The Icon of the Resurrection

Written by John Menghini

Recently, we have installed three beautiful icons in our Adoration Chapel. The first icon, which was hung December 2022, is of the "Crucifixion of the Lord." The second icon, "The Resurrection" was hung in April 2023. Our most recent icon, "Ascension of Our Lord" was hung in October 2023. All three icons were created by an iconographer from Coronado, California by the name of Maidie Weisbarth.

Today we turn our attention and contemplation to the icon of Christ's resurrection; oftentimes this icon is referred to as "Christ's Descent into Hades". Keep in mind that icons are not meant to be artistic representations but rather they "speak" to us through our eyes of faith by recounting sacred scripture.

Jesus is the center and primary focus of this icon and hence is more prominent in size than the surrounding figures. This dichotomy is designed to show the obvious difference between God and man. Jesus is surrounded by a series of concentric blue circles known as the "Mandala". The Mandala is symbolic of the Infinite and Divine Mystery from which all creation comes with Christ as the center, radiating light by which all can become one through Him.

The white garment worn by Jesus is shown in movement and illustrates the upward movement as Christ rises from the abyss. Jesus is grasping Adam and Eve by their wrists and lifting them up, freeing them from the confines of Hades (death). Note here, that they are not holding on to God but God is holding on to them. This illustrates clearly that mankind does not save itself but is saved by Christ. The dark chasm of sin and death is straddled by Christ's feet which are shown standing on two wooden planks; these wooden planks or "bars" are representative of the gates of hell, which Christ has smashed to free its captors. The royally crowned David and Salomon, the ancient Jewish Kings, stand at Christ's right hand. On His left hand stand John the Baptist and the prophetess Deborah; considered the greatest of the 7 woman prophets.

The overall "statement" of this beautiful icon is victory; Christ's victory over sin and death and in His rising from the dead. Let us look upon this icon with wonder and recall the words in Holy Scripture that recount this scene:

"Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay."