

## Life in the Spirit

All religions teach some form of spirituality. The Orthodox tradition is perhaps the most diverse and comprehensive, at least within the Christian world.

The Orthodox spiritual tradition is not only about prayer, meditation and spiritual disciplines; Orthodox spirituality encompasses the full range of how faith is expressed, including the arts.

The Holy Spirit is our guide and enabler in all things spiritual. Consider the following invocation to the Holy Spirit:

Come, true light.  
Come, life eternal.  
Come, hidden mystery.  
Come, treasure without name.  
Come, reality beyond all words.  
Come, person beyond all understanding.  
Come, rejoicing without end.  
Come, light that knows no evening.  
Come, unfailing expectation of the saved.  
Come, raising of the fallen.  
Come, resurrection of the dead.  
Come, all-powerful, for unceasingly you create, refashion and change all things by your will alone.  
Come, invisible whom none may touch and handle.  
Come, for you continue always unmoved, yet at every instant you are wholly in movement; you draw near to us who lie in hell, yet you remain higher than the heavens.  
Come, for your name fills our hearts with longing and is ever on our lips; yet who you are and what your nature is, we cannot say or know.  
Come, Alone to the alone.  
Come, for you are yourself the desire that is within me.  
Come, my breath and my life.  
Come, the consolation of my humble soul.  
Come, my joy, my glory, my endless delight.

*St. Symeon the New Theologian (949-1022)*

# Life in the Spirit — Icons & Sacred Architecture

In the Orthodox tradition, even icons and buildings are means and expressions of the spiritual life.

## *Why Icons are important*

- They visibly and tangibly remind us of the Incarnation of Christ.
- They convey profound theological truths and beliefs in the most direct way imaginable!
- They convey the mystical depths of scriptural events.
- They are a safeguard against excessive literalism.
- They are representations of the church as the communion of saints.
- They carry us beyond the natural realm into a transfigured view of reality.
- They remind us that the Christian faith is about beauty, not ugliness!
- They are a help to prayer and communion with God.









The encounter of Moses with the burning bush in Exodus 3 is a seminal event in God's self-revelation in the holy scriptures. The Greek Fathers of the Church found much to inspire them in the stories of Moses and the burning bush and Moses' receiving of the Law at Sinai. The mystical tradition inspired the iconographic representation of the burning bush as pre-figuring the Virgin Mary and the Incarnation.







Παναγία Οδηγήτρια - 1260-1270  
Μονή Χελανδαρίου



Madonna hodegetria - byzantine icon  
1260-1270 - Chilandari Monastery

The icon of the **Nativity of Christ** is an example of how icons are able to bring together into unity different events & messages. Mary is rarely shown alone in icons. She is always shown with Christ, usually in a manner that indicates sweet motherly love and tenderness. She also usually points to Christ. The multitude of names that have been given to icons of the Theotokos is beyond measure!





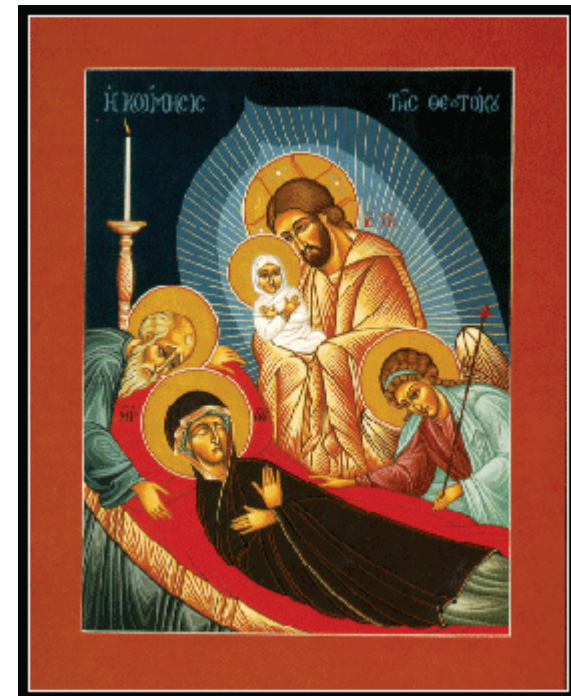


**Images of the Resurrection**





The icon of the **Dormition of the Holy Theotokos** makes a profound anthropological statement.







