

Reading the Orthodox Cross

A guide to the three-bar form

The Cross directs our attention to Jesus Christ, crucified and risen. This three-bar form is one expression of Orthodox tradition, not the only Orthodox cross.

**1****The title board**

Recalls the inscription above Christ at the Crucifixion.

2**The main crossbeam**

Marks the beam on which Christ's arms were extended.

3**The footrest**

Represents the support beneath Christ's feet.

Why is the lower bar slanted?

The footrest may be horizontal or slanted. Devotional interpretations of the slant developed later; its shape alone does not establish one historical explanation.

More than a shape

The sign of the Cross is prayer: Orthodox Christians ordinarily move from forehead to chest, then right shoulder to left. Learn the practice in the life of your parish.

Continue exploring with Athon

Discover the Athon Orthodox app for iOS and Android.

App Store

Google Play

athonapp.com

Sources and further reading: Orthodox Church in America. Explanatory paraphrase by Athon, with an original diagram.

The Russian Orthodox Cross · oca.org

Sign of the Cross · oca.org

You may print and share this Athon handout with its source credit intact.