

Byzantine At-Home Art: 4th-5th Grade

Artwork: Virgin and Child with Saints and Angels (6th century)

What You're Doing:

You will recreate one of the oldest Christian artworks— an **icon** painted in the 6th century during the Byzantine Empire. It shows Mary seated on a throne holding the Christ Child, flanked by saints, angels, and even the hand of God above.

This painting is called an **icon**: a holy image made to help Christians remember the truth of heaven while they worshipped.

This icon is special because it survived the period of **Byzantine Iconoclasm**, when most icons were destroyed. It was kept safe at Saint Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai in Egypt, where it still remains today.

It was painted using a method called **encaustic** (colors mixed with melted wax), which helped it last for more than 1,400 years.

Icons like this were not made to look exactly realistic. Instead, they were meant to serve as a window into heaven, reminding worshippers of God's presence and glory.

Your assignment is to carefully observe, draw, and color this icon to create your own replica.

Step-by-Step Instructions

1. Place the icon printout and a blank sheet of paper side by side. (If you lost the printout from class, parents may reprint the copy provided.)
2. Do not trace! The goal is to train your eye and hand by drawing freehand.
3. Begin by sketching lightly in pencil, using simple shapes to plan where the throne, saints, angels, and halos will go.
4. Once the overall layout looks right, add details (faces, clothing patterns, jewels, folds in robes).
5. When your pencil drawing is finished, use colored pencils to complete your icon.
6. Pay attention to the primary colors (red, blue, yellow) and how they stand out against the other tones.
7. Work slowly and carefully— your goal is to create a faithful replica that helps you appreciate both the art and the faith behind it.

Due Date & Presentation

- You will not have art class on September 18th.
- **Bring your completed icon recreation to class on Thursday, September 25th.**
- On that day, you will present your drawing to the class and share one thing you noticed while recreating it (color, shape, symbolism, or detail).

✨ Tip for success: Start with light sketching, then details, then color. Byzantine artists worked carefully and with reverence – you should too!