitta.

At bottom right, seven saints—Tatiana, Julamia, Martha, Matthew, Spyridon, and Antipas—reverence the crucified Christ. In the lower left corner is an image of the Mother of God, Seeker of the Lost. This image of the Mother of God is celebrated on February 5.



Troparion of the Holy Martyrs Quiricus and His Mother Julitta:

Blessed Julitta, Christ God's rational ewe-lamb,

With holy Quiricus, her three-year-old offspring,

Stood at the judgment seat and with authority and great boldness they proclaimed the true Faith of the Christians.

In no wise were they afraid of the threats of the tyrants;

And now in Heaven, wearing precious crowns,

They both rejoice as they stand before Christ our God.

Unidentified iconographer (Russian, active late 19th century), **Quadripartite Icon with Crucifixion**, late 19th century, egg tempera on wood panel, 21" x 16³/₈"; Gift of Marie, Queen of Romania, Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art, 1926.3.44

Quadripartite Icon with the Archangel Raphael

Unidentified iconographer (Russian, active late 19th century)

This icon features four images of the Mother of God surrounding the Archangel Raphael. Clockwise from upper left are the Mother of God, Joy to All Who Suffer; the Feodorovskaya Mother of God; the Mletkopitatelnitsa Mother of God; and the Mother of God, Savior of Miserable Sufferers.

The Feodorovskaya Mother of God (Our Lady of St. Theodore) icon was miraculously discovered in 1329. The image ultimately became a patron and symbol of the Romanov dynasty. Orthodox traditions differ as to why it was named after St. Theodore Stratelates (Theodore the General) (281–319). He was from Asia Minor and was a military commander in Heraclea Pontica, Bithynia, where he was martyred.

The Mletkopitatelnitsa Mother of God is known as “The Milk-Giver” in the Greek world. The original icon is housed at the Hilandar Monastery on Mount Athos, where it has resided since the 13th century. The image shows the Mother of God breast-feeding an infant Christ, in what is now an unusual motif.

The Mother of God, Savior of Miserable Sufferers, is a rare icon type that is based on a Constantinopolitan prototype.

According to Orthodox Christian tradition, four Archangels—Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, and Uriel—stand at the four corners of the throne of God. The name “Raphael” means “It is God who has healed” and the role of Holy Archangel Raphael is to provide healing to the earth and its inhabitants.

St. Sergius of Radonezh (1314–1392) and St. Theodore the Studite (759–826) appear at the far left and St. Anna (mother of the Virgin Mary) and St. Mary of Egypt (344–421) appear at the far right.



Troparion of the Synaxis of the Archangel Michael and the Other Bodiless Powers:

*Commanders of the heavenly hosts,
We who are unworthy beseech you,
By your prayers encompass us beneath the
wings of your immaterial glory,
And faithfully preserve us who fall down and
cry to you:*

*"Deliver us from all harm,
For you are the commanders of the powers on
high!"*

Unidentified iconographer (Russian, active late 19th century), **Quadripartite Icon with the Archangel Raphael**, late 19th century, egg tempera on wood panel, 27½" x 22¾"; Gift of Marie, Queen of Romania, Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art, 1926.3.46

Quadripartite Icon with Crucifixion

Ivan Petrov (Russian, active late 19th century)

This icon features four main images surrounding the Crucifixion. The upper left corner shows the beheading of St. John the Baptist and his severed head being presented to Salome on a charger. Salome was the daughter of Herodias and Herod Antipas. St. John's execution is mentioned in the Gospels of Mark and Luke and described in detail in Matthew 14: 6–12. The icon shows the headless body of St. John laying on the ground between the two scenes.

The upper right quarter portrays Christ's Descent into Hades, the Resurrection, the arrival of St. Dismas (the Good Thief) at the entrance to Paradise, and the post-Resurrection appearance of the Lord Jesus to seven of his disciples at the Sea of Galilee (John 21:1–23).

At lower right is an image of the Mother of God, Soothe My Sorrows. The scroll held by the infant Christ says, "Judge righteously; each show mercy to one another; do not offend widows and orphans, and do not keep malice in your heart towards your brother."

In the lower left quadrant, seven saints are shown reverencing the crucified Christ. They include Saints Joachim and Anna (parents of the Virgin Mary), St. Theodosia, St. Justinia, and St. Cyprian of Moscow. God the Father appears at the top of the icon and two familial patron saints—the Prophet Moses and St. Theodosia—appear at far left and right.

