



CHRIST “ANAPESON”

When one first begins to learn about icons, every icon is interesting, and each new icon is a new experience. After one has seen many, many icons, however, one becomes more discriminating. One begins to look for intriguing variations, for quality of painting, and, of course, for unusual types.

Today’s icon is one of those unusual types. Examples of it are seldom seen. The icon depicts Christ Immanuel, that is the youthful or child Christ reclining on a bed. At left is Mary, and at

right an angel, his hands covered with a cloth to show reverence.

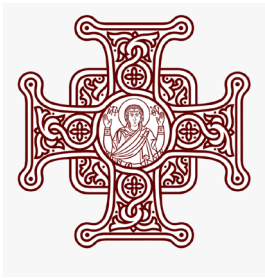
The text associated with this type in iconography is generally that of Psalm 121:4 “Behold, he that keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.”

The version of this type found in Greek iconography differs somewhat in that it is less elaborate and the eyes of Christ Immanuel, though he is reclining, are generally open. That brings us to the second text associated with the type, taken from Genesis 49:9 of the Greek Septuagint version:

...ἀναπεσὼν ἐκοιμήθη ὡς λέων καὶ ὡς σκύμνος· τίς ἐγερεῖ αὐτόν;  
...anapeson ekoimethes hos leon kai hos skumnos; tis egerei auton  
“..reclining he slept as a lion, and as a [lion’s] whelp; who shall rouse him up?”

It is from that text that the icon takes its name for this type — Anapeson.

The text, in regard to the icon, is rather obscure unless we recall that Simeon Metaphrastes, in the tenth century, expressed the odd belief that a lion sleeps without closing his eyes; further, that the young of the lion are born dead, but are brought to life by the parent on the third day. This, of course, begins to “open our eyes” as to the significance of this icon, because this being “born dead” and being “brought to life” on the third day is an allegory for Jesus, who is said to have been in the tomb until the third day, when he rose to life.



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Further, if we turn to the E. Orthodox liturgy, a hymn for Holy Saturday (the day before Easter) reads:

“Come, let us see our Life lying in the tomb, that he may give life to those that lie dead in their tombs. Come, let us look today on the Son of Judah as he sleeps, and with the prophet let us cry aloud to him: You have lain down; you have slept as a lion; who shall awaken you, O King?”

From all of this we see that the “Unsleeping Eye” icon represents the “sleep” of Jesus, after the crucifixion, in the tomb on Holy Saturday; and that while sleeping he is also, as God, eternally awake, according to Eastern Orthodox doctrine.

The Greek version of the type, as already mentioned, is generally simpler than the Russian, and may consist only of the reclining Christ Immanuel, sometimes with an accompanying angel (who may hold the spear, sponge and cross), and sometimes with the angel and with Mary. Russian examples generally depict Mary standing, while Greek versions tend to depict her as seated in a chair to the right of the sleeping Immanuel, with right arm outstretched and holding a cloth at the side of the child’s head.

Here is a mid-14th century example from the Monastery of John the Forerunner, which is a few miles from Serres in northern Greece. It depicts Mary standing at right, and two bowing angels, their hands covered with cloths as a sign of veneration, at left.

In old Greek churches the Anapeson was sometimes painted over the western door; because of that, it is at times associated also with Psalm 121:8:

“The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.”

However it is sometimes found at the diakonikon (a chamber on the south side of the central church apse).

There are some very different looking, later examples of variant icons under the same title. Some simplify the image to a very “Western” looking Mary holding the sleeping infant Jesus. These images are generally more like Roman Catholic art. Here is one in the town of Ruibinsk (Рубинск) that has a reputation as “miracle working”:



“Epitafios Thrinos” - Lamentation at the Tomb

Celebrated: Holy Friday

Occurance in Scripture:

Matthew 27:59-61-When Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his new tomb which he had hewn out of the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the door of the tomb, and departed. And Mary Magdalene was there, and the other Mary, sitting opposite the tomb.

