

CHRISTIAN SYMBOLS

The Cross is represented in many forms. (Wikipedia has a good list). It wasn't used as a Christian symbol in the early days of Christianity, however (too many painful memories, probably!) The **Latin cross** or empty cross is often favoured by Protestants. It reminds Christians of the resurrection, while **crucifixes** (centre), with Jesus on it, is more often seen in Catholic and Orthodox churches. It is a reminder of Christ's suffering and sacrifice. The **Christus Rex** (Christ the King) crucifix (right) shows Jesus crowned on the cross, emphasizing his victory over death. Sometimes it shows him with the sun and moon, or standing on the earth. It was the dominant image until the Middle Ages, when increased emphasis on Christ's suffering (and therefore his empathy with our suffering led to the images of the dead and dying Jesus, like that in the centre).



The **triumphant cross with orb** (right) represents Christ's reign over the world.

The inverted cross is the **cross of St. Peter**, who, according to tradition, was crucified upside down because he felt unworthy to die the same way as Christ.



Alpha and omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, signifying that God is "the beginning and the end," or eternal. The symbols were used in early Christianity and appear in the Roman catacombs.

The **Chi Rho** is a symbol made from the first two letters of "Christ" in Greek. It is said that before an important battle, the Emperor Constantine saw this symbol in the sky and heard the words "By this sign, conquer."



INRI is the Latin abbreviation for "Jesus Christ, King of the Jews," "Iesus Nazarenus Rex Iudaeorum." the sign placed above Jesus' head on the cross (John 19:19) Though the sign was intended to mock Jesus, Christians view the phrase as a confession of faith.



ΙΧΘΥΣ or **ICHTHUS** is the Greek word for "fish" and an acrostic for "Jesus Christ, God's Son, Saviour." (Iesus **C**hristos **t**heou **u**ios **s**oter). It was an early symbol for Christians, thought to be popular because it wasn't obvious to outsiders what it meant, therefore guarding against alerting persecutors to the presence of Christians.



IHS IHS represents a Greek abbreviation of the word IH(SOY)S, JES(US). It is sometimes also claimed that it stands for various other things including Iesus Hominum Salvator - Jesus Saviour of Men, In Hoc Signo (vinces) - In this sign (you shall conquer) or In Hac Salus - In this (cross) is salvation, or In His Service. The



version shown here is the symbol of the Jesuit Catholic order.



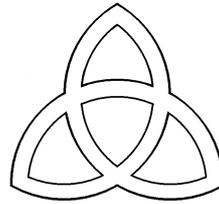
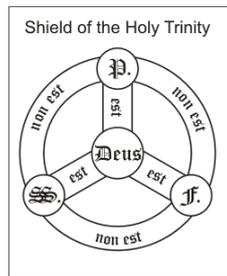
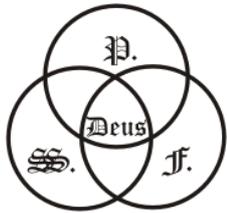
In Christian symbolism, the **LAMB** represents **Jesus**, "the Lamb of God" (Agnus Dei). **Standing** with a banner, the lamb represents the risen Christ triumphant over death. **Seated** on a throne or a book, the lamb represents the judgment of Christ.



Among the earliest images of Jesus were images of him as the **Good Shepherd**. (note the clean shaven image – very Roman rather than Galilean).



THE HOLY TRINITY



GOSPEL SYMBOLS

The symbols for the four gospels below date back to ST Jerome (ca. 347-420 AD), though earlier writers had assigned them in different ways to these four creatures, which are mentioned in the OT book of Ezekiel (1:10 - they are known as the Tetramorph.)

Matthew - a divine man with wings (sometimes misinterpreted as an angel). Matthew begins his gospel with a genealogy of Jesus tracing him through Joseph's line.

Mark - winged lion. Mark's Jesus is full of power and energy.

Luke - winged ox. The ox was a beast of burden and of sacrifice. Luke's Jesus bears the burdens of the world on the cross.

John - a rising eagle. John's Gospel is far more philosophical than the others, taking a lofty view, like an eagle, perhaps?



SHELL. (Pilgrimage & Baptism) The symbol of St James, whose shrine at Compostella in N. Spain was a pilgrimage destination from the middle ages onwards. It became a symbol for pilgrims anywhere. Those being baptised are taking the first step on their Christian pilgrimage, so a shell is often used to pour water on them at baptism



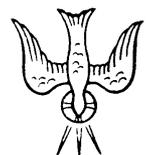
FLAMES – HOLY SPIRIT

The arrival of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost was described as making the disciples appear as if they had flames dancing on their heads. Other symbols of the Spirit include the rushing wind and the dove, (see below.)



DOVE (HOLY SPIRIT)

In Mark's Gospel the Spirit descends on Jesus "like a dove" at his baptism. (Mark 1.9-11)



DOVE (PEACE)

The dove with an olive branch in its beak is a reference to the story of Noah. Noah sends out the dove to see if there is dry land after the flood. When it comes back with a branch in its beak that is a sign that the flood is receding. It is also a sign that it has new life on its mind (birds gather twigs in order to make nests!)



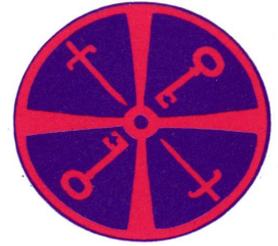
SYMBOLS OF THE SAINTS

Every saint has a symbol. Martyrs are often pictured with something representing how they died (!) St Catharine has the wheel to which she was tied. St Lawrence has the gridiron on which he was burned...