An 1897 inscription on the back of the icon says, "This holy icon was painted in the town of Izmail by Ivan Petrov on the 13th day of the month of May." Izmail is in what is now southwestern Ukraine. In 1897, it was situated on Russia's far southwestern boundary.



Troparion of the Icon of the Mother of God, Soothe My Sorrows:

Sooth the pains of my much-sighing soul,

O thou who hast wiped away every tear from the face of the earth:

For thou dost drive away the sickness of men,

And quench the afflictions of sinners.

We have obtained hope and support in thee,

O most Holy Virgin.

Ivan Petrov (Russian, active late 19th century), **Quadripartite Icon with Crucifixion**, 1897, egg tempera on wood panel, 21" x 18³/₄"; Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art, 0-334

Pendant Icon of the Mother of God of the Kiev Caves Monastery

Unidentified artists (Russian, active 19th century)

This pendant icon is less than two inches square. It is painted on a small wooden panel with a silver cover that reveals only the hands and faces of the Mother of God, the infant Christ, and Saints Anthony and Theodosius of the Kiev Caves (shown at left and right). According to a stamp on the *riza*, the icon was created in 1871. It is based on a prototype that was painted by St. Alipy of the Caves, who died in 1114. He was a disciple of Constantinopolitan Greek artists who were painting the interior of the Cathedral of the Dormition of the Theotokos at the Monastery of the Kiev Caves (1073–1089).

As a young man, Saint Anthony of Kiev (c. 983–1073) was interested in living a monastic life and he traveled to Mount Athos and was tonsured a monk. His igumen eventually encouraged him to return home and predicted that he would draw many like-minded individuals to himself. After visiting various monasteries near Kiev, Saint Anthony began his ascetic struggle in about 1051—in a cave that had been dug by Hilarion, a priest who later became Metropolitan of Kiev. As additional monks and novices arrived, more caves were dug, the community expanded, and a cathedral church was built there (although it was destroyed 1941). The monastery is now home to more than ten churches.

Saint Theodosius of Kiev (1009–1074) was in his early 20s when he sought out Saint Anthony. Saint Theodosius was soon tonsured a monk and he was ultimately elected by his brothers to serve as their abbot. Saints Anthony and Theodosius are remembered as the founders of the Monastery of the Kiev Caves. The feast commemorating Saint Anthony occurs on July 10. Saint Theodosius is remembered on May 3 and the two are celebrated together on September 2. The Synaxis of the Venerable Fathers of the Kiev Near Caves occurs on September 28.



Troparion for St. Anthony of the Kiev Caves

Having departed from worldly tumults,
In leaving the world you followed Christ according to
the Gospel.

You reached the quiet refuge of the Holy Mount Athos,
Living there a life equal to the angels.

Therefore, with the blessing of the Fathers,
You came to the Kievan hills.

There having fulfilled a life loving of labors,
You illumined your homeland....

Kontakion for Venerable Theodosius of the Kiev Caves

Today let us honor a star of Russia,
Who shone forth from the East and came to the West.
The entire world has been enriched by wonders and
blessings,

And all of us by grace

And by the establishment of the monastic rule by
Blessed Theodosius.

Unidentified artists (Russian, active 19th century), **Pendant
Icon of the Mother of God of the Kiev Caves Monastery**,
1871, egg tempera on wood panel with silver *riza*, 1 $\frac{7}{8}$ " x 1 $\frac{5}{8}$ "
(exclusive of hanging hardware); Collection of Maryhill
Museum of Art, 0-252

St. John the Forerunner

Unidentified iconographer (Russian, active 18th/19th century)

In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus tells his disciples that, “among those born of women there is not a greater prophet” than St. John the Baptist (also known as St. John the Forerunner). St. John was a cousin of Jesus Christ and the last of the Old Testament prophets. In Eastern Orthodox icons, St. John is usually shown with angel wings, a hair garment, and a green cloak. He is also emaciated—a result of his ascetic life. In this image, the saint points to the infant Christ in a gold chalice while holding a scroll that reads, “I saw and have borne witness; this is the Lamb of God.”

Six scenes from the saint’s life here surround the icon’s central figure. The Birth of St. John is shown in the lower left-hand corner. There, the infant John is being prepared for a bath; he also appears dressed in white and being held by a servant. In an adjoining room, his father Zechariah is writing “His name is John,” as was directed by the Angel Gabriel (see Luke 1:11–20; 59–66). Moving clockwise, the next scenes show St. John Baptizing in the Jordan (Luke 3:1–18), St. John Praying in the Wilderness, an Angel Guiding St. John into the Wilderness (Luke 1:80), the Finding of the Head of St. John, and the Beheading of St. John (Matthew 14: 6–12). Above the saint’s head, the LORD SABAOTH may be seen sending down the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove.

The Orthodox Church honors St. John the Forerunner on six separate feast days. His main feast is celebrated on the day after Theophany (Epiphany), January 7/20, depending on whether the Gregorian or Julian calendar is being observed. St. John’s birth is commemorated on June 24, and his beheading is commemorated on August 29/September 11. St. John is the patron saint of Jordan, Puerto Rico, French Canada, diverse European, American, and Asian cities, hospitals, nurses, the sick, printers, and firefighters.



Troparion from the Synaxis of the Holy Glorious Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist John:

*The memory of the righteous is celebrated
with hymns of praise,
But the Lord's testimony is sufficient for you,
O Forerunner.*

*You were shown in truth to be the most
honorable of the prophets,
for you were deemed worthy to baptize in the
streams of the Jordan Him whom they
foretold.*

*Therefore, having suffered for the truth with
joy,
You proclaimed to those in hell God who
appeared in the flesh,
who takes away the sin of the world, and
grants us great mercy.*

Unidentified iconographer (Russian, active 18th/19th century), **St. John the Forerunner**, 18th or 19th century, egg tempera and gold leaf on wood panel, 21" x 17⁵/₈"; Gift of Marie, Queen of Romania, Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art, 1926.3.161

Holy Theophany (The Baptism of Jesus Christ)

Eliseea Papcioc (Romanian, b. 1969)

Holy Theophany is celebrated on January 6/19 and it is considered one of Orthodoxy's 12 Great Feasts. "Theophany" comes from the Greek word *theophania*, which means "appearance of God." At the baptism of Christ, the Holy Trinity clearly appeared to humanity for the first time: God the Father's voice was heard from Heaven, the Son of God was incarnate and physically standing in the Jordan River, and the Holy Spirit descended on Him in the form of a dove (Matthew 3:13–17).

In this icon, St. John the Baptist stands at left, baptizing Jesus, who stands in the Jordan River. Five angels look on from the right, two of whom are waiting to receive the naked Christ (the new Adam). The Holy Spirit descends from God the Father (represented by an eye). The axe appearing on the ground behind St. John refers to the prophecy of Isaiah: "The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire" (Isaiah 40:3; Matthew 3:10). Jesus and St. Nicodemus converse in the lower left-hand corner, while Adam—the First Man—and St. Spyridon (Bishop of Trimythous, c. 270–348) appear in the left and right margins.

The Feast of Theophany marks the end of the Orthodox Christmas season, which extends from December 25/January 7 to January 6/19. The Great Blessing of Water occurs in conjunction with Theophany and water that is made holy on that day is used by priests to bless the homes of the faithful. Western Christians refer to their December 6 feast as "Epiphany" and a significant part of the Western celebration commemorates the visit to Bethlehem of the three Magi.

Sister Eliseea Papcioc is a Romanian Orthodox nun who lives and works in Bradetu, a rural village that is in the southern Carpathian Mountains about 150 miles northwest of Bucharest.



Troparion of Holy Theophany:

*When Thou, O Lord, wast baptized in the Jordan,
The worship of the Trinity was made manifest!
For the voice of the Father bore witness to Thee,
And called Thee His beloved Son!
And the Spirit, in the form of a dove,
Confirmed the truthfulness of His word.
O Christ our God, Who hast revealed Thyself
and hast enlightened the world, glory to Thee!*

The Kontakion of Holy Theophany

*Today You have shown forth to the world, O Lord,
And the light of Your countenance has been marked on
us.
Knowing You, we sing Your praises.
You have come and revealed Yourself,
O unapproachable Light.*

Eliseea Papcioc (Romanian, b. 1969), ***Theophany (The Baptism of Jesus Christ)***, c. 2000, wooden panel, organic paints, shellac, and turquoise, 23½" x 15¾"; Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art, 2018.32.1

St. Nicholas of Mozhaisk

Gregory Trephonov Pavlikov (Russian, active early 20th century)

St. Nicholas the Wonderworker was a fourth-century archbishop of Myra in Lycia in southern Asia Minor. He is the patron saint of many cities and countries—including Greece and Russia. He is also the patron of groups that include sailors, merchants, thieves, and children. He is also the individual upon whom the Santa Claus legend and imagery are based. St. Nicholas is commemorated in Orthodox churches on three different days. They are (according to the Gregorian calendar) December 6, May 9 (the transfer of his relics from Myra to Bari, Italy, in 1087) and on July 29 (his nativity).

