

Christian Symbols



Fish: the fish -- ever-watchful with its unblinking eyes -- was one of the most important symbols of Christ to the early Christians. In Greek, the phrase, "Jesus Christ, Son of God Savior," is "Iesous Christos Theou Yios Soter." The first letters of each of these Greek words, when put together, spell "ichthys," the Greek word for "fish" (ICQUS). This symbol



can be seen in the Sacraments Chapel of the Catacombs of St. Callistus.

Because of the story of the miracle of the loaves and fishes, the fish symbolized, too, the Eucharist (see stylized fish symbol at right).

The earliest literary reference to the fish as Christian symbol was made by Clement of Alexandria, who advised Christians to use a dove or fish as their seal. Tertullian wrote (in "De Baptismo") "But we, being little fishes, as Jesus Christ is our great Fish, begin our life in the water, and only while we abide in the water are we safe and sound." Also used as a Christian symbol was the dolphin, most often as a symbol of the Christian himself rather than Christ, though the dolphin was also used as a representation of Christ -- most often in combination with the anchor symbol ("Christ on the Cross").



Lamb: symbol of Christ as the Paschal Lamb and also a symbol for Christians (as Christ is our Shepherd and Peter was told to feed His sheep). The lamb is also a symbol for St. Agnes (Feast Day 21 January), virgin martyr of the early Church.



Dove: symbol of the Holy Ghost and used especially in representations of our Lord's Baptism and the Pentecost. It also symbolizes the release of the soul in death, and is used to recall Noe's dove, a harbinger of hope.



Peacock: As a symbol of immortality (even St. Augustine believed the peacock's flesh to have "antiseptic qualities" and that it didn't corrupt), the peacock became a symbol of Christ and the Resurrection. Its image embellished everything from the Catacombs to everyday objects, like lamps, especially in early Romanesque and Byzantine churches. (The peacock, for obvious reasons, was also used as a symbol for pride, too)



Pelican: The Pelican is a symbol of the atonement and the Redeemer and is often found in Christian murals, frescos, paintings and stained glass. The pelican was believed to wound itself in order to feed its young with its own blood. In the hymn "Adoro Te," St. Thomas Aquinas addresses the Savior with, "Pelican of Mercy, cleanse me in Thy Precious Blood." Allusion is even made to this belief in "Hamlet" (act iv): "To his good friend thus wide I'll ope my arms And, like the kind, life-rendering pelican, Repast them with my blood."



Phoenix: The Phoenix is a mythical creature said to build a nest when old, and set it on fire. It would then rise from the ashes in victory. Because of these myths (believed by the Egyptians, Greeks, and Orientals), the bird came to symbolize Christ.



Ship: As those outside of Noe's Ark were destroyed, the ship became a perfect early symbol of the Church with its associations with "the barque of Peter, the Fisherman." In the same vein, the main part of a church's interior, the place where the people worship, is called a "nave," from the Latin "navis" -- ship. The Ark is also a symbol of the Temple through its shape and purpose, both having three levels, etc. And as a symbol of the Temple and Church, it is a symbol of Mary, sealed off with pitch and closed up by God Himself.



Rainbow: Sign of the Covenant with Noe. Its 7 colors (from the top down: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet) recall the 7 Sacraments (7 is the sign of Covenant and completion). In St. John's vision of Heaven, a rainbow makes an appearance -- over the head of the angel who gives John a book to eat (ch. 10), and surrounding the throne of God:

Apocalypse 4:2-3 2

And immediately I was in the spirit: and behold there was a throne set in heaven, and upon the throne one sitting. And he that sat, was to the sight like the jasper and the sardine stone; and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.



The Good Shepherd: Some of the earliest depictions of Christ show Him as the Good Shepherd. This type of representation is found in the Catacombs.

Click to see a picture of The Good Shepherd from the Priscilla Catacombs, and here to see a statue of the Good Shepherd, dated ca. A.D. 225 (will open in new browser windows).



Palm: victory and martyrdom. Palms are especially made use of on Palm Sunday. The ashes of palms used on Palm Sunday are later burned and used on the next year's Ash Wednesday to symbolize mortality and penance.



Scallop shell: the sea shell, especially the scallop shell, is the symbol of Baptism, and is found frequently on Baptismal fonts. The dish used by priests to pour water over the heads of catechumens in Baptism is often scallop-shaped. The scallop, too, is a symbol for the Apostle James the Greater.



Butterfly: The beautiful butterfly, with the power of flight, emerging from the apparently lifeless cocoon: what could be a more perfect symbol of the Resurrection?



