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God The Father

*The LORD looks down from heaven / upon the human race,
To see if even one is wise, / if even one seeks God. PSALM 14:2*

This symbol represents God, the Father of us all, who sees all of His creation and who knows all things.



In the first centuries after Christ, no Christians attempted to picture God the Father. When they did, they chose the *Manus Dei*, the *Hand of God*. The Scriptures speak of God's providing, guiding, guarding, and blessing hand.



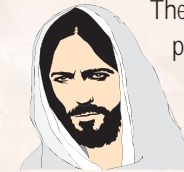
You open wide your hand / and satisfy the desire of every living thing. PSALM 145:16

The star is a powerful Scriptural symbol with different meanings. In this application it represents God the Father as Creator, and the six points of the star refer to the six days of creation. It also reminds us of the Star of David, symbol of our shared heritage with the people of Israel.



Again we see the hand of God, in this symbol touching the hand of Adam and giving him life. This well-known image is taken from Michelangelo's *Creation of Adam* in the Sistine Chapel of the Vatican.

God The Son



There are more images of Jesus than of any other person in history. They range in difference from the babe in the manger to the 14th Century Russian icon, *the Christ of the Fiery Eye*. The closest image is perhaps that of the Shroud of Turin, believed by many to be the burial shroud of the Lord.

From the lamb provided by God for Isaac in the book of Genesis, to the throne of the Lamb in the last chapter of the Book of Revelation, the lamb in Scripture symbolizes the Messiah. The Lamb of God is the poignant image of the One who was sacrificed to take away the sins of the world.



The image of the fish can be found inscribed in the catacombs and appears in early Christian art and literature. It is a common symbol for Christ and for the Eucharist, as Jesus shared meals of bread and fish with His followers. The letters form an acronym for Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior.

The ancients who observed the pelican believed that she pierced her own breast to feed her young. The resemblance to Christ, who gave His body and blood as spiritual food and drink for His disciples, was so strong that for centuries the pelican has endured as a symbol of nurturing self-sacrifice.



The Apostles

Apostle comes from the Greek *apostolos*, 'one who is sent'. It specifically refers to the Twelve disciples chosen by Jesus as His closest followers. The Twelve Apostles (including Matthias, who took the place of Judas), presided over the early Church, preaching and teaching in the name of Jesus, and performing signs and wonders in His name. All but John died as martyrs for the Faith.



Simon Bar-Jona, brother of Andrew, testified to the divinity of Jesus, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." (MATTHEW 16:16) Jesus changed his name to Peter, or the Rock, upon which He would build His Church, and gave him the keys to the kingdom of heaven, confirming Peter's authority. He was crucified upside down on Vatican Hill in Rome in 64 AD.

Saint James, the first of the Twelve to suffer martyrdom, is called the Greater because he became an apostle before Saint James the Less. Some hold a tradition that James first preached the gospel in Spain before returning to Judea. He is symbolized by scallop shells, which abound on the Spanish coast. King Herod killed James with the sword in 44 AD.



According to ancient sources, Saint John, the Beloved Disciple, is the only disciple who died a natural death, although he was imprisoned and exiled for the Faith. Unbelievers attempted to kill him, including one who gave him a poisoned chalice. According to an early story he drank from it unharmed.

"God is love, and whoever remains in love remains in God and God in him."

1 JOHN 4:16



Saint Andrew, the first apostle to follow Christ, was brother to Simon Peter. He preached the gospel in Scythia, and later in Byzantium itself, and was martyred at Patras, Greece, where they crucified him on an X-shaped cross. This cross has come to be known as Saint Andrew's cross. Saint Andrew is the patron of Russia, Scotland, and the Patriarchate of Byzantium.

Tradition holds that Saint James the Less, cousin of Jesus and Bishop of Jerusalem, was thrown down from the temple in Jerusalem, stoned, and sawed in half by the Scribes and Pharisees in 62 AD. Others hold that he was stoned, struck a mortal blow on the head, and then sawn asunder. Regardless of how he died, Saint James the Less was known as a just man and a wise shepherd.



Most scholars agree that Saint Bartholomew is the Nathaniel mentioned in John's gospel. Bartholomew journeyed to India and then to Armenia, where, according to tradition, he was flayed to death. In Michelangelo's Last Judgement at the Sistine Chapel, Saint Bartholomew is represented as holding in his hand his own skin.

A ship represents Saint Jude, also known as Thaddeus, since he traveled throughout Mesopotamia, Libya, and Persia, proclaiming the gospel with Saint Simon. Saint Jude was a brother of Saint James the Less, and his mother was a cousin of the Blessed Mother. He is the author of the Epistle of Jude in the New Testament, and was martyred in Persia.



The Sacraments



Sacraments are signs instituted by Christ that give the grace they signify. Baptism in water, represented by the shell, gives us the indescribable grace of spiritual rebirth, cleanses us from sin, and makes us members of the Body of Christ.

The candle in this design represents the Baptismal candle of the newly baptized, which is lit from the Paschal candle, itself a symbol of the light of Christ. In our Baptism, Christ generously infuses us with sanctifying grace, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity.



Typically in the Catholic Church, infants are baptized, continuing the tradition established by the first Christians and confirmed in Scripture.

Jesus, however, called the children to himself and said, "Let the children come to me and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these." LUKE 18:16

Jesus stood up and exclaimed, "Let anyone who thirsts come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as scripture says: / 'Rivers of living water will flow from within him.' " He said this in reference to the Spirit that those who came to believe in him were to receive.... JOHN 7:37-39



In the sacrament of Penance, also known as Confession or Reconciliation, Jesus through the priest forgives our sins, deepens in us the virtues of humility and penance, and gives us absolution. Our Lord sacramentally pours out His healing blood over our souls, removing sin, strengthening us, and flooding our souls with life-giving grace, to return to Him with confidence and hope.

Another name for the sacrament of Penance is the Rite of Reconciliation. This emphasizes the reunion and healing we experience in this most beneficial sacrament.

Saint Paul tells us, "So we are ambassadors for Christ, as if God were appealing through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." 2 CORINTHIANS 5:20



The Catholic Church teaches that the Holy Eucharist (*eucharistein—thanksgiving*) is the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ, given for us. The Eucharist is the heart and summit of the Church's life. Jesus gave us the Eucharist so that He could always be with us, His beloved, in a real and substantial way, and make us sharers in his Passover.

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and giving it to his disciples said, "Take and eat; this is my body." Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins." MATTHEW 26:26-28

