

Coptic Iconography

A Window Into the Heavenly

Icon

Greek word “εἰκών” meaning “image”.

Icon

A faithful representation of the Holy Scripture,
or a biography a Saint



Christ



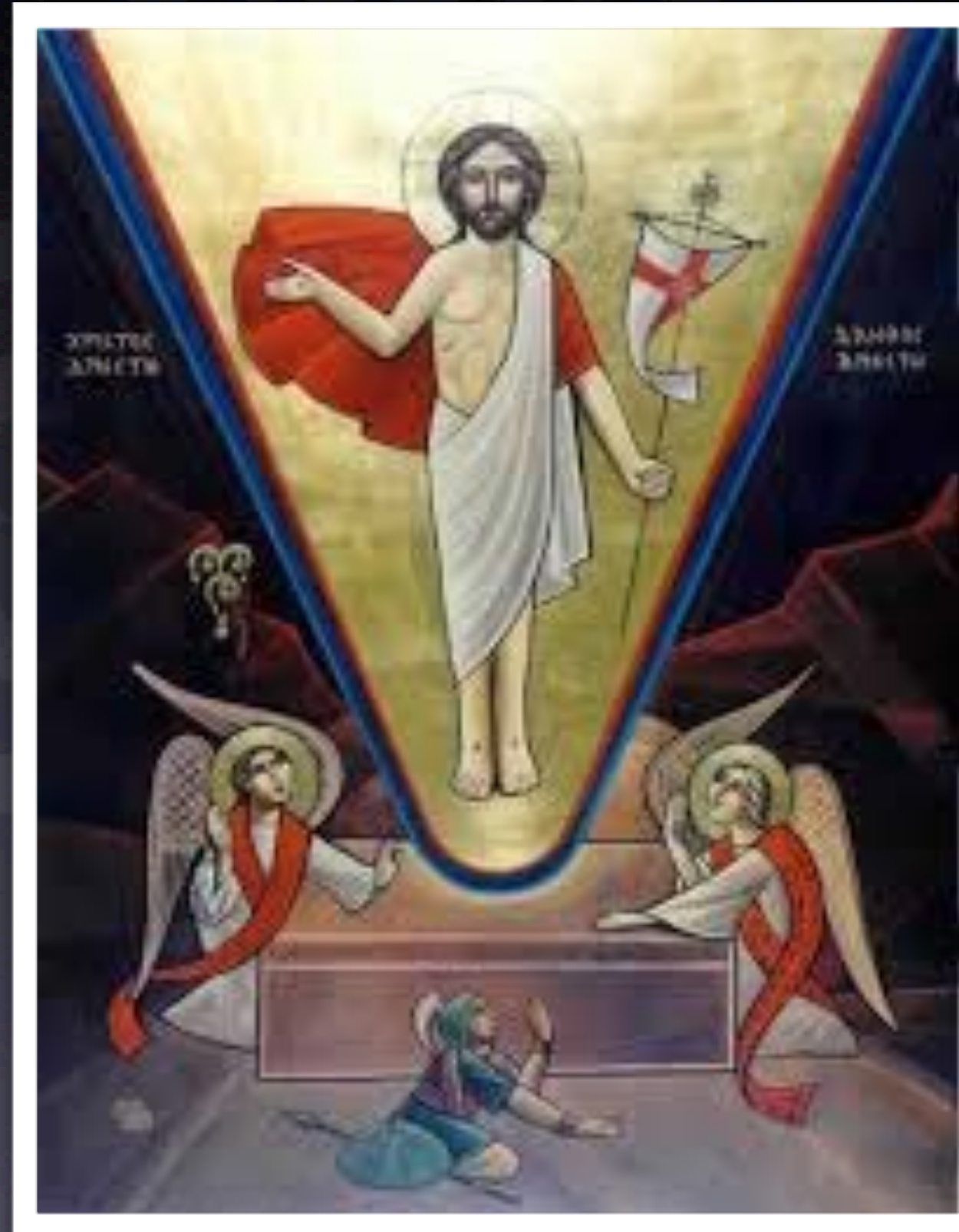
Events



Saints

Written, Not Painted

Blessed be the Lord who
2 Who forget not all thy
3 Who who healeth all thy
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How to Write an Icon

Review Design



Gesso (Glue) on Wood



Design on Gesso Wood



Edward Ishak

Gild the Background



Dark Colors First



Follows the order of enlightenment: darkness until the light of Christ shines. “You are the light of the world” (Mt. 5:14).

Light Layers



Clothes, Other Items Last



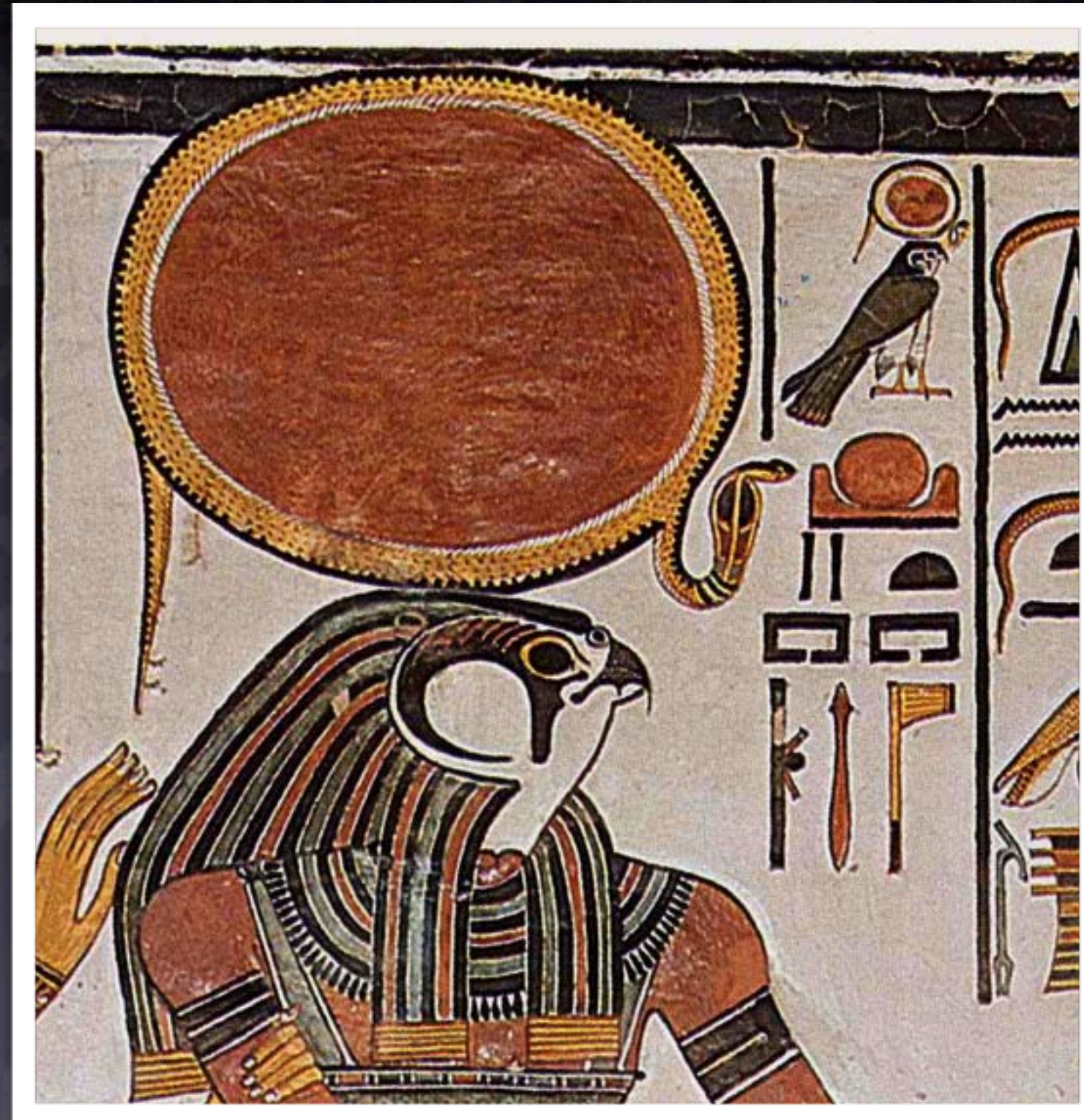
Can take between 30 and 300 hours, depending on size

Inspiration

- Ancient Egypt
- Rome
- Byzantium



The Eye of Horus



Egyptian god, Horus



Mummy portrait of
young woman, 3rd cent.

History

- Inspiration from pre-Christian Egypt, Rome, Byzantium
- Golden age: 4th-7th centuries, decline during Arab invasion
- Revival during Fatimid period: 10th-12th centuries
- 19th cent: verge of disappearance



St. Anne, 8th cent.



Nativity, 10th cent.



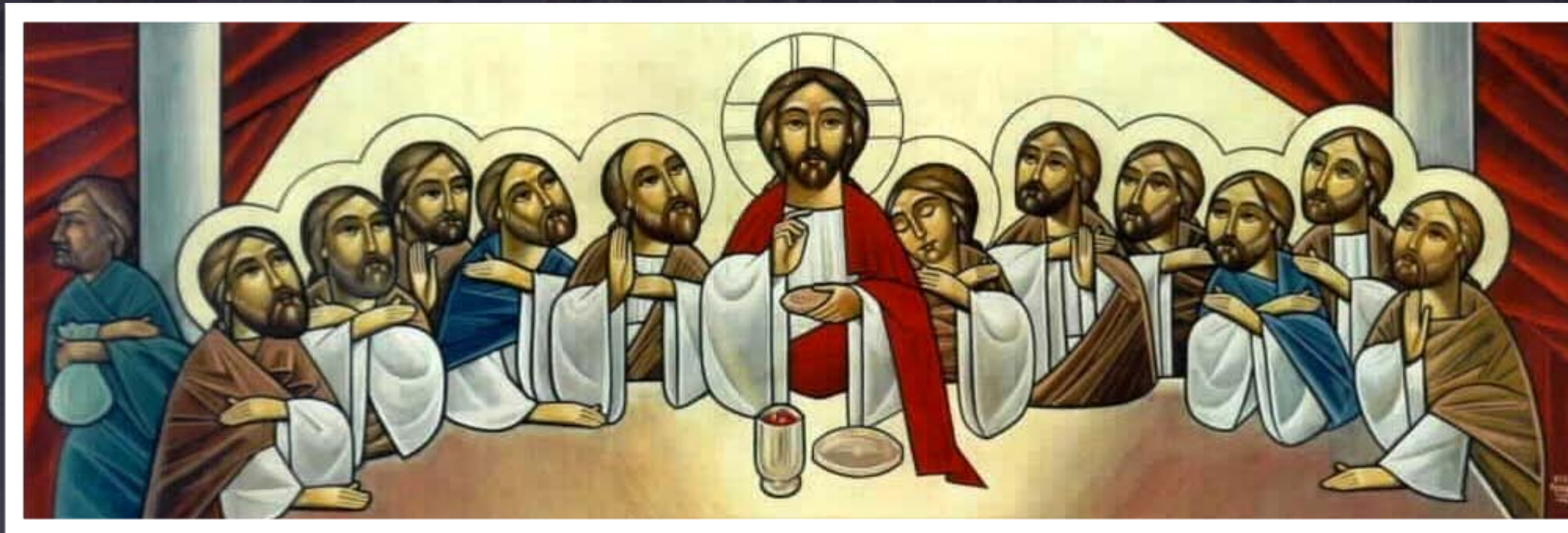
Archangel,
17th cent.



St. Mercurius
18th cent.

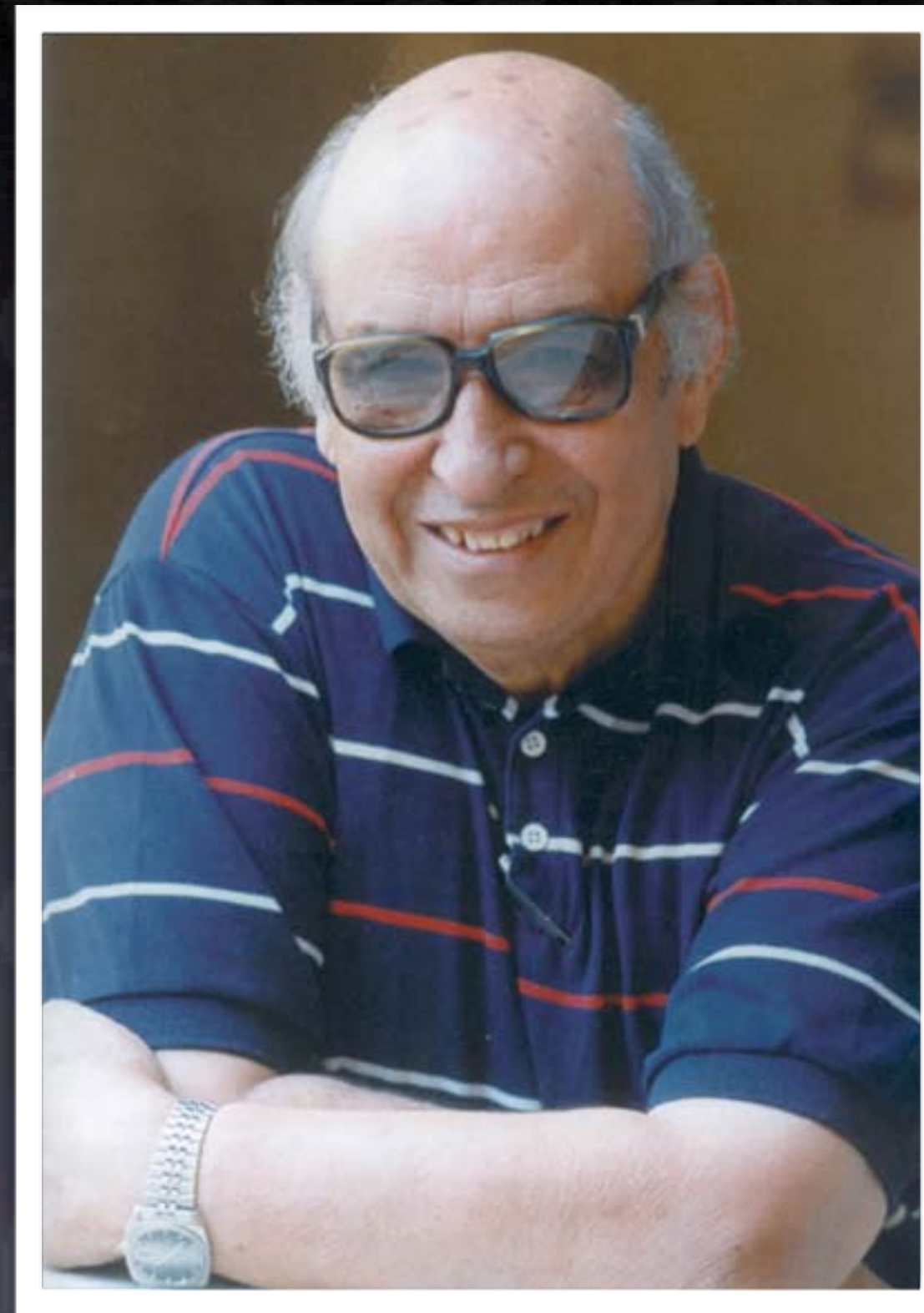
Neo-Coptic School

- Started during the papacy of H.H. Pope Kyrillos VI
- Founded by Dr. Isaac Fanous (1919-2007)



Iconographer

- Active member of the church
- Live a spiritual life
- Theologically knowledgeable
- Not just an artist
- Deep understanding of church dogmas



