

# May

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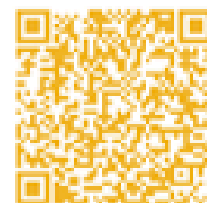


# BYZ\*KIDS

May 2025

# ICONS

Discover the beauty and richness of Byzantine icons through music, art, engaging activities and inspiring stories!



Scan the QR code to see the links for the activities

## May Activities Calendar

This month is filled with so many fun and interesting things to do! Visit the Activities Index on the ByzKids page at ByzMom.com for all the links! <https://www.byzmom.com/byzkids-magazine-extras>

### May 1

- St. Tamara; Queen of Georgia
- Learn about her icon in I Spy in My Little Icon: St. Tamara, Queen of Georgia, and color your own Queen St. Tamara Coloring Page



### May 2

- St. Athanasius;
- Read the story of the Boy Bishop



### May 4

- Sunday of the Holy Myrrhbearers
- Make some Myrrhbearers Aromatic Sugar Scrub and read all about the Myrrhbearing Women in the April 2025 issue of ByzKids, from the Archives



### May 7

- Apparition of the True Cross Over Jerusalem
- See our Holy Cross Window Craft



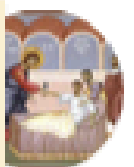
### May 9

- Feast of the Prophet Isaiah
- Craft our God Is With Us Ornament Set



### May 11

- Mothers Day
- Sunday of the Paralytic
- Sts. Cyril & Methodius
- Get our Coloring Page and then read about these brothers in Once Upon A Saint!



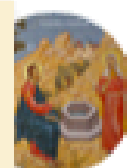
### May 15

- St. Pachomius the Great
- Learn to make a knotted chotki!



### May 18

- Sunday of the Samaritan Woman
- Make Photina's Eggs in a Wall for Brunch!



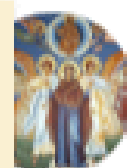
### May 21

- Sts. Constantine & Helen, Equal to the Apostles



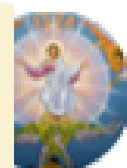
### May 29

- Feast of the Ascension.
- We have LOTS of things to Do for the Feast of the Ascension!
- Make Gatznabour; Armenian Rice Pudding Recipe for Ascension Thursday
- I Spy in My Little Icon of the Ascension
- Ascension Icon Coloring Page
- Ascension Troparion Bookmarks
- A Pantomime of the Story of Christ's Ascension,
- According to St. Luke, A Silent Play by Khouria Sylvia Dorham
- Get the sheet Music from MCI: The Lord Ascends



May is a great time to watch the rebirth of God's Creation! Check out our May 2019 / Creation Issue Activities:

- Psalm 103
- The Birds of the Sky; Birdfeeder Craft
- Walk on the Wings of the Wind; Kite Craft
- Plants to Serve Man's Needs; Field Journal Activity
- I Spy in My Little Icon: Creation
- Creation Icon Coloring Page
- Listen to the Creation Song by Khouria Sylvia Dorham



# CHOIR PRACTICE

By Sylvia Dorham

## Icons

Do you see all the icons - covering the walls,  
Written on their wooden boards with care?  
Not - just pretty painted portraits  
But windows into heaven made with prayer

**CHORUS:**  
Icons, Icons  
See them everywhere  
The Saints are smiling at you  
As they hear your prayer.

Jesus became a man - with a body like you  
We know he died and rose again - the church says it's true  
An icon is a painting of God's human form  
A body with hands and a voice that's warm

### CHORUS

Be an - icon of Jesus to everyone around  
Act - like he does, his love is profound  
Look into the eyes of an icon as you pray  
You're peeking through a window to heaven today.

### CHORUS



Vers 1: Do you see all the i - cons co - ver - ing the walls, writ - ten on their wood - en boards with



care? Not just pret - ty paint - ed por - traits, but win - dows in - to hea - ven made with prayer.



Chorus: I - cons, i - cons, see them ev - ery - where. The Saints are smil - ing with you as they hear your prayer.



