

About Icons

1. The first purpose of an icon is as a prayer of the painter. It is not meant to be mere art or decoration. The making is not motivated by hope of fame or financial gain. An icon is a prayer or inspired sermon expressed in form and color instead of words. It is a visible meditation.
2. The second purpose of an icon is to be the subject of contemplation by other persons. Whenever someone prays and meditates before an icon he becomes the prayer partner of the painter and a participant in the realm of mystery. An icon is a window to mystery; a peephole into the heavenly environment.
3. Traditional icons have a childlike quality about them. Sophisticated realism would tend to emphasize the historical at the expense of the mystical. Icons help us connect with the resurrected Jesus alive today.
4. Saints in heaven are in perfect harmony with God's will, and have heavenly ministries in the plan of God. They model perfectly what it means to be Christ-like and always point us to Jesus. Icons of Mary and the saints always lead us to a deeper personal relationship with the risen and alive Jesus whom they serve and worship. With the saints we go hand in hand to Jesus who brings us to the very throne of the Father. The saints themselves are living icons of Jesus. Since the heavenly lives of the saints reflect Jesus perfectly, Icons of the saints are icons of Jesus.
5. In the Old Testament God was unpicturable and images of Him were forbidden. Jesus is God and the infinitely perfect image of the Father. In the Incarnation we humans could actually see God. Jesus is picturable. Very early in Church history when this was questioned by some, in relation to the first commandment, a council of Church leaders infallibly decided in favor of icons. Preaching the Gospel through art simply backs up the Gospel in Words. Our new Catechism of the Catholic Church, #1159 quotes St. John Damascene; *“Previously God, who has neither a body nor a face, absolutely could not be represented by image. But now that He has made Himself*

visible in the flesh and has lived with men, I can make an image of what I have seen of God.

6. An icon is a focal point for the presence of God in our home. It should have a place of honor uncluttered by worldly things. It should have space for us to sit or kneel in prayer.