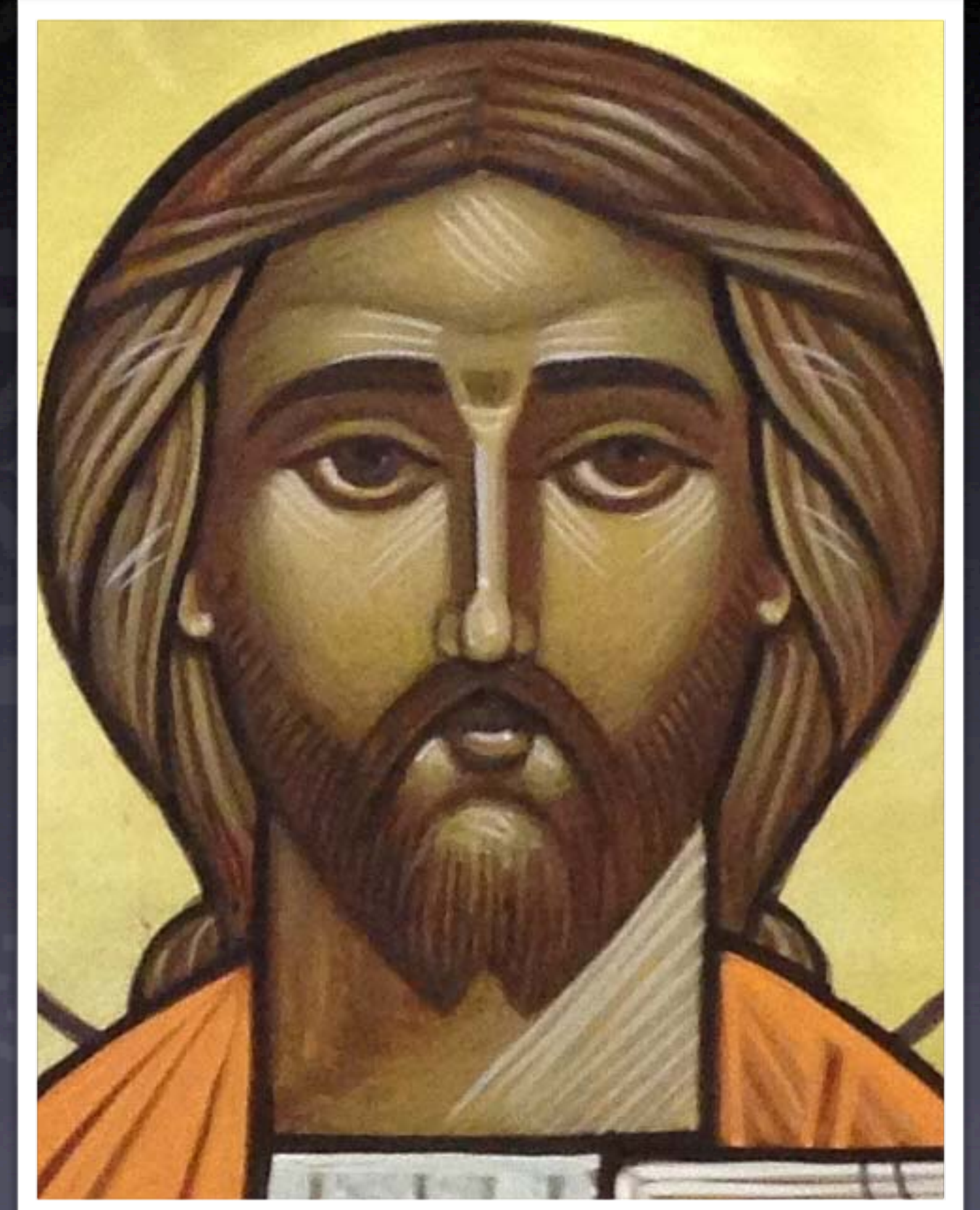
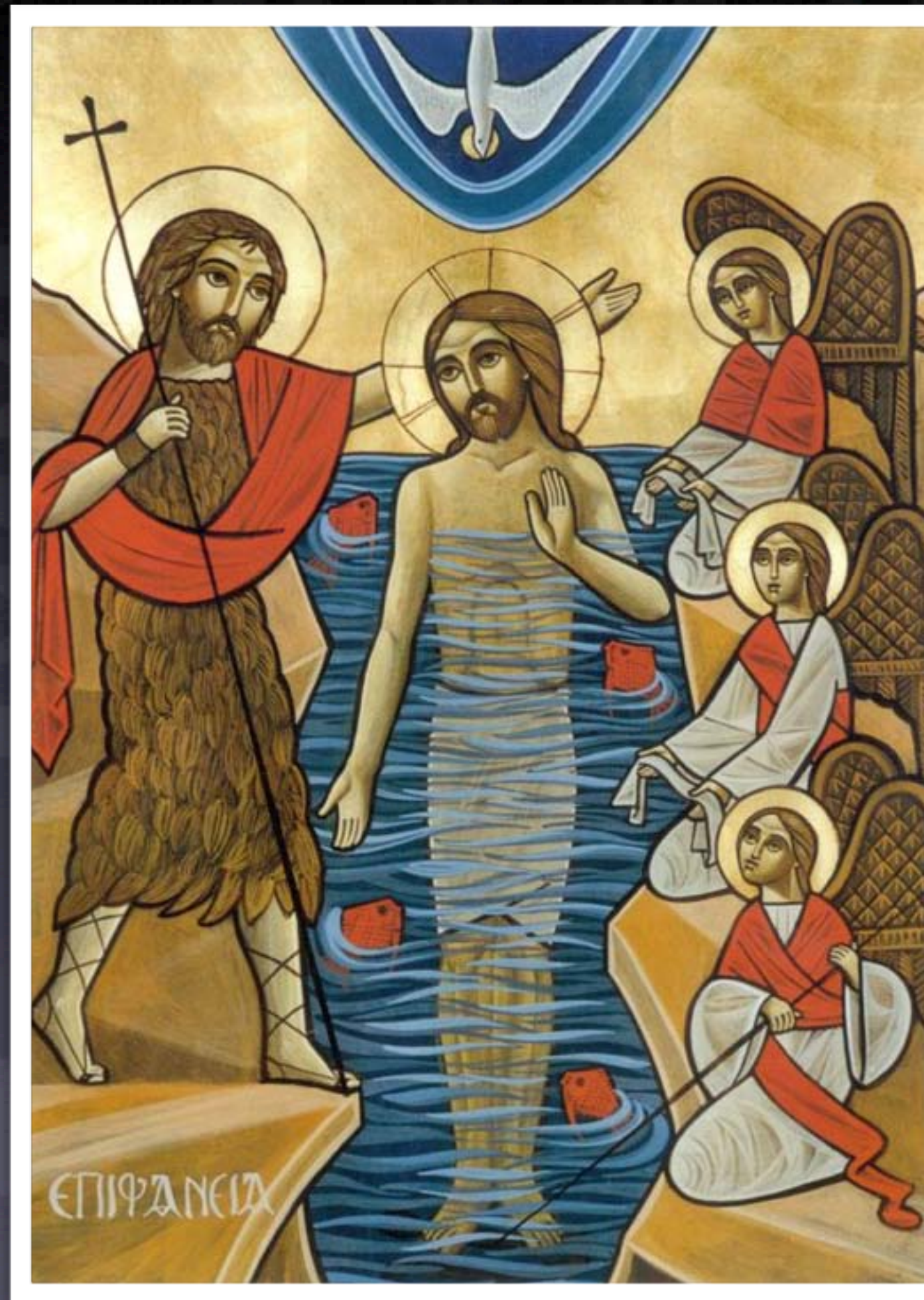
Dr. Isaac Fanous



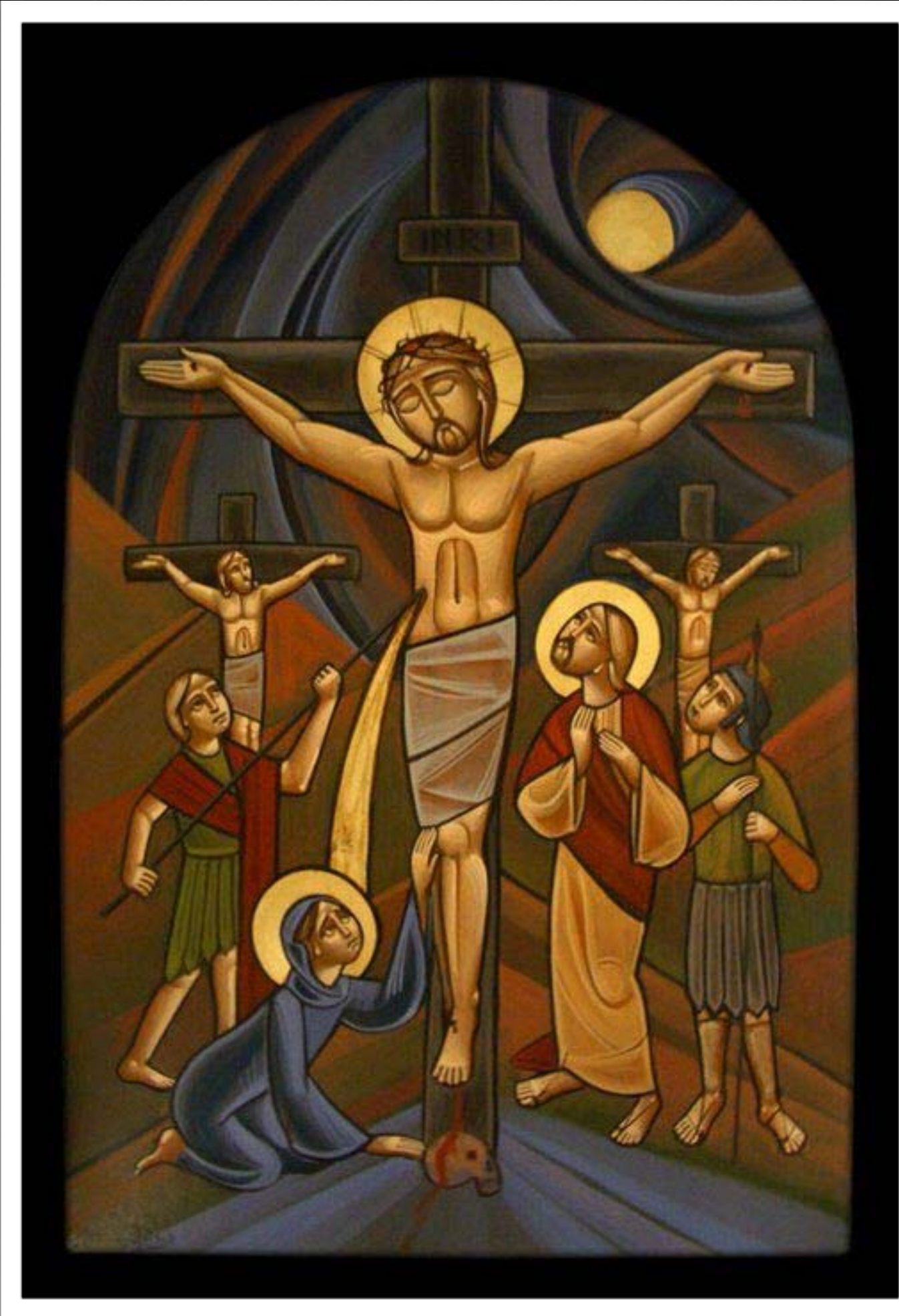
Dr. Stéphane René
w/ Dr. Isaac Fanous

General Style

- Large eyes, ears
- Long thin noses
- Small mouths
- Organs focused on Christ
- Light coming from Christ, or within



General Style



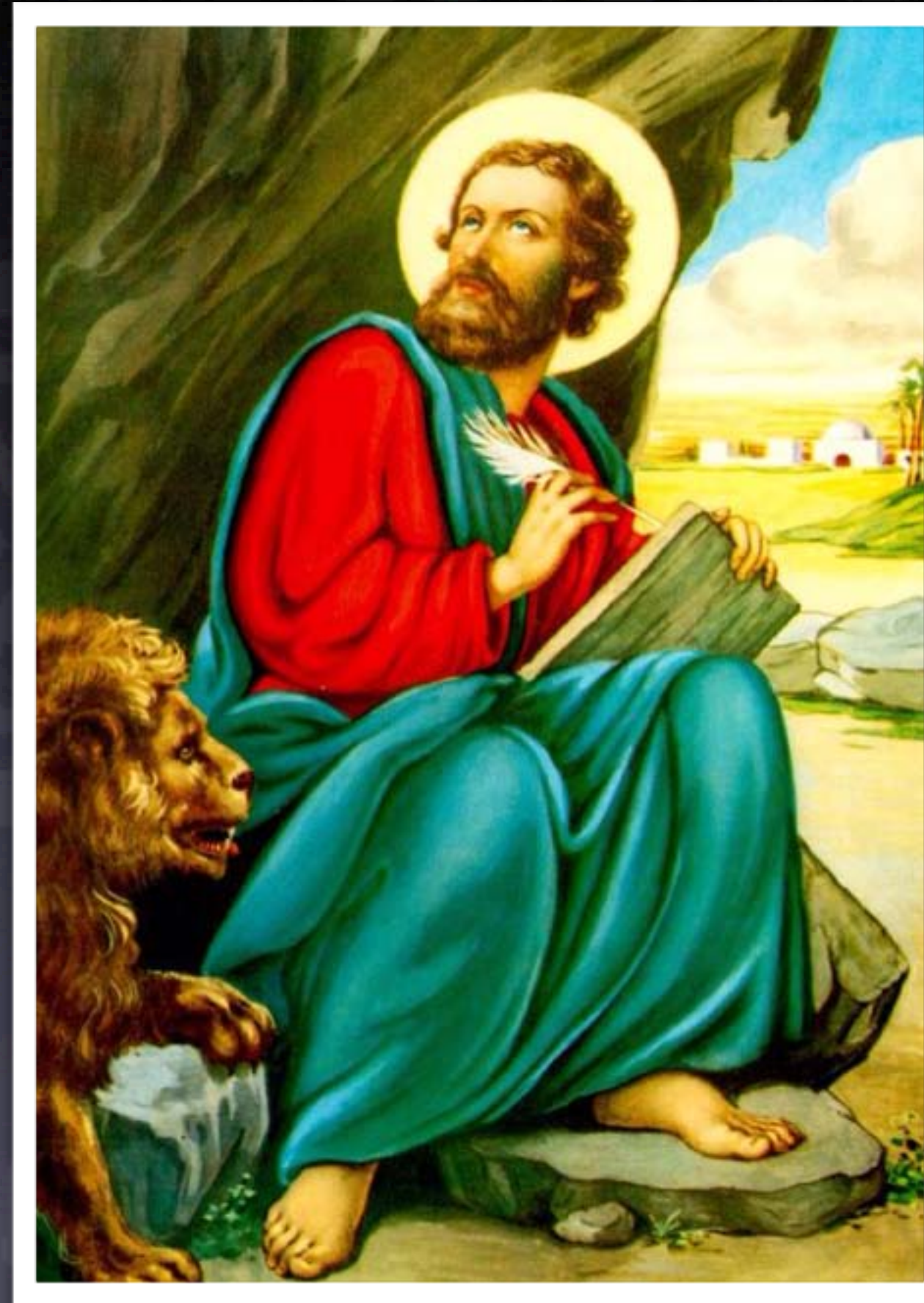
- Idealism over realism
- Focus is the human figure: a representation of the image of Christ
- Lacking details

"In the traditional Greek style, there are more details, and it is the imitation of nature that comes first, whereas we, the Egyptians, use abstraction to express our vision of eternity, of immortality." - Isaac Fanous.

