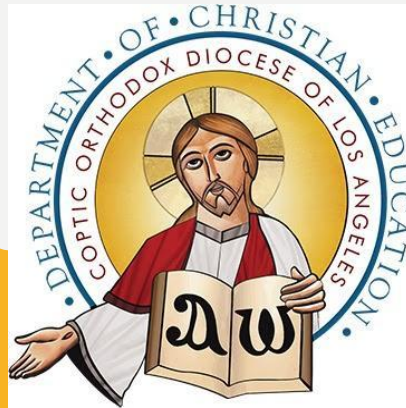


SYMBOLISM OF ICONS



VIDEO: MAIN POINTS

- Icons are not used as artistic decoration in the church
- Iconography is a celebration of the Incarnation
- We venerate the Lord and His saints that are depicted in the icons
- Iconography is not merely artistic but a spiritual work
- Icons: encircle us with the kingdom of God made accessible to us
- Icons: Reveal eternity and God's divine light
- Icons: Serve to educate and edify

ICONS ARE CONSECRATED

- Not just pictures or decoration
- Consecrated by a Bishop during a liturgy
- Anointed with Myron and Bishop breaths the on it the breath of the holy spirit
 - The icon becomes holy
- “Written” not “drawn”
 - Icons express our faith and tell us the story of salvation like the Bible does

PRAYER FOR THE CONSECRATION OF ICONS

○ Master Lord God, the Pantocrator, Father of our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ who from the beginning through his servant Moses, gave us the law to place in the Tabernacle of the Testimony the prototype of the cherubim who cover the altar with their wings. You also granted Solomon wisdom to build Your house in Jerusalem, and manifested Yourself to your chosen apostles through the incarnation of Your only-begotten Son our Lord, God and Savior, Jesus Christ to build churches and monasteries named after your saints and martyrs. Therefore, we ask you and entreat You ○ Lover of Mankind to send Your Holy Spirit on these icons of the saints and martyrs (name of saints), (*The bishop anoints the icons with Myron and blows over them and says:)*

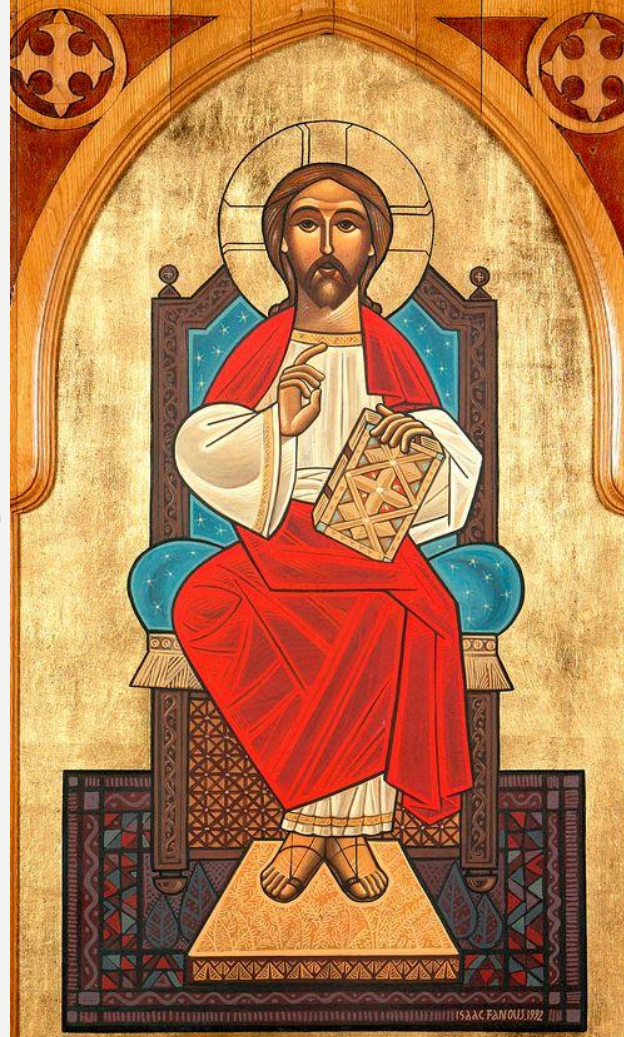
That they may become an anchored harbor of salvation and steadfastness for all who approach them faithfully to receive through them grace and forgiveness of their sins from God. For blessed and full of glory is Your Holy name ○ Father, Son, and Holy Spirit now...

