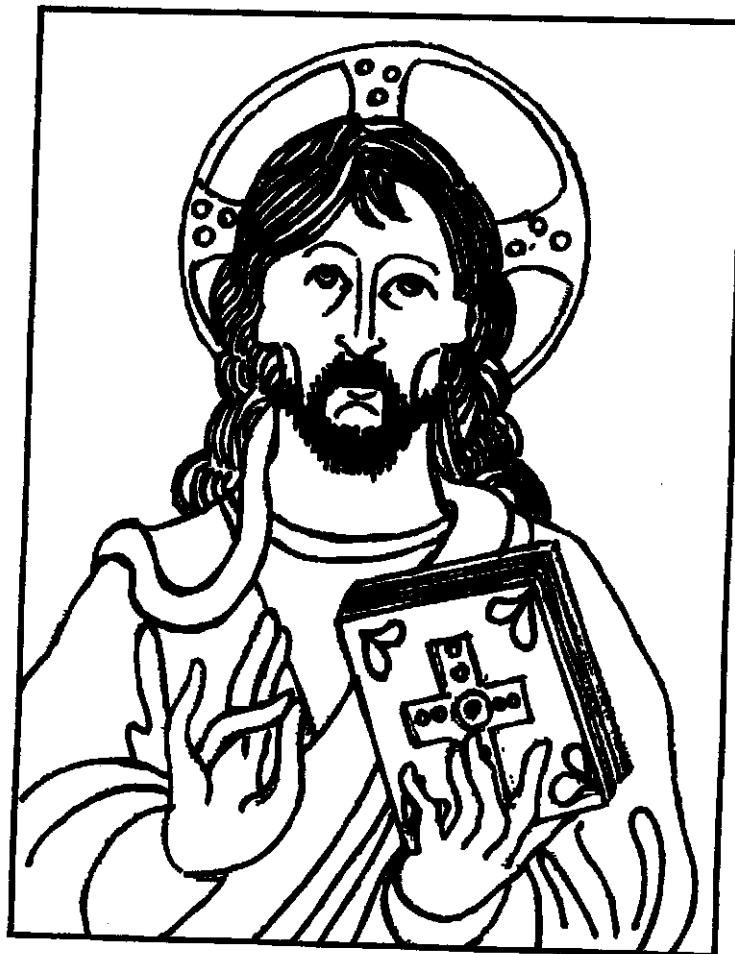


# Part IV: The Byzantine Period

(One Week)

## Icons/Religious Art

(Art Lessons for Students)



## Part IV: The Byzantine Period

(Before beginning watch Part IV of the DVD series *God & the History of Art*, approximately 12 minutes and 08 seconds, if available as part of your program.)

The Byzantine Period is a short, one week section (we have extended it to 3 weeks because of the additional religious art lessons). Though The Byzantine Period lasted for over a thousand years, the artists remained unknown throughout the era. However, this is an excellent opportunity to introduce students to several more delightful art lessons mainly from this era. Hopefully, students will learn more about Byzantine art along with its purpose through these exercises. We hope the additional art lessons will be enjoyable and educational for the students. You may also choose to intersperse these art lessons throughout the other parts of this program whenever you find it appropriate. With this in mind, we have portioned Part IV for one to three weeks, whichever suits your classroom best.

### *"Byzantine Art"*

Have students read pages 190 and 191.



## Icons - Religious Art

As we have learned, religious art has always been a concern within the Church and very awkward to deal with throughout the centuries. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Commandment is the main concern and where conflict arises between art and the Church. Because of this, and the various ways the 2<sup>nd</sup> Commandment can be interpreted, there have always been derisions.

*"You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself any carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them."* (Exodus 20: 1-5)

Some believe that any and all religious art is a type of idol worshipping. The "iconoclasts" boldly made this statement throughout the Middle Ages (as discussed on page 194), destroying much of the artwork within the churches along with many classical Greek and Roman masterpieces.

But it would be Pope Gregory the Great (page 193) who would make a stand for the merit of Christian art within the Church. Such art, he believed, was a source of edification and learning for the lay people who could not read. As the Protestant and Catholic Churches drifted apart in the 1500s, their interpretation of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Commandment became clearly manifested, with more and more religious art being embraced by the latter and less and less by the former. Today there is still a subtle division as the walls of the Protestant Church remain relative denuded of Christian art, whereas religious icons are still an integral part of Orthodox denominations along with the Roman Catholic Church.

The important thing to take into consideration when meditating on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Commandment is the verse "... *you shall not bow down to them nor serve them.*" Though there are people in the non-Christian world who do, more or less, bow down to the art world and "worship" great pieces of artwork, we, as Christ-bearing souls, should simply enjoy the beauty of art and embrace religious artwork both for its purpose and edification within our spirits.



The term "icon" simply means "a religious work of art." As an artist and a student of art for many years, I have come to cherish the beauty and the spiritual significance of such artwork. This does not mean that I bow down to such images and worship them. Not only is there a deep appreciation for the beauty, simplicity, and spiritual significance of these religious works but also a profound fondness for the many various interpretations of Christ upon the cross. Protestants hold to the perspective that "He is risen," and, therefore, there is no longer any need to show Him on the cross. But Paul states in Philippians 3:10, "... that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings...." With Christ's suffering in mind, one can better appreciate the multitude of crucifixes created throughout the centuries portraying the sacrifice Jesus made. The crucifix is nothing more than a spiritual reminder.

And so, we encourage you to settle back, open your understanding to what icons truly are, and appreciate the merit and beauty of such inspirational art as you copy them in your own unique style.

**Teacher's Note:** As mentioned, this chapter includes lessons on religious artwork. Its intention is to both give students some enjoyable lessons and offer a better understanding and appreciation for such, hopefully giving them a comprehension of why some denominations in the Christian faith have such religious art.

Finally, we need to be reminded that Christian art was not meant to be realistic or perfect, but symbolic, representing the spiritual significance of Jesus and the saints. The religious art from past centuries was quite childlike and personalized. Therefore, students have the liberty to be creative with these lessons and simply enjoying the process of drawing some of these godly saints in their own heartfelt way and with their own personality and unique style, which God has given every one of us!

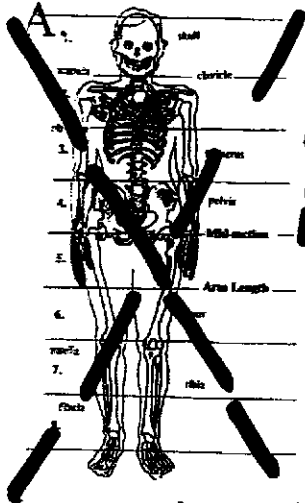


*"Soli deo Gloria!"*  
Johannes Sebastian Bach

# Art Lesson #1:

## "St. Luke"

[redacted] for now let's take a beginning step in this, doing our first rendering of the saint and focusing only on simplifying the figure.



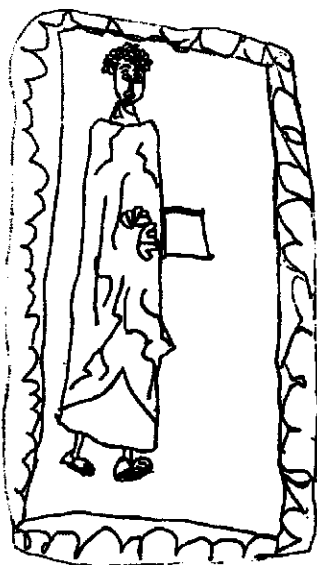
B.



[redacted] the artwork of the early Church was not concerned with realism but more with spiritual significance and symbolism. Therefore, throughout the centuries, the figures of the saints were not only simplified but also elongated. For example, notice my rendering of "St. Luke" (B).

In proportion to the illustration of the adult skeleton, the figure is slightly longer in length (the head is smaller in proportion). El Greco (page 287) carried this style into the 17th century by exaggerating the length of the figure even more.

Place "St. Luke" from the picture postcard gallery in front of the students and have them copy it in their sketchbooks. Before beginning, have them look at the renderings of St. Luke on this page, two of these were done by my 8 and 10-year-old granddaughters and another drawn by a 12-year old homeschooler (below). They are all delightful and have their own unique personality, especially when considering the different age levels and levels of ability.