General Style



Coptic Icon of
St. Mark

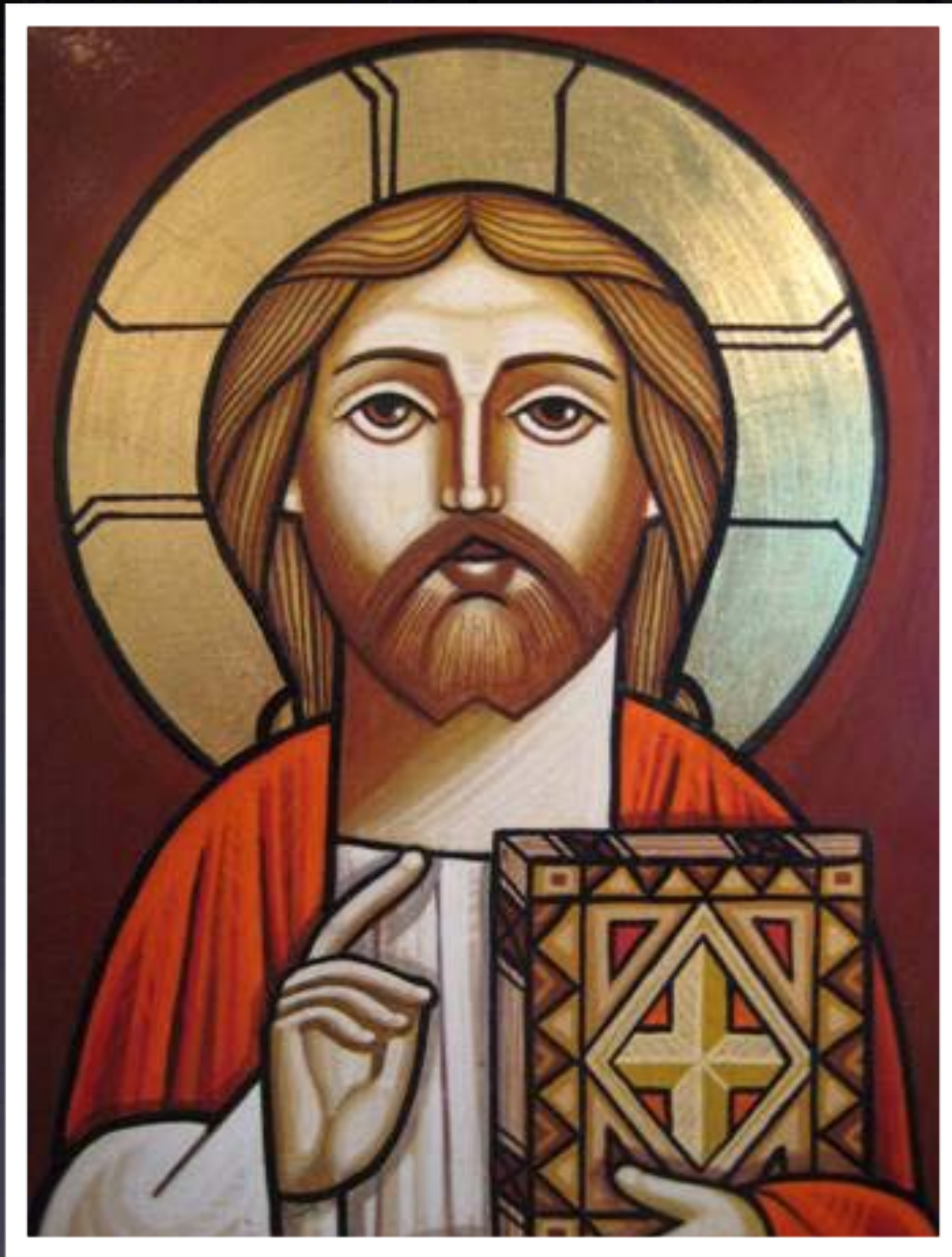


Roman Icon of
St. Mark

Edward Ishak

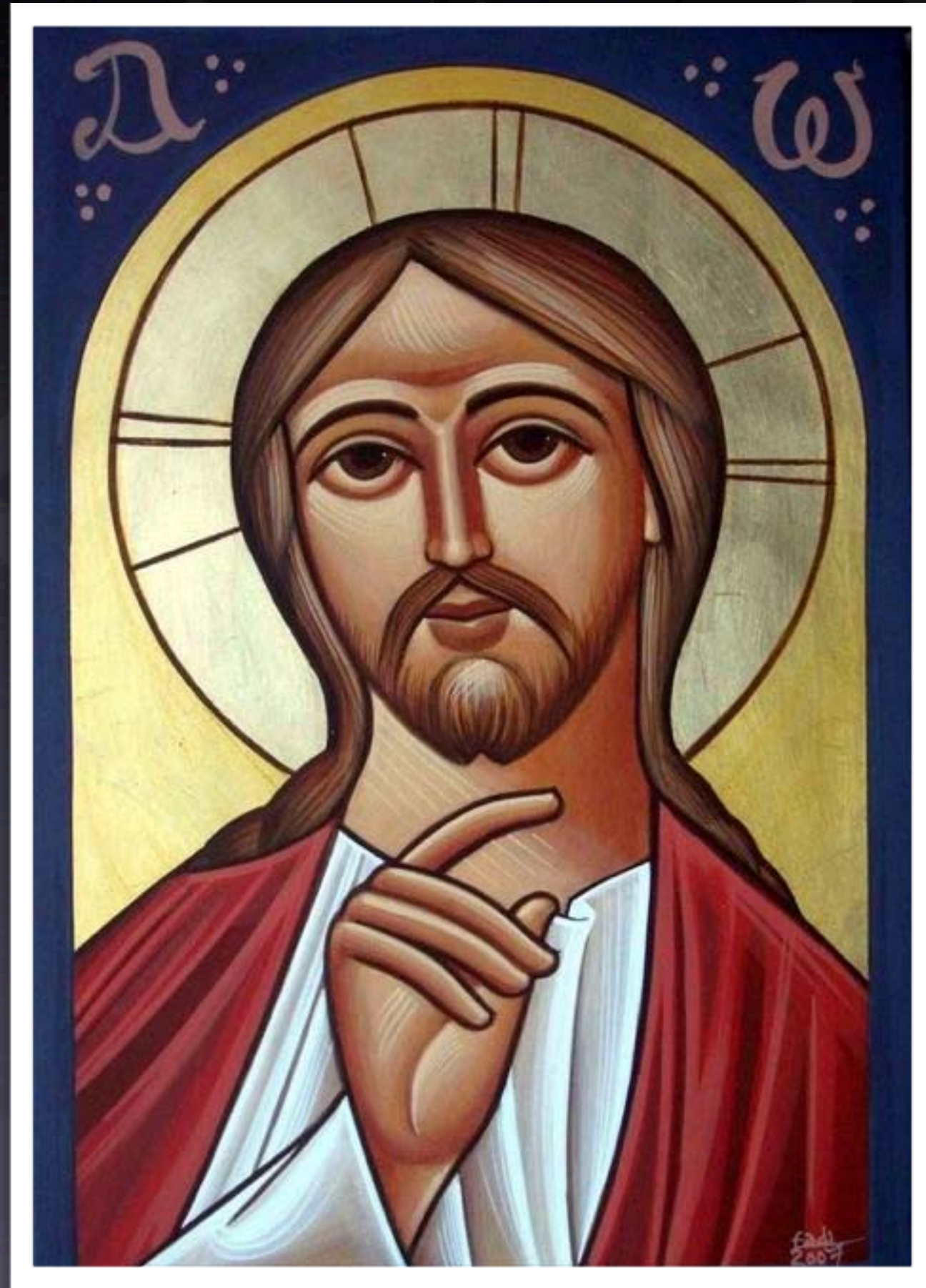
- Simple
- Thick lines
- No 3D
- No external source of light, no shadows
- Each color has significance

General Style



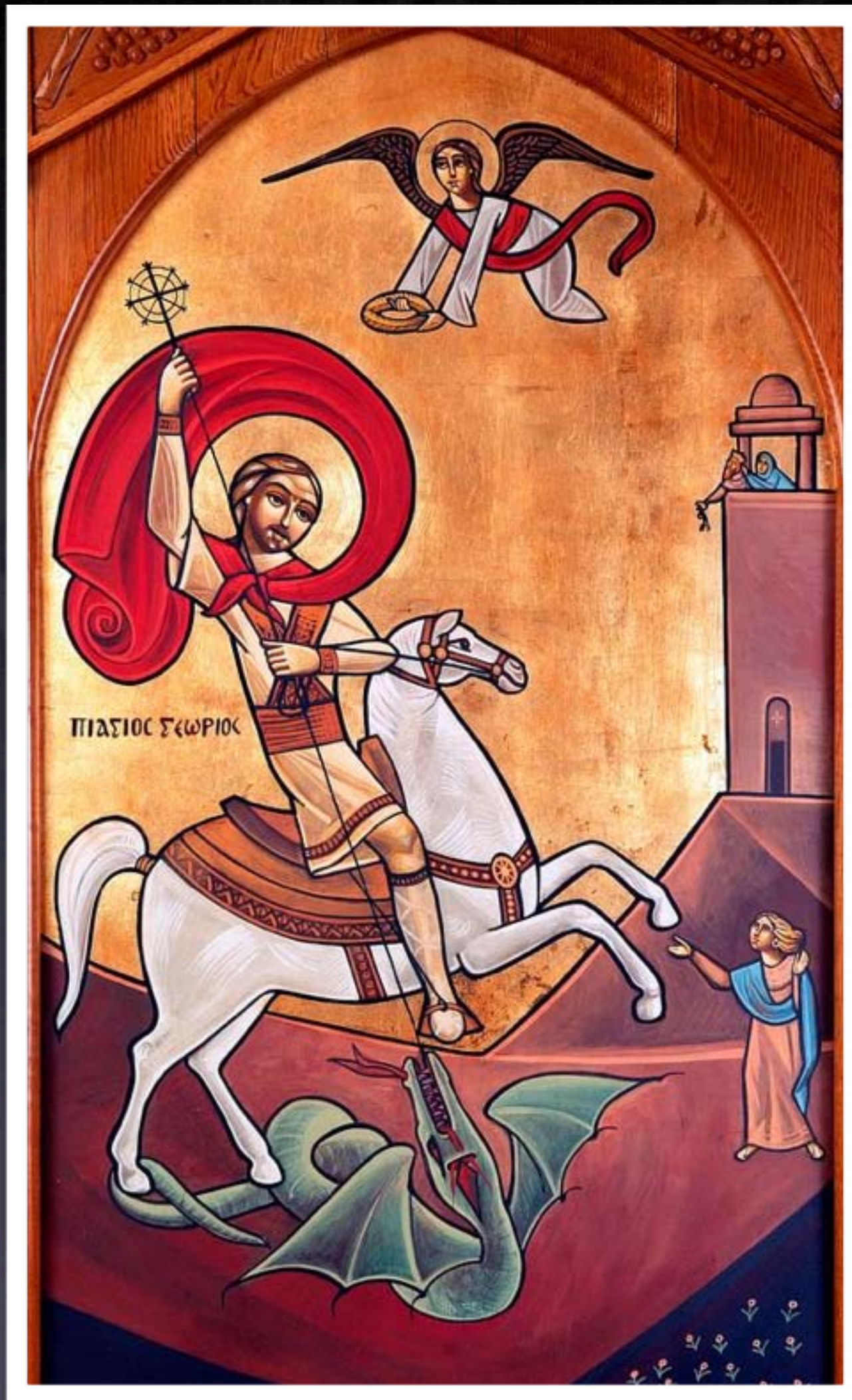
Our Savior and the saints always depicted facing the worshipper frontally and look directly to him/her

General Style



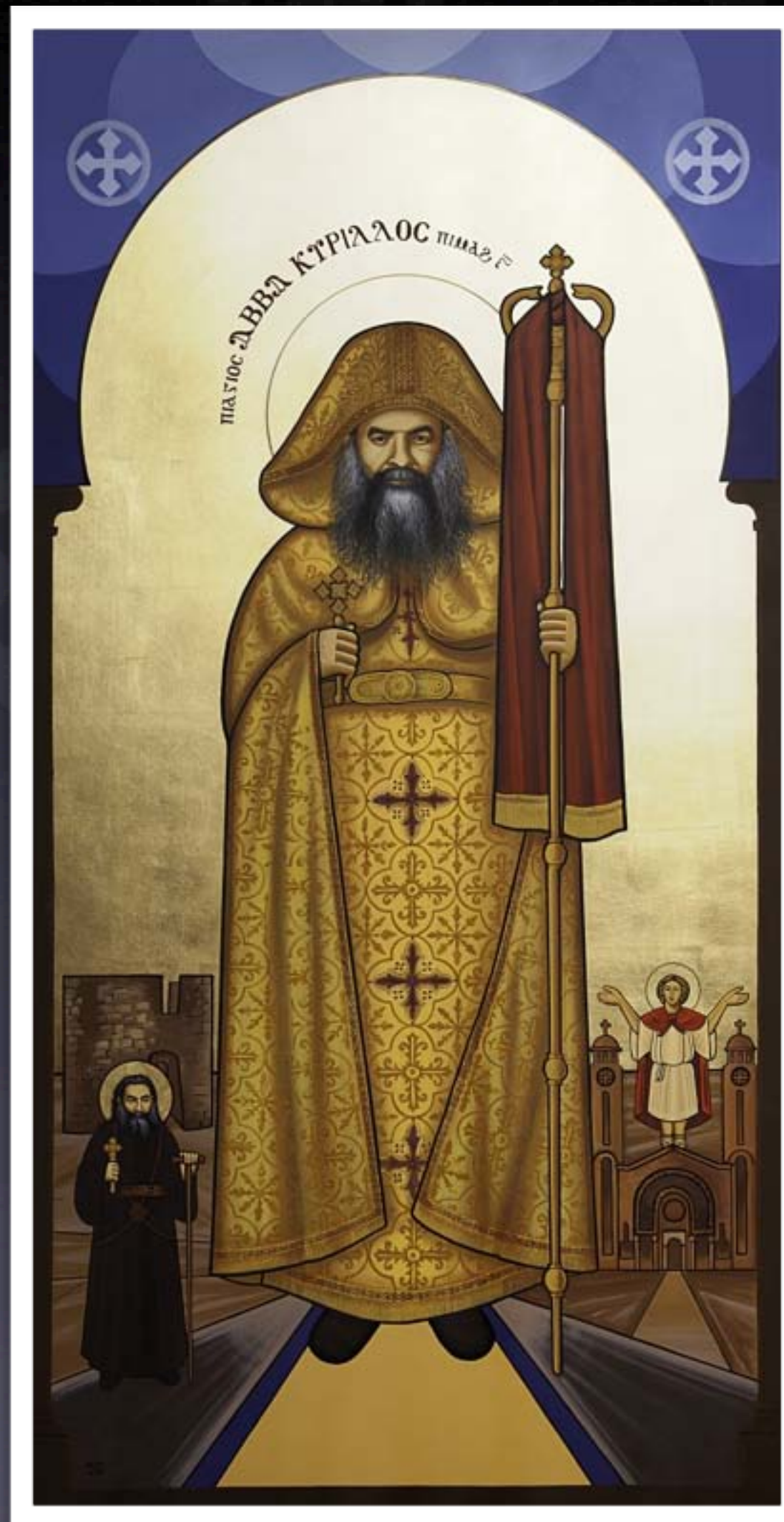
Halo is expression of light radiating from within—differs from western halos which appear as flying discs

General Style



Saint (especially martyrs) always depicted as victorious and calm, never weak, or in pain.

General Style



Saint is in state of glorification, background must be gilded (gold). Gold symbolizes heavenly glory. Encourages us to persevere in our own struggles.

Color Symbolism



- Red: honor, sacrifice (martyr)
- Purple: royalty
- White: purity, divinity
- Blue: heaven, 2nd heaven
- Brown: humility (ground)
- Gold: glory
- Green: sin, evil

Reading Icons

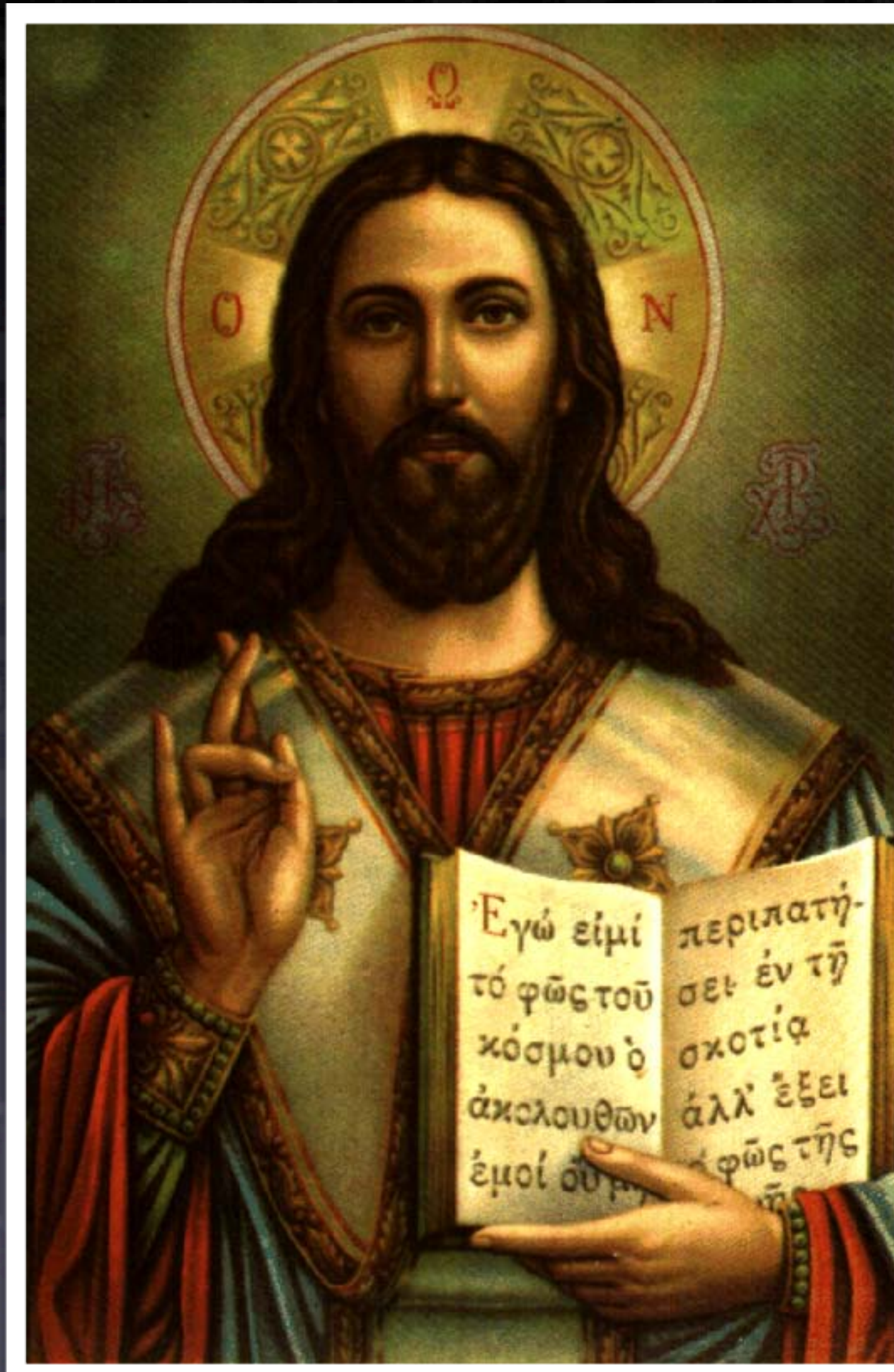
Coptic or Not?



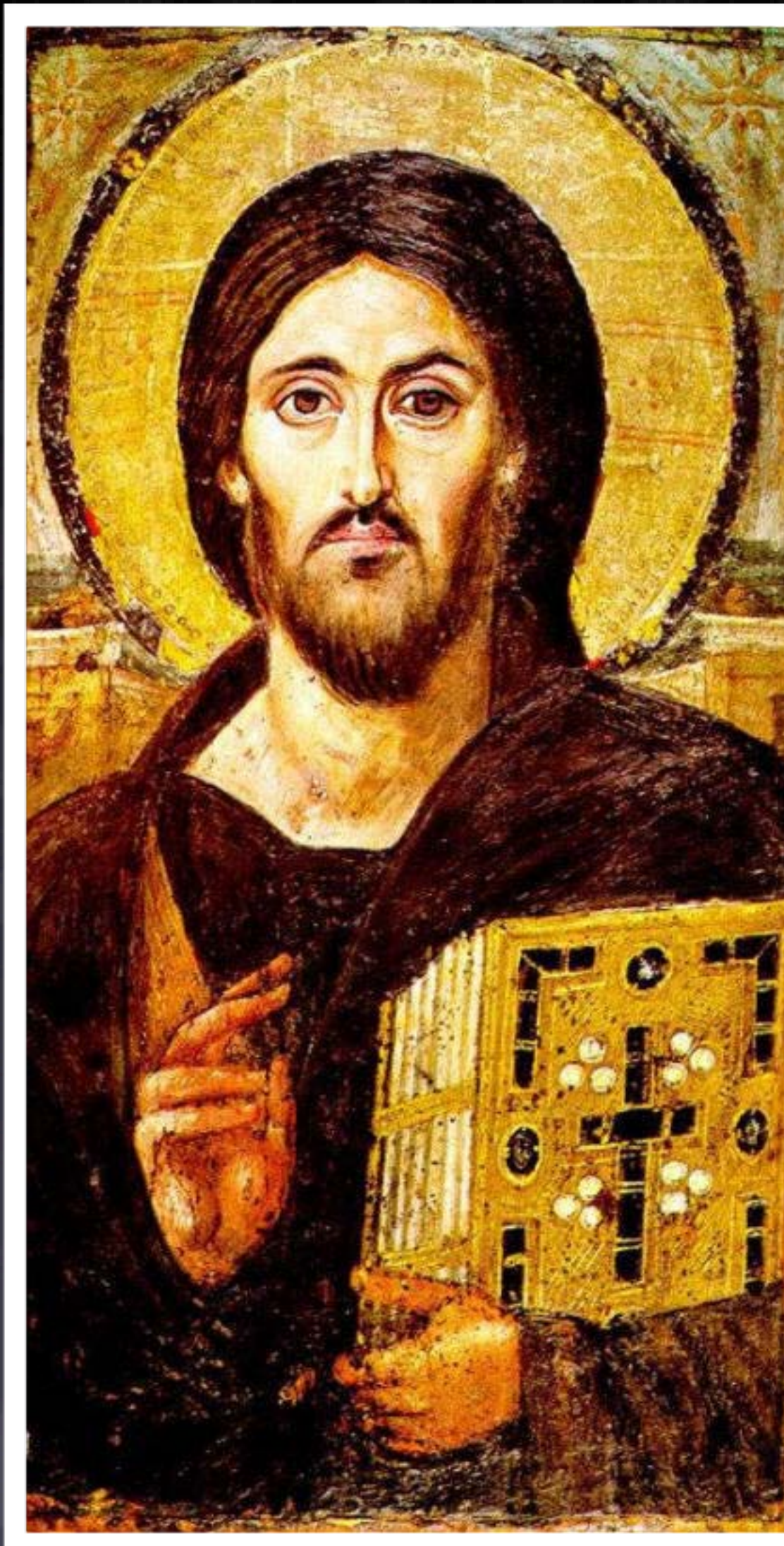
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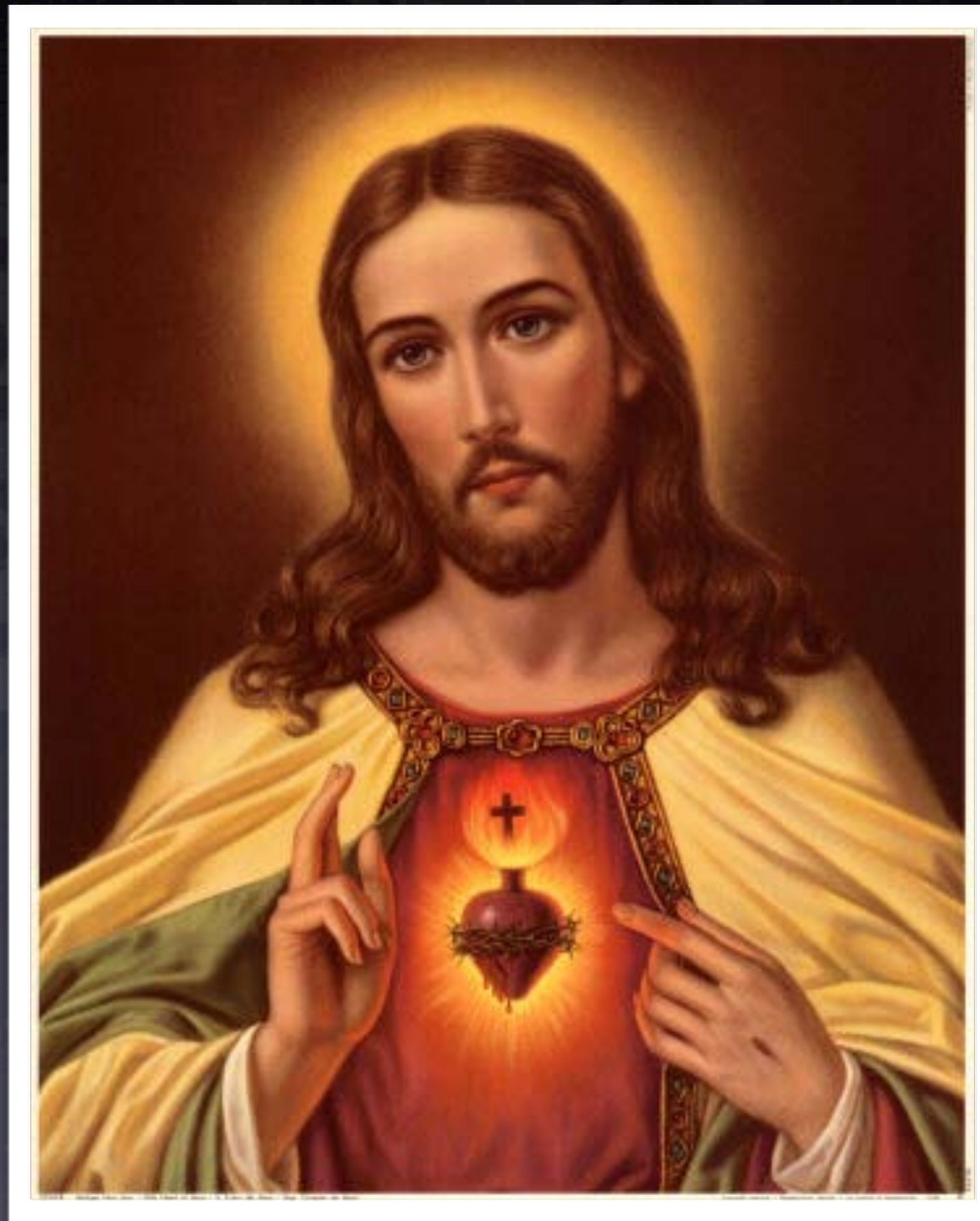


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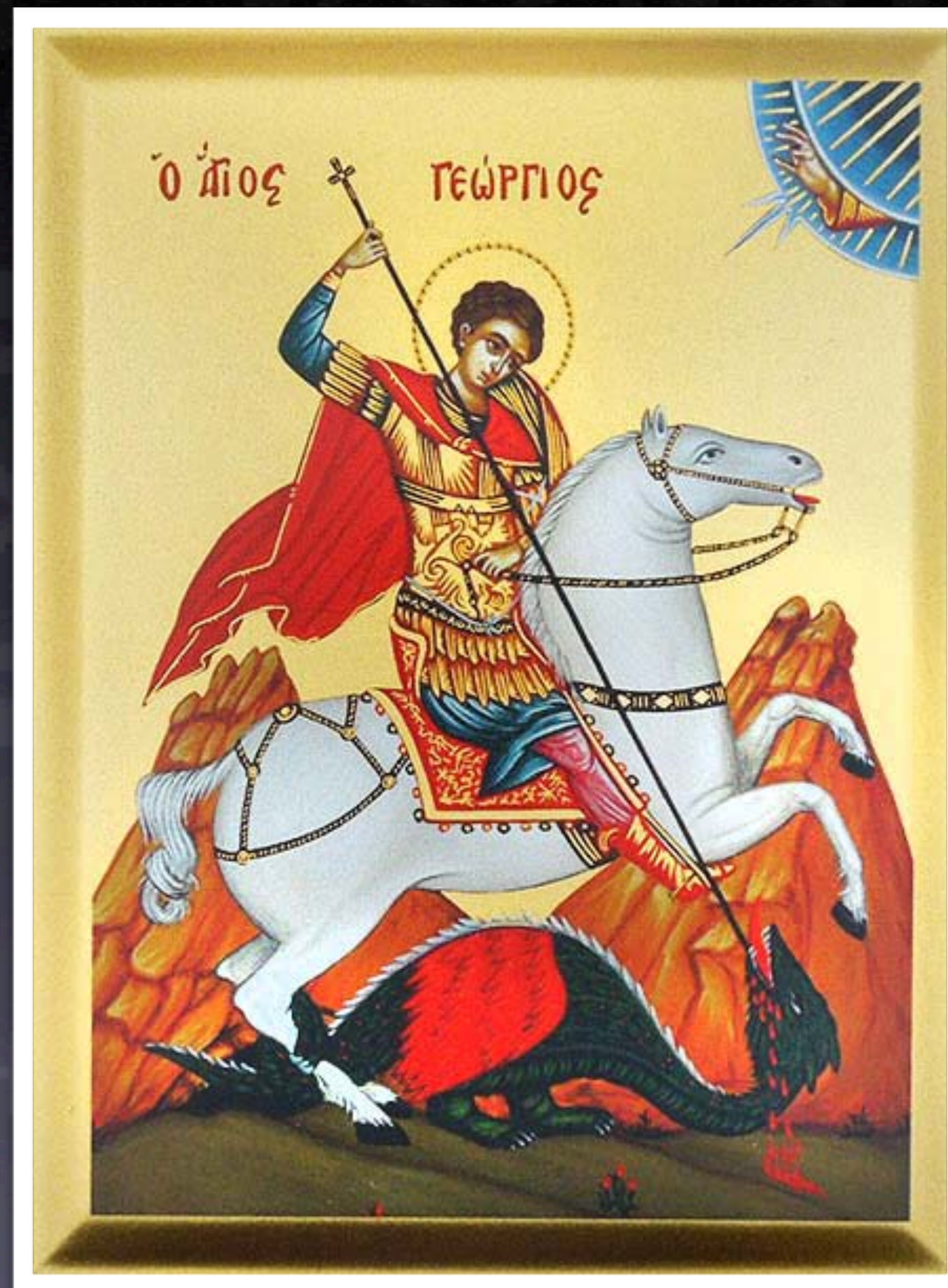