In Russia, icons of St. Nicholas frequently represent the saint as Holy Hierarch Nicholas of Mozhaisk. According to legend, Mozhaisk came under attack by the Tatars in 1302. The attackers laid siege to the city and the townspeople gathered in the cathedral to appeal to St Nicholas for help. The saint then materialized above the church holding a sword and a model of the church, causing the enemy to flee.

Icons of St. Nicholas generally include representations of Christ and the Mother of God on either side of the saint's head. In the St. Nicholas of Mozhaisk variant, the saint's entire body appears, and he carries a sword in one hand and a city or church in the other. This icon also shows the six patron saints of the Russian Imperial family. On the left are Saints Anastasia, Alexandra, and Olga. On the right are Saints Tatiana, Maria, and Alexei.

An inscription on the icon's back says, "This icon was painted by the Old believer peasant Gregory Trephonov Pavlikov on the Estate of Posada Shezomach Chernigov for the presentation on the Angel Day of his imperial Majesty, the sovereign emperor Nicolai Alexandrovich, in the year of the birth of Christ 6 December 1906."



Troparion for St. Nicholas:

*In truth you were revealed to your flock
as a rule of faith,
An image of humility and a teacher of
abstinence;
Your humility exalted you;
Your poverty enriched you.
Hierarch Father Nicholas,
Entreat Christ our God
That our souls may be saved.*

Kontakion for St. Nicholas:

*You revealed yourself, O saint, in Myra
as a priest,
For you fulfilled the Gospel of Christ
By giving up your soul for your people,
And saving the innocent from death.
Therefore you are blessed as one
become wise in the grace of God.*

Gregory Trephonov Pavlikov (Russian,
active early 20th century), **St. Nicholas
of Mozhaisk**, 1906, egg tempera and
gold leaf on wood panel; Gift of Alma de
Bretteville Spreckels, Collection of
Maryhill Museum of Art, 1951.7.232

Translation of the Relics of St. Nicholas from Mira to Bari

Ivan Sobol (Russian, active late 16th–early 17th century)

This icon shows the holy relics of St. Nicholas being transported through the town of Bari, on the east coast of Italy, in 1087. The moving of the relics occurred after a Turkish attempt to steal the saint's bones from his tomb in Myra in Lycia (Asia Minor). They were taken and moved by a group of individuals from Bari and Venice.

Here, two deacons carry the saint, and they are accompanied by an unidentified hierarch. The church with the white facade (upper right) represents the Basilica di San Nicola (built 1087–1197) which was constructed to house the relics. The Mother of God of the Sign appears in the upper frame and the unmercenary physicians, Saints Cosmas and Damian, appear in the frame at far left and right. The Russian Orthodox Church commemorates this event on May 9, but the Greeks do not celebrate it because they see it as a remembrance of a theft of ecclesiastical property.

This icon was owned by the donor's father, Ambassador Nicholas Petrescu Comnen (1881–1958). He was an international lawyer, university law professor, author, congressman, diplomat, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Romania during the reign of King Ferdinand and Queen Marie, and the Romanian Ambassador to the Vatican prior to the Communist takeover. As a young lawyer, he participated in the Versailles Peace Conference after World War I. After being discharged of his ministerial responsibilities in 1940, he resided in Florence, Italy, and was an active observer of European affairs. He died in exile there in 1957. Among his many decorations, Ambassador Comnen was honored with the rarely given title of honorary citizen of Florence, for his efforts in preserving the city's art and architecture from destruction when the Germans were withdrawing their troops during World War II.



Troparion for the Feast of the Transfer of the Relics of Our Holy Father Nicholas the Wonderworker from Myra to Bari

The day of radiant feasting is here,
The city of Bari rejoices, and the world exults
with hymns and spiritual songs.

For today is the sacred feast
Of the transfer of the precious and healing
relics of the bishop and wonder-worker
Nicholas.

Like a never-setting sun
He shines with radiant beams of light
Dispelling the gloom of temptations and grief
From those who cry with faith:
Save us, great Nicholas, for you intercede
for us.