Unicorn: the unicorn -- mentioned in the Bible, by the way: see Psalm 21:22, 28:6 (Psalms 22 and 29 in the King James Bible), 92:11; and Isaias 34:7 -- is a symbol of chastity and of Christ Himself. Medieval legend had it that the unicorn, a feisty and fierce animal, could not be easily hunted, but if a virgin were to sit in the forest, the unicorn would find her and lay its head upon her lap. The hunter could then come by and take its horn, which was seen as having profound medical qualities (for ex., it was said to eliminate the harmful effects of a poisoned liquid). The picturing of a virgin and unicorn together, then, was common during the Age of Faith -- the former representing Our Lady, and the latter representing Christ, Who brought forth the "horn of salvation."



Ermine: the ermine was believed to have rather died than get its pure white coat dirty and, so, it came to symbolize innocence, moral purity, and the Christian's desire to die rather than commit a mortal

sin. Its fur was used to adorn the clothes of clerics and royalty.



Elephant: the male and female elephant together represent Adam and Eve



Turtledove: because of their reputation for taking only one mate to whom they are faithful for life, turtledoves are a symbol of Christian fidelity. They are also known for their love of seclusion, a fact mentioned by St. Augustine (City of God, Book 16, chapter 24).



Rose: the Holy Faith, Our Lady, martyrdom, the secrecy of [penance](#). Five roses grouped together symbolize the [5 Wounds](#) of Christ.



Scarab: an ancient symbol of regeneration (the scarab was an especially prevalent symbol in Egypt), the scarab was adopted by Christians, too, as a symbol for the same and for the Resurrection, in particular, and for Christ Himself. Habacuc 2:11 was often translated as "For the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beetle out of the timber shall answer it." Psalm 21:7's mention of "worm" ("But I am a worm, and no man: the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people") was often translated as "scarab," and St. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan (A.D. 340-397) referred to Christ as "The Good Scarabaeus" numerous times, with other Church Fathers, such as SS. Cyril of Alexandria, Augustine, etc.) following suit.



Owl: the owl has a double meaning: 1) the perfidious Jews who, preferring darkness to light, reject Jesus, and 2) (from the Aberdeen Bestiary), "In a mystic sense, the night-owl signifies Christ. Christ loves the darkness of night because he does not want sinners - who are represented by darkness - to die but to be converted and live... The night-owl lives in the cracks in walls, as Christ wished to be born one of the Jewish people, saying: 'I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel'. But Christ is crushed in the cracks of the walls, because he is killed by the Jews. Christ shuns the light in the sense that he detests and hates vainglory... The night-owl flies at night in search of food, as Christ converts sinners into the body of the Church by preaching. In a moral sense, moreover, the night-owl signifies to us not just any righteous man, but rather one who lives among other men yet hides from their view as much as possible. He flees from the light, in the sense that he does not look for the glory of human praise."



Cock: the cock is the harbinger of the dawn, and "Oriens" -- "Dawn" -- is one of the titles for Christ (used especially in the O Antiphons during Advent). It is, then, a general symbol for Hope. Further, it is ancient belief that the cock's crow breaks enchantments and evil spells. Prudentius (d. 861), Bishop of Troyes, wrote "They say that the night-wandering demons, who rejoice in dunest shades, at the crowing of the cock tremble and scatter in sore affright."

The Aberdeen Bestiary (c. 1200) speaks of the cock thusly:

The crowing of the cock at night is a pleasant sound, and not only pleasant but useful; like a good partner, the cock wakes you when are asleep, encourages you if you are worried, comforts you if you are on the road, marking with its melodious call the progress of

the night.

With the crowing of the cock, the robber calls off his ambush; the morning star itself is awakened, rises and lights up the sky; the anxious sailor sets aside his cares, and very often each tempest and storm whipped up by evening winds moderates. At cockcrow the devout of mind rise eagerly to pray, able once again to read the office. When the cock crowed assiduously for the last time, Peter himself, the rock of the Church, washed away his guilt, which he had incurred by denying Christ before cockcrow.

With the crowing of the cock, as with the words of Jesus, hope returns to everyone, the troubles of the sick are eased, the pain of wounds is lessened, the raging heat of fevers is moderated, faith is restored to those who have fallen. Jesus watches over those who falter, he corrects those who stray; in short, he looked at Peter and immediately his sin went away, his denial was put out of mind, his confession followed.

The Winter Hymn of Sunday's Lauds include this hymn from St. Ambrose (d. 397):

Light of our darksome journey here,
With days dividing night from night!
Loud crows the dawn's shrill harbinger,
And wakens up the sunbeams bright.

Forthwith at this, the darkness chill
Retreats before the star of morn;
And from their busy schemes of ill
The vagrant crews of night return.

Fresh hope, at this, the sailor cheers;
The waves their stormy strife allay;
The Church's Rock at this, in tears,
Hastens to wash his guilt away.

Arise ye, then, with one accord!
No longer wrapt in slumber lie;
The cock rebukes all who their Lord
By sloth neglect, by sin deny.