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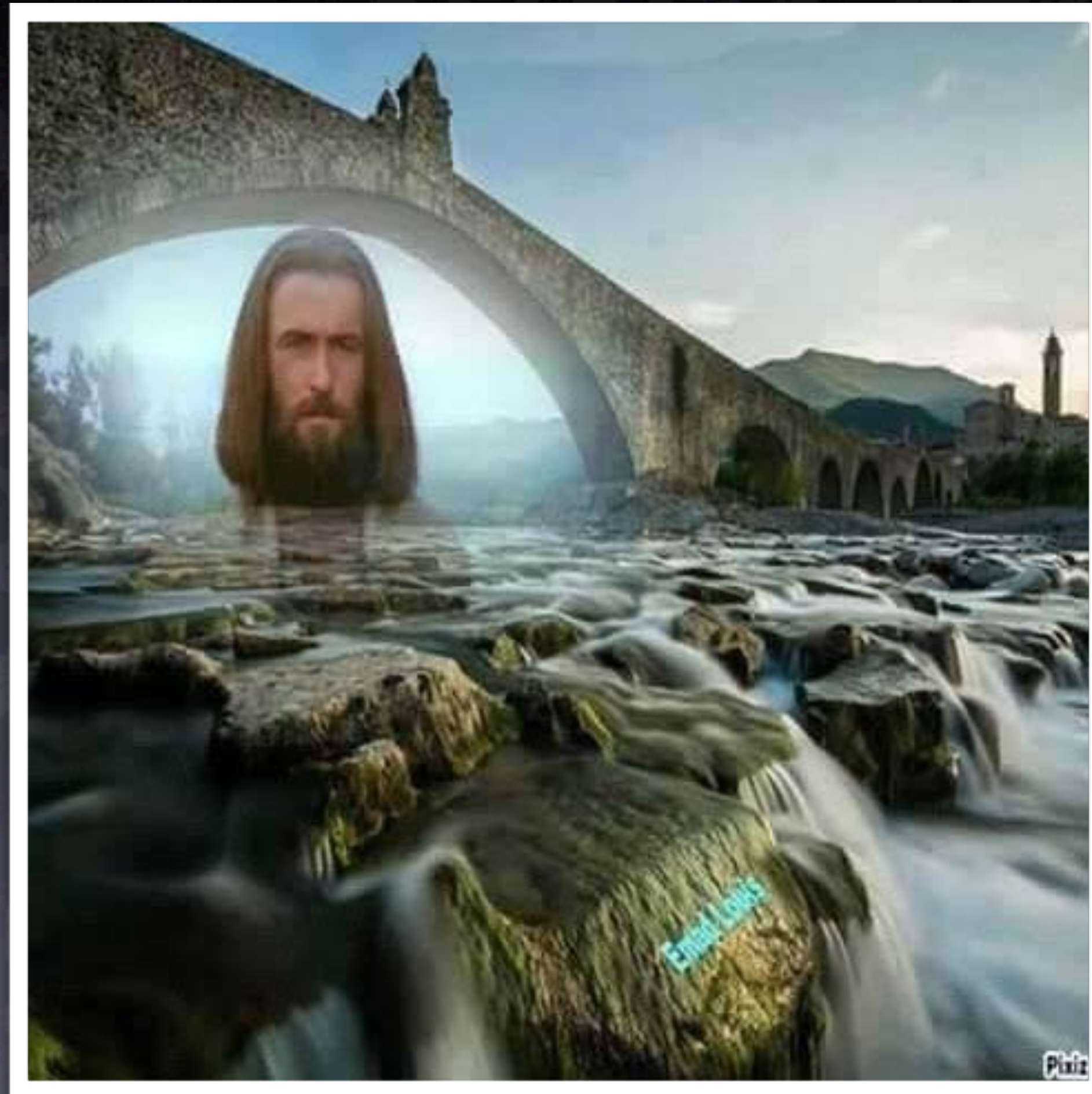
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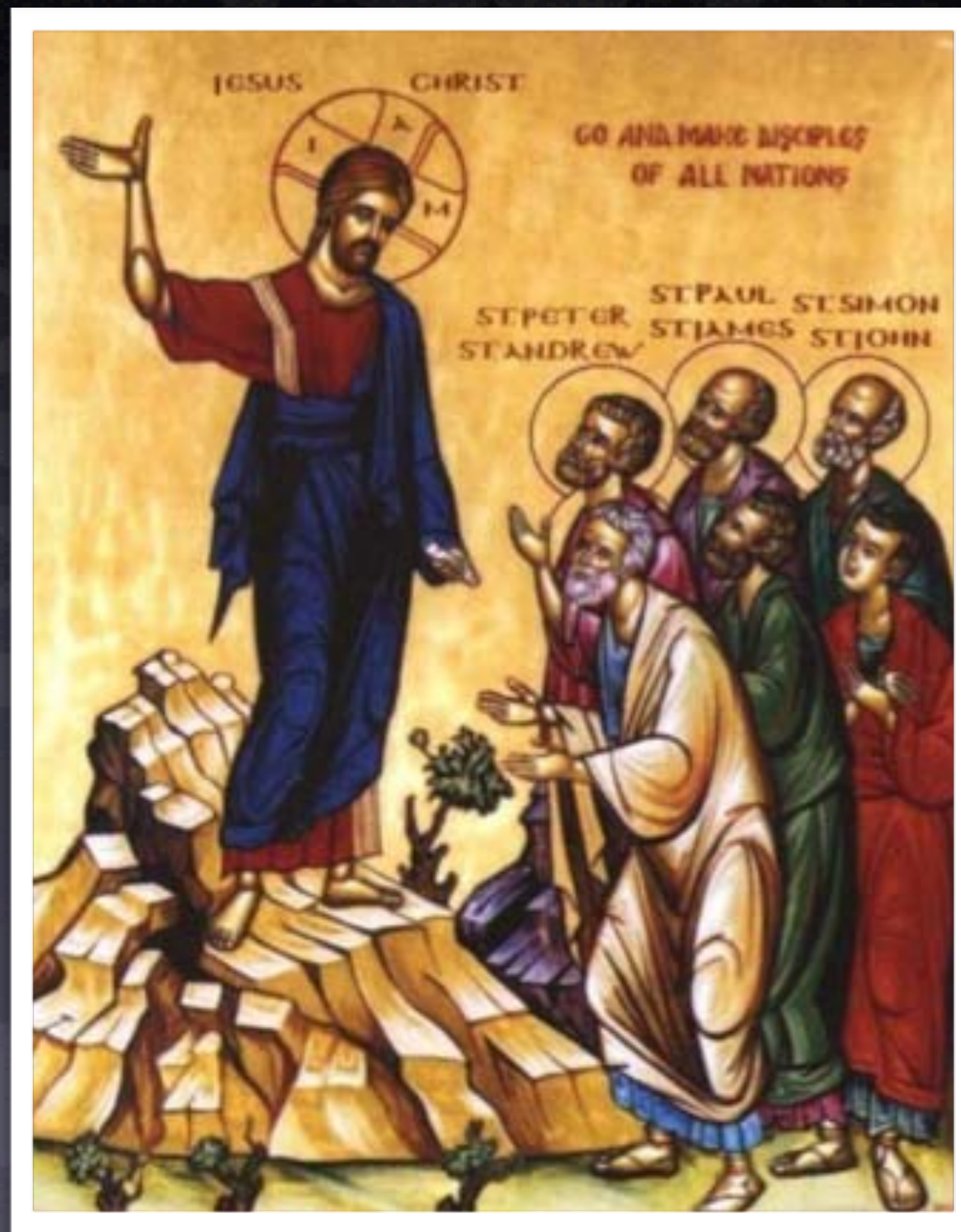
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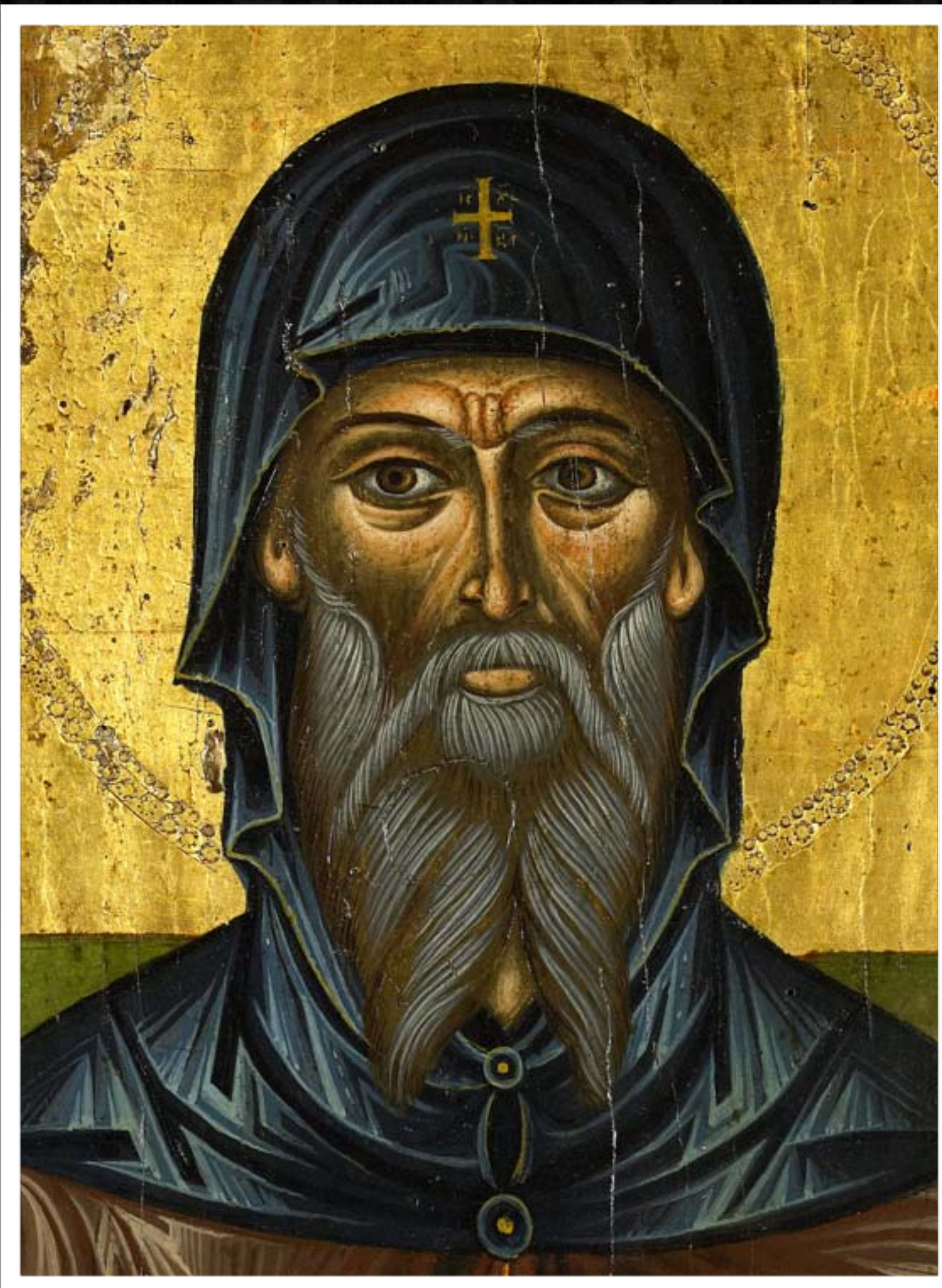
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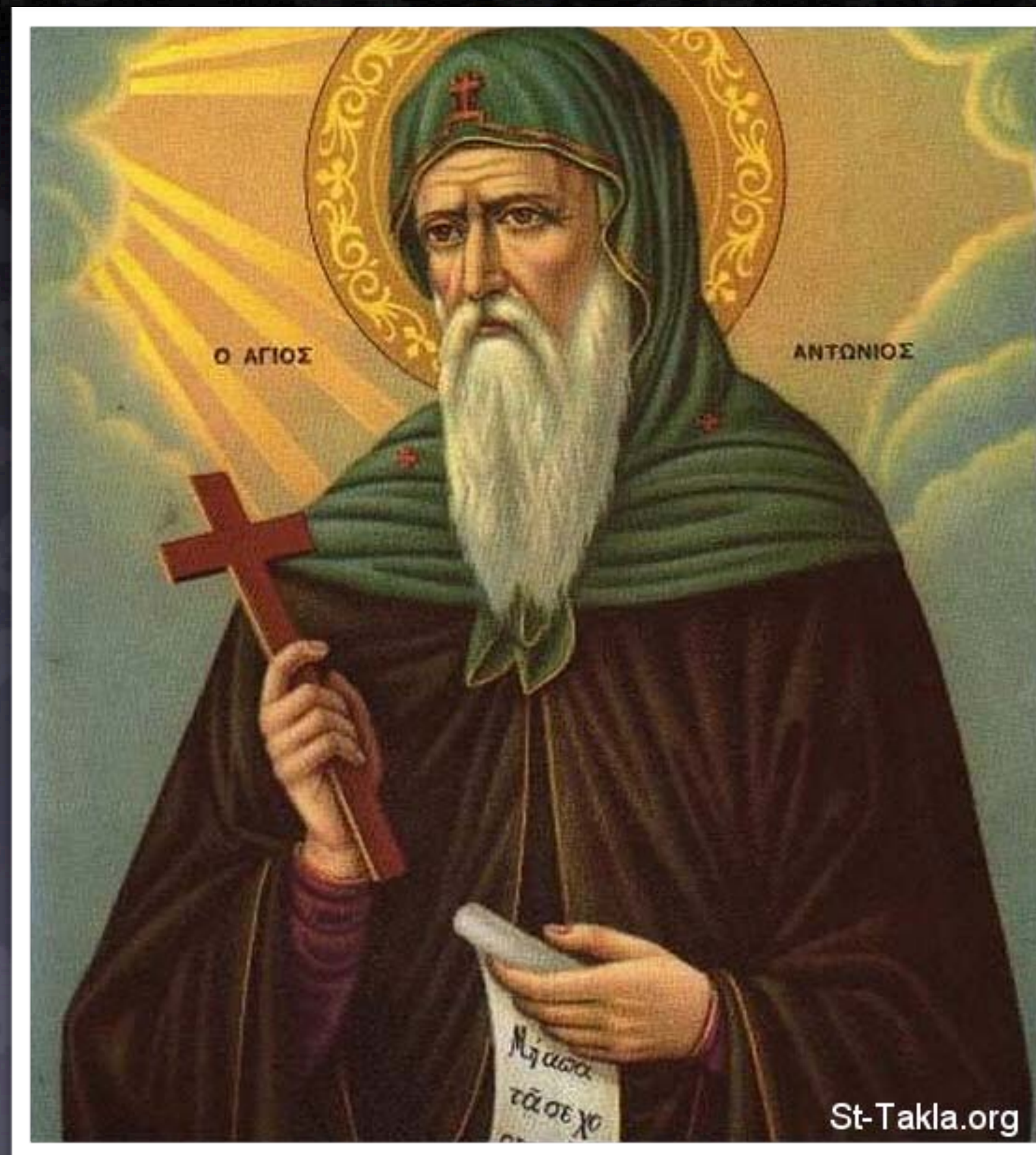


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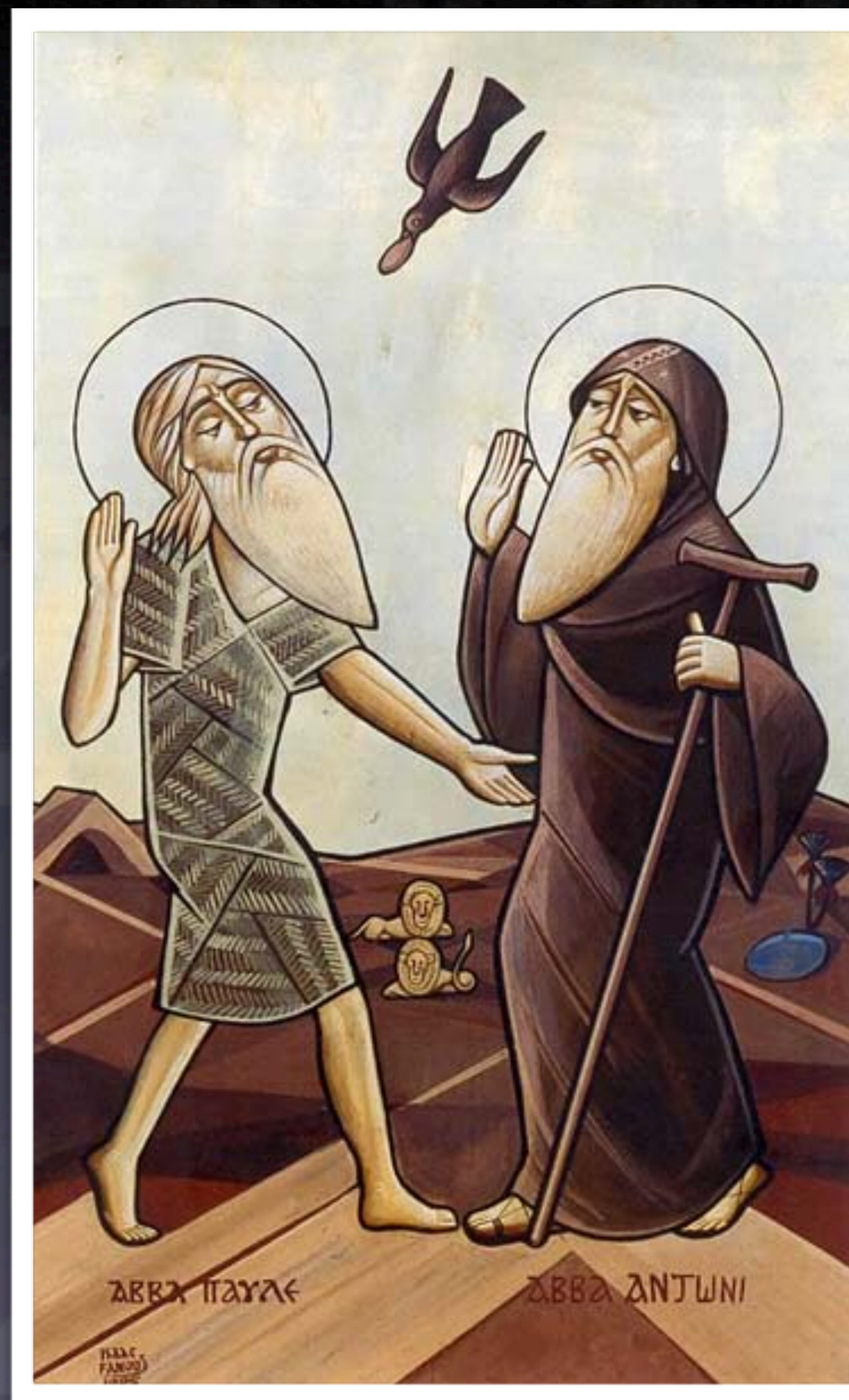