Mark 15:46-47- Then he bought fine linen, took Him down, and wrapped Him in the linen. And he laid Him in a tomb which had been hewn out of the rock, and rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses observed where He was laid.

Luke 23:53-56- Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a tomb that was hewn out of the rock, where no one had ever lain before. That day was the Preparation, and the Sabbath drew near. And the women who had come with Him from Galilee followed after, and they observed the tomb and how His body was laid. Then they returned and prepared spices and fragrant oils. And they rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment.

John 19:39-42- And Nicodemus, who at first came to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds. Then they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in strips of linen with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury. Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. So there they laid Jesus, because of the Jews' Preparation Day, for the tomb was nearby.

Liturgical Use: This icon is most commonly seen on a cloth which is placed in the wooden tomb of Christ (Kouvouklion) on Holy Friday. This is a major piece in any Orthodox Church's liturgical elements.

Aspects of the Icon:



- 1) Christ's Body: Centrally located is the body of Christ. As in all icons of Christ, he features a halo that is cruciform with the words "O ΩN" meaning "The One Who Is" informing the viewer that Christ is God. This comes from God speaking to Moses saying "I am." Christ is depicted with the wounds of His passion (Hands, feet and side)
- 2) The Freshly Hewn Stone: The burial slab centrally figured is prominent in Orthodox Iconography even in the most unlikely places. We see this depicted even in the icon of the Nativity which is prefiguring this central event in Christ's life, death, burial and resurrection.
- 3) The Clean Linen Cloth: Placed under Christ, the clean linen cloth was prepared as a means of proper burial according to Jewish Custom.
- 4) "The Tools of Salvation": Below the tomb is depicted the nails which were used to hang Christ upon the Cross. They have been removed from His body by a set of pliers which is depicted next to the basket which they are held.
- 5) Mary and Martha: Figured to the left of Christ's body we see Mary and Martha the sisters of Lazarus. While their postures depict their obvious state of weeping and lament, as is shown in the title of the icon, they remain surprisingly composed. This is to show that even in true grief and lament Christ's salvation soothes and comforts us pointing the viewer toward the resurrection.
- 6) St. John the Evangelist: The only Disciple to witness the Crucifixion, John venerates the hand of Christ as the body is prepared for burial.
- 7) Nicodemus: Depicted as the only male figure to not have a halo, Nicodemus is posed showing his confusion and bewilderment. This is echoed during the Holy Friday Lamentations Service where the hymnography of the Church asks "How can you die, O Life?" and "Life has been laid in the tomb..."
- 8) The Noble Joseph of Arimathea: Attending to the linen cloth, The Noble Joseph is beginning to wrap Christ's body for burial. This depicts the scriptural essence of the oncoming Sabbath and the anticipation of Christ's Resurrection.
- 9) The Theotokos holding her Son's face: Perhaps the most heartwrenching concept of Christ's burial is the thought of the Mother of God burying her own son. It is worth noting again that despite the anguish one would expect a mother to have at this moment, her face remains calm and almost happy knowing that her Son is working to make all things new.
- 10) Golgotha and the Crosses of the Crucifixion: In the background we see the crosses placed on Golgotha where Christ and the two thieves were executed. Being far off in the distance the icon brings a kind of relief knowing that the passion of Christ has ended and the destruction of death and hell is underway.





CHRIST'S BURIAL IN A NEW TOMB

Scriptural References: (See above)

Elements of the Icon:

1) Christ Wrapped in the Clean Linen Cloth: Always depicted with the Cruciform Halo, the Icon depicts the body of Christ, having been prepared for burial, being placed in a newly hewn tomb.

2) Nicodemus, St. John the Evangelist and The Noble Joseph: Carrying Christ together, and placing Him in the tomb. The figures show

movement without showing strain to lift Christ, referencing Christ's words "My yoke is easy and my burden is light."