Naiya Stebbing Age 8



Amelia Stebbing Age 10



Amanda Paulo Age 12

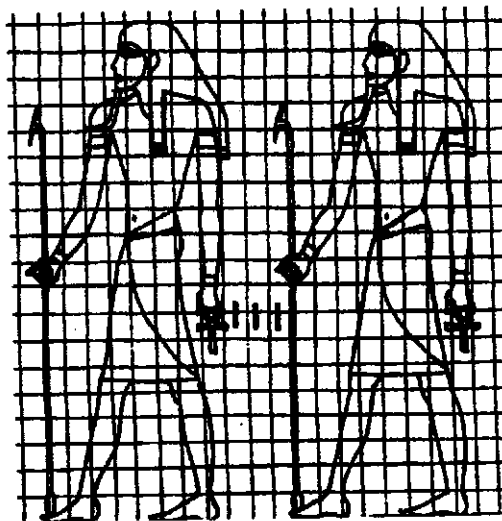
## Art Lesson #II:

### *"Parable of the Wise & Foolish Virgins"*

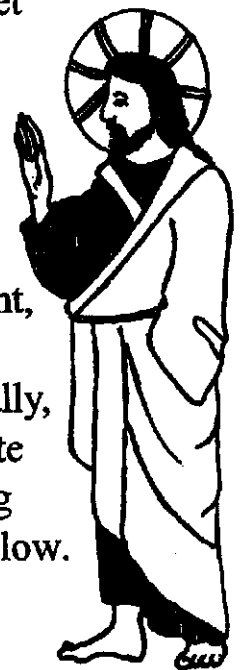
Let's draw another standing figure. This time, a rendering of Christ. My drawing (below right) was copied from a picture. The original is a large mosaic masterfully created on a wall in a cathedral in Rossano, Italy, during the 6<sup>th</sup> century. (The entire mosaic is on the back cover where you can see the full story.) Jesus stands at the door. The six virgins whose lanterns are full have entered and stand behind Him as He prevents the six virgins whose lanterns are empty from entering. The figure of Christ is flat and there is no emotion on His face. Notice that the figure is not as elongated as in Lesson #1. One of His hands also seems to be concealed in a pocket of His robe. He is standing in profile, similar to figures carved on the walls of the tombs of ancient Egypt (below). Many scholars believe that early Christian art was influenced by this style. However the ancient Egyptians would give their figures either both right or left feet, whereas the early Christians manifested this part of the body more realistically, as revealed in the feet of Christ.

Let us remember, though, that early Christian art was not intended to be realistic but spiritual and symbolic. The figures were flat with little form. There was only the suggestion of depth or distance in the scenes and no expressions on the faces. Likewise, colors were used to be more symbolic and spiritual. For this assignment, copy the figure of Christ in your sketchbook. First, draw Jesus lightly with pencil and then go over the figure with a black drawing pen. Finally, use symbolic colors, mainly gold (yellow), blue and red. Can you create different tones of these colors, making them lighter or darker by mixing other colors with them? Practice mixing various tones in the circles below.

**Pointer:** Students may also choose to copy from the figure of Christ on the back cover. You may even want to have them copy the entire picture or read the story and do an illustration using their imagination.