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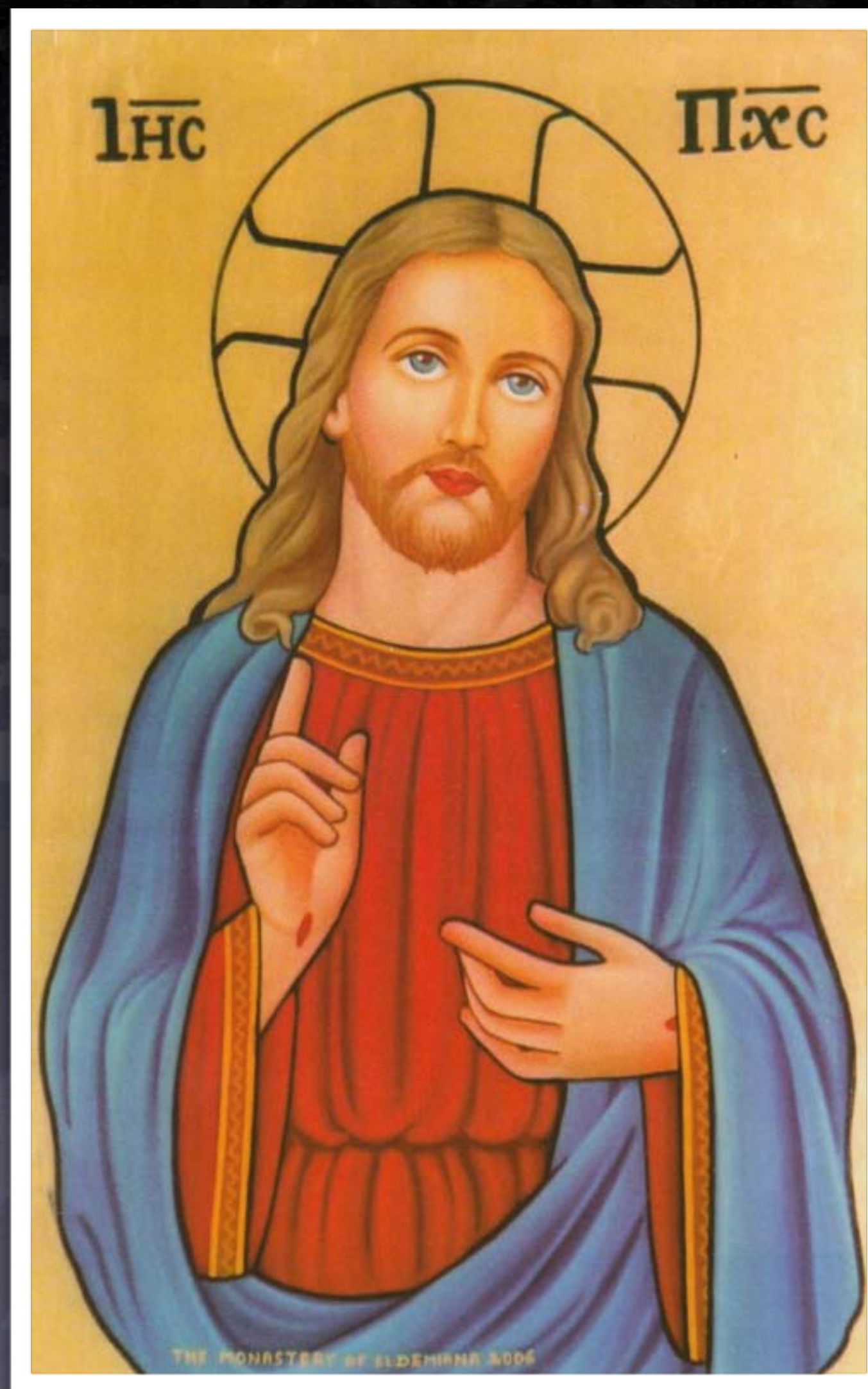
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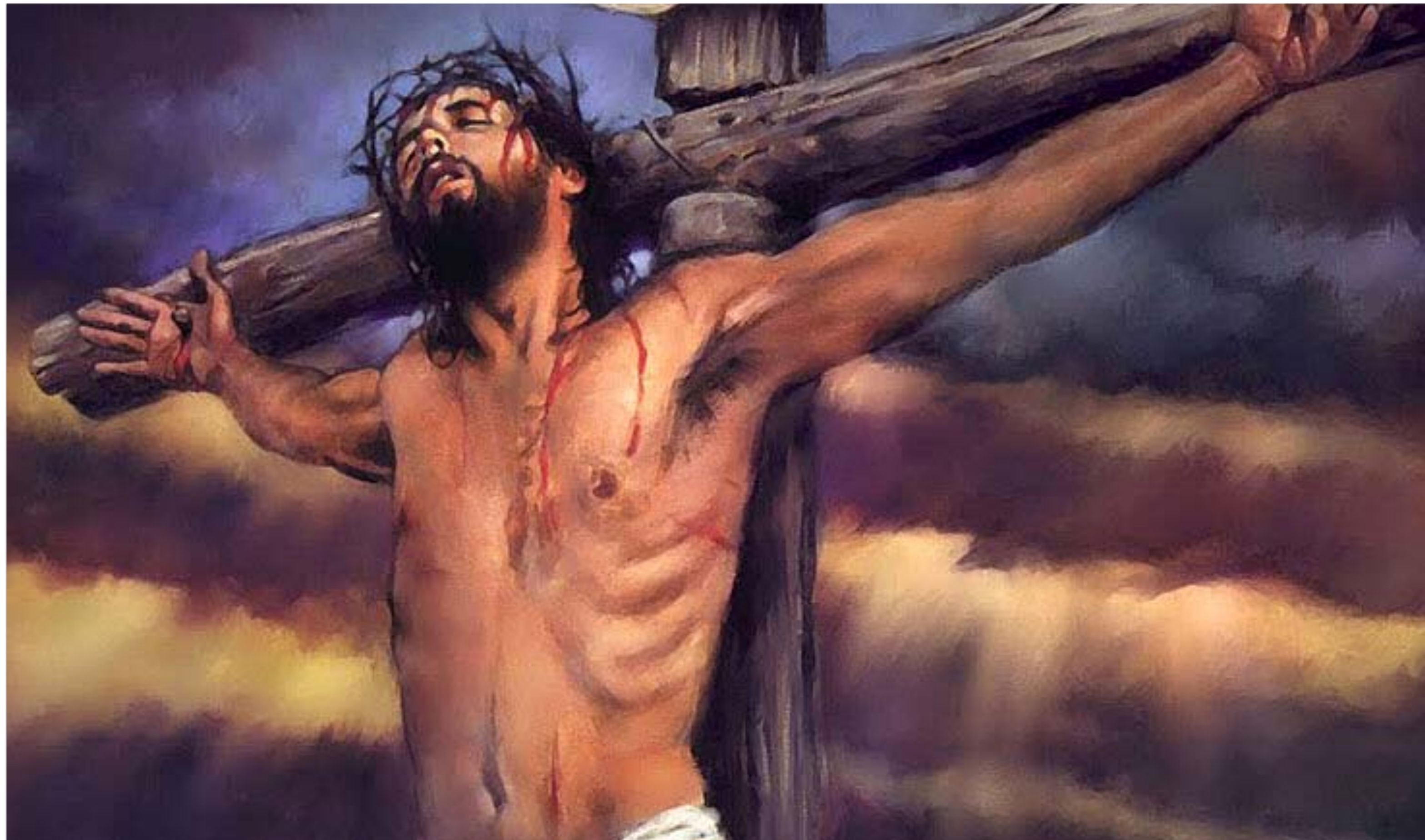


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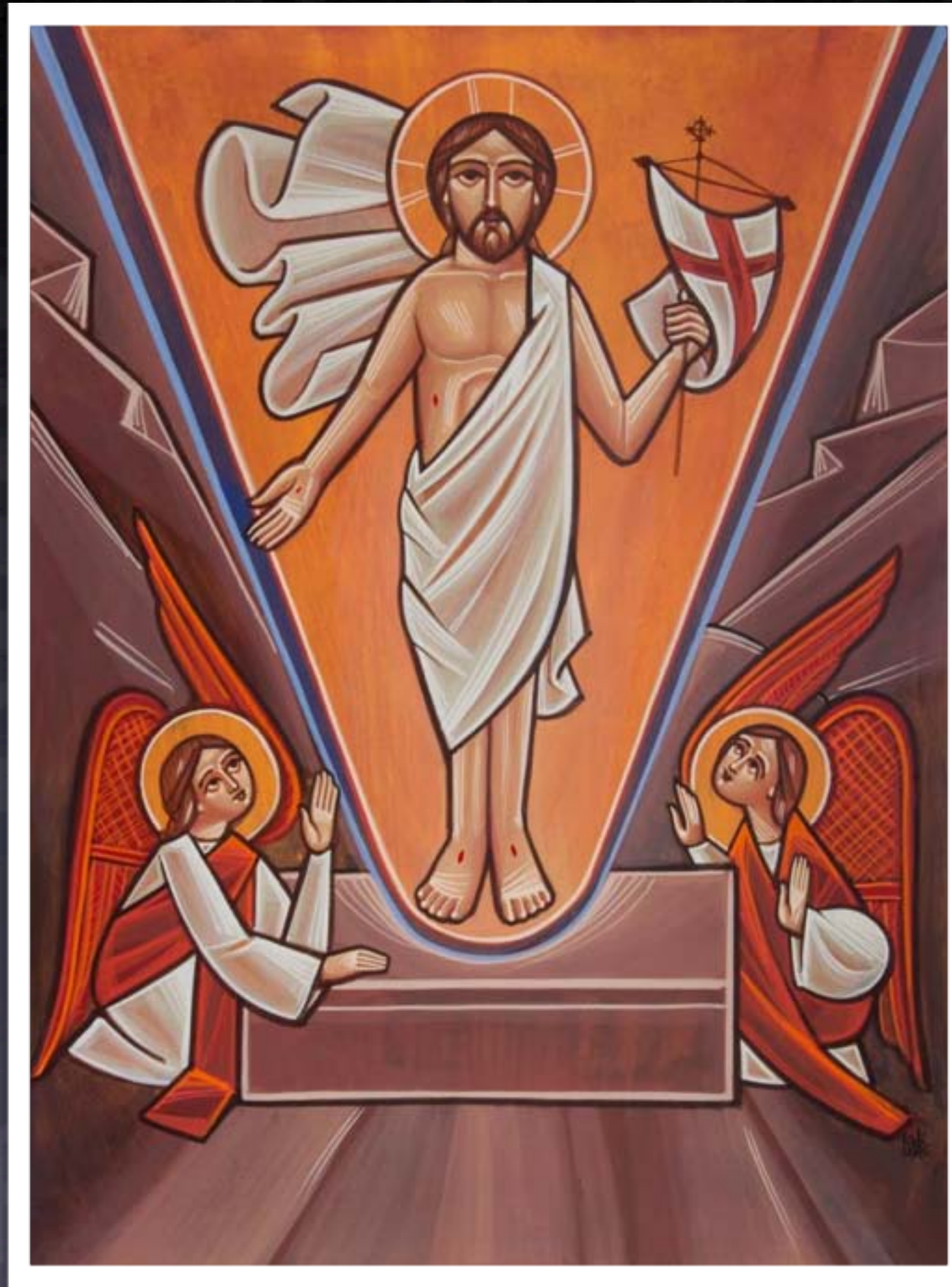
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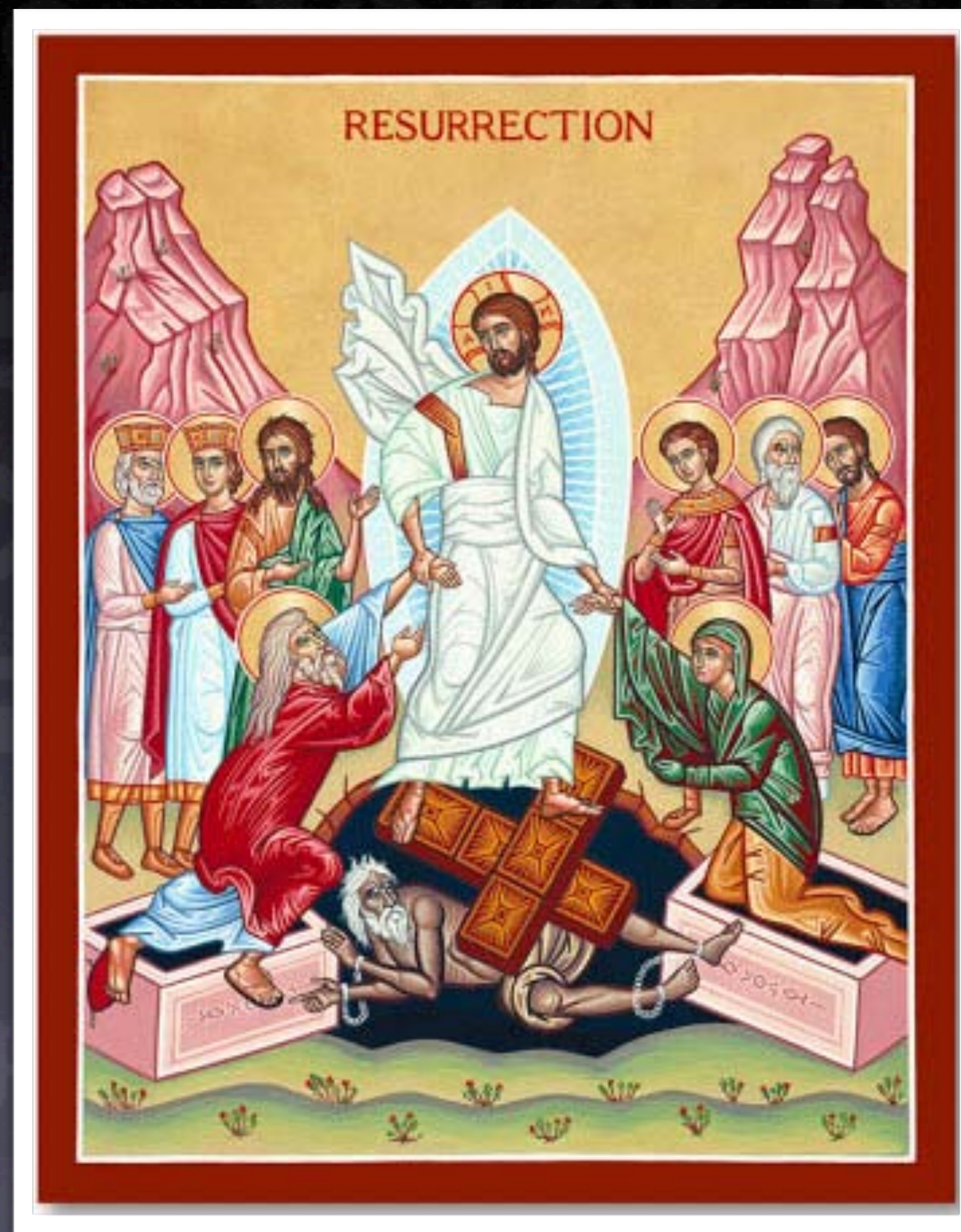
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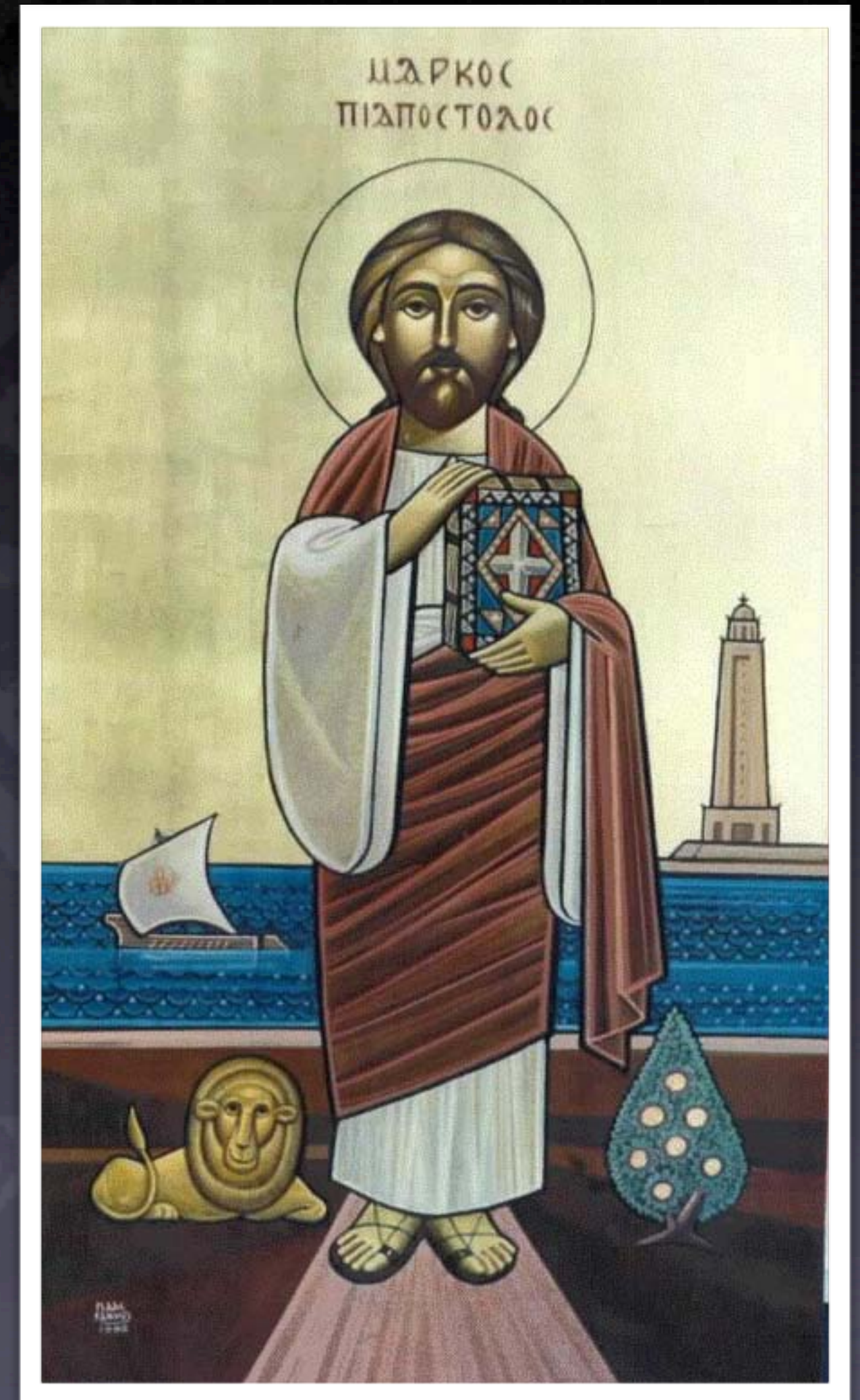
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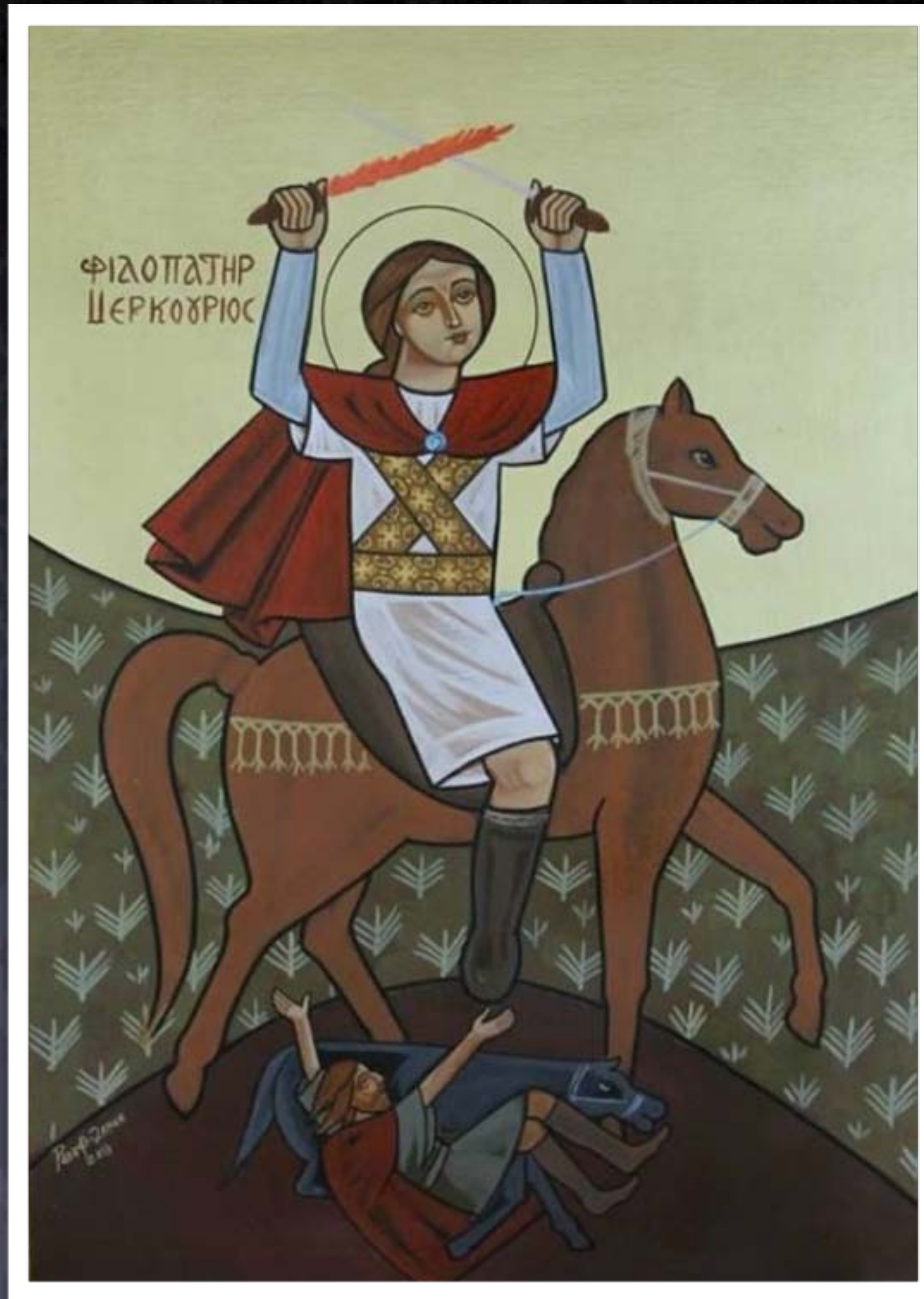