Vers 2: Je - sus be - came a man with a bo - dy... like you, We know he died and rose a - gain; the  
Verse 3: Be an i - con of Je - sus to ev - ery - one a - round... Act... like He does... His



Church says it's true. An i - con is a paint - ing of  
love is pro - found... Look in - to the eyes of an



God's hu - man form, a bo - dy with hands and a voice that's warm  
i - con when you pray. You're peek - ing through a win - dow to hea - ven to - day.

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# KNOW YOUR FAITH

By Lynne Wardach



Toward the end of the seventh century, a controversy arose within the Byzantine Empire due to many miracles that occurred after the faithful prayed before certain icons. Christians who witnessed these miracles began to venerate the miraculous icons, causing many to accuse them of worshipping them. The serious nature of such an accusation was so dangerous that it led many good Christians to fear the use of icons and swing to the other extreme of removing all icons from homes and churches so that no confusion could occur. These were known as iconoclasts.

This movement upset another group of Byzantine Christians known as iconophiles, who argued that icons were merely tools for worship, not worshipped themselves, and that true worship belonged to God alone. The iconophiles treasured the symbolic teaching tools for what they were and could not understand how anyone could confuse them with idol worship.

These two groups of people were completely at odds, and their division caused the church much strife and anxiety. Terasios, the Patriarch of Constantinople, asked Empress Irene to call an Ecumenical Council to discuss and resolve this issue and restore peace to the Church. The Seventh Ecumenical Council then convened in Nicea in 787 and was attended by 367 bishops. Pope Hadrian, who could not attend the council, considered the matter and sent a letter stating that he upheld the position that icons were important and worthy of veneration but not worship, which is due only to God alone. The council agreed and decreed that all icons were to be restored to homes and churches, stating:

*"We define that the holy icons, whether in color, mosaic, or some other material, should be exhibited in the holy churches of God, on the sacred vessels and liturgical vestments, on the walls, furnishings, and in houses and along the roads, namely the icons of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ, that of our Lady the Theotokos, those of the venerable angels and those of all saintly people. Whenever these representations are contemplated, they will cause those who look at them to commemorate and love their prototype. We define also that they should be kissed and that they are an object of veneration and honor (timitiki proskynisis), but not of real worship (latreia), which is reserved for Him Who is the subject of our faith and is proper for the divine nature. The veneration accorded to an icon is in effect transmitted to the prototype; he who venerates the icon, venerated in it the reality for which it stands".*

In 843 AD, a regional Synod was called in Constantinople where Empress Theodora, her son Michael III, Patriarch Methodius and many monks and priests processed into the Hagia Sophia Cathedral, carrying the icons and restoring them to their rightful place in the church. This was done on the first Sunday of the Great Fast and was from that time on, commemorated and known as the Sunday of Orthodoxy. Many churches celebrate this commemoration by processing their own collection of icons around the church on this day.

To this day there are those who challenge this idea, noting various excerpts from scripture like the ones listed below that call attention to the fact that God the Father specifically and emphatically told the early Israelites NOT to make images resembling any living thing.

*Exodus 20:4-5 You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me.*

*Leviticus 26:1-2 "You shall not make idols for yourselves or erect an image or pillar, and you shall not set up a figured stone in your land to bow down to it, for I am the Lord your God. You shall keep my Sabbaths and reverence my sanctuary: I am the Lord.*

If we read those verses as they appear in context we must note that God isn't angry about the making of images so much as He is about His followers actually worshipping those images. The Israelites of the time lived in close proximity to pagan tribes who constantly sought God but, not having had Him reveal Himself to them, they did not know him. They made gods for themselves out of familiar objects and began to offer them worship. God did not want His people to be tempted to do the same. His problem was not with the object, but with the false worship of it.

*Psalms 97:7 All worshipers of images are put to shame, who make their boast in worthless idols; worship Him, all you gods!*

As Christians, we encounter a new and wonderful idea not yet known to the early Israelites. They were told that whosoever looked upon the Face of God would surely die, so magnificent and unencounterable is our Heavenly Father. No one could ever attempt to fashion an image of Him, or His heavenly angelic escorts, since they had no earthly body to replicate. It was a futile exercise. Then along came Christ!

