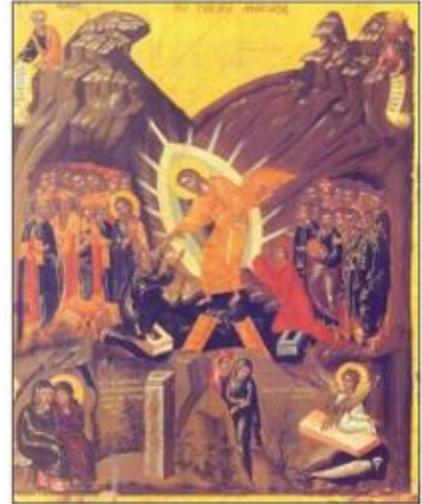


THE RESURRECTION ICON (THE DESCENT INTO HADES)

In traditional iconography, the actual moment of the Resurrection of Christ was never depicted. The Gospels and Church Tradition are silent about that moment and do not say how Christ arose. Neither does the icon show it.

The action of the event takes place in the depths of the earth, in hell, shown as a gaping black abyss. In the center of the icon is the figure of the Savior. He appears in hell not as its captive, but as its Conqueror and Deliverer, as the Master of life. He is surrounded by a radiant mandorla with rays issuing from the center of the mandorla. His garments are not those in which He is portrayed during his lifetime. They are brilliant white.



The darkness of hell is filled by the light of these Divine rays. Christ tramples underfoot the two crossed boards of hell's doors that He has pulled down. In many icons, below the doors, in the black abyss, the cast down figure of the prince of darkness, Satan, is seen. The power of hell is destroyed. This is symbolized by the keys, nails, and so forth.

Christ raises Adam from the grave with His right hand and Eve with His left hand. By this he frees Adam's soul and with it the souls of all those who wait for His coming with faith. This is why to the right and left of this scene are shown two groups of Old Testament saints, with prophets at the front. On the left are kings David and Solomon in royal robes and crowns and in front of them, John the Forerunner (Baptist). On the right are the prophets. Seeing Him, they at once recognize Him as the One whom they had foretold.

By freeing the old Adam, and with him, the whole of humankind, He laid the foundation of a new life for all humankind. The spiritual raising of Adam is a symbol of the coming resurrection of the body, the first fruit of which was the resurrection of Christ.

In the upper section of the icon, the two peaks of rock remind us that "the earth shook and the rocks were split" (Mt. 27:51) after the death of Christ. The dividing of the rocks also reminds us of the dividing of the waters of the Red Sea as the Israelites traveled from the slavery of Egypt to the freedom of the Promised Land.

WHAT CAN I DO AT HOME?

- Prepare the Easter basket and take it to church to be blessed.
- Attend services during Holy Week and Easter.
- Process with the Resurrection icon to the icon corner and venerate it. Decorate the corner with flowers. Sing the Tropar "*Christ is risen from the dead. By death He trampled Death, and to those in the tombs He granted life.*"
- Explain the symbolism of the icon.