

PRAYING THROUGH ICONS

Thursday, March 11th | 7:30pm

Praying with Icons is a spiritual practice which is often neglected in the Western Christianity. However, it is an ancient discipline dating back as early as the 4th century. Though we may think of icons as nothing more than pretty paintings, they much more than that. An icon is meant to show us a glimpse of heaven and act as a window that allows us to see the very person depicted. Thus, when we pray with icons, we are not simply staring at a pretty picture, but gazing upon a saint or even Christ himself in a mysterious way we cannot fully understand.

Preparation

Find a quiet place in which to pray, preferably one free of visual distractions. Make sure to sit somewhere comfortable. Feel free to light candles or light incense. Create an environment which will help you transfer your mind from the worldly realm to the heavenly.

Step One: Choose an icon

Choose the icon with which you feel compelled to pray. Which saint speaks to you at this time? Which depiction of Christ is most compelling in this moment? Allow the Spirit to guide you as you seek out a companion in prayer. (If you do not have physical icons available, you may look for icons online. You may wish to print out any images to avoid straining your eyes from looking at a screen.)

Step Two: Behold the image

We will begin exploring our general impressions of the image that is before us. Where is your eye drawn? What are the colors saying to you? What feelings are you experiencing as you look upon the icon?

Step Three: Make eye contact

The icon allows us to connect with the person depicted by allowing us to catch a glimpse of them in their heavenly dwelling. Remember that you are mystically connected to this person as part of the Church universal. Focus upon the eyes of the person you see before you. Know that they can see you, as well. What are they trying to tell you?

Step Four: Prayer

What have you learned from the image before you? What have you learned from the person? What has been stirred up within you? What do you need to bring to God in this moment? Come to God in prayer.

Optional: Debriefing

If you would prefer more time of contemplative prayer and silence, feel free to log off the Zoom call. If you'd like to stay in the call and talk about this experience with the group, we will have time to debrief together.