Ivan Sobol (Russian, active late 16th-early 17th century), *Translation of the Relics of St. Nicholas from Mira to Bari*, c. 1600, egg tempera on wood panel with 19th-century silver *riza*, 18" x 15"; Gift of Mrs. Irene Bie, Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art, 1998.12.3

St. George the Great Martyr

Diana Arkhi (Arkhipova) (Moldavan, b. 1970)

The Holy Great Martyr George the Victory-Bearer (born c. 275) is a highly venerated Christian saint whose life is usually celebrated on April 23/May 6. St. George was from Cappadocia. While a young man, he joined the Roman army and achieved the rank of military tribune. He was a member of Emperor Diocletian's imperial guard when Diocletian (244–311) ordered a persecution of Christians in 302. St. George publicly opposed the Emperor's edict and declared himself a Christian. Despite the Emperor's pleas, St. George did not deny his faith. He was imprisoned, subjected to a series of tortures, and performed several miracles—as shown in the periphery of this icon. He was beheaded at Nicomedia in Bithynia (in Asia Minor) on April 23, 303. After his martyrdom, the body of St. George was returned to the saint's native village. His tomb is in an underground chapel of the Church of St. George in the city of Lod (Lydda), about 10 miles southeast of Tel Aviv. The sarcophagus there contains some of the saint's relics while other of his relics may be found in churches throughout Christendom.

The legend of St. George and the Dragon dates to the 11th century. It was brought to Europe by the Crusaders. St. George became the patron saint of England in 1350 and the Cross of St. George—the Crusader's Cross—is the central feature within the United Kingdom's Union Flag. St. George is the patron saint of Canada, Greece, Portugal, Ethiopia, and other countries and he is also the patron of soldiers, farmers, lepers, Boy Scouts, and other groups.

Orthodox icons have also depicted St. George standing in the armor of a Roman soldier for more than 1,300 years. Since the Fall of Constantinople (1453) and because of his association with Crusader knights, St. George is also shown mounted upon a white horse.



Troparion for Saint George:

You were bound for good deeds, O martyr of Christ: George;

By faith you conquered the torturer's godlessness.

You were offered as a sacrifice pleasing to God; Thus you received the crown of victory.

Through your intercessions, forgiveness of sins is granted to all.

Kontakion for Saint George:

God raised you as his own gardener, O George, For you have gathered for yourself the sheaves of virtue.

Having sown in tears, you now reap with joy; You shed your blood in combat and won Christ as your crown.

Through your intercessions, forgiveness of sins is granted to all.

Diana Arkhi (Arkhipova) (Moldavian, b. 1970), **St. George the Great Martyr**, 2011, egg tempera and gold leaf on wood panel, 21¼" x 17⅞"; Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art, 2011.11.1

Three Holy Hierarchs

Unidentified iconographer (Greek, active early 20th century)

The title “Three Holy Hierarchs” refers to St. Basil the Great (Basil of Caesarea), St. Gregory the Theologian (Gregory of Nazianzus), and St. John Chrysostom. They were highly influential bishops of the early Christian church and played pivotal roles in shaping Christian theology. In Roman Catholicism they are honored as Doctors of the Church.

The Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great dates to the fourth century. It is celebrated by the Orthodox Church on ten occasions each year—during Great Lent, on the Eves of Nativity (Christmas) and Theophany (Epiphany), and on the saint’s feast day (January 1). The Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom is celebrated on all other occasions. This liturgy was refined and beautified during St. John’s tenure as Patriarch of Constantinople (398–404). It became the liturgical form used in the Church of Holy Wisdom (Hagia Sophia), which opened in 537. Over time it then became the normative liturgical form that was celebrated in churches within the Byzantine Empire.

During the reign of the Byzantine emperor Alexios I Komnenos (1081–1118), a dispute arose in Constantinople over which of these hierarchs was superior. In a dream, they approached St. John Mauropus, Metropolitan of Euchaita, and greeted him saying, “As you see, the three of us are with God and no discord or rivalry divides us.... There is not among us a first, a second, or a third....” After discussion with the disputing factions, it was decided that the trio would be jointly celebrated on January 30. They are also celebrated on their own feast days: St. Basil is remembered on January 1 (Eastern Orthodox parishes) and January 2 (by the Catholic Church). St. Gregory is commemorated on January 25 and St. John Chrysostom is commemorated on November 13 (and other days as well).