Use Colored Pencils



## Art Lesson #III: "Elongated Figure"

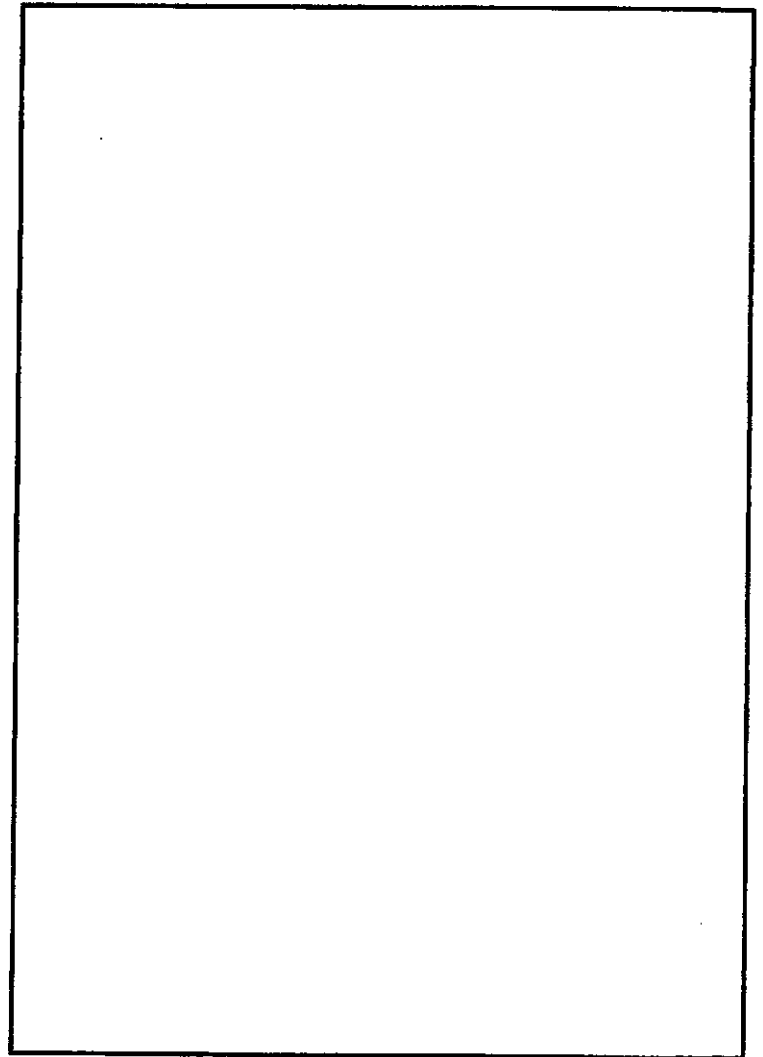
Observe how elongated the figure (below) is in the copy of this early Gothic painting of one of the saints. Can you imagine how tall he would be if you saw the entire body? Notice how small the head is? And even the hands are small in proportion to the rest of the figure. Again, the purpose for religious art was to be symbolic and not realistic. The style is simplified and wonderfully stylized.

For this assignment, copy the figure of the saint (A) in the figure box (B). Start your drawing lightly and then go over it with a black pen and color with colored pencils using symbolic colors. Have the students draw in the facial features by copying from the St. Luke postcard, by looking at the face on page 33, or by simply creating their own.

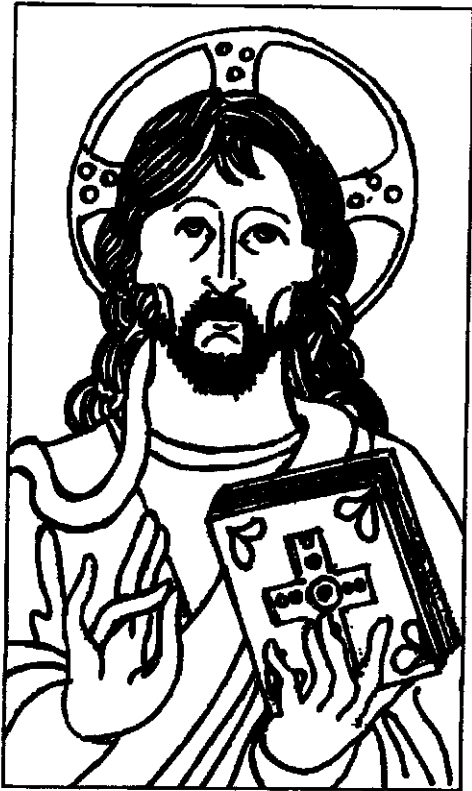
A.



B.



## Art Lesson #IV: "Christ Enthroned"

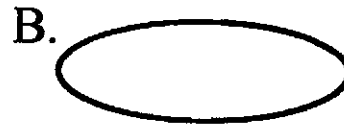


There have been countless portrayals of Jesus Christ throughout the years. Yet, none of us really knows what He looked like. There were no portraits done of Him during His lifetime (as discussed on pages 95 thru 98).

