



JESUS CHRIST, LIBERATOR

By Brother Robert Lentz OFM

The Greek letters in the cross in Christ's halo are the divine name revealed to Moses in the burning bush: "I am who am." The inscriptions in the upper corners of the icon are Greek abbreviations for "Jesus Christ." Christ wears the traditional Greek garments of icons, whether they are from Russia, Syria, or Ethiopia, but now they have African colors: burnt orange of the Maasai and white of the Saharan peoples. Like most African men, He wears necklaces.

The justification for this icon lies in the text Christ holds (Matt. 25:31-46). "When did we see you...?" those on Christ's left will ask him at the Last Judgment. This text reminds us that Christ identified with the poor and oppressed of the world. The lives of the saints abound with stories about how Christ appeared as a beggar or a sick person in need. Christ has suffered in the Black members of His Mystical Body for many centuries -- slavery, exploitation, prejudice, and racial violence. The time has come to depict His solidarity with the Black peoples of the world -- in iconographic form.