Deeper Look

St. Mark



St. Mercurious



St. George



St. Mina



Name that Saint



Name that Saint



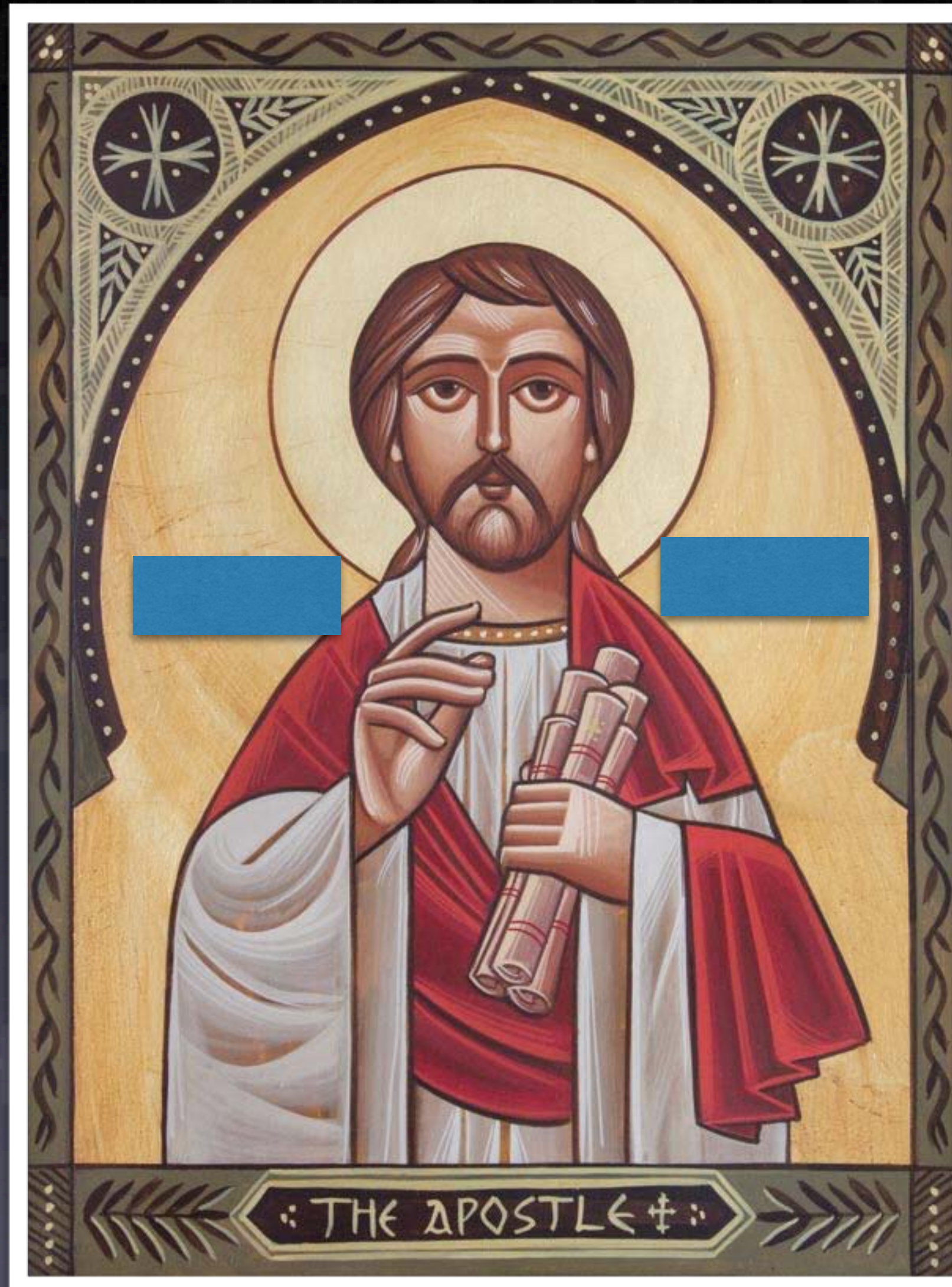
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Name that Saint