3) The Theotokos, Martha, and "the Other Mary's": to the left of the scene is depicted The Theotokos, Martha, and Mary lamenting for the death of Christ. Again, their faces are shown not so much in despair, but in a beautiful "Joyful Sorrow" that is prolific in all Byzantine Iconography.

4) The Angels lamenting: "All creation Trembled" at Christ's death on the Cross. Here we see two angelic figures attending to the body of Christ and lamenting for the death of God.



### THE HARROWING OF HELL

Celebrated Holy Saturday Morning

Scriptural References: Hebrews 2:14, "that through death he might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil."

I Peter 3:18-20- For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.

Apocryphal Literature Reference: Gospel of Nicodemos- Chapters 16, 18-20:

AND while Satan and the prince of hell were discoursing thus to each other, on a sudden there was a voice as of thunder and the rushing of winds, saying, 2 Lift up your gates, O ye princes; and be ye lift up, O everlasting gates, and the King of Glory shall come in.

4 And the prince said to his impious officers, Shut the brass gates of cruelty, and make them fast with iron bars, and fight courageously, lest we be taken captives.

7 And the divine prophet David, cried out saying, 3 Did not I when on earth truly prophesy and say, O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men.

8 For he hath broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder. He hath taken them because of their iniquity, and because of their unrighteousness they are afflicted.

18 While David was saying this, the mighty Lord appeared in the form of a man, and enlightened those places which had ever before been in darkness,

19 And broke asunder the fetters which before could not be broken; and with his invincible power visited those who sate in the deep darkness by iniquity, and the shadow of death by sin. 3

13 Then the King of Glory trampling upon death, seized the prince of hell, deprived him of all his power, and took our earthly father Adam with him to his glory.



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3 For behold now that Jesus of Nazareth, with the brightness of his glorious divinity, puts to flight all the horrid powers of darkness and death;  
He has broke down our prisons from top to bottom, dismissed all the captives, released all who were bound, and all who were wont formerly to groan under the weight of their torments have now insulted us, and we are like to be defeated by their prayers.  
THEN Jesus stretched forth his hand, and said, Come to me, all ye my saints, who were created in my image, who were condemned by the tree of forbidden fruit, and by the devil and death;  
Live now by the wood of my cross; the devil, the prince of this world, is overcome, and death is conquered.  
Then presently all the saints were joined together under the hand of the most high God; and the Lord Jesus laid hold on Adam's hand and said to him, Peace be to thee, and all thy righteous posterity, which is mine.  
12 And taking hold of Adam by his right hand, he ascended from hell, and all the saints of God followed him.  
1 THEN the Lord holding Adam by the hand, delivered him to Michael the archangel; and he led them into Paradise, filled with mercy and glory;  
2 And two very ancient men met them, and were asked by the saints, Who are ye, who have not yet been with us in hell, and have had your bodies placed in Paradise?  
3 One of them answering, said, I am Enoch, who was translated by the word of God: 5 and this man who is with me, is Elijah the Tishbite, who was translated in a fiery chariot. 6  
5 And while the holy Enoch and Elias were relating this, behold there came another man in a miserable figure carrying the sign of the cross upon his shoulders.  
6 And when all the saints saw him, they said to him, Who art thou? For thy countenance is like a thief's; and why dost thou carry a cross upon thy shoulders?  
7 To which he answering, said, Ye say right, for I was a thief who committed all sorts of wickedness upon earth.  
8 And the Jews crucified me with Jesus; and I observed the surprising things which happened in the creation at the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus.  
9 And I believed him to be the Creator of all things, and the Almighty King; and I prayed to him, saying, Lord, remember me, when thou comest into thy kingdom.  
10 He presently regarded my supplication, and said to me, Verily I say unto thee, this day thou shalt be with me in Paradise. 1  
11 And he gave me this sign of the cross saying, Carry this, and go to Paradise; and if the angel who is the guard of Paradise will not admit thee, shew him the sign of the cross, and say unto him: Jesus Christ who is now crucified, hath sent me hither to thee.  
12 When I did this, and told the angel who is the guard of Paradise all these things, and he heard them, he presently opened the gates, introduced me, and placed me on the right-hand in Paradise,  
13 Saying, Stay here a little time, till Adam, the father of all mankind, shall enter in, with all his sons, who are the holy and righteous servants of Jesus Christ, who was crucified.  
14 When they heard all this account from the thief, all the patriarchs said with one voice, Blessed be thou, O Almighty God, the Father of everlasting goodness, and the Father of mercies, who hast shewn such favour to those who were sinners against him, and hast brought them to the mercy of Paradise, and hast placed them amidst thy large and spiritual provisions, in a spiritual and holy life. Amen.