At his clear cry joy springs afresh;
Health courses through the sick man's veins;
The danger glides into its sheath;
The fallen soul her faith regains.



Trefoil: a stylized shamrock, such as St. Patrick used in evangelizing Ireland, the trefoil is a symbol of the Most Holy Trinity.



Quatrefoil: ubiquitous in Gothic architecture, the quatrefoil symbolizes the four evangelists, as do the Winged Man (Matthew), Lion (Mark), Ox (Luke), and Eagle (John) -- the four beasts of Ezeckiel and the Apocalypse.



3 Nails: 3 nails symbolize the Crucifixion. They are three in number because two nails were used to secure Christ's Hands, and a third was used to secure His Feet. The 3 nails are often combined with other symbols, such as they are in the Jesuit seal -- the letters IHS with the three nails underneath, all surmounted by a Cross.



Anchor: found in the first century cemetery of St. Domitilla, the second and third century epitaphs of the catacombs, and especially in the oldest parts of the cemeteries of Sts. Priscilla (about 70 examples in this cemetery alone), Domitilla, Calixtus, and the Coemetarium majus. See Hebrews 6:19.



Egg: the egg is a wonderful symbol of birth and rebirth, an apparently lifeless object out of which comes life. Because of this, it is a symbol of Christ's Resurrection and is seen most often at Easter. In 2006, a necropolis under the Vatican revealed an infant who'd been buried holding an egg to symbolize his parents' hope in his resurrection, because of Christ's Resurrection.

Legend has it that St. Mary Magdalen went to Rome and met with the Emperor Tiberius to tell him about the Resurrection of Jesus. She held out an egg to him as a symbol of this, and he scoffed, saying that a man could no more rise from the dead than that egg that she held could turn scarlet. The egg turned deep red in her hands, and this is the origin of Easter eggs, and the reason why Mary Magdalen is often portrayed holding a scarlet egg.

Another level of symbolism is that the egg represents the Creation, the elements, and the world itself, with the shell representing the firmament, the vault of the sky where the fiery stars lie; the thin membrane symbolizing air; the white symbolizing the waters; and the yolk representing earth.



Keys: The Keys are the symbol of the authority of the papacy and the Church's power to "bind and loose" (Matthew 16:19 and Isaiah 22).



"Chi-Rho" or "sigla": the letters "X" and "P," representing the first letters of the title "Christos," were eventually put together to form this symbol for Christ ("Chi" is pronounced "Kie"). It is this form of the Cross that Constantine saw in his vision along with the Greek words, TOUTO NIKAI, which are rendered in Latin as "In hoc signo vinces" and which mean "in this sign thou shalt conquer."

AΩ

Alpha-Omega: Alpha, the first letter of the Greek alphabet, and Omega, the last letter of the Greek alphabet, became a symbol for Christ due to His being called "the First and the Last." The roots of symbolizing these attributes of God go back further, all the way to the Old Testament where, in Exodus 34:6, God is said to be "full of Goodness and Truth." The Hebrew spelling of the word "Truth" consists of the 3 letters "Aleph," "Mem," and "Thaw" -- and because "Aleph" and "Thaw" are the first and last letters of the Hebrew alphabet, the ancients saw mystical relevance in God's being referred to as "Truth." At any rate, the Greek Alpha and Omega as a symbol for Christ has been found in the Catacombs, Christian signet rings, post-Constantine coins, and the frescoes and mosaics of ancient churches.

IHS

IHS: dating from the 8th c., this is an abbreviation for "IHESUS," the way Christ's Name was spelled in the Middle Ages (despite popular belief, the monogram stands neither for "Iesus Hominum Salvator" --"Jesus Saviour of Men" -- nor for "In His Service.") Popularized by St. Bernardine of Siena, the monogram was later used by St. Ignatius of Loyola as a symbol for the Jesuit Order.

T

"Crux commissa" or "thau" or "tau": the T-shaped cross is mentioned in the Old Testament and is seen as a foreshadowing of the Cross of Christ. Ezechiel 9:4:

And the Lord said to him: Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem: and mark Thau upon the foreheads of the men that sigh, and mourn for all the abominations that are committed in the midst thereof.

The Thau of Ezechiel was itself presaged by the image of Moses's brazen serpent that he held up on a pole

in Numbers 21:

And the Lord said to him: Make brazen serpent, and set it up for a sign: whosoever being struck [by the "fiery serpents"] shall look on it, shall live. Moses therefore made a brazen serpent, and set it up for a sign: which when they that were bitten looked upon, they were healed.

Because of these verses, at least one of the ancients believed the Thau to be the form of the Cross of Jesus. Tertullian wrote, "The Greek letter and our Latin letter T are the true form of the cross, which, according to the Prophet, will be imprinted on our foreheads in the true Jerusalem." (Contra Marc., III, xxii)

If "Thau" was the true form of the Cross, the existence of the titulus crucis (the plaque that bore the inscription "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews") would have made the Cross at least appear to be a "crux immissa" (see below), and there would have had to have been enough of the upright post over the arms on which to affix it. Nonetheless, whether the "immissa" or commissa" was the true form of the Cross, at the very least the Thau depicts the Cross of Christ symbolically, and St. Francis of Assisi took the Thau as the symbol of his Franciscan Order.



"Crux immissa" or "Latin Cross": the most common form of the Cross and believed to be of the style on which Jesus died.



Byzantine Cross: used mostly by the Eastern Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches. The second cross-bar at top is for the INRI inscription; the bottom cross-bar is His footrest.



Slavonic Cross: used most often by Eastern Catholics and Russian Orthodox, this Cross is the Byzantine Cross with the footrest at a diagonal. This slant is said to represent one of a few things:

- the footrest wrenched loose from the Christ's writhing in intense physical suffering; lower side representing "down," the fate of sinners, while the elevated side represents Heaven;
- the lower side represents the bad thief (known to us as Gestas through the apocryphal "Acts of Pilate" ("Gospel of Nicodemus") while the elevated side to Christ's right represents the thief who would be with Him in Paradise (St. Dismas);
- the "X" shape of the slanted "footrest" against the post symbolizes the cross on which St. Andrew was crucified.



Greek Cross: a very common artistic representation of the Cross. Crosses such as this one and the Tau were also popular because they were easily disguised, an important feature for persecuted Christians.



Jerusalem Cross: also called the "Crusaders' Cross," it is made up of 5 Greek Crosses which are said to symbolize a) the 5 Wounds of Christ; and/or b) the 4 Gospels and the 4 corners of the earth (the 4 smaller crosses) and Christ Himself (the large Cross). This Cross was a common symbol used during the wars against Islamic aggression. (see less stylized version at right)



Maltese Cross: associated with the Knights of St. John (also known as the "Hospitallers of St. John of Jerusalem" or simply "Knights of Malta"), this Cross's 8 points are said to symbolize the 8 Beatitudes and

the Beatitudes' associated obligations. The Order of St. John ran hostels and hospitals for Christian pilgrims to Jerusalem, but eventually had to fight during the wars of Islamic aggression. It is said that the Maltese Cross is a symbol within a symbol in that it is made of the initial letters of the Greek words for, "Jesus Christ, God, Son, Savior" ("Iesous Christos Theou Huios Soter"), which forms the acrostic for the word "fish" (see "fish" above). When these letters -- ICQUS -- (Iota, Chi, Theta, Upsilon, Sigma) are stacked on top of each other and their "ends" closed, they form a Maltese Cross.



Baptismal Cross: consisting of the Greek Cross with the Greek letter "X", the first initial of the title "Christ," this Cross is a symbol of regeneration, hence, its association with Baptism



Graded Cross: this Cross, also known as the "Calvary Cross," has 3 steps which represent the three Theological Virtues: Faith, Hope and Charity.



Evangelist's Cross: the 4 steps at the bottom of the Cross stand for Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.



"Crux decussata" ("decussated cross") or "St. Andrew's Cross": called "decussated" because it looks like the Roman Numeral "10" (decussis), it is also called St. Andrew's Cross because St. Andrew was supposed to have been crucified on a cross of this shape.



Celtic Cross ("the Cross of Iona"): stone crosses in this form dot the landscapes of Ireland and Scotland and are associated with the evangelization of these lands.



St. Brigid's Cross: St. Brigid fashioned a Cross out of rushes as she sat near a dying chieftan's bed. He asked her about what she was doing and in explaining, she recounted the story of Christ, whereupon the chieftan converted. Catholics -- especially Irish Catholics -- fashion Crosses like these on the Feast of St. Brigid (1 February).



Peter's Cross: because when Peter was to be martyred he chose to be crucified upside-down out of respect for Christ, the upside-down Latin Cross has become his symbol and, thereby, a symbol of the papacy. Sadly, this cross has been co-opted by Satanists whose purpose of "inverting" Christianity (e.g. as in their Black 'Masses') is expressed by taking the Latin Cross of Christ and inverting it. At various anti-Catholic Protestant websites, I've seen pictures of the Holy Father standing in front of Peter's Cross with captions such as "The Pope worships Satan!!!!!!!" It'd be funny if it weren't so sad and ignorant.



Papal Cross: the three cross-bars represent the Latin Pope's triple role as Bishop of Rome, Patriarch of West, and successor of Peter, Chief of the Apostles



Lorraine Cross: used by archbishops and patriarchs. Also known as a "Caravaca Cross" because of a miracle, involving a Patriarch's Cross, that took place in Caravaca, Spain. See the page on Crucifixes for more information.

See more crosses below



5-point Star: the Star of Bethlehem; the 5 Wounds of Christ. This symbol inverted, such that a single point is at the bottom and two points are at the top, is a Satanic symbol indicating a goat's head.



Torch of Truth: Symbol of the Dominican Order, often shown being carried in the mouth of a little black and white dog. It originates in a dream St. Dominic's mother had when she was pregnant with the Saint: she dreamed of her child as a little black and white dog illuminating the world by carrying a torch in his mouth. The Dominican Order St. Dominic founded is known as the "Order of Preachers," the colors of its habit are white and black.

The Symbology of Numbers

- 1 the Undivided Oneness of God
- 2 the two natures of Christ; both the Divine and the material
- 3 the Three Persons of the Most Holy Trinity, the three Magi and their gifts
- 4 the Evangelists and their Gospels; the elements, humors and material world; North, South, East, and West; the four seasons
- 5 the Five Wounds; the senses
- 6 the days of creation; creation fallen; imperfection
- 7 covenant, oath; perfection; the day God rested (the Sabbath being the sign of the Covenant with Adam); the seven colors the rainbow (a sign of the Covenant made with Noe); the seven Sacraments (the Covenant sign made with the Church); the Gifts of the Holy Ghost; the virtues and vices
- 8 the visible world, made in seven days, with the invisible kingdom of grace following;

regeneration

- 9** man's imperfection; the choirs of Angels
- 10** the Commandments; the Plagues of Egypt
- 12** the tribes of Israel; the Apostles; the signs of the Zodiac; the hours of the day and the hours of the night; the penetration of matter with spirit (3 X 4)
- 13** betrayal; Judas
- 33** the number of years of Jesus's human life
- 40** testing and trial; the years of the Deluge; the years of wandering in the desert in Exodus; the days Moses spent on Mt. Sinai; Christ's days in the desert
- 666** the number of the Beast. (Also 616 in some later manuscripts, a number rejected by St. Irenaeus as a scribal error).
- 1000** the millennium -- the Church Age

Cross Styles and their Symbolic Meanings



Alpha and Omega - This Latin cross combined with the Greek alpha and omega remind us that though Christ died on the cross for our sins, he now reigns in glory

forever. "He said to me: 'It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life.'" - Revelation 21:6



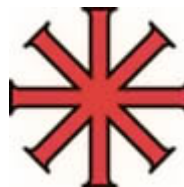
Anchor - The anchor cross originated in primitive days in the catacombs, formed by combining an anchor and cross. This cross can be used to symbolize the Christian's hope, which is anchored in Christ. Anchor crosses are occasionally a feature in coats of arms, in which context they are referred to by the heraldic terms "anchry" or "ancre." This cross was also the emblem of Saint Clement, Bishop of Rome; who, according to tradition, was tied to an anchor and tossed into the sea by the emperor Trajan. This cross is also known as the mariner's cross.

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Ansatid - Also called the crux ansata (handled cross), this looped tau cross symbolizes life through Christ. "Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No

one comes to the Father except through me.'" - John 14:6



Baptismal - This Greek cross is superimposed on a Greek chi, the first letter of the Greek word for Christ. It forms a cross with eight arms. Since the number eight is

symbolic of rebirth or regeneration, this cross is often used as a baptismal cross. "He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done,

but because of His mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit." - Titus 3:5



Bottonnée - This widely-used cross calls to mind the Holy Trinity because of its trefoil end caps, and its name actually refers to the shape of an architectural trefoil.

Once commonly-stamped on the covers of hymnals, it's now used often where a decorative form of the cross is desired. This cross is also called a bottony or budded cross.



Byzantine - The Byzantine cross is generally used by the Greek Orthodox Church. The Byzantine Empire, of which Constantine was emperor, was the empire that brought widespread adoption of Christianity to Europe.



Calvary - The three steps leading up to this graded Latin cross represent the hill of Calvary where Christ was crucified; or, more often, God's gifts of faith, hope, and love. "And now

these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love." - 1 Corinthians 13:13



Canterbury - This design consists of four hammer-like arms which spring from a square, creating a circular pattern. Each arm bears a triangular panel incised with a triquetra, symbolizing the Holy Trinity. The Saxon original dates from c. 850 A.D., being excavated in 1867 in Canterbury, England. This cross is common in Anglican churches.



Carolingian - This cross is a series of four intertwined celtic trinity knots (triquetra), each knot reminding us of the Holy Trinity. The circle around

this cross symbolizes the fact that God is eternal - without beginning and without end. This cross design is named after the Carolingian Dynasty of France, its most prominent ruler being Charlemagne, who was crowned emperor in the year 800.



