

3 Images of God I really like.

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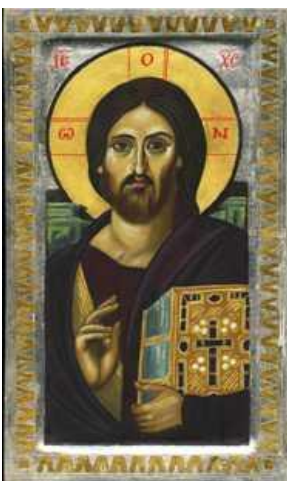
Joseph's Dream



This icon I found in St Anne's Church on Gozo in Malta. It shows Joseph asleep at the bottom of the picture. In his dream he sees Mary with the Child in her arms. Joseph has been worried that she will be blamed for being pregnant and perhaps wonders if she has been unfaithful to him. Mary however is shown sitting on her own Mother's lap and beside St Anne is her father Joachim. The icon shows the other side of the lineage of Jesus by the presence of the Archangel Gabriel. Mary has her spare hand raised as we often see Jesus doing in icons. With her thumb on her fourth finger she is emphasising the Human and Divine natures of her Child. So this picture is theological teaching on the mystery of the Incarnation. Joachim holds a scroll on which is written the Schema, the first prayer any Jewish child learns. Hear o Israel, the Lord your God is one. " Jesus through his Mother and grandparents shares his human nature with the line of David, but He is very clearly through the presence of Gabriel to be the only Son of God on High and therefore has a second nature that is Divine as the second person of the Holy Trinity made flesh. I fell in love with this when I first visited the chapel and photographed the

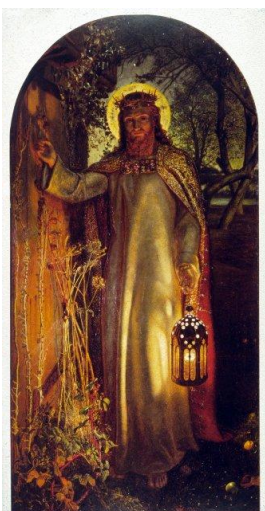
icon. It is for me the history of salvation in one image, and really blows my mind. It speaks so much of the generosity of God's compassion that he gave us his only Son to redeem us and reveal our place in His life of love. What a destiny we share.

The Christ of Sinai:



This is an icon from St Catherines Monastery in Sinai at the bottom of the mountain where Moses received the 10 Commandments from God. It is a very old icon and like all images of Jesus is based on the image found on the Edessa cloth or Mandelion. This image unwritten by human hand is said to be the prototype of all likenesses of the Lord. It is said to have been sent by Jesus to the King of Edessa to cure his leprosy. This icon shows a Pantocrator but on that is less stern even compassionate and serene. The left side of the face is the human face of Christ, the right is his Divine face. You can see this by mentally drawing a split from his forehead to his chin. His hand is raised not in blessing but in teaching us his two natures, human and Divine. His inner garment is red but over his shoulder a band of gold, emphasising it is through his passion death and resurrection that he returns as Gods Word incarnate to be pantocrator and the Second person in the circle of love that makes up Father, Son and Spirit. I love this image and love to hold it in my hands as I pray the Jesus Prayer, Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God have mercy on me.

The Light of the World :



A painting by Holman Hunt in St Paul's Cathedral London shows us Christ gently knocking at the door of home. The door is closed firmly and has no outside handle to turn to gain entry. It is overgrown with weeds and dead creepers etc. The door has been closed for a long time. Christ carries a lantern that gives off a gentle warm light. He knocks but waits for the door to be opened from within. The door is a symbol of the human soul or heart. Christ is the Light of the world, and he wishes so much to give each of us His light. He does not intrude or force Himself upon us. Conversion is a personal change of heart and we each have to invite that light into ourselves so that we can see where we need to change in order to grow in our love for God and one another. I love this image as it speaks to me of my need to be ever open to Christ when he comes to knock on my soul's door. He may come in strangers or those I find hard to love but the challenge for me is to be ready to open my heart to him..