

The icon of St Michael (Archangel)



The word *icon* means image – especially a religious image which is *written* (we would call it painted) on a wooden board. They are particularly prominent in what we think of as Eastern Orthodox (Greek and Russian) Christianity and all are written in a particular style called ‘Byzantine’.

Icons have existed from the very earliest days of Christianity and were used to teach people about Jesus with images of his life even before the gospels were written. Some people think of icons as ‘windows into heaven’ or ways of ‘making the invisible visible’. Icons are written in prayer as an act of spiritual devotion and are intended to help those who see them in their own prayers.

This icon of St Michael shows the archangel wearing a red cloak as is often the case with Russian icons and holding a staff in one hand and an orb, representing the world, in his left hand. On the orb are the Greek letters X and P, the ‘Chi Rho’ symbol for Jesus Christ. This is to show that the orb (i.e. the world) belongs to Jesus and represents the kingdom of our Godly King who sits on his heavenly throne.