Troparion for the Three Holy Hierarchs:

*Let us who love their words gather together
and honor with hymns the three great torch-
bearers of the triune Godhead:*

*Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian and John
Chrysostom.*

*These men have enlightened the world with the
rays of their divine doctrines.*

*They are sweetly-flowing rivers of wisdom filling all
creation with springs of heavenly knowledge.*

*Ceaselessly they intercede for us before the Holy
Trinity!*

Kontakion for the Three Holy Hierarchs:

*O Lord, You have taken up to eternal rest
and to the enjoyment of Your blessings the
divinely-inspired heralds,*

The greatest of Your teachers,

*For You have accepted their labors and deaths as a
sweet-smelling sacrifice,*

For You alone are glorified in Your saints!

Unidentified iconographer (Greek, active early 20th century), **Three Holy Hierarchs**, 1924, egg tempera and gold leaf on wood panel, 16 $\frac{3}{8}$ " x 12"; Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art, 2016.30.1

St. Barbara, St. Seraphim of Phanarion and Neochorion, and St. John of Damascus

Ioannes Eugenoglu (Greek, active 18th/19th century)

This icon shows (from left) St. Barbara, St. Seraphim, Archbishop of Phanarion and Neochorion, and St. John of Damascus—all of whom are commemorated by the Orthodox Church on December 4/17.

The Holy Great Martyr Barbara is a popular Orthodox saint. She was a third-century resident of Heliopolis in Syria and has been venerated since at least the ninth century. According to Orthodox tradition, Saint Barbara lived and suffered during the reign of Emperor Maximian (305–311). Her father, Dioscorus, was a rich and prominent resident of the Syrian city of Heliopolis. After the death of his wife, he devoted himself to his only daughter. Barbara was exceptionally beautiful, and her father sequestered her in a tower to protect her from the gaze of strangers. Dioscorus eventually set Barbara free, and she became a Christian. Her father beat her for this, then turned her over to the prefect of the city, who had her tortured. Barbara was ultimately executed by her own father. She is now the patron saint of miners, armorers, artillerymen, mathematicians, and others.

St. Seraphim (c. 1550–1601) was a monastic who was elected archbishop of Phanarion and Neochorion (Greece) in 1587. Four years later, he was tortured and killed by Muslims.

St. John Damascene (c. 675/676–749) is considered the last of the “Fathers” of the Eastern Orthodox Church. He was a noted theologian, wrote hymns that are still in liturgical use, and was a strong defender of icons during the iconoclastic controversy of the 7th century. The scroll he is holding petitions the “Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit to have mercy on his people...”

The inscription in the lower central margin says, “Painted by the hand of Ioannes Eugenoglu.”



Troparion for St. Barbara:

*Let us honor the holy martyr Barbara,
For as a bird she escaped the snares of the enemy,
And destroyed them through the help and defense
of the Cross.*

Troparion for St. John of Damascus:

*Champion of Orthodoxy, teacher of purity and of true
worship,
The enlightener of the universe and the adornment
of hierarchs:
All-wise father John, your teachings have gleamed
with light upon all things.
Intercede before Christ God to save our souls.*

Ioannes Eugenoglu (Greek, active 18th/19th century), **St. Barbara, St. Seraphim of Phanarion and Neochorion, and St. John of Damascus**, 18th or 19th century, egg tempera and gold leaf on wood panel, 18" x 13¼"; Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art, 2012.16.1

St. Myron of Crete

Unidentified iconographer (Greek, active late 19th–early 20th century)

Saint Myron the Wonderworker, Bishop of Crete, is commemorated on August 8. As a young man, the future saint was married and had a family. He worked as a farmer and had a reputation for goodness and for assisting all who asked him for help. Saint Myron is famously remembered for once coming upon thieves in his threshing barn as they were preparing to steal his grain. Without revealing who he was, he offered to help them bundle the grain into their sacks and carry it away. When the thieves realized the identity of their accomplice, they repented and dedicated their lives to virtuous living. Saint Myron was highly respected by the Cretan people. They urged him to accept ordination to the priesthood in his native city of Rauko/Rafko (now Agios Miron) and he was later chosen Bishop of Crete. He was given the divine gift of wonderworking and reposed at the age of 100, in about 350 AD.

Since his repose, St. Myron has been credited with helping many individuals who suffer from illnesses. He is also believed to have been responsible for miracles that protected the residents of Crete during the 1941–1945 German occupation of the island. On several occasions during the last quarter-century, the saint's tomb and his nearby icon have been observed to exude myrrh before and during Holy Week and in conjunction with the observance of the saint's feast day.