Celtic - One of the most ancient of cruciforms, this cross was used by the Celtic Christians in Great Britain and Ireland. This is also sometimes called the Irish cross, or the high cross; and is

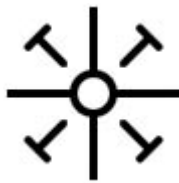
very common in churches and graveyards.



Cercelée - This cross has its arms split at the end, curved in a manner resembling rams' horns.



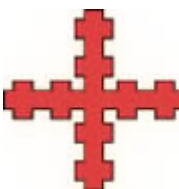
Conqueror's - This Greek cross is complemented with the first and last letters of the Greek name for Jesus (IC), the first and last letters of the Greek word for Christ (XC), and the Greek word for Conqueror (NIKA). The



Coptic - A small circle from which emanate four branches of equal length, with angled T shapes in the corner, cross-pieces outward, representing the nails used in Jesus' crucifixion. The Coptic Church, headquartered in Alexandria, shares the history and theology of the early church, in which Egypt played an important role.



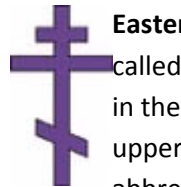
Crown, Key, Sword, and Hammer - This Greek cross has four other Christian symbols on it. The Hammer represents the Hammer of God, the Law. The Key represents the Keys to the Kingdom, the Gospel and forgiveness. The Law crucifies us with Christ, and the Gospel brings us Life through Christ. The Sword represents the Church Militant, the spiritual kingdom of Christ at war with the worldly kingdom of Satan here on earth. The Crown represents the Church Triumphant, the kingdom of Christ prevailing over the kingdom of Satan. Jesus said, "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." - John 16:33



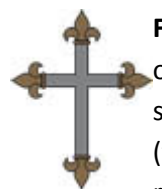
Embattled - This heraldic cross calls to mind the battlements of a fortress or castle, and thus may be used as a symbol of the Church Militant (the church



Crosslet - A cross formed of four smaller crosses, this form represents the spreading of the Gospel to the four corners of the earth. This ornamental version rests on a lattice forming four additional crosses. "Jesus said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.'" - Mark 16:15



Eastern - This form of the cross, also called a Slavonic cross, is used primarily in the Russian Orthodox Church. The upper bar represents the inscription, abbreviated INRI, that Pilate had placed above Jesus' head. The slanted line is thought to point up to Heaven and down to Hell. Some say that the upper side pointing to the right (according to Jesus' view) indicates the repentant thief to whom Jesus promised Paradise, and the lower side pointing to the left indicates the thief who mocked Jesus. Others suggest that the bottom line represents the footrest, wrenched loose by Jesus' writhing in intense agony. Another explanation is that the slanted bar forms Saint Andrew's cross. Saint Andrew is believed to have introduced Christianity to Russia.

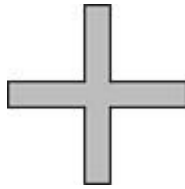


Fleur-de-Lis - A cross with the ends of the arms flory (fleury), having a shape somewhat like a fleur-de-lis (fleur-de-lys); this cross is a reminder of the Holy Trinity and of

here on earth; as opposed to the Church Triumphant, or those who have gone to be with the Lord). This symbol is also known as a crenellée or crenel cross, from the Latin word for "notch," crena.



Fleurie - The liliform end caps of this cross remind us of the Holy Trinity.



Greek - An ancient cruciform with arms of equal length. This cross is also known as the crux immissa quadrata.



Jerusalem - This complex form is composed of a central cross made of four tau crosses representing the Old Testament law. The four smaller Greek crosses represent the fulfillment of the law in the Gospel of Christ. Others have interpreted it to represent the missionary work of the church, which is spreading the Gospel to the four corners of the earth. Still others have acknowledged the five crosses to represent the five wounds of Christ on the cross. This cross appeared on the coat-of-arms of Godfrey of Bouillon, the first ruler of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem; and was embodied in the heraldry of the Crusaders. The Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem existed for almost two hundred years after the First Crusade. This cross is also known as the Crusaders' cross or fivefold cross.



Latin - This most common of all cruciforms reminds us of the supreme sacrifice offered by Jesus for the sins of the world. The cross is empty to remind us of the resurrection and the hope of eternal life. This

the Resurrection.



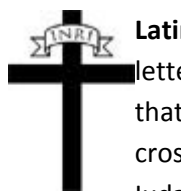
Fourchée - This is a heraldic cross, also called fourchy or fourche, which means "forked."



Ionic - This form of the cross was taken by St. Columba to the island of Iona in the sixth century.

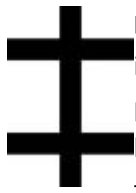


Labarum - Constantine's Labarum is also known as a Christogram or Chrismon, a monogram of the name Jesus Christ. It consists of the superimposed Greek letters chi (X) and rho (P), often embroidered on altar paraments and clerical vestments. Often this symbol is referred to as a Chi-Rho. Several other forms of Christograms exist.