Elements of the Icon:

Though not directly described in scripture, this icon is one that has perhaps the most prominent role in all of Orthodox Iconography. It depicts Christ's descent into hades to deliver all mankind from the bondage of death. This particular icon of Holy Trinity is a reproduction of the famous "Harrowing of Hell" which is a fresco located in the main apse behind the altar section of the Ancient Chora Church in Istanbul (Constantinople).

1) Christ Victorious: The central figure of this icon is Christ. Depicted in "brilliantly white robes" showing His Divine Glory that was revealed to His Disciples at the Transfiguration. "To accentuate the last stage in the kenotic act of God, as well as the salvation of the human race, the painter of the Anastasis depicts the moment of Jesus' descent into hell as a sort of reverse transfiguration." He is also depicted with the wounds he received during the Crucifixion foreshadowing the bodily Resurrection promised to us all by Christ. His robes and limbs are depicted with much movement showing His mighty works while in the depths of hades.

2)The Mandorla: "Mandorla" coming from the Latin word for "almond" depicts the Uncreated Light of God that emanates from Christ's entire person. It differs from a typical light radiating from a source in that it gets darker the closer the viewer looks to Christ. This is a theological commentary by the iconographer showing that the closer one becomes to Christ, the more mysterious and unknowable the God becomes.

3) The Doors of Hades: Christ triumphantly stands on the broken doors of hades depicting His destruction of the realm of death.

4) The Broken Brass and Metal Chains: Below the doors of hades are depicted the locks and chains which have held humanity captive since the Fall.

5) Adam being raised from the tomb: Being pulled from a tomb by Christ's right hand is Adam. This is to show that all of humanity, from the beginning of creation has been restored by Christ's triumph over death. Adam's robes are also shown to have great movement showing the swiftness with which Christ has come to restore His creation.

6) Eve being raised from the tomb: Being pulled from a tomb by Christ's left hand is Eve. She is depicted with her hand being covered. During Byzantine times, and continued in modern





Orthodox praxis, it was considered respectful for a subject to cover their hands when touching royalty. This was to prevent dirt of filth from sullyng the emperor. In the icon, Eve covers her hand which plucked the fruit from the tree in the Garden of Eden whil Christ, irrespective of her sins, grasps her bare hand firmly to deliver her from sin and death.

7) Solomon and David: To Christ's right behind Adam, is depicted the kings of the Old Testament Solomon and David wearing kingly crowns. According to Orthodox teaching Christ is descended from these Kings.

8) St. John the Baptist: Considered to be the last Prophet and Forerunner of Christ, we see St. John the Baptist who was beheaded before Christ's Crucifixion. In true Forerunner Fashion, he descended into death ahead of Christ to bring the Good News of Christ to those who were already in the grave. He is depicted as gesturing to Christ indicating that even in death, St. John was calling people to follow Christ.

9) Abel: Holding a shepherd's crook, Abel, the first slain human, is shown to witness the Resurrection of Christ and His triumph over death.

10) The Prophets, Kings and Patriarchs of the Old Testament: On either side of the icon, flanking the figures of Solomon, David, St. John the Baptist, and Abel, we see the Prophets, Kings, and Patriarchs of the Old testament. Though not named specifically in this depiction, it is common to see such figures as Jacob, Isaac, and Abraham in these postions in other reproductions of the famous icon in Chora Church.