The small coin on the face of the icon is not traditionally part of the iconography of St. Myron. A former owner may have added it to the image as a votive gift. The 1 Kurush silver coin (14mm wide) is of Ottoman Turkish vintage and dated Sultan Abdul Hamid 11 1293 (year of Hejira) + 28—1902 by our current calendar. It thus predates the 1923 population exchange between Greece and Turkey. This suggests that the icon once belonged to a Greek individual or family that resided in Asia Minor.



Apolytikon for St. Myron of Crete:

*You were seen as an immense sun in Crete,
And you flashed signals with your miracles,
Father Myron, all-wonderful Hierarch.*

*You stopped the streams of Triton and slew the
destructive dragon.*

*Thus, O Saint, intercede for us with Christ our
God,*

That He will grant the great mercy.

Kontakion for St. Myron of Crete:

*You were seen as a most godly shepherd of
Crete,*

*As the divine instrument of love and mercy,
And the inexhaustible and divine fountain of
miracles.*

*But as a divine Hierarch, intercede for our
deliverance from all needs and sorrows,*

*As we cry out to you: Rejoice, Myron our
Father.*

Unidentified iconographer (Greek, active late 19th–early 20th century), **St. Myron, the Wonderworker of Crete**, c. 1900, egg tempera and gold leaf on wood panel, 10¼" x 8⅛"; Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art, 2015.10.1

Saint Cyprian of Nicomedia, Saint Panteleimon, and Saint Niphon of Cyprus

Unidentified iconographer (Russian, active 19th century)

Saint Cyprian was a native of Antioch who was schooled in philosophy and sorcery from a young age. He pursued his studies on Mount Olympus, in the Egyptian city of Memphis, in Babylon, and elsewhere. He returned to Antioch where he became a celebrated pagan priest. Saint Justina was also a resident of Antioch, and she was noted for her piety. A suitor sought Cyprian's help in winning her hand in marriage, but the sorcerer was unsuccessful in securing it, despite numerous attempts to influence her and her family. Recognizing that Saint Justina's prayers and her use of the sign of the cross were more powerful than his dark arts, Saint Cyprian turned away from 30 years' worth of sorcery, burned his books, and was baptized. He ultimately became a priest and was eventually ordained as a bishop. He and Saint Justina were martyred in Nicomedia (present-day Turkey) in 304 AD, during the persecution of Christians that was ordered by Emperor Diocletian. They are commemorated on October 2/15.

Saint Panteleimon the Unmercenary Healer was from Nicomedia. He trained as a physician and devoted all his time to helping the poor. He was executed in Nicomedia in 305 AD—also during the Diocletianic Persecution—and he is commemorated on July 27. His appearance in this icon is very unusual because he is shown wearing soldier's attire, although he is not known as a military saint.

All these saints are linked with special intercessory powers. Saint Niphon, Bishop of Constantia on Cyprus (shown at far right), lived during the fourth century and is commemorated on December 3. He is called upon for help in driving away evil spirits. Saint Cyprian of Nicomedia is viewed as an intercessor against evil charms and spells. Saint Panteleimon is a patron saint of healing and physicians.

Saint Justina appears at far left, next to Saint Cyprian. There is no patron saint in the right-hand margin.



Troparion for the Hieromartyr Cyprian and the Virgin Martyr Justina of Nicomedia

You abandoned the darkness of impiety,
becoming a beacon of truth, O Cyprian;
You were illustrious as a pastor;
You were glorified in contest.
O venerable Father, intercede with the Creator
for us, together with the divinely-wise Justina.

Kontakion for the Great Martyr and Healer Panteleimon

You emulated the Merciful One,
And received from Him the grace of healing,
Passion-bearer and healer Panteleimon;
By your prayers, heal our spiritual diseases
And continually drive away the temptations of
the enemy
From those who cry out in faith "Save us, O
Lord."

Unidentified iconographer (Russian, active 19th century), **Saint Cyprian of Nicomedia, Saint Panteleimon, and Saint Niphon of Cyprus**, 19th century, tempera and gold leaf on wood panel, 13 $\frac{3}{8}$ " x 10 $\frac{5}{8}$ "; Gift of Marie, Queen of Romania, Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art, 1926.3.42

Epitaphios (The Lamentation)

Unidentified artist(s) (Greek, active late 18th century)

Epitaphios is a common short form for *Epitáphios Thrēnos*, which means “Lamentation upon the Grave” in Greek. This embroidery reproduces an image of the burial of Jesus Christ. Angels appear at left and right and Mary, the Mother of God, cradles the head of her Son. Mary Magdalene throws her hands up in despair while Mary Salome and two other women mourn behind the body. St. John the Evangelist clutches Christ’s right hand. St. Nicodemus holds the ladder with which Christ was removed from the cross and St. Joseph of Arimathea holds a vessel that probably contains items that will be used to prepare the Body for burial (see John 19:38–40).

