

ICONS

Icons are an essential part of our faith so it makes sense to discuss them after the Creed and the Bible. Every Orthodox Church has icons and every Orthodox Christian should have icons in their home.

Icons have many functions;

- ❖ Icons make the Church beautiful
- ❖ Icons teach us about the Orthodox faith
- ❖ Through the icons we worship God

Icons are different from religious paintings that we see in non-Orthodox churches and they are different from portrait paintings and photographs. Photographs and paintings only show our ordinary earthly bodies, but icons show the saints in bodies that have been made holy. A piece of iron in a fire glows red with heat and looks like fire but still remains iron. In the same way, the souls and bodies of the saints are made holy by the Holy Spirit. An icon is a bridge that leads us to the same holiness that the saints enjoy.

Why do we have icons when the Old Testament forbids making images?

Firstly, we need to understand that God did in fact command the making of certain images such as the carved Cherubim above the tabernacle. In the Old Testament it was not possible to see God; the people of Israel heard God's voice but they saw no image. This is why God commanded the people of Israel not to make any image without His permission, because any image they made would just be from their imagination. However, as we know, the people disobeyed this commandment by making a golden calf which they worshipped as God.

After the Incarnation it was possible not only to hear God but also to see Him and even to touch Him. We can paint icons of Christ because He was seen on earth and lived among us. Because Christ was God and man it's possible to paint Him in icons. We also have icons of the Mother of God and the saints because through these icons we confess that the Son of God became