Latin with Proclamation - The Latin letters INRI stand for the inscription that Pilate ordered placed on Jesus' cross: "Iesus Nazarenus Rex Iudaeorum" - Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews. This notice was also written in

cross is also known as the crux ordinaria.



Lorraine - This cross is generally used in heraldry. It is similar to a patriarchal cross; but usually has one bar near the bottom and one near the top, rather than having both near the top.



Moline - In this type of cross, the ends of the arms are split and curved back. The two points at the end of each arm remind us of the two natures of Christ - 100% man in order to die in our stead, and 100% God in order to keep the law perfectly so that His sacrifice would cover the sins of the world.

Aramaic and Greek, as we read in John 19:19-20.



Maltese - This cross has arms which narrow towards the center, and are indented at the ends. This makes an eight-pointed cross with no curved lines. The eight outer points of this cross are symbolic of regeneration, and are sometimes said to represent the eight beatitudes. The cross was the emblem of the Knights of St. John, who were driven from Rhodes to the island of Malta by the Turks. Malta is the island where St. Paul was shipwrecked.



Natal - This cross is shaped like a star, reminding us of the story of Jesus' birth and foretelling the purpose for which he was born. "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star." - Revelation 22:16



Papal - This cross is the official emblem of the papal office, and is often used in ecclesiastical heraldry. The three bars are sometimes said to represent the three crosses on Calvary.



Patonce - A cross patonce is more or less an intermediate between a cross pattee and a cross flory, and is often used in heraldry. The liliform ends of this cross remind us of the Holy Trinity.



Passion - The pointed ends of this Latin cross represent the nails used to attach Christ to the cross, and the suffering of Christ at his crucifixion.



Patriarchal - This is an ecclesiastical cross that is often seen carried by the patriarchs in works of art. The upper bar represents the inscription placed on the cross by Pilate. It was adopted by cardinals and archbishops as a hierarchical distinction. In the Orthodox Church, a short, slanted crosspiece is placed near the foot of the cross.

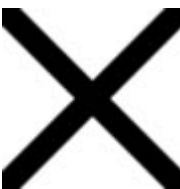


Pattée - This cross is often confused with the Maltese cross. A cross pattée has arms narrowing towards the centre, but with non-indented ends. The lines of the arms are also curved, unlike the Maltese. This

cross is sometimes referred to as an iron cross.



Potent - This cross has a crossbar at the end of each of its arms, forming four separate tau crosses. "Potent" is an old word for a crutch, and is used in heraldic terminology to describe a T shape.



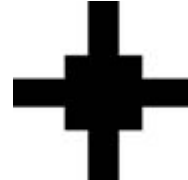
Saint Andrew's - According to tradition, Saint Andrew felt unworthy to be crucified like his Lord, so he begged that his cross be made differently. It is a symbol of humility and suffering, and is sometimes referred to

as the crux decussata. This cross is also called the saltire, the boundary cross, because it was used by the Romans as a barrier. The cross doesn't have to be at this particular angle to qualify as a saltire; the symbol X can also be considered a Saint Andrew's cross.



Pommée - The knobs, resembling apples, represent the fruits of the Christian life. Since knobs were used on pastoral

staves in ancient times as symbols of authority, this is sometimes referred to as the bishop's cross. "So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God." - Romans 7:4



Quadrate - A cross with a square at the intersection point, which reminds us of the four Gospels


going out to the four corners of the earth. The number four also represents earth, so this cross can signify the fact that Christ died on the cross to save this world from its sins.




Saint Peter's - An upside-down Latin cross, based on the story that Saint Peter was martyred by being crucified upside-


down. Like his brother Saint Andrew, Saint Peter felt unworthy to be crucified in the same manner as Christ. This cross symbolizes humility and deep love for Christ as our Savior. "May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." - Galatians 6:14

T **Tau** - The tau cross, made from the Greek letter T, is the simplest of all crosses. It is often used as the cross of prophecy, or Old Testament cross, because it is the traditional sign that Israelites made with lamb's blood on their doorposts in Egypt on the night of Passover. A tau cross is often pictured as the pole on which Moses lifted up the brazen serpent in the wilderness. This cross is also known as Saint Anthony's cross, the Egyptian cross, and the crux commissa. Francis of Assisi used it as his signature.

 **Triumphant** - This cross symbolizes the final triumph and reign of Christ over the world. It is often used in Christian art atop the scepter of Jesus as He reigns in glory. This is also sometimes called the Cross of Victory or cross and orb.

"Thanks be to God! He gives us victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." - 1 Corinthians 15:57

 **Triparted** - A cross triple parted and fretted. In heraldry, it is interlaced. The triparted cross represents the Holy Trinity, and the twelve ends represent the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve disciples.