Icons of the **Last Judgment** are not common, but they're most often found in monasteries to drive fear into monks. The "Ladder of Divine Ascent" is also popular in monasteries.

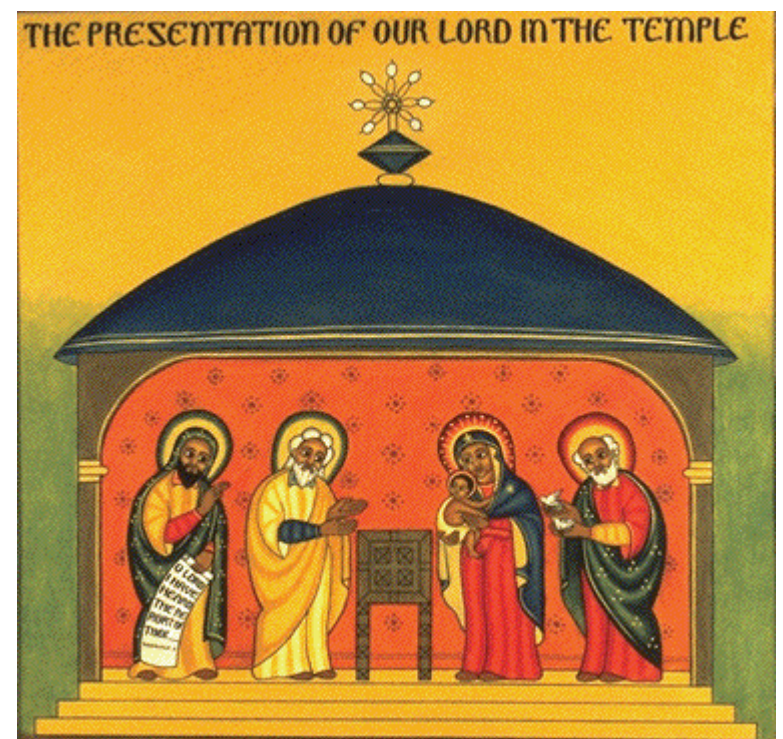