WHAT ICONS SYMBOLIZE AND EMPHASIZE:

- The Life of Joy
 - We do not have icons of Hades but of heaven and the saints. We do not draw the pains of martyrs but their glory.
- Victory over death
 - Even when the devil is drawn, he is in a small size or underfoot
- The Spirit of love
 - Saint Mary as the mother of God Jesus as a child.
- The power of the Spirit
 - Also the proportions are very poor. In icons, the head is big and the eyes are wide. The Coptic artist does not want to show the bodily strength but the inner spirit and eyes.
- God the Father is not depicted in icons, since He is unseen

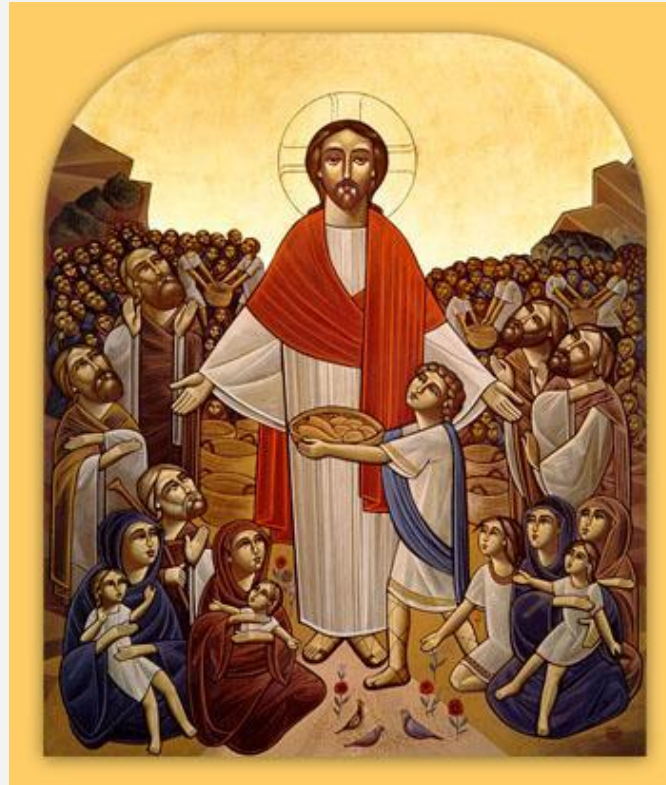
UNIQUE FEATURES IN HOW ICONS ARE WRITTEN

- Icons are two-dimensional
- Gold background represents Heaven
- Haloes are shown as circles around the head
 - Symbol of being the light of the world.
 - The halo around Jesus is unique with an embedded cross, and/or contains His name



UNIQUE FEATURES IN HOW ICONS ARE WRITTEN

- Sizes are disproportionate
 - Jesus is larger than others.
 - Satan is depicted as small.
 - Eyes and ears are large, mouth is small.



UNIQUE FEATURES IN HOW ICONS ARE WRITTEN

- Clothes are usually white & red for holiness. Green represents evil
- Direction of the face
 - Faces are either facing forward, or towards Jesus.
 - Evil is depicted with no halo, green color, and side face (can't see both eyes/ears)



UNIQUE FEATURES IN HOW ICONS ARE WRITTEN

- Items and details in icons tell about the type or category of saints and events in their life.
 - What they are wearing, items in their hands, items in the background, etc.



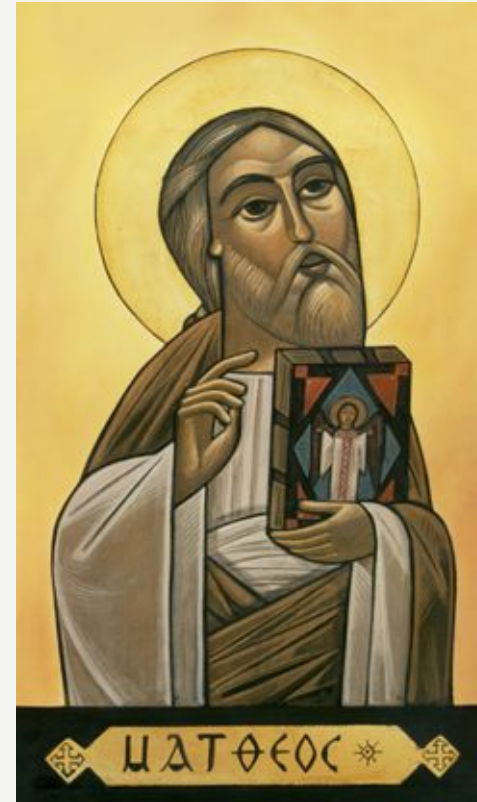
ICONS OF APOSTLES

They wear:

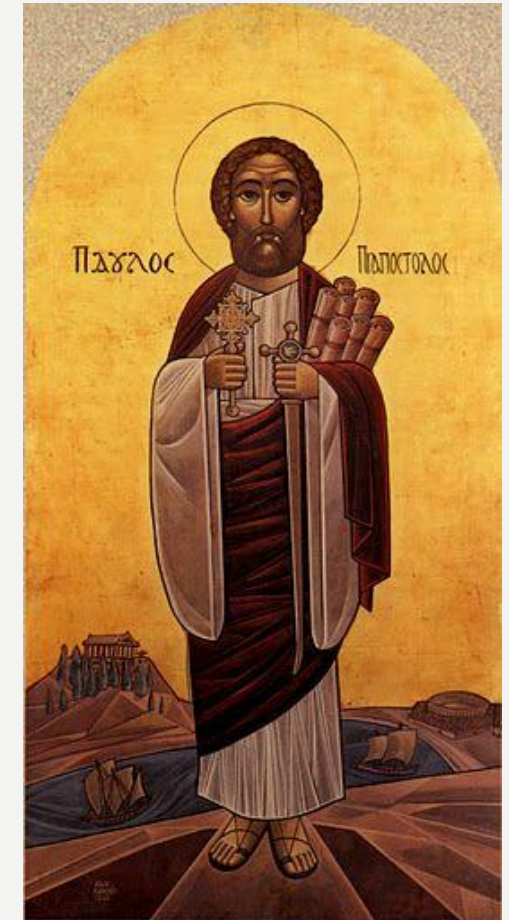
- Shown wearing a cloak, usually yellow, signifying the great mission they accomplished, or red, symbolizing their martyrdom.

They hold:

- A scroll or a book. The 4 evangelists hold a book, while the Apostles who preached or wrote other texts hold scrolls.



St.
Matthew



St. Paul

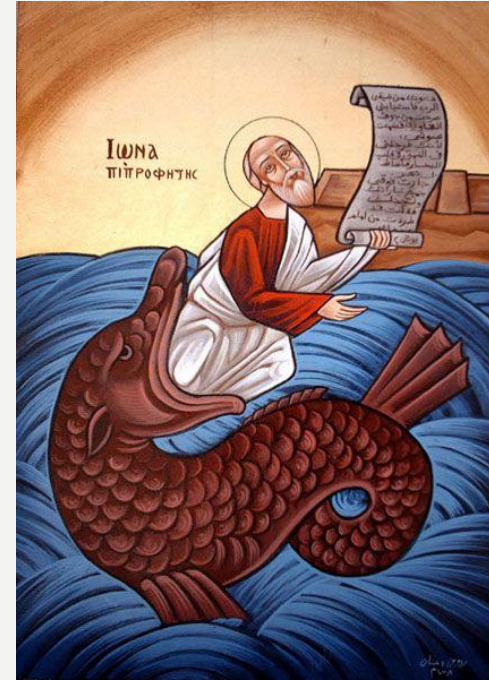
ICONS OF PROPHETS

They wear:

- Usually shown dressed according to their social status on earth, or in a scene from their life.
 - For example, David and Solomon are dressed like kings, and Jonah is shown with a large fish.

They hold:

- Open scrolls, with an excerpt from their prophecies. As with other Saints, they may also be holding the instrument of their salvation.



Prophet Jonah(above),
King David (below)



ICONS OF MARTYRS

They wear:

- Shown wearing red clothing, which signifies their blood that was shed for the love of Christ.
- They are also usually shown with a crown of martyrdom.

They hold:

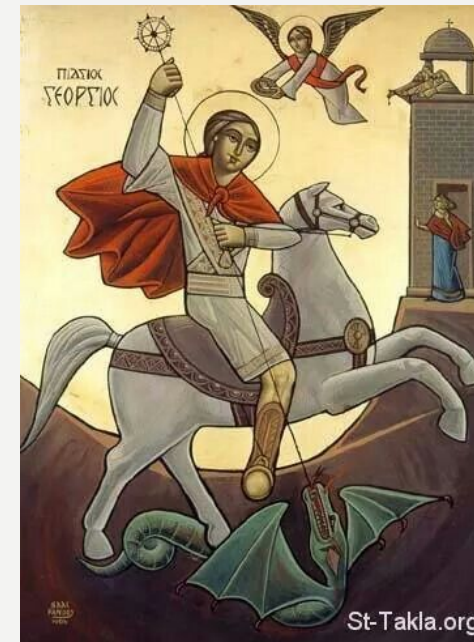
- A cross symbolizing where their strength came from, and/or palm branches as a symbol of their entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven.
- They may also hold the instruments of their martyrdom. If they are soldier martyrs, they usually hold their weapons.



St. Catherine



St. Barbara



St. George

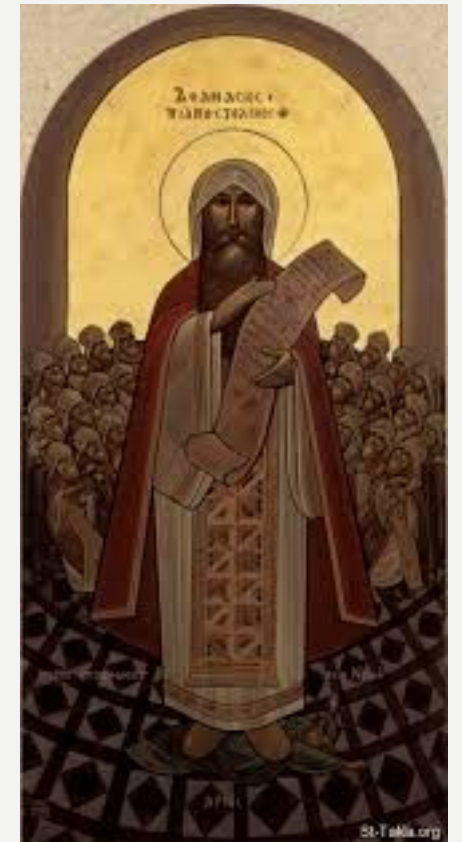
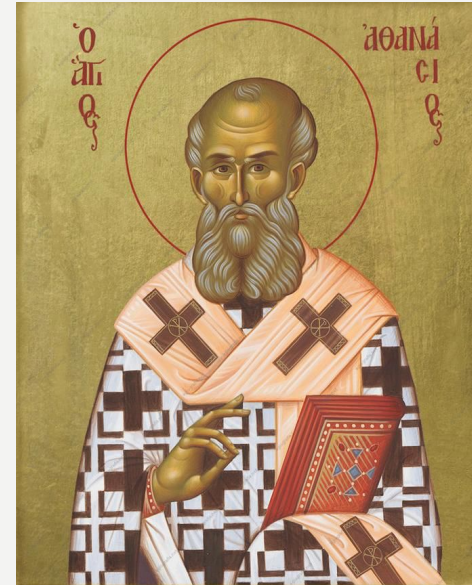
ICONS OF FATHERS/HIERARCHS

They wear:

- Clergy vestments, often decorated with crosses.

They hold:

- A Gospel book or scroll, because they followed and preached the Word of God through the Gospels.



St. Athanasius (Coptic vs. Byzantine icons)

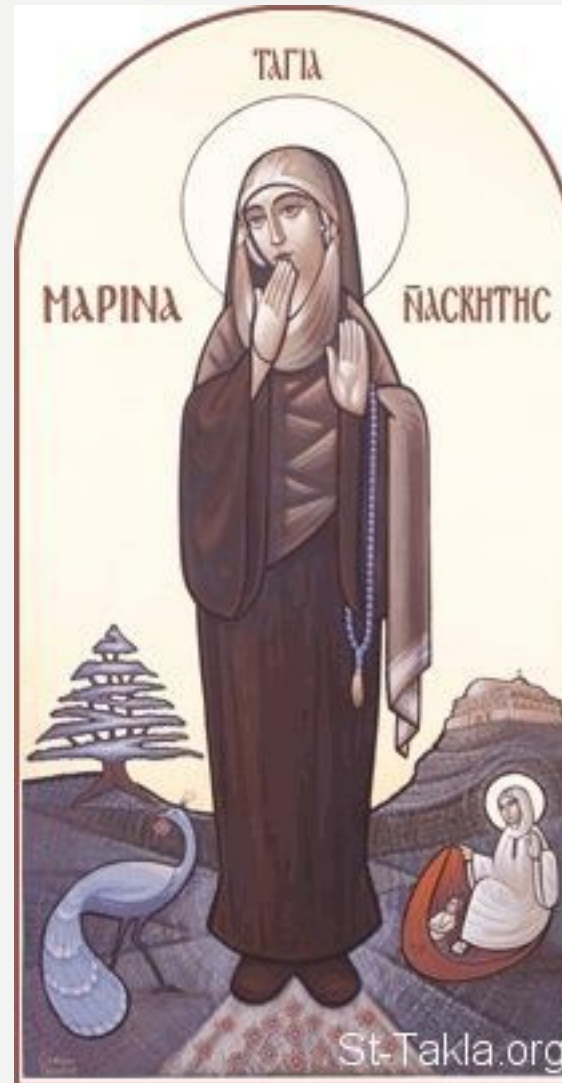
ICONS OF MONASTICS

They wear:

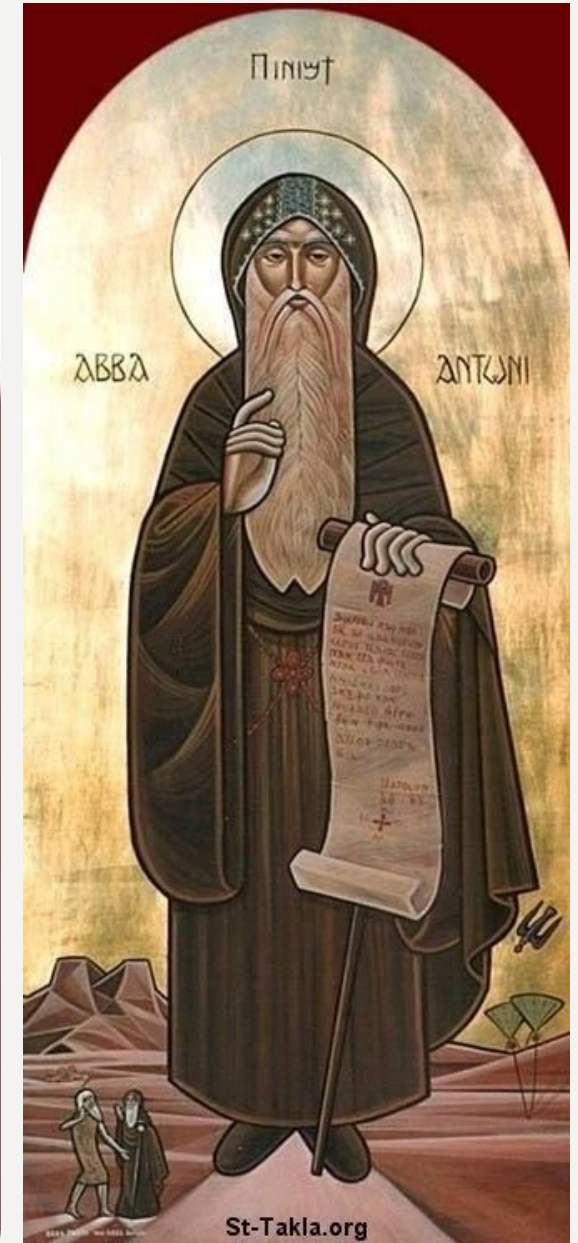
- Their dark monastic habit, usually hooded.

They hold:

- Monastics may hold a prayer rope or a cross or staff, which symbolizes the cross they bear in their spiritual struggle.
- They may also hold a scroll, open or closed



St. Marina the Monk



St. Anthony

SUMMARY

We can tell much about a saint based on what they are wearing and holding in an icon, in addition to other unique features on the side/background which tell us about details from their life.

To summarize, every detail in an icon is symbolic and has a meaning. Each Icon tells us a story related to salvation.

“If a pagan asks you to show him your faith, take him into church and place him before the icons.” - John of Damascus



THE ICONOSTASIS

“HOW LOVELY IS YOUR TABERNACLE, O LORD OF HOSTS! MY SOUL LONGS, YES, EVEN FAINTS FOR THE COURTS OF THE LORD” (PSALM 84:1-2).

BIBLICAL BASIS OF THE ICONOSTASIS

When Lord ordered Moses to set the Tabernacle, He ordered Moses to set two curtains of fine linen woven with blue, purple, and red wool (Exodus 26).

- One separates between the house and the Holy
- The second separates between the Holy and the Holy of Holies
- In addition to these, there was another curtain which separated the house of Israelites and that of Gentiles and the Roman soldiers.

CHURCH STRUCTURE

- The structure of our church is modeled after these guidelines given to Moses. The church is divided into 3 parts: sanctuary, nave, and vestibule.
 - The **vestibule** is the first area of the Church **when entering the structure**
 - The **nave** is the **main body of the Church**
 - The sanctuary is where the Holy Altar is located.
 - Heaven (represented by the sanctuary) and earth (represented by the nave) are brought together by the Lord Jesus Christ.
- The sanctuary and the nave are divided by the screen of icons called **iconostasis**.
 - The icons on the iconostasis are use to help the faithful focus on prayer and the key elements of faith. The congregation's eyes should be fixed on the Lord
 - “When I am lifted up from the earth I will draw everyone to me” (John 12:32).