*Colossians 1:15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.*

Now, when the second person of the Blessed Trinity became a human being, it became possible for God to be seen and heard; those who encountered Christ did not die. Christ makes the unencounterable God able to be encountered! Not only can we see Him, but we can remember what He looked like in His earthly, physical body and copy the image on canvas to be passed on to

future generations. Legend tells us that St. Luke painted the first icon as a portrait of the Mother of God. Christ Himself left the imprint of His Holy Face upon the veil of St. Veronika and the imprint of His crucified body on the Shroud of Turin. Miraculous cures and healing events have been attributed to the placement of these "images" upon the sick and suffering. Indeed, He is not opposed to the painted image.

Another example of God's tolerance for artistic images of heavenly things is found in the Book of Exodus when He tells the Israelites how to construct the Ark of the Covenant.

*Exodus 25:18-20 And you shall make two cherubim of gold; of hammered work shall you make them, on the two ends of the mercy seat. Make one cherub on the one end and one cherub on the other end. Of one piece with the mercy seat shall you make the cherubim on its two ends. The cherubim shall spread out their wings above, overshadowing the mercy seat with their wings, their faces one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubim be.*

Why would God instruct them to build images of Cherubim out of gold to adorn the Ark if He was opposed to graven images altogether? The answer is that He is not. He IS, however, opposed to the worship of those images. This is precisely the distinction that the Council of Nicea sought to solidify in the minds of all Christians. Icons are not dangerous to the faith of the Christian who venerates them so long as the veneration given to the icon is understood to be transferred to the image it represents.

For example, we often carry pictures of those we love in our wallets so that when we are far from home and miss them terribly, may spend time looking upon their image, contemplating our relationship with them, conversing with them in our minds, and even kissing the image of their faces. We may treasure that photograph above all other possessions. Yet, if we were to raise our eyes from the picture and see that our loved ones had come into the room, we would surely toss it to the floor in order to run to them! This is so for the icon as well! Who would forsake the beloved for His picture? It's common sense.

This Sunday, let us contemplate how much these sacred icons have enhanced what we know about the Lord, His Blessed Mother, the Angels and Saints, and the feast days of the church. Before people could read and write, they could consult these icons and remember facts about their catechism. When we feel far away from God due to the state of our souls, the state of the world, or the circumstances in which we find ourselves, we can always turn to these images to find comfort and solace before our Beloved enters!

# Once Upon a **SAINT**

by Rebecca O'Loughlin



Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte, Naples (1855)

## St. Lazarus Zographos

My dear children,

It was November 17, 810AD when Lazarus (Ghazaros) was born. I don't know much about his childhood, but when Lazarus was a teenager, he entered a Studite Monastery in Constantinople.

Brother Lazarus sat under a tree outside. It was a nice warm evening, and there was just enough light to work. He carefully drew a line with a thin piece of charcoal on some bark. The image he sketched was of the Theotokos, a practice for what he would write the next day.

"I'm glad the Monastery is no longer closed and that iconography is allowed again," Brother Lazarus thought to himself. "Iconoclasm is a terrible heresy. Here I can learn from the Masters, and God blesses my hands when I write holy images for His glory. Without icons it would be so much more difficult to teach people the Faith."

The face of the Theotokos appeared under Lazarus' careful hand. The Monastery monks were known as Akoimati, which means "sleepless ones," because they had perpetual adoration in the chapel: there was always at least one monk keeping watch and praying. It was almost time for this young monk to go inside for his own shift. Time just sitting with the Lord provided the perfect environment for Brother Lazarus to meditate and pray, and then he would paint, build or write whatever was on his heart.

Brother Lazarus became known for his peaceful holiness and almsgiving among other things, and he was soon ordained a priest.

One day, Father Lazarus was writing an icon on a wood panel.

A monk was watching him work. "Father," he asked, "Why is Jesus' sandal coming off? Why does he seem scared in His body, but His face is so peaceful?"

Father Lazarus replied: "Jesus' sandal has begun to come off, because He ran very fast to Our Mother after seeing a vision of the archangels holding instruments of His future passion and death. Jesus is fully God, so His face shows His perfect acceptance of the Father's will. But He is fully human also, and His body fears what is to come, even while He chooses the coming Crucifixion."

The monk contemplated. "This icon should be called *The All Holy One of the Heart. The Theotokos holds Jesus so close to her heart when He is afraid. I wish she would protect me that way.*"

Father Lazarus locked eyes with his student. "Indeed, she does watch over you this way, my son, just as our Mother holds all her children, helping them in their need whenever they ask her."

This icon eventually became known as *Our Lady of Perpetual Help, and is now in St. Alfonso de Liguori Church in Rome. Through the icon, miracles are sometimes given. Father Lazarus also created the Theotokos mosaic in the apse of Hagia Sophia. But most of his work is either destroyed or unknown, because iconographers don't sign their name. Their goal is to have the icon be as much God's as possible, and themselves mere instruments through whom He works.*

Unfortunately, a new emperor came into power. Basileus (which means ruler) Theophilus was an iconoclast.

"Icons are idols!" Theophilus told Father Lazarus. "You must stop painting and writing and building these unholy images of God and the saints."

Father Lazarus gently replied, "My Basileus, icons are images, this is true, but we do not honor the paint, but the Holy One that is shown. When I pray before the image of the Theotokos, she stands there, present through the image, listening to her poor child. Because Our Blessed Mother is in heaven, she is not restricted to time and space like you and I are. The icon is similar to me talking to you through a window, and through the icon, we communicate and honor God and the saints in a very real way."

Theophilus thought for a moment. "Perhaps you will be willing to destroy the icons and stop working if I pay you a lot of money? You can feed a lot of people with the money I can give you."

"No, I will not stop painting or writing for the glory of God. It would be wicked to feed the bodies of my people in order to starve their souls." Father Lazarus responded.

Theophilus was angry. "People died for less than this insult in the glory days of iconoclasm!"

"It is against the law to kill a priest, Basileus."

Theophilus shook his fist. "Nevertheless, stop painting and destroy every last icon, or I promise, YOU WILL SUFFER!"

Father Lazarus returned to the monastery and only worked harder, writing new icons and restoring religious items that had been badly treated by zealous icon haters.

Emperor Theophilus was infuriated by this. He put Father Lazarus in prison, burning him so badly that he nearly died. Not long after, however, the Jailer came to Theophilus.

"Basileus, I am sorry to disturb you, but what should I do with Father Lazarus?"

"Ah! He is finally dead! Hm. Toss his body wherever you please. I don't care."

The jailor stiffened. "You misunderstand, Basileus. Father Lazarus is nearly well, and is painting icons on the walls of his cell. He uses rocks to dig images into the walls, and his food to stain them. Beets make a lovely shade of red, and pomegranates, a different shade. He is so resourceful! Why there was even the indigo flowers that he plucked from the grate for blue color. And for green..."

"What?!!" Emperor Theophilus stood in fury. "Was his fiery punishment not enough? Burn his hands off then!"

Poor Father Lazarus. His hands were very nearly burned off. But as he lay, near death and in terrible pain, the Lord came and healed him.

When Theophilus saw that Father Lazarus was healed, he wasn't sure what to do. His wife Theodora came to him. She loved icons and loved to visit Father Lazarus and speak to him in prison.

"Husband," Theodora said quietly, "why not send Father Lazarus far away where he cannot trouble you? There is a monastery in Tou Phoberou, which is quite secluded."

Theophilus agreed. Not long after, Theophilus died. Empress Theodora went to Father Lazarus and begged his forgiveness for her husband's cruelty.

"Is there any hope for his soul, father?" She asked him.

Father Lazarus replied "Take heart. God is just and merciful."

