

THE ORTHODOX WEEKLY BULETIN VESTAL, CLIFFWOOD, NEW JERSEY

Certainly the iconostas is one of the most outstanding architectural feathers of a house of worship. It stands between the sanctuary and the the body of the church, between heaven and earth so-to-speak, and serves not so much to divide them but to unite them through the life and work of our Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God.

In the center of this wall of icons are the ROYAL DOORS. They are called this because the king of glory, Jesus Christ, passes through them in the Holy Eucharist, feeding His family with the Bread of Life. The icons that adorn the Royal Doors vary, but normally bear the image of the Annunciation – The Archangel Gabriel announcing the coming Birth of the Saviour to the Holy Virgin. Then, below, are depicted the Four Evangelists – John, Matthew, Luke and Mark, since they proclaimed the Kingdom of God first announced to the Mother of God.

Above the Doors is usually depicted the Last Supper, Jesus offering the Eucharist – first the bread, His body, then the Cup, His Blood, to the Apostles. Some churches also depict the Holy Fathers, or Liturgists, in this area. (The doors at the sides, often termed the Deacon’s doors, usually carry icons of Messengers of God, the Angels; or Deacons of the Church, who during their ministry had charge of articles in the sanctuary area and assisted at rites.)

This grand panorama of images began as a vital tool in teaching the Christiana faith to people. Today it serves as a graphic reminder that this is the entrance to the “Holy of Holies.”