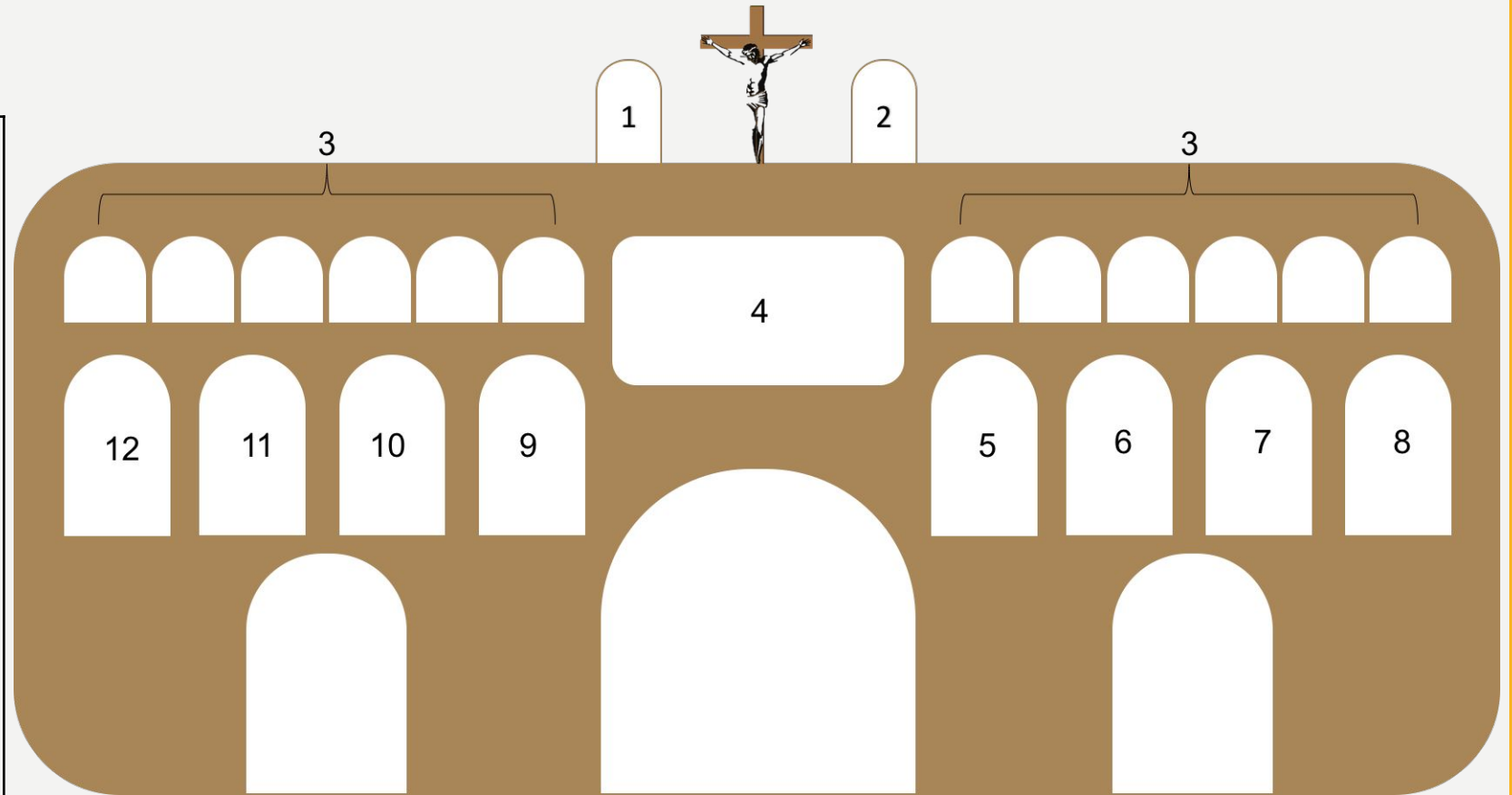
CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ICONOSTASIS

- In Greek, means “a place on which the icons stand”
- Usually made of **wood, marble or stone**.
- It has **three** doors
 - Center door - called the “**Royal Door**”
 - A symbol of the passage between Heaven and Earth.
 - Only the patriarch, bishops, and deacons accompanied by the priest may pass through the Royal Doors because of its great holiness
 - Two single doors on each side - called “**Deacons Doors**”
 - Each door has a **curtain** decorated with crosses or the picture of the patron saint of the church or the saint after which the altar is named.
- The icons on the iconostasis are not random, but have a **specific order** (see next section)
- An **Ostrich egg** is suspended above the Royal door representing resurrection
- In older churches, **oil lamps** are hung in front of all the icons, except Christ, because He is the light of the world.

THE ORDER OF ICONS

At the highest point: Crucifix

- 1 St. Mary
- 2 St. John the Apostle
- 3 The 12 Apostles
- 4 The Last Supper
- 5 Our Lord Jesus Christ
- 6 St. John the Baptist
- 7 Church Patron Saint
- 8 Saint or Martyr
- 9 St. Mary
- 10 Annunciation
- 11 Archangel Michael
- 12 St. Mark the Evangelist



APPLICATION: From memory, name which icon corresponds to each number on the iconostasis