Father Lazarus lived many more years. It is no secret that our Church was meant to be One Church, founded by Christ. Jesus told His Apostles "be one as I and the Father are One" (John 10:30). Unfortunately, there always has been some fighting in our Church, even among the Apostles. It is so sad when brothers and sisters argue. Father Lazarus became an ambassador for Theophilus and Theodora's son, Emperor Michael III, in 856. He traveled twice to Rome to visit Pope Benedict III to discuss reconciliation between Rome and Constantinople. He died returning from the second visit, and was buried near Constantinople.

*Lazarus does not paint You now O Word, But sees You alive without capturing You in the colors of paints.*

I think it's interesting that we don't call St. Lazarus "the Iconographer," even though he was a very good one. Instead, our title for him is "Zographos," which in Greek means "painter," or more literally, "writer of life." He was an amazing artist for God's glory, and worked for unity in the Church. St. Lazarus Zographos' feast day is celebrated November 17 in the East and February 23 in the West.

# I SPY IN MY LITTLE ICON



By Kim Fritzes



We see the Christ Child being lovingly held by His mother while he has his face cuddled up to her cheek. The tenderness and love that the Christ Child and his mother show each other give icons like this the title Eleousa. Eleousa icons depict the Christ Child draping his left arm around her shoulder. Some show His hand around her neck and some do not show the hand. The Theotokos has her left hand pointing in a gentle way to the Christ Child inviting you to gaze upon her son and approach Him with love and without fear, as she knows how much the Christ Child loves you.

We see on Our Lady's veil a star and also one on her left shoulder. There is a third star on her right shoulder which we don't see as the Christ Child is in front of it. These stars represent her virginity before, during, and after the Nativity of Our Lord. Tradition also states they represent the Holy Trinity.

In the Eastern Church there is an Eleousa icon titled Vladimirskaya, translating to Our Lady of Vladimir, Vladimir Mother of God, or the Virgin of Vladimir, this is a famous Eleousa icon. Tradition has this icon being painted by St. Luke on a board from the table of the Holy Family. The original Virgin of Vladimir is at the Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow, Russia. It dates to 33? - 1133. If St. Luke painted this icon or not, it is one of the most beloved icons in Russia.

There are many different Eleousa icons. In the Eastern Church some are the Fyodorovskaya, the Tolgskaya, the Donskaya. The Western Church has the Cambrai Madonna, the Tempi Madonna, among others.

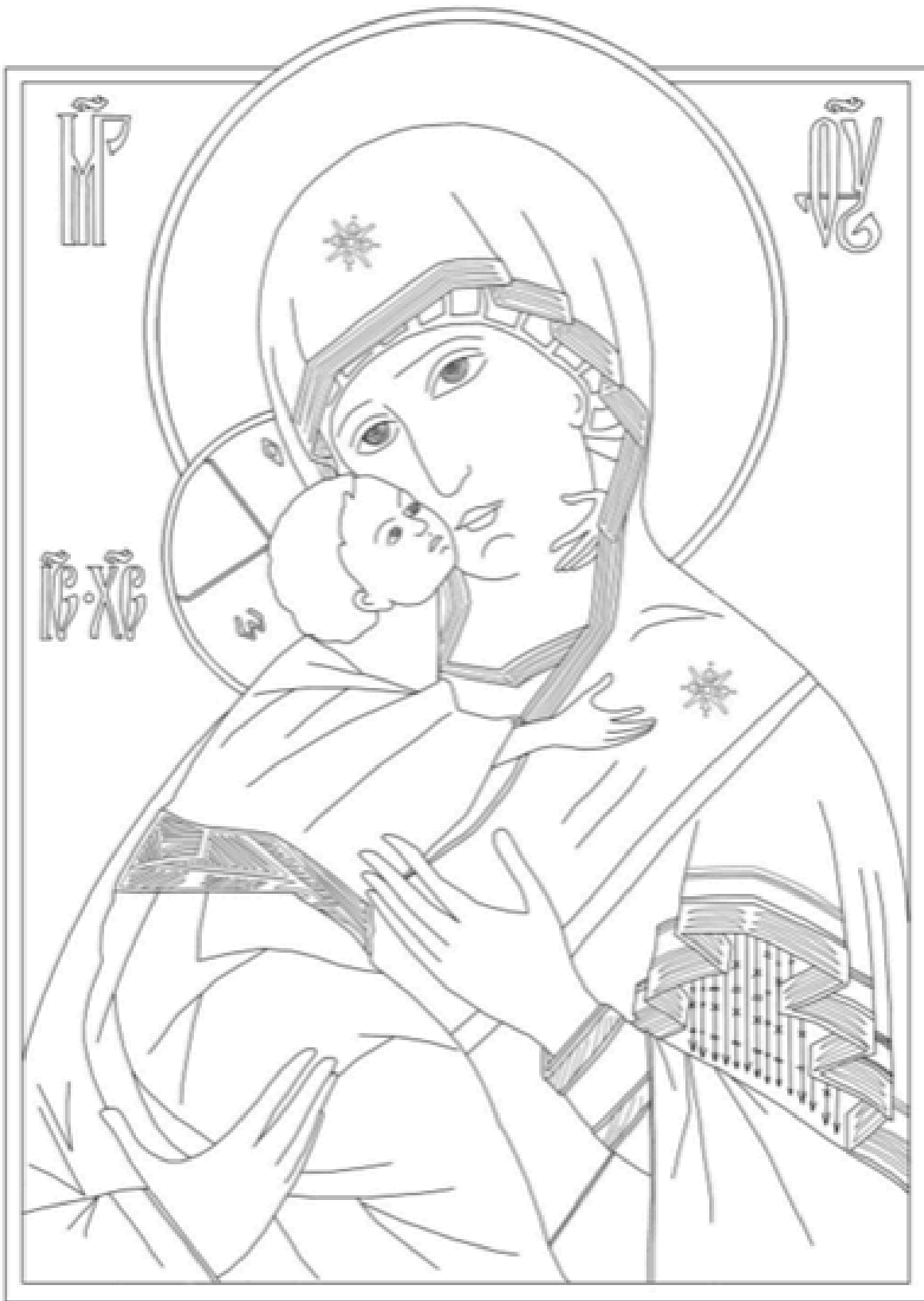
Do you have a photo of yourself as a small child and your mother? One where she is holding you in her arms and you are snuggled up to her cheek? Our icon for this month is just like that! The love you and your mother are showing is the love that the Christ Child and the Theotokos show in our icon for this month.

This is an Eleousa icon. Eleousa translated means tenderness or showing mercy. In the Eastern Church they are called Panagia Eleousa and the Western Church titles them as Madonna Eleousa, Or Our Lady of Tenderness.

## Hymn to the Theotokos

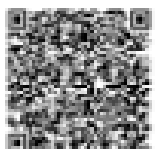
It is truly meet to bless you,  
O Theotokos,  
ever blessed and most pure,  
and the Mother of our God.  
More honorable than the Cherubim,  
and more glorious beyond compare  
than the Seraphim,  
without defilement you gave birth  
to God the Word.  
True Theotokos we magnify you!





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# MEANWHILE BACK IN BYZANTIUM

by Kathryn Reetzke

If you look up inside the dome within a sanctuary of an Eastern Christian Church most likely you will be met with a large icon of Christ, called Christ the Pantocrator. This same image might be in a half dome behind the altar or in the nave when you first enter the church. The name Pantocrator in Ancient Greek means Almighty God and comes from the Jewish tradition in the Torah of the many names for God the Father (the original Hebrew translated into Greek are the names: Lord of Hosts and God Almighty). The Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem houses one inside its dome. A mosaic of the same icon has been uncovered in the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul (Constantinople). In Western Churches, this same style of depicting Christ (but in full length) is called "Christ in Majesty."



*(From the Dome of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, rebuilt in the 11th Century, Public Access)*

The oldest known icon by this name is housed in the monastery at St. Catherine's from the 6th or 7th century in Sinai. As seen in the image, Christ holds the New Testament and makes the sign of blessing (that you have seen your priest or bishop make) towards the viewer. The image was able to survive the iconoclasm that racked the Byzantine Empire twice during 726 AD to 787 AD and 814 AD to 842 AD, since it was located in the Sinai peninsula.