On the afternoon of Great and Holy Friday (Good Friday), Orthodox Christians gather for a Vespers service that features the priest and deacon carrying an *epitaphios* (Burial Shroud) like this one from behind the iconostasis to a table in the center of the church. It is sprinkled with flower petals and rosewater and censed as a sign of respect. The priest and faithful then venerate the *epitaphios* while the choir chants hymns. The congregation continues venerating the *epitaphios* throughout the afternoon and evening. Later that same day, during an evening Orthros service, the Lamentations are sung before it. The *epitaphios* is then carried in a solemn procession commemorating the burial procession of Christ. At the end of the procession, the *epitaphios* is brought back to the church and in some churches, it is held aloft at the door so that all who enter will pass under it. Its role in worship on Holy Saturday and during the Pascal Vigil varies by jurisdiction.

During the Late Byzantine period (c. 1261–1453), images like this were often painted below a Christ Pantocrator in the apse of a church’s prothesis (room behind the iconostasis where the bread and wine are prepared), illustrating a hymn celebrating Christ “On the throne above and in the tomb below.”

From the Third Stasis of The Lamentations Service for Great and Holy Saturday:

Taking Thee down from the Tree, Joseph of Arimathaea lay Thee in a sepulchre....

Providently bringing Thee sweet spices, O my Christ, the Myrrh-bearers drew near....

Come, and with the whole creation let us offer a funeral hymn to the Creator....



Unidentified artist(s) (Greek, active late 18th century), **Epitaphios**, 18th century, satin with gold, silver, and silk thread, pearls, gold beads, and glass beads, 19½" x 37½"; Gift of Alma de Bretteville Spreckels, Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art, 1951.7.268

Ecclesiastical Textile (*Dormition of the Theotokos*)

Unidentified artist (Greek, active late 18th century)

Orthodox and Catholic traditions hold that the physical body of the Mother of God remained inviolate after giving birth and that it was taken up directly into heaven. This belief is celebrated by Western churches as the Feast of the Assumption and by the Orthodox community as the Dormition of the Theotokos. Both feasts are observed on August 15, but they are nuanced differently. One focuses on the Virgin's body being taken up into heaven and the other observes her "falling asleep."

The narrative that informs the image on this textile holds that the Virgin was praying at Golgotha when the Archangel Gabriel appeared and announced that she would soon leave her earthly life and pass into eternal life. She prayed that the LORD would permit her to see all the apostles again, and she readied herself for her deathbed. The apostles were all miraculously carried to Jerusalem from the far-flung places where they were preaching. They are here shown gathered in mourning with Christ appearing behind the lifeless body and carrying his mother's soul (represented as an infant). According to tradition, the body of the Theotokos was laid in a tomb, but when the Apostle Thomas arrived three days later, the tomb was empty. Her bodily assumption was confirmed by an angel and by an appearance to the Apostles.

This ecclesiastical textile is one of more than a dozen that Alma de Bretteville Spreckels donated to Maryhill Museum of Art in 1951. They all date to about the 18th century. Some are believed to be of Greek origin and produced in Greece or Asia Minor during the Ottoman occupation. Others are of Armenian origin and come from the Caucasus region. According to an inscription (in Greek) on the front of this textile, it was embroidered by a monk from the post-Byzantine Constantinopolitan school of embroidery.

From St. Theodore the Studite's
Encomium on the Dormition of
the Theotokos:

Now the Mother of God shuts her material eyes and opens her spiritual eyes towards us like great shining stars that will never set, to watch over us and to intercede before the face of God for the world's protection. Now those lips, moved by God's grace to articulate sounds, grow silent, but she opens her [spiritual] mouth to intercede eternally for all of her race. Now she lowers those bodily hands that once bore God, only to raise them, in incorruptible form, in prayer to the Lord on behalf of all creation....

Unidentified artist (Greek, active late 18th century), **Ecclesiastical Textile**, late 18th century, silk satin, gold and silver embroidery thread; beads, and sequins, 36½" x 43½"; Gift of Alma de Bretteville Spreckels, Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art, 1951.7.269



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