

Symbology in Icons

Hands	<p>hands are often shown giving a blessing: the last two fingers touching thumb (two fingers raised) symbolizes the two natures of Christ; ring finger touching thumb (three fingers raised) symbolizes the Trinity.</p> <p>Hands are also shown with with the forefinger extended straight; the middle finger curved slightly; the thumb and the ring finger crossed; and the little finger curved slightly. This gesture forms the letters "IC XC" (Greek letters for "Jesus Christ") -- the first finger making the I, the curved middle finger forming the C, the crossed ring finger and thumb forming the X, and the pinky finger forming the second C.</p>
Eyes	large to show faith in God ("the eyes of faith")
Ears	large to show we must listen to God
Position	usually, divine and saintly figures face forward; others are in profile
Light	Light source shown as coming from within the Divine or divinized Person or persons
Color	<p>Gold: Divine Light, Christ Himself</p> <p>White: eternal Light, the Father</p> <p>Green: Holy Spirit, regeneration</p> <p>Blue: faith, humility</p> <p>Red: youth, beauty, war, love</p> <p>Purple: royalty, priesthood</p> <p>Bright Yellow: Truth</p> <p>Pale Yellow: pride, betrayal</p> <p>Brown: death to the world</p> <p>Black: evil, death</p>

Time and Space	earthly perspective is lost and icons have a flatness to them that disappears in Western Art after the painter Giotto discovered the rules of painting using perspective. Time, too, is distorted to show sequential events simultaneously. Both of these phenomena lend themselves to aiding the viewer in realizing that he is not looking at temporal realities, but spiritual realities
Evangelists	wear tunics, carry a book
Bishops	wear vestments, carry a book or scroll
Monks	wear habits, stand very erect