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Name that Saint

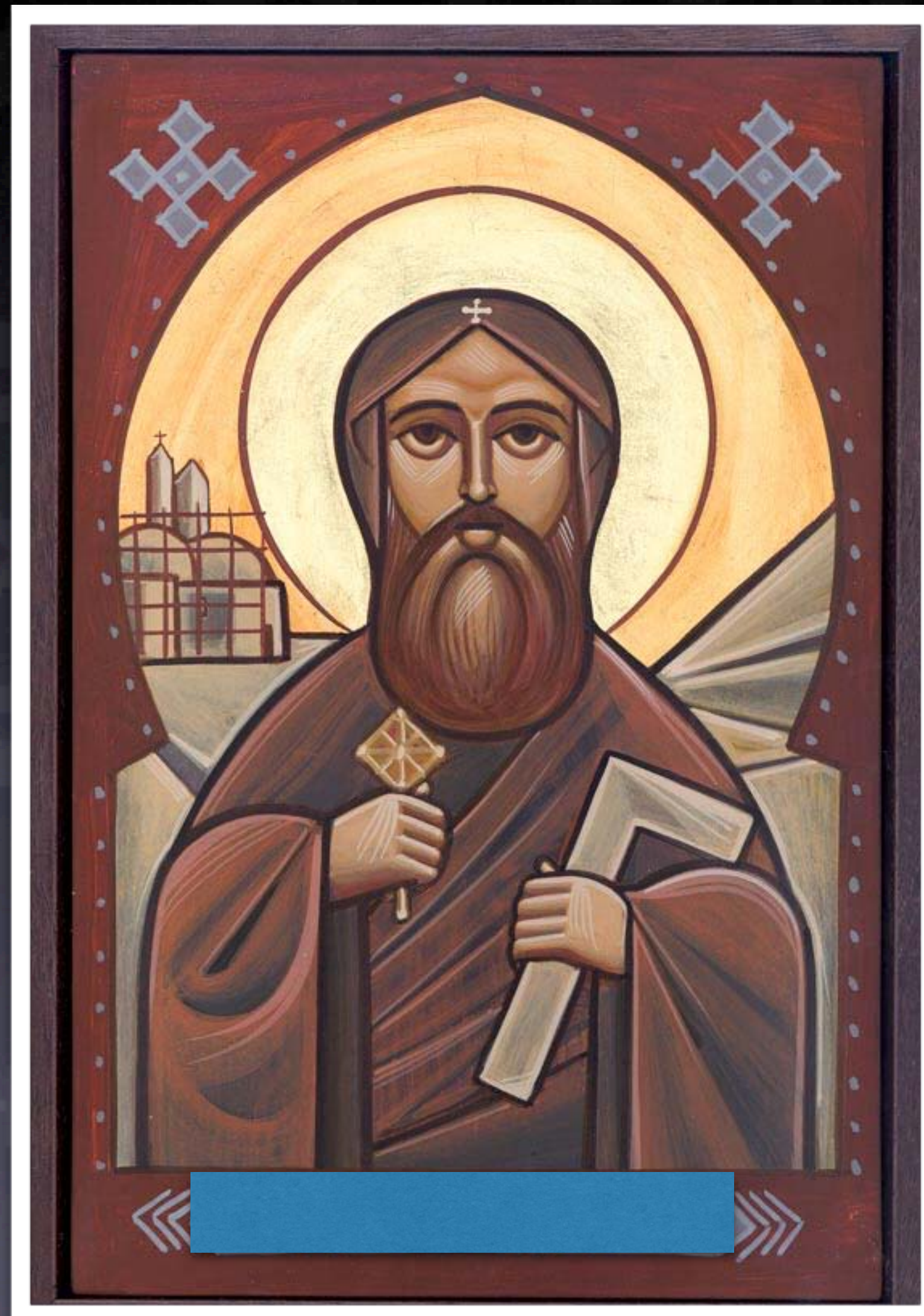


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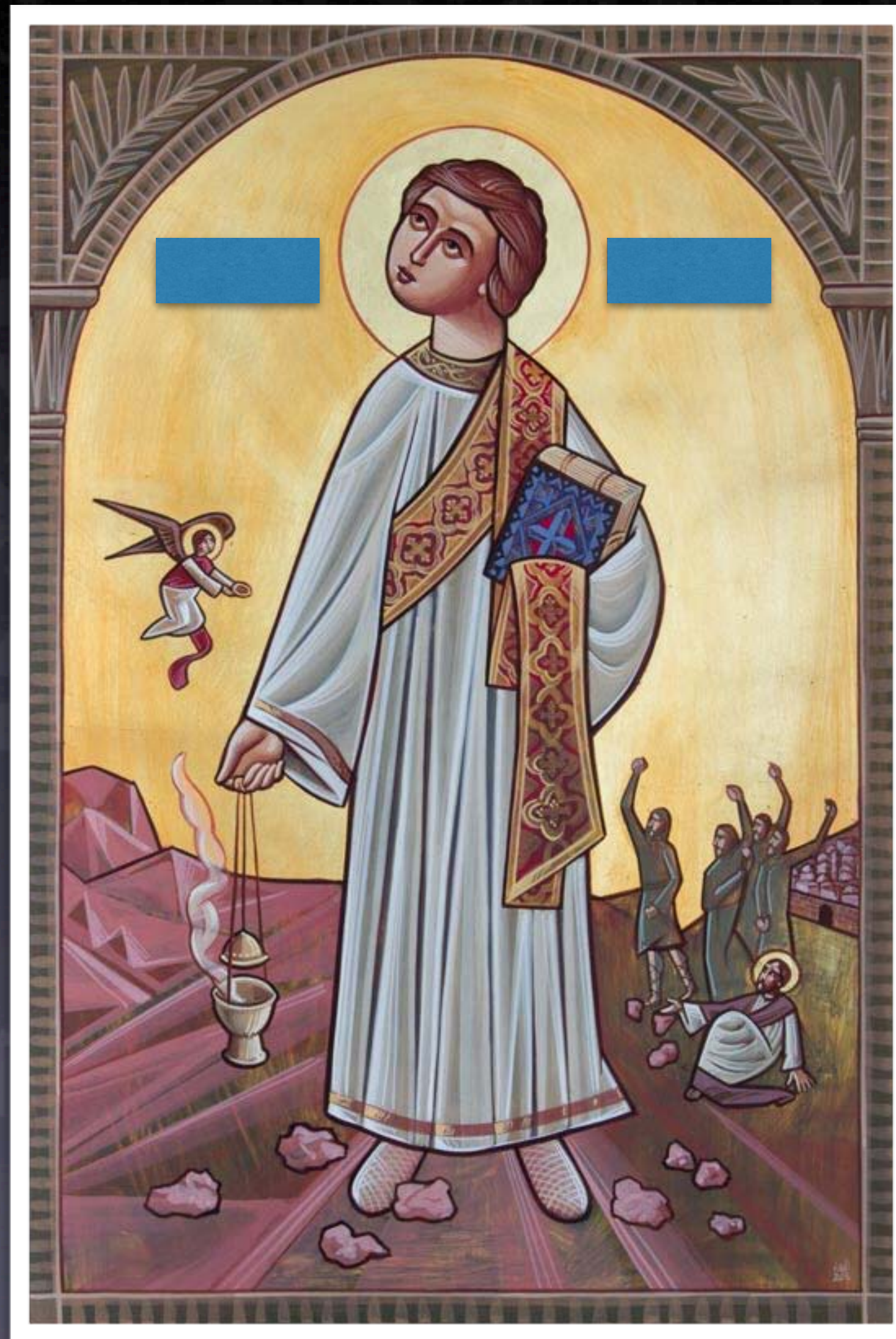
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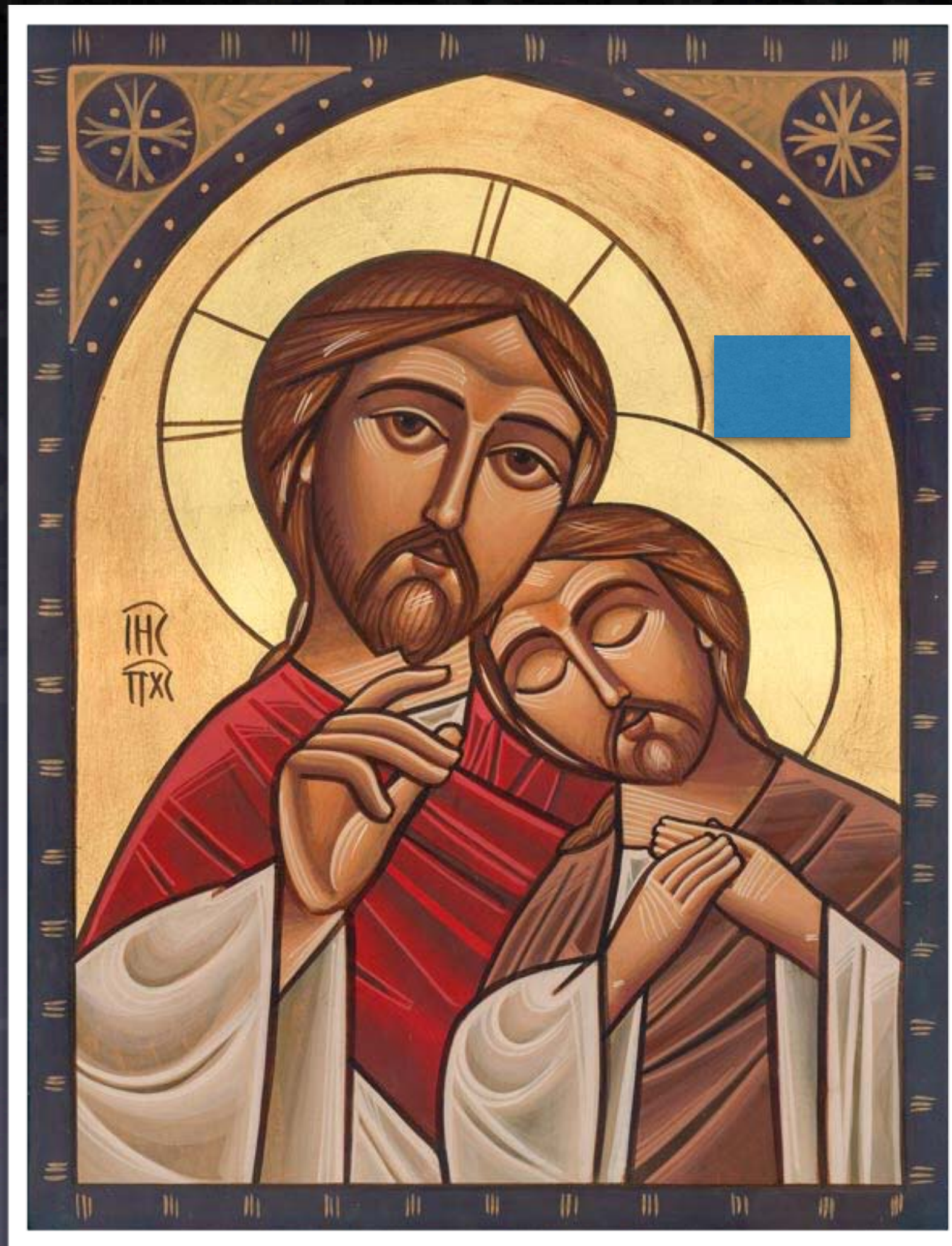
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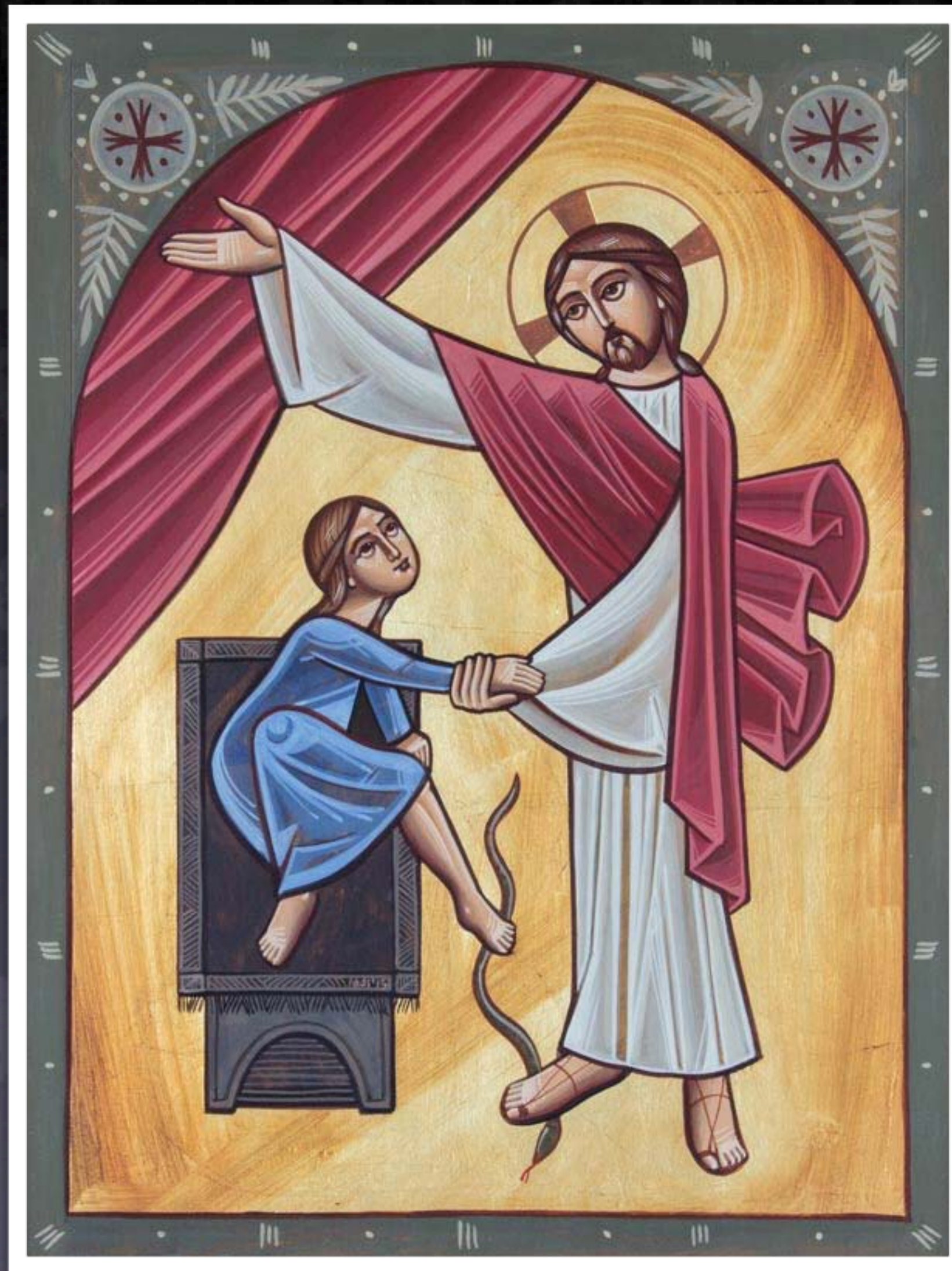


Name that Saint



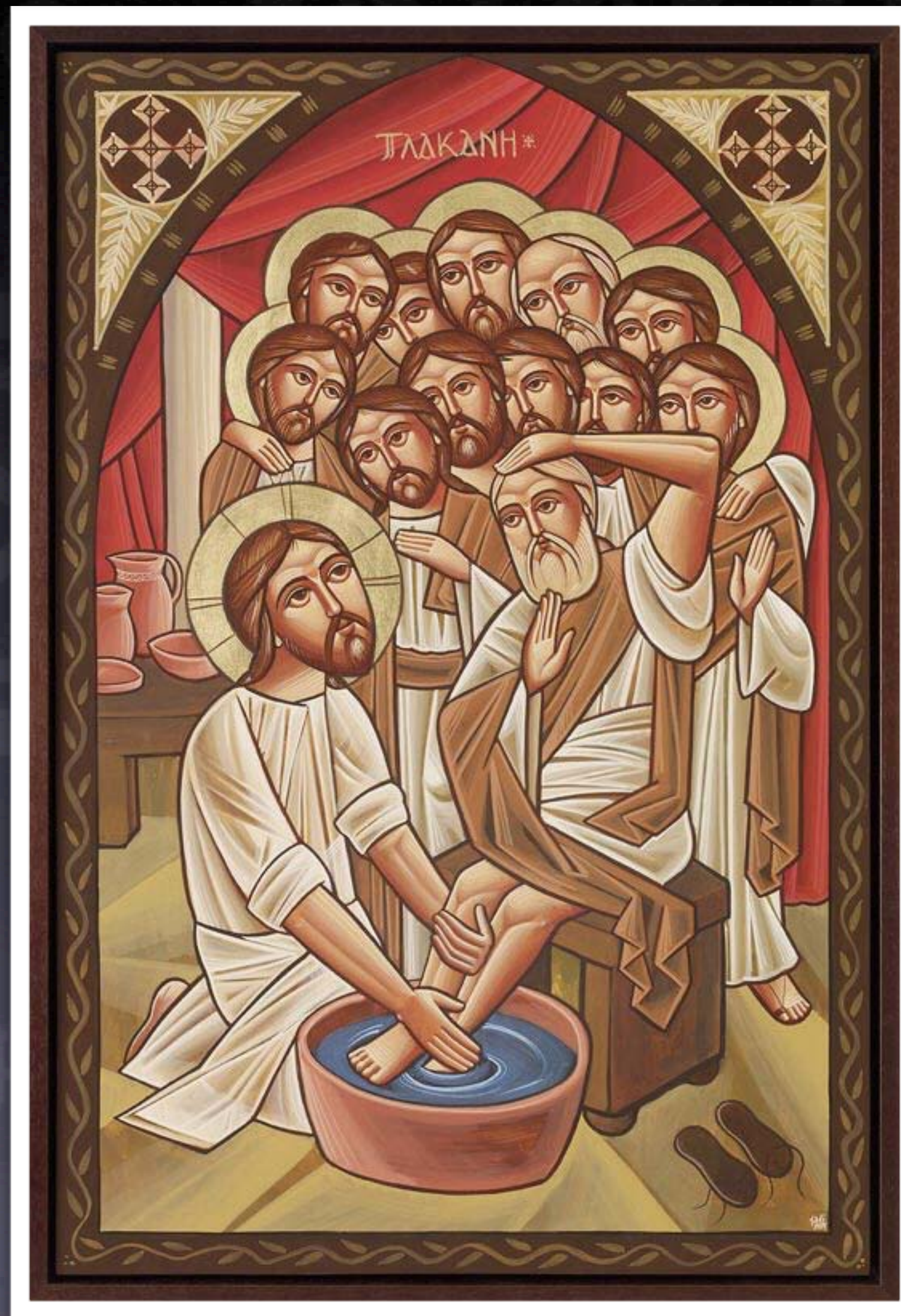
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Name that Event



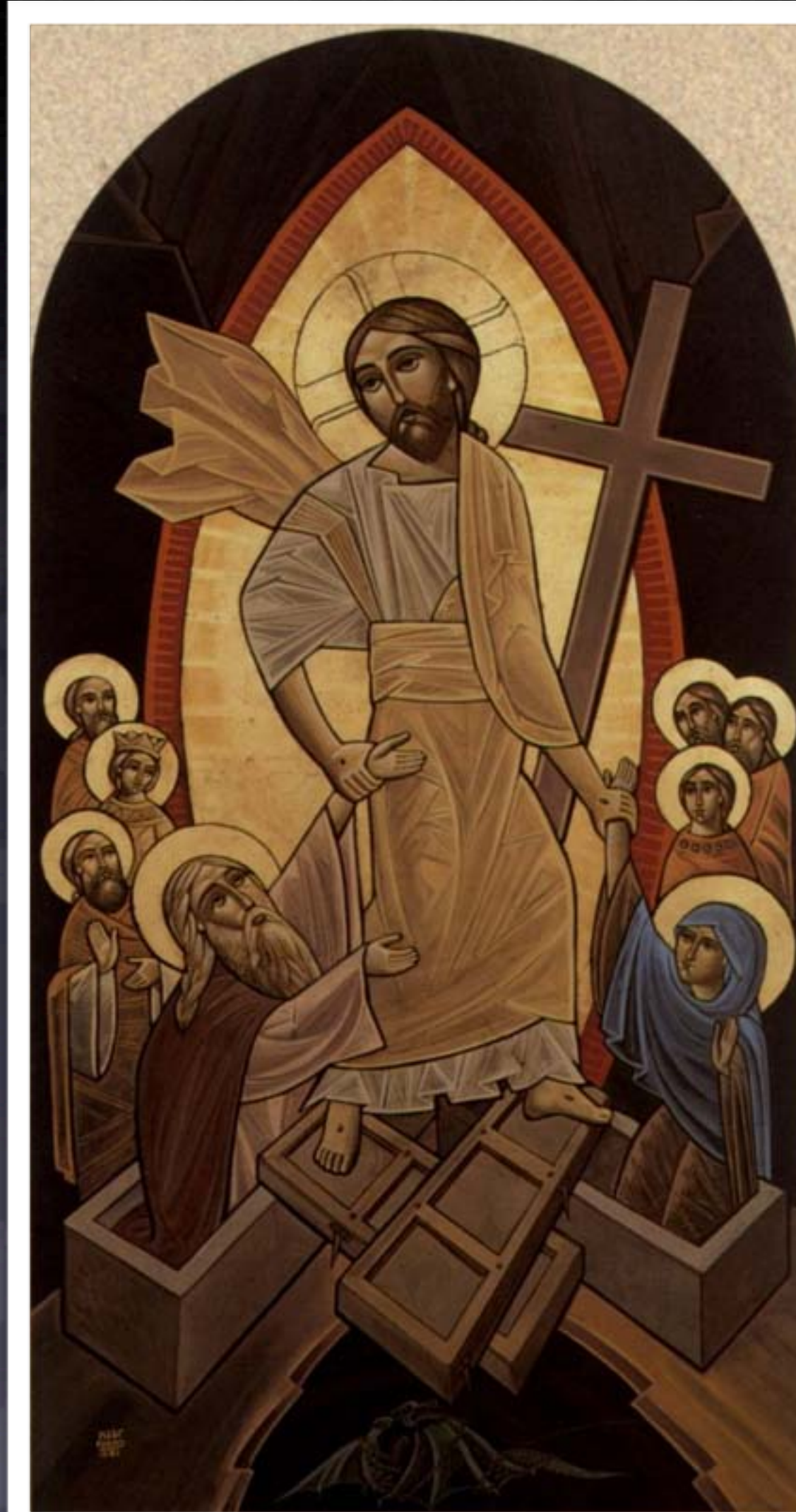
Edward Ishak

Name that Event



Edward Ishak

Name that Event



Edward Ishak

**Glory be to God Forever.
Amen.**