

Praying with Icons *A Virtual Retreat*
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Participant Handout

Welcome

- Introduction
- Opening Prayer

Session 1

- I. The Life of the Church at Prayer (*not exhaustive, but to warm us up*)
 - A. Personal Prayer
 1. On the Mountain (Lk 6:12 & Mt 14:22-3)
 2. In your Room (Mt 6:5-6)
 - B. Communal Prayer
 1. Liturgical
 2. Devotional

- II. The Sacred Icon
 - A. The focal point of an Icon
 1. God
 2. The Virgin Mary - *Traditionally holding the Child Jesus*
 3. The Saints - *distinguished by vestments & symbolic objects*
 4. Events of Salvation History
 - B. Why the Icon?
 1. Inherited images from the early Church
 2. Spiritual richness connecting Heaven and earth

Breakout 1

(1) Which form of prayer have you been drawn to grow in recently?

(2) Do icons have a current place within your life of prayer?

Part 2

III. Icons in the Eastern Tradition

A. Liturgical

1. The Iconostasis
 - a) The east side of the church
 - b) Separates the sanctuary from the nave
 - c) Hierarchy of icons on full traditional iconostasis
2. The laity face east in prayer awaiting the second coming of Christ
 - a) “For just as lightning comes from the east and is seen as far as the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be” (Mt. 24:27).
 - b) St. John Damascene identifies that facing the east at prayer visibly expresses the hope for the coming of Jesus.
 - c) Same tradition in the West

B. Personal Prayer

1. Facing East
2. Perpetually Burning Lamp
3. Arrangement

IV. Icons in the Western Church

A. Liturgically

1. Icons are not present in Western / Latin / Roman Catholicism is the way that they are present within the Eastern / Orthodox Church.
2. Parallels would be found in the sacred art or statuary within the church.
3. One liturgical guideline for sacred renderings in Roman Catholicism is the duplication of images: one Crucified Lord, one Mary, one Joseph, etc.

B. Personal Prayer

1. Roman Catholics are more given to statues and holy images rather than icons, and more accustomed to votive candles and not oil lamps.
2. While an icon may be present it would be seen in parallel with other sacred images or statues, unless they employ the eastern understanding, then they can most certainly harvest the spiritual benefits of such depth.

C. Popular Icons in the West - both are Theotokos images

1. Our Lady of Perpetual Help
 - a) Figures: Mary, Jesus, Angels
 - b) Symbols: Instruments of Jesus' Passion, the unwound sandal
 - c) Text: Mother of God, Jesus Christ, Alpha, Omega, God & Man,

- d) Explained: Theotokos holding the child Jesus. Both hands of Jesus in the hand of Mary displays her role in comforting him in his distress when considering his passion. Jesus is looking to Gabriel who holds the cross and nails. St Michael holds the spear, crown of thorns and sponge soaked with wine. Sandal of Jesus refers to the haste with which He runs to Mary, the fact that He is untethered from earthly things, a nod to His divine nature.
2. Our Lady of Czestochowa
- a) The veneration of this holy image in Poland is an expression of their faith and gratitude for her intercession and protection; it is held that the nation's very existence depends upon her role in interceding for Poland's preservation.

Breakout 2

- (1) Which themes emerge as impressive or insightful for you regarding the traditions of the Icon.
- (2) Do you have any observations in comparing liturgical or personal prayer, or even Eastern and Western prayer?



Part 3

V. The Prayer of Writing an Icon

A. Faithfulness to Tradition

1. Writing versus painting
2. The form of an icon is a stylized art based upon Holy Tradition.
3. The writer of an icon does so obediently

B. Environment of Writing

C. