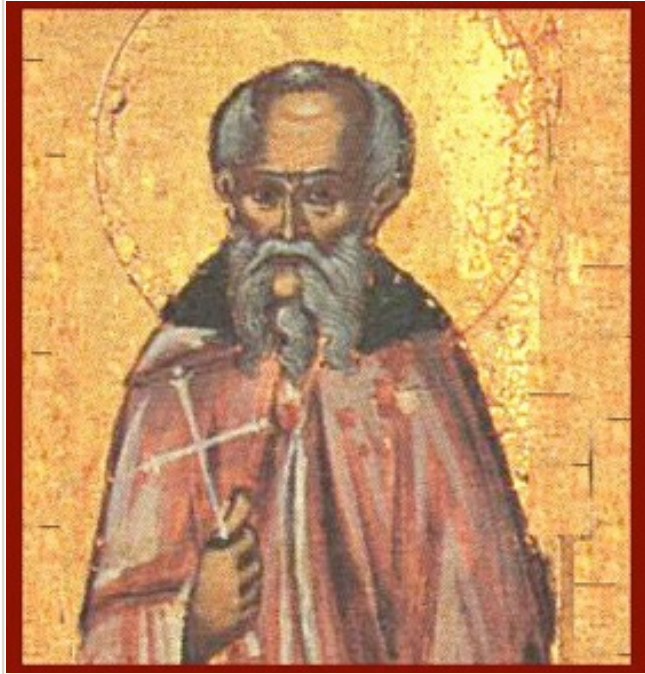


## Why do Orthodox Christians use icons?: St. Germanus of Constantinople



*St. Germanus, Patriarch of Constantinople (c. AD 634 -c. AD 733). He was the first leader of Orthodox opposition to Emperor Leo III the Isaurian's inauguration of iconoclasm, whose first edict was issued in AD 725.*

### **St. Germanus Patriarch of Constantinople (c. AD 634 - c. AD 733), written c. AD 725**

It is not to deviate from the perfect worship of God that we allow the production of icons made of wax and colors. For we make no icon or representation of the invisible divinity: in fact, the holy angels themselves cannot understand or penetrate it totally. But since the only Son himself, Who is in the bosom of the Father, deigned to become man according to the good will of the Father and the Holy Spirit, in order to ransom His own creature from death, since He became a participant in blood and flesh like us, as the great apostle says--"Having become similar to us in everything except sin" [Hebrews 4:15]--we draw the image of His human

aspect according to the flesh, and not according to His incomprehensible and invisible divinity, for we feel the need to represent what is our faith, to show that He is not united to our nature only in appearance, as a shadow..but that He has become man in reality and truth, perfect in everything except the sin which the Enemy has sown in us. Because of this unshakable faith in Him, we represent the character of His holy body on the icons, and we venerate and honor them with the reverence due to them, because they lead us to the remembrance of His divine, lifegiving, and inexpressible incarnation.

[From "*A Letter to John of Synedea*," **Mansi 13**: 101A-C, quoted in **St. Germanus of Constantinople: On the Divine Liturgy**, Popular Patristic Series, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, NY 1984, pp. 49-50.]