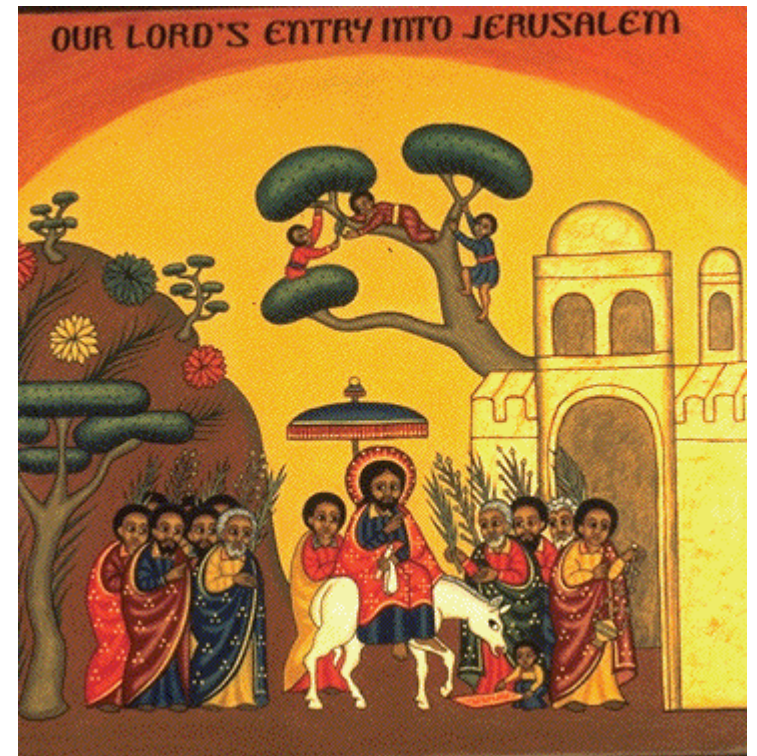
# Angels and Saints







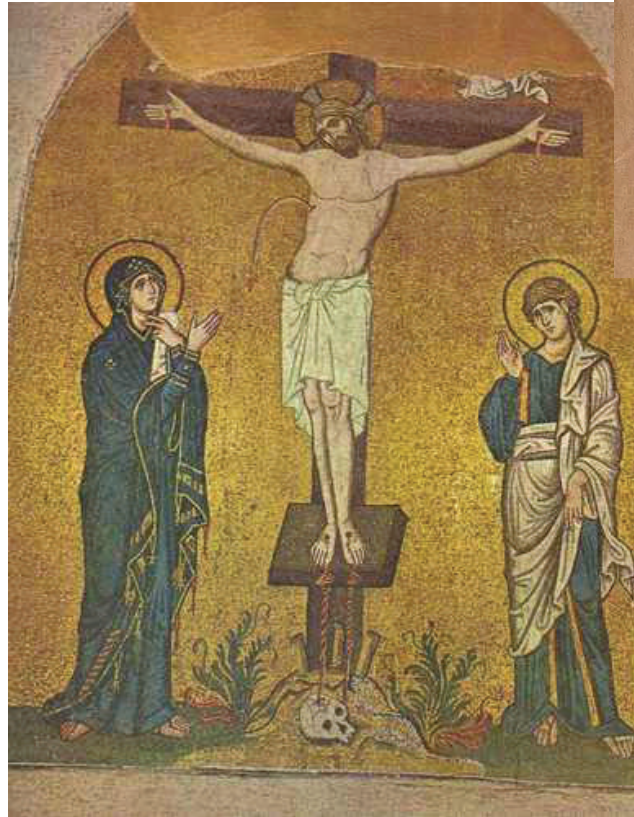
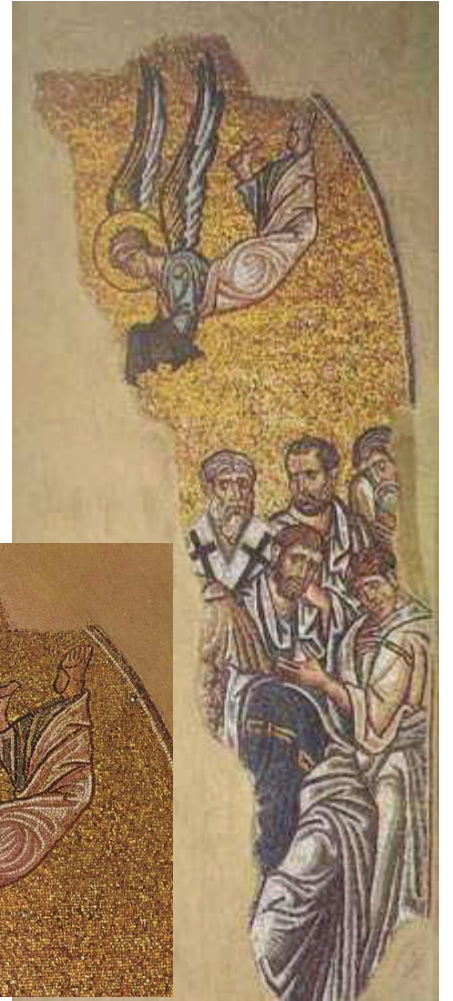
Two Icons by Christopher Gosey  
in Ethiopian style



Icons from the Coptic &  
Ethiopian traditions

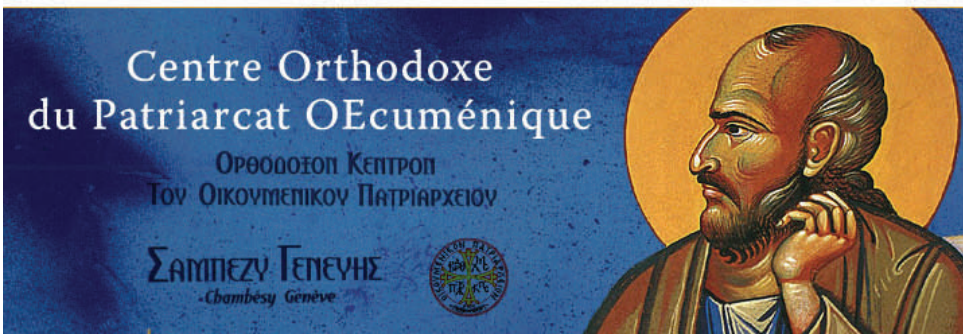


Mosaics from Daphni Monastery, Greece





## Iconography for Today?



Not all icons are patterned on historic prototypes. As an example of living, breathing tradition, here is a large fresco from the chapel of St. Paul at the Orthodox Centre of the Ecumenical Patriarchate at Cham-bésy, outside Geneva, Switzerland. It is a modern interpretation of Acts 16:9. *And a vision appeared to Paul in the night:*

*a man of Macedonia was standing beseeching him and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."*

But note continuity in how Paul's visage is represented.







**Cupola of the Creation** at S. Marco Basilica in Venice. The interiors of Byzantine churches often feature complex iconographic programs. On the next two pages are views of Byzantine interiors, including St. Mark's in Venice, showing the context of the Creation cupola.











## The Deeper Meaning of Sacred Architecture

“When three are gathered in thy name, they already form a church. Watch over the thousands here assembled. Their hearts had prepared a sanctuary before our hands built it to the glory of thy name. May the temple of stone be as beautiful as the temple of our hearts. Deign to bless both alike with thy Spirit. Our hearts, like these stones are marked with thy name...

God built humanity so that humanity might build for him... He is infinite; we are limited. He builds the world for us. We build a house for him. It is good that human beings can build a dwelling for him who is present everywhere...

God came among human beings so that they might meet him...

Thine is the kingdom of heaven: ours is thy house!”

*Balai (Syrian bishop, died 460)*



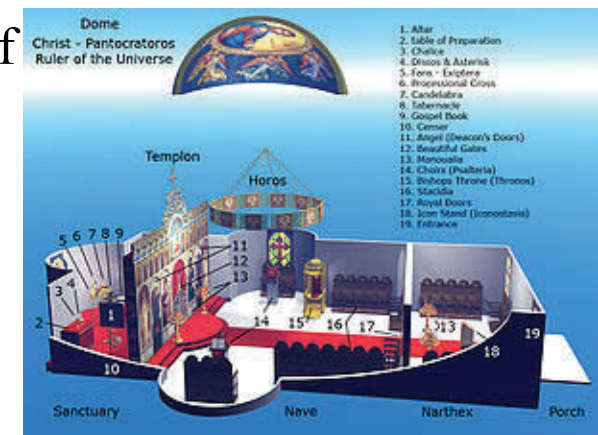


St. Maximus the Confessor was one of the most profound of all the Greek Fathers. He saw the human person as a *microcosm* of creation. In the following two excerpts from his major work, **Mystagogia**, he carries the microcosm idea to include the church building. In his vision of cosmic unity he is bold to draw spiritual connections between the human person and the church building.

“The church is the perfect image of the sensible world. For sky it has the divine sanctuary, and for earth the nave in all its beauty. And vice versa, the world is a church. For sanctuary it has the sky and for nave the grandeur of the earth.”

“The church is like a human being. For soul it has the sanctuary, for mind the divine altar, for body the nave. The church is the image and likeness of the human being who himself has been created in the image and likeness of God. By its nave, as by the body, it enables the gaining of practical wisdom; by its sanctuary, as by the soul, it gives a spiritual interpretation of the contemplation of nature; by the divine altar, as by the mind, it reaches the vision of God. Conversely, the human being is a mystical church. By the nave of his body he enlightens his active powers... by the sanctuary of his soul he offers to God the spiritual essences of things... by the altar of his mind he invokes the silence in the heart of the divine word, with a loud voice that surpasses all knowledge. There, as far as is allowed to humanity, he is united to the godhead... and receives the imprint of its dazzling splendor.”

*Maximus the Confessor (580-662), from his Mystagogia*





## Dome

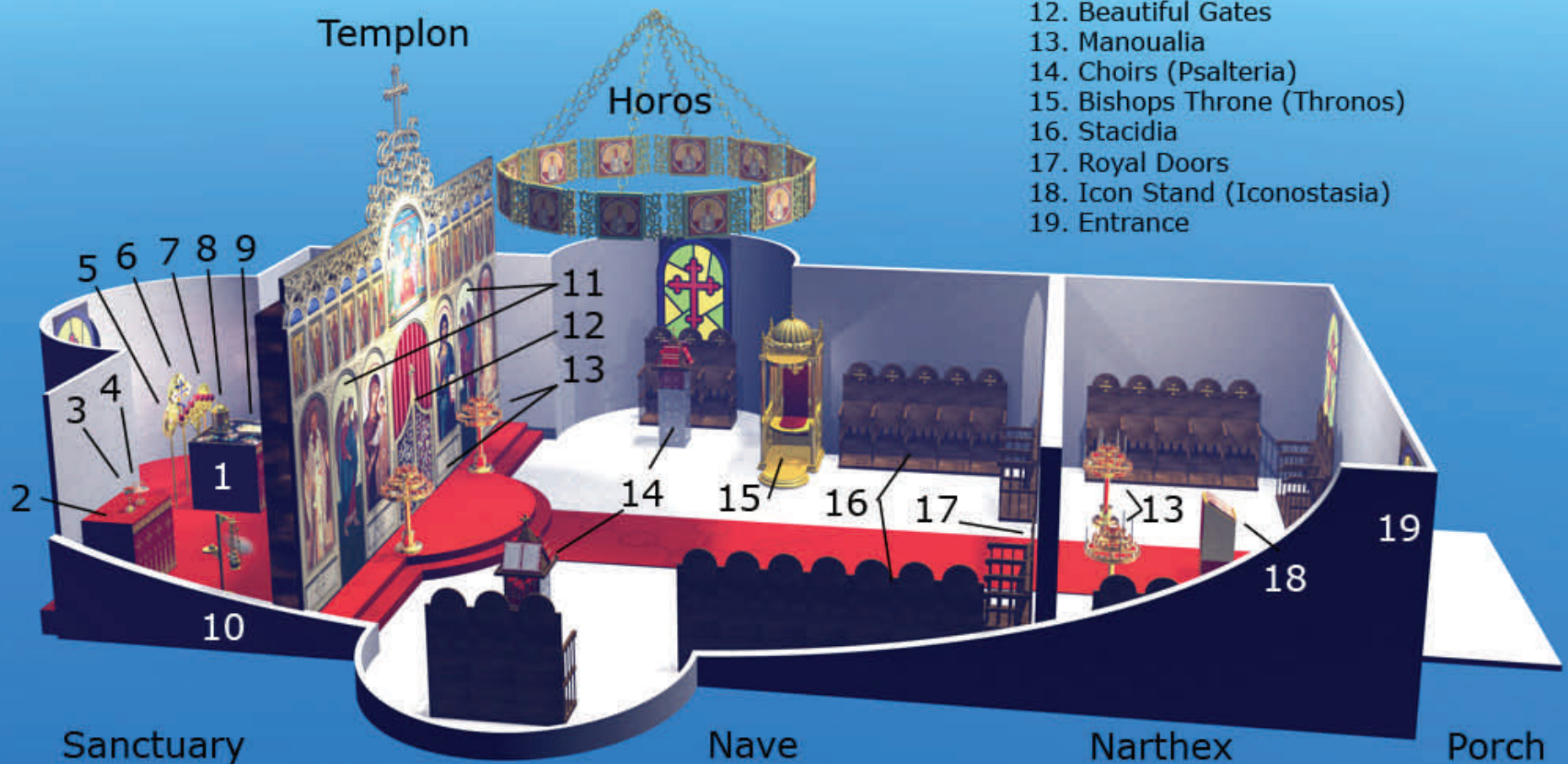
Christ - Pantocratoros  
Ruler of the Universe



1. Altar
2. table of Preparation
3. Chalice
4. Discos & Asterisk
5. Fans - Exiptera
6. Processional Cross
7. Candelabra
8. Tabernacle
9. Gospel Book
10. Censer
11. Angel (Deacon's Doors)
12. Beautiful Gates
13. Manoualia
14. Choirs (Psalteria)
15. Bishops Throne (Thronos)
16. Stacidia
17. Royal Doors
18. Icon Stand (Iconostasia)
19. Entrance

## Templon

## Horos



Sanctuary

Nave

Narthex

Porch





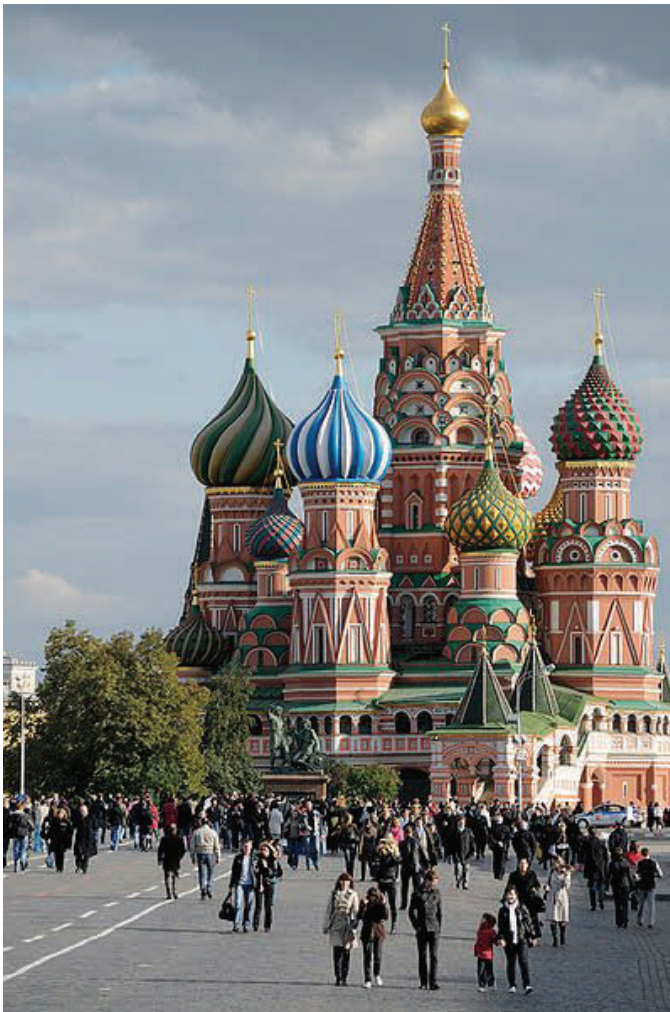




Some churches  
of Greece







St. Basil's Cathedral in the Red Square, Moscow (completed in 1561)

The Cathedral of St. Sava in Belgrade, Serbia, is the largest Orthodox church in the world.



Church of the Intercession 1165



A Georgian church (11th century)

The Alexander Nevsky Cathedral in Sofia, Bulgaria, can hold 5,000 people







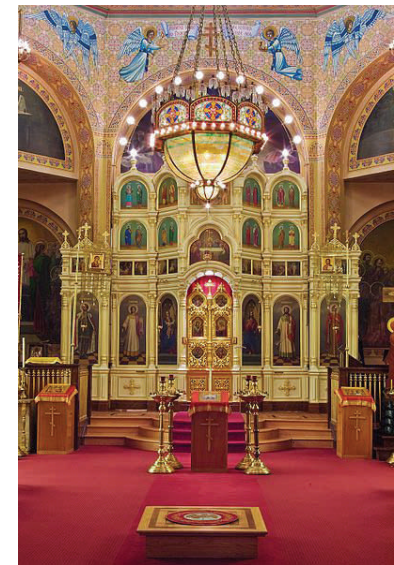




Russian iconostasis from 17th century



Modern iconostasion of a Greek church in America



Holy Trinity Cathedral in Chicago (OCA)



Modern iconostasion in Thessaloniki