The portrayal of Christ (left) is copied from a reproduction of a large mosaic that was done in the 11<sup>th</sup> century on a wall of the church of St. Sophia in Constantinople. The face is expressionless, the features are stylized, and the hair simplified. Christ's robe is a deep blue, and the background is a rich gold. Notice that my rendering is slightly different from the original mosaic (see back cover). One reason for this is that it is a copy of a mosaic (cut glass or stone) drawn with a black pen—two very different mediums. It is also because God has given us all a unique style, as personal and different as our handwriting.

For this assignment, copy the original picture of "Christ Enthroned" from the back cover in your sketchbook. First, lightly draw a figure box to lay in the composition. Then go over your drawing with a black pen and color with colored pencils, trying to be as true to the original colors as possible. Finally, write your thoughts about this style along with your feelings about your drawing. Do you like it? Why? What do you think of the colors in the original artwork and the colors you have available to copy it? With what colors did you have the most difficulty?

**Pointer / Making Halos:** Halos are a symbol of holiness and have been used around the heads of saints and Christ for centuries. A halo is suggested by either a circle (A) or an ellipse (B). Circles can be difficult to draw free hand (without the use of a compass), especially when going over them with a black pen. My recommendation is that you find a small jar lid to use for a halo, going around it with your pen in order to make a perfect circle. (This may take some practice on a scrap piece of paper.)





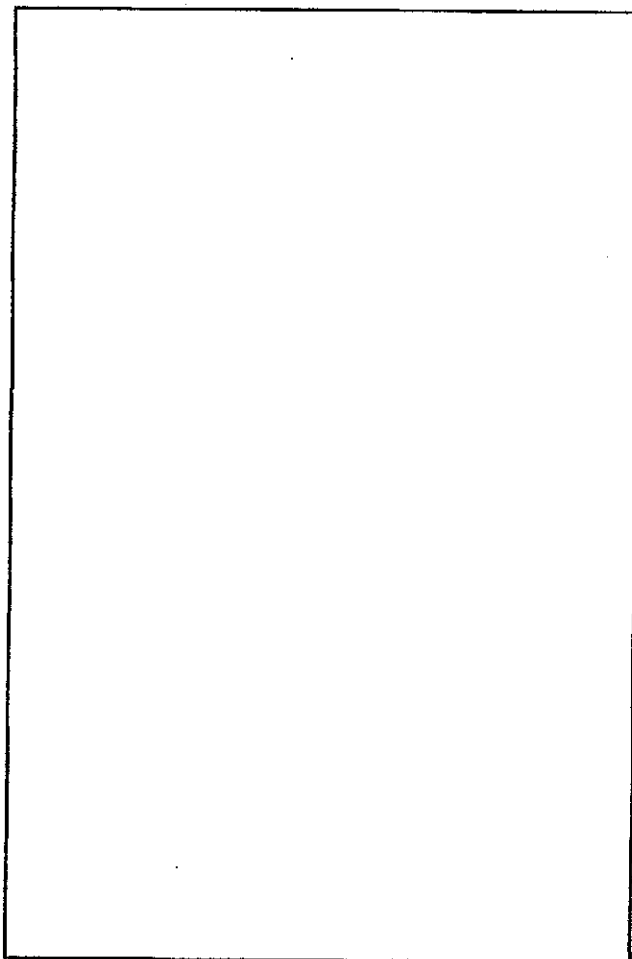
Art Lesson: #VI:  
"Madonna & Child"

"Madonna & Child" paintings (Mary and the infant Jesus) have been a popular theme in religious art throughout the centuries. For this assignment, copy the stylized "Madonna and Child" (A) in the figure box below (B). Unlike adults, infants, hands are much smaller in proportion to the head. Do your drawing lightly with your yellow colored pencil and then add other colors. Finally, with the broad side of your pencil lay in a flat yellow for the halos. When finished, lay in a flat violet background (behind the halos). Can you use other symbolic colors? See if you can make various tones of the same color as discussed in Lesson #31.