 **Voided** - A cross voided throughout, also known as the gammadia, can be seen as a Greek cross with its centre lines removed, or as composed of four angles (L shapes) separated by a thin space. The name gammadia refers to its being made up of four shapes similar to a capital Greek letter gamma. This is the third letter of the Greek alphabet, which can symbolize the Holy Trinity. The four angles represent the four Gospels being spread to the four corners of the earth, and the voided lines show us that Christ left the cross to proclaim His victory over sin, death, and the devil.

"Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." - Hebrews 12:2

More Christian Symbols



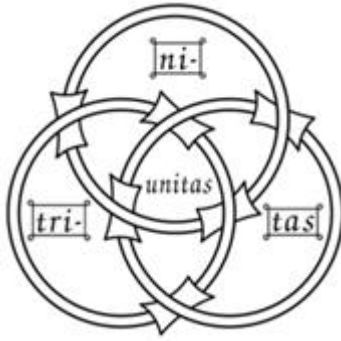
The Dove - This is a symbol of the Holy Spirit, from the account of Jesus' baptism. "Then John gave this

testimony: 'I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on Him. I would not have known Him, except that the One who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is He who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God.'" - John 1:32-34



The Paschal Lamb - This is a symbol of Jesus Christ, who is the sacrificial Lamb of God, who took our place on the cross to atone for all of our sins. The flag with

the cross represents Christ's victory over death. "The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, 'Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!'" - John 1:29



Borromean Rings - A Trinitarian symbol, Borromean rings consist of three circles or ellipses linked together to form a

Brunnian link. This mathematical term means that no two of the rings are linked, yet they are all linked. This illustration has the Latin words "Trinitas Unitas" inscribed in the circles, which mean "Three in One, and One in Three." Sometimes this symbol is placed inside of a triangle, another symbol of the Holy Trinity.



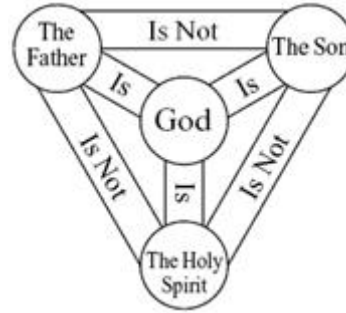
Holy Baptism - Holy Baptism is represented by the shell, which pours water. The baptismal candle represents the Holy Spirit, which appeared as flames with the

Apostles on Pentecost. The Bible underneath it all is God's Word, as Holy Baptism is the water and the Word, through which the Holy Spirit works. At the center is Christ, represented by a common Greek Christogram combined with a cross.



Crossed Keys - The Keys of the Kingdom represent the authority of the Church to forgive sins in Jesus' name. Two

keys represent dual authority to open Heaven to repentant sinners and to lock Heaven to the unrepentant. This is also a common emblem of St. Peter.



Shield of the Trinity - Also called the Scutum Fidei (Latin for "Shield of the Faith" - Ephesians 6:16), this is a

traditional Christian visual symbol which expresses many aspects of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, summarizing the first part of the Athanasian Creed in a compact diagram. In medieval England and France, this emblem was considered to be the heraldic arms of the Triune God.



Holy Communion - This shows the bread and the cup of wine, which are the true body and blood present in the Lord's Supper. "The Lord

Jesus, on the night He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way, after supper He took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.'" - 1 Corinthians 11:23b-25



IHS / JHS - The most common Christogram is IHS or IHC, derived from the first three letters of the Greek name of

Jesus. Because the Latin alphabet letters I and J were not systematically distinguished until the 17th-century, JHS and JHC are completely equivalent to IHS and IHC.



Ichthus - The Greek word for "fish," ichthus or ichthys is a Christian symbol for Christ, and is composed with the initials of these five words: Iesus Christos theou uios soter: Jesus Christ Son of God Saviour. During the persecution of the early church, this symbol was



among those used by Christians as a means of identification and to designate a place of gathering.



Christian Flag - The Christian flag was first conceived on September 26, 1897, in Brighton Chapel on Coney Island in Brooklyn, New York in the United States. The flag's most conspicuous symbol is the Christian cross, the most universal symbol for Christianity. The red color represents the blood of Jesus and brings to mind His crucifixion, as Jesus' death and resurrection is the means through which God saves us from our sins. In Colossians 1:20 we read "Through [Jesus] God

reconciles Himself to all things... making peace by the blood of the cross." The white field draws on symbolism throughout the Bible equating white clothes with purity and forgiveness. People who have been "washed white as snow" in the Bible have been cleansed from their sins, as Isaiah 1:18 describes. The symbolism behind the blue canton is uncertain, but has been interpreted to represent Heaven, truth, or Holy Baptism.