The icon was protected both by the geography of the monastery and the local Islamic Caliph (ruler), who prevented outsiders from coming in to destroy icons. Much later, in the 1960s, an icon restoration to remove the Medieval overpainting around the edges revealed that this icon was most likely made in Constantinople and transported to St. Catherine's. Luckily for Eastern Christians, the iconoclasm ended when Blessed St. Theodora the Empress saved Constantinople from this destruction and with the support of Bishops reinstated the use of icons as "windows into heaven." You can see St. Theodora uplifting icons in the icon "The Triumph of Orthodoxy" that is processed on the first Sunday during Great Lent.



*(Christ Pantocrator at St Catherine's Monastery, Sinai 6th/7th Century made with encaustic or hot wax mixed with paint, Public Access)*

Christ's expression in this icon is meant to represent God as both merciful and gracious (left) and as the judge of unrepentant sinners in the final judgment (right). May we live so that Christ's mercy covers us with His grace and with the reminder that we will answer in judgment for our faith in Him.

# CRAFTING THE PRECIOUS SOUL THAT IS YOU!

Do you remember listening to the Gospel of the Genealogy of Christ when Matthew told us about who became the father of whom and pointed out the 14 generations three times? He was pointing to the fact that, even by His ancestry, Christ was proving that He was the promised Son of David, who would redeem Israel!

God proved to us in the orchestration of Christ's family how He controls our coming and going; God crafts our very being over generations to become the unique individuals we are in the time that was chosen by God just for us! How special we all must be! No two people are alike; each is a priceless and precious creation, crafted by the Master for a specific purpose and place in the Kingdom.



## THE MAKING OF A FAMILY ICON

Each member of our family has a specific patron saint. A patron saint is one whose name we were given at our baptism or whom we have chosen as our special heavenly friend. To construct a family icon, collect prints of each of our family patrons and paste them onto a craft board. Your icon can be as elaborate or simple as you desire. The goal is to become acquainted with each of your family's patron saints and understand how your family's structure is critical in making YOU the unique individual you are!

**THE TOP ROW** of your family icon will be where you will place the icon prints of your grandparent's patron saints.

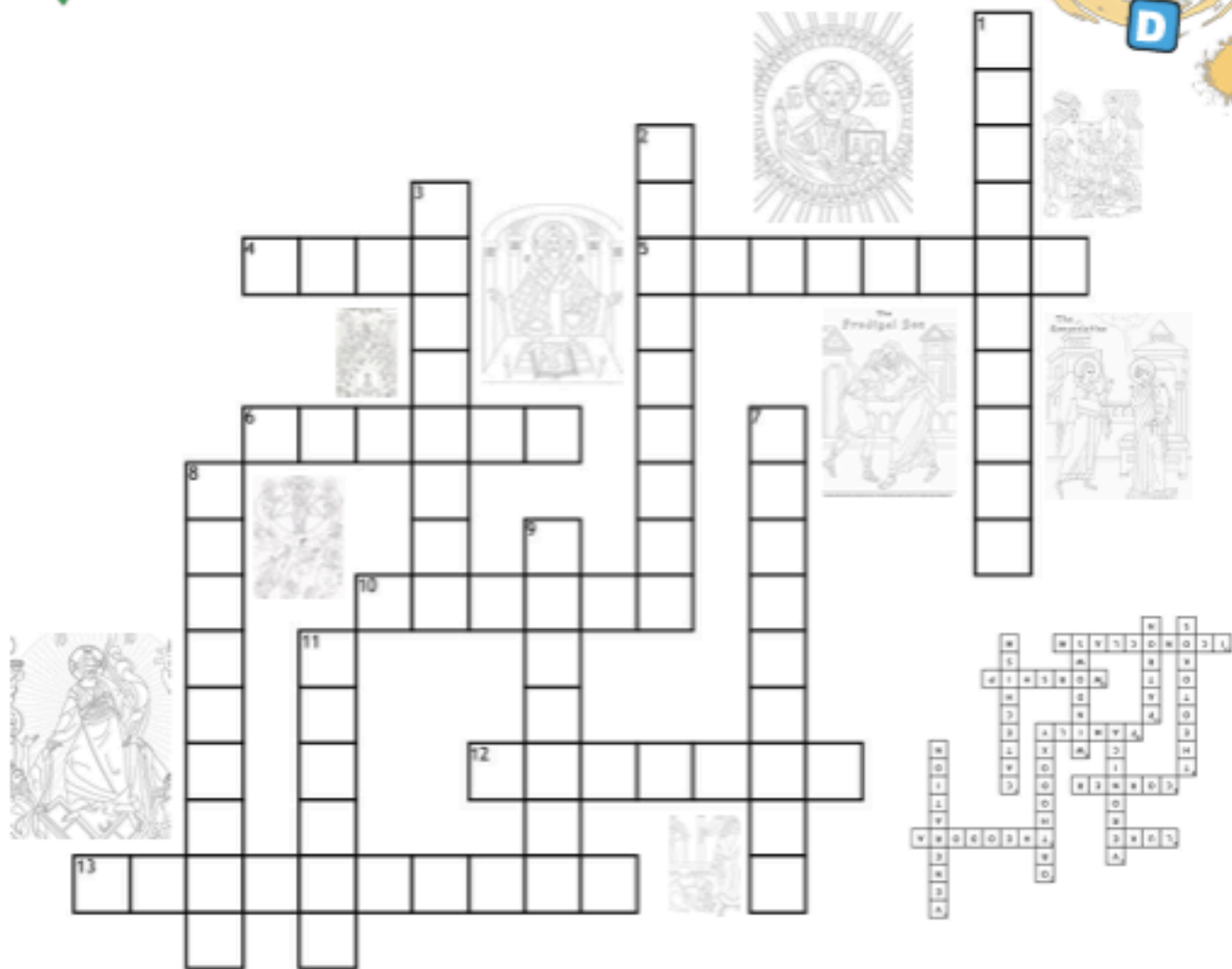
**THE MIDDLE ROW** is where your parents' patronal icons are placed: Mom's on the left and Dad's on the right.

**THE BOTTOM ROW** is where you can place the icon of YOUR patron saint and the patronal icons of each of your brothers and sisters!

This unique icon can be placed in your family's icon corner and become an excellent tool for prayer each day. As you look upon each of the patron saints remember to ask their intercession and God's blessing upon each of your family members, whether they live with you or have departed for eternal life. Recalling the stories of their lives and their struggles can encourage us to become saints, too. We can thank them for their prayers for us before the throne of God so that one day, we may join them in the glory of heaven.

As we pray for each of our earthly family members, we can remember how carefully and particularly each of them was made by God to be exactly who they are!

# Icons



## Across

4. Saint \_\_\_\_\_ is considered the first iconographer
5. Empress \_\_\_\_\_ carried an icon into the Hagia Sophia on the Sunday of Orthodoxy
6. Many families pray at their icon \_\_\_\_\_ where most of the icons are hung
10. In this issue, you can make a \_\_\_\_\_ icon made up of all the icons of the patron saints of your family
12. "Icons are objects of veneration & honor but not of real \_\_\_\_\_ (latreia), which is reserved for Him Who is the subject of our faith"
13. when icons were not allowed in church because some thought they were not good for prayer

## Down

1. "Icons are objects of \_\_\_\_\_ and honor but not of real worship (latreia), which is reserved for Him Who is the subject of our faith"
2. We remember when icons were restored to worship in our churches on the Sunday of \_\_\_\_\_
3. an image of Jesus' face was on the cloth \_\_\_\_\_ gave Jesus to wipe His face before the crucifixion
7. icons are our \_\_\_\_\_ before we can read:
8. The first painted icon was of the \_\_\_\_\_
9. icons are \_\_\_\_\_ to heaven
11. In this issue, you can make a family icon made up of all the icons of the \_\_\_\_\_ saints of your family