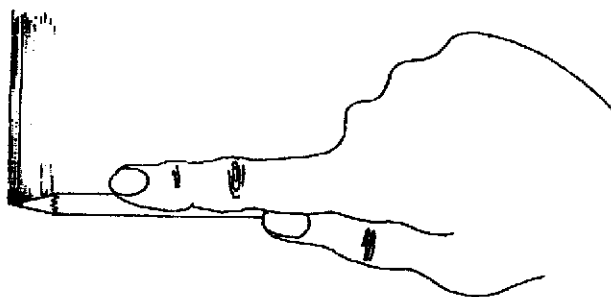
A.



B.



Teacher's Note: Have students turn their pictures sideways and even upside down in order to have a better angle in coloring with the broad side of their pencil.

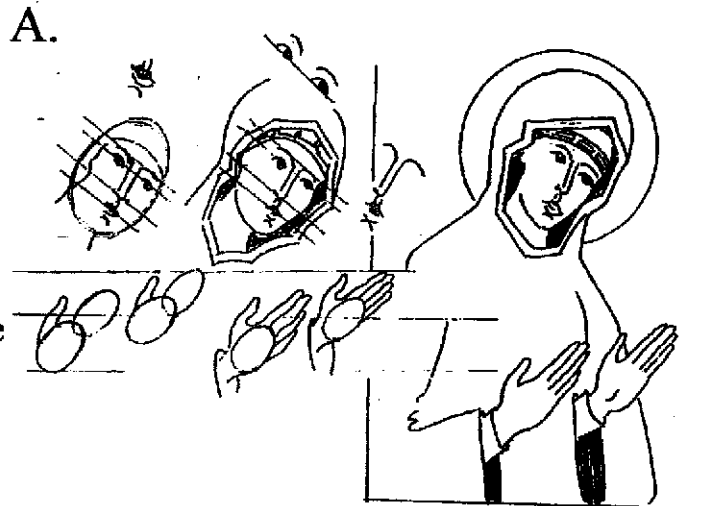


## Art Lesson #VII:

### "Preliminary Studies of the Saints"

While observing drawings done by the great masters, you will notice quite often that their central drawing is surrounded by other smaller studies (especially in drawings by Da Vinci and Michelangelo). Notice my drawing of Madonna (A). I did some preliminary studies, which are nothing more than problem-solving sketches to the left of my main drawing. What is the angle of the facial features? The form of the hands? The configuration of the lips? Not only do these studies assist in solving difficulties but can also enhance the drawing since the eye relishes following the thought process of the artist. There is something to be said about the beauty of unfinished drawings along with our problem-solving studies. Such artwork also allows the picture to breathe and the mind to wander. It is a misconception to believe that every drawing we do, every page in our sketchbook, has to be a completed "pretty drawing."

\* For this assignment go to the library and research early Christian or Byzantine art and find a picture that inspires you. Then, in your sketchbook do some preliminary studies (figuring out how to draw certain features) along with the entire picture. Start with your orange colored pencil and add more color and values with your brown and black colored pencils.



(These limited colors should give you a nice master's technique.) Fill the page with both your finished drawing, along with the preliminary studies around it, making a pleasing composition of the entire study.

**Teacher's Note:** The majority of students do not fill the pages in their sketchbooks, especially with such "thought processes." This may be a good time to review the sketchbooks and have the students fill the pages with more preliminary studies. (These studies do not have to be relevant with the drawings already on the pages.)

**Pointer:** Written comments can also be delightful to add to preliminary sketches, continuing to reveal the thought process of the artist. You may have students return to previous sketches and add notes answering questions about their artwork. "Do I like this drawing?" "What do I need to work on?" "Do I like the subject matter?" "Did I practice any fundamentals, such as shading with lines, ellipses, line variation, values, etc.?"

## Art Lesson #VIII: "St. Thomas of India"

As mentioned in our studies, circles were used quite often for religious symbolism. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The ring, or circle, also represents eternity. And we all know that a halo around the head symbolizes holiness.

Below is another delightful piece of religious artwork. In this mural of St. Thomas, the circle becomes part of the theme, bringing everything together. It also shows a simple, child-like portrayal and yet a masterful sense of design, and the original mosaic was done with brilliant colors. Again, notice the way St. Thomas postures the fingers on his right hand.