St Paul is pictured with a sword, because he is thought to have been beheaded in Rome. Some say it is also a reference to the Sword of the Spirit, which he refers to in Ephesians 6.17:

St Peter is usually pictured with keys, since Jesus told him that he was giving him the keys of the kingdom. Matthew 16.19

Hence the symbol of Seal C of E school, linked with the church of St Peter and St Paul.



A couple of others....

The Diocese of Rochester



TIMES AND SEASONS

THE CHURCH'S YEAR

The cycle of the Church's year takes us through times of joy and sorrow, times for reflecting on the life of Christ – his birth, ministry, death, resurrection and ascension, times for thinking about the excitements and challenges of the early Church. Through this cycle Christians explore what it means to be a member of the Church today, and find their personal experiences set in a wider context. Following this seasonal movement helps to build balance into our lives.

THE CYCLE OF THE YEAR

ADVENT – (Liturgical colour) PURPLE

Preparing for the coming of Christ. Hoping and waiting. You might use Advent Candles, Advent rings and Advent calendars to countdown to Christmas.

CHRISTMASTIDE- GOLD

From Christmas day to Candlemas (Feb 2nd). This includes Epiphany. The theme of Christmastide is the celebration of God with us in Jesus (Incarnation). Epiphany gives us the chance to reflect on the gift of Jesus to the whole world, and of what we can give to him.

You might build a Christmas crib and light candles. Traditionally the wise men don't arrive until Epiphany and the crib stays up until Candlemas.

SUNDAYS BETWEEN CANDLEMAS AND ASH WEDNESDAY– GREEN

Ordinary time, with the emphasis on stories about Jesus ministry and teaching.

LENT– PURPLE

A time of repentance and reflection beginning on Ash Wednesday when we have ash, made from last year's palm crosses, placed on our forehead. This symbolises our mortality and the way in which all our best intentions come to dust and ashes. Flowers and decorations are removed from the church, and Lent is a time when we try to make time and space to spend with God.

HOLY WEEK - RED from Palm Sunday to Wednesday , GOLD for Maundy Thursday, after which all hangings are removed until Easter day, when Gold is worn again.

- PALM SUNDAY – Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a donkey. The crowd acclaim him. Palm crosses are distributed in church.
- MAUNDY THURSDAY - the Last Supper. Jesus is arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane. It is a day on which we give thanks for the Eucharist. We also keep vigil in Church, thinking of Jesus and of all who have suffered imprisonment and torture.
- GOOD FRIDAY – the Crucifixion. You might spend time thinking about the cross and what it means. You could build an Easter Garden like those which we have in Church.
- HOLY SATURDAY - Jesus' body lies in the tomb. This is a good day to remember those who are in despair and cannot find hope. Sometimes we need to just sit and wait- we can do nothing.
- EASTER SUNDAY – the Resurrection. You might use flowers, eggs (for new life), and candles – anything which speaks to you of hope and joy.

EASTERTIDE- GOLD

This runs from Easter Day to Ascension Day. We focus on stories of Jesus' appearances after the Resurrection – e.g. the supper at Emmaus, doubting Thomas, and the miraculous catch of fish (John 21).

ASCENSION DAY- GOLD

Jesus ascends to heaven. The disciples are sent out to proclaim the Gospel to the world. We think about the Good News of Christ and the ways in which we can pass it on. It is also a time for thinking about the glory and majesty of Heaven. You might like to find some 'heavenly' pictures or music to focus on.

PENTECOST (Whitsun) - RED

The season of Pentecost begins on the day after Ascension Day and leads up to the Day of Pentecost. This festival celebrates the coming of the Holy Spirit to the disciples and the beginning of the Church. (Acts 2) Symbols associated with the Holy Spirit are fire, wind and the dove. It is a time of excitement which marks the birthday of the church. Why not fly a kite as part of your prayer, or do something else which you find exciting!

TRINITY SUNDAY - GOLD

The Holy Trinity. At the heart of God is a relationship of love. On Trinity Sunday we give thanks for the way in which God weaves us into this relationship of Father Son and Spirit. You could plait or weave, and picture yourself woven into the life of God.

SUNDAYS AFTER TRINITY- GREEN

Twenty or so Sundays during which there is no particular set theme. A chance to explore what it means to live a Christian life.

THE KINGDOM SEASON– All Saints to Christ the King - RED

The kingdom of God – here and now, made by us as we make a difference to the world, but also still to come 'on earth as it is in heaven.'

This period includes All Saints, All Souls and Remembrance Day. (The colour for All Saints' Day is Gold and for All Souls', purple, but in the rest of the season we wear Red - perhaps because the underlying theme is the cost of the kingdom - the blood of Christ, and of those who have followed in his steps) We remember those who have gone before us in faith, both the Saints of the church and those who have been special to us personally. We celebrate their gifts to us and treasure their memories. You could find some photographs of those whom you remember, or consider who your own saints are.

CHRIST THE KING- GOLD

Christ in majesty. Heaven, and the rule of Christ in our lives. This is the end of the story which started at Advent. It is a good moment to look back on the year and consider what we have learnt and how we have grown.

See also <http://www.angelfire.com/trek/annegordon/> for more information (It's my children's work website).