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PDF Generated on: 05/21/2024

Russian Orthodox Icon of Golgotha Cross, circa XIX C.

In bronze, measures 7.6" x 4.2", weighs 6.4 oz. The icon is an 8-ended Golgotha cross framed by a four-ended contour, a design revered by Old Believers. The top part features a hole drilled through the bronze side to side to allow for insertion of a cord to make this icon wearable.

The top part depicts an image of Savaof, God Father, separated from the lower profane space by a garland of cosmic objects. Beneath Him, two angels, according to the canon of Orthodox iconography, should hold a tablet bearing the acronym INRI for "Jesus Nazareus, Rex of Judaerum", which is not seen in this icon. The Holy Spirit presented as a Dove descending from Father to Son, completes the image of the Holy Trinity. Crucified Jesus is depicted with a halo, symbolizing the eternal celestial light. The halo bears Greek letters which stand for "Existing One" (Exodus 3:14). His hands are nailed to the central bar of the cross. Adam's sculpt in a bone box beneath His feet completes the composition. According to tradition, Adam was buried at the foot of Golgotha Mountain and Jesus' spilled blood redeemed humankind's original sin (symbolized in Orthodox iconography as Resurrection, or Descending to Hades).

In the background of the central bar, under the hands of Jesus, we see a depiction of four figures, bringing about the theme of Pieta (Oplakivanie). Probably those images are, from left to right, Maria Theotokos (Mother of Jesus), Maria Magdalena (Jesus' devoted disciple from the town of Migdala), Joseph of Arimothea and Nicodim, priests of the Temple, secret followers of Jesus, descending His body from the Cross. These details contribute to a unique type of iconography, enhancing the icon's artistic quality. On the reverse, two words are clearly visible but, unfortunately, not easily understandable. On the right side we see the word "лѣта" which means "years" in Russian. The left side features four letters which appear to be an abbreviation of some words in Church Slavonic. We are not sure of the first letter, and only 80% sure that the 2nd letter is the Church Slavonic "X". The two letters following it look like "P" and "Б". The abbreviation "МЛРБ", common on Orthodox crosses and standing for "Место Лобное Рай Бысть" (The place of torture [Golgotha] will become Paradise) was our first guess for these four letters, but the first two do not look like M and Л at all. Room for interesting research for the inquisitive mind!

Overall, it's a fine work of art with elements of the Baroque style, felt in the richness of composition and the graceful curve of the bodyline of Jesus, highlighting the artistry and craftsmanship of the creator of this cross.

In very good condition. The metal has retained most of its original bronze luster and shows only two tiny spots of verdigris. The fine details of the high points are considerably worn off but this does not diminish the overall impression and only adds to the air of antiquity and authenticity of this icon.

Please note that the pen in our photo is for size reference.

Item# 37663

\$480.00