For this assignment, copy "St. Thomas of India" in your sketchbook. For the larger circle you may want to find a round object to trace (i.e. a saucer, the lip of a cup, a lid to a container, etc.).

**Pointer:** Notice there is a fine, double line in this large outer circle, two circles close together. It may be difficult to find another similar object for this inner circle. You can either carefully draw it in free-hand, following closely the outline of outer circle or simply have one circle encompassing St. Thomas. Draw lightly. When finished, outline your drawing with a black pen and color with rich, symbolic



Art Lesson #X:  
"The Good Shepherd"

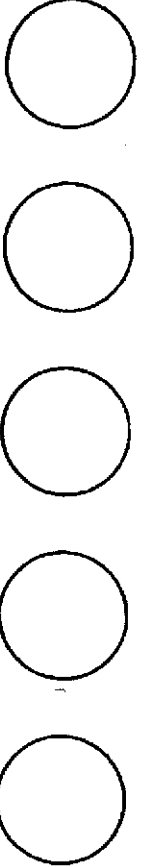
This portrayal of Jesus shows Him without a beard. As we have mentioned in our studies, the countenance of Christ would go through many changes throughout the centuries.

Earliest portrayals show Him as beardless. Ironically, more has been written about Christ than any other man in history. He has also been drawn, painted, and sculpted more than anyone else, yet none of us really know what He looked like.

The drawing (below) was taken from a pastoral scene of Jesus, "The Good Shepherd," tending to His sheep. For this assignment, copy the picture in your sketchbook. Though simplified, it may still be difficult to copy. (As mentioned, you may want to trace.) After drawing the composition, color with bright colors and outline with a black pen.

[REDACTED]

A.



\* Use Colored Pencils

## Art Lesson #XII:

### *“Symbolism of the Right Hand”*

Throughout these lessons you have noticed Jesus and other saints making a symbolic gesture with their right hand (A, B, & C). Even the infant Christ has his right hand raised in such a manner (D).

A.



B.

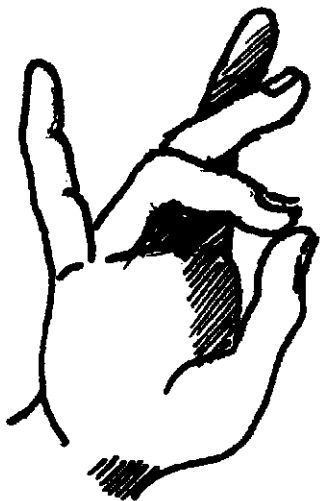


C.



This was a common gesture used during the early Church and simply suggests the offering of a blessing. The fingers spell out “*ICXC*,” which was a familiar Greek abbreviation for “*Jesus*.” The Bible tells us that *Jesus* is the name above all other names, and it is proclaimed over and over again in early Christian art. The three raised fingers also symbolize the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Finally, the finger and thumb that form a small circle spell “*C*” for Christ along with the joining of the kingdom of God with mankind through the body of Christ.

For this assignment, draw the right hand making this gesture once more (as illustrated below) in your sketchbook. Start off lightly and then outline with your black pen. Spell out the letters “*ICXC*” underneath and write what you learned about the symbolism of the raised, right hand and this gesture.



D.



## Art Lesson #XIII: "Garnishing Artwork"

Early Christian artwork was often garnished with delightful borders of floral designs and other artifacts. This was especially true in the beautiful illuminated manuscripts created by monastic monks during the Dark Ages (as discussed on pages 186-188). For this assignment, complete the floral design, placing a creative border around the saint (below). Start lightly, then go over your design with your black pen and color with vibrant colors just as in the illustrated manuscripts.



## Art Lesson #XIV:

### *"St. Francis of Assisi"*

A popular saint in Christian art has always been St. Francis. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]. Below is another rendering of St. Francis and is quite different from the one on the cover. For this assignment, copy St. Francis (below [REDACTED]) in your sketchbook and adorn the borders with a creative floral design as in the previous lesson or simply continue with the design already started, framing the figure. Start off lightly, then go over your picture with your black pen, and color with bright, vibrant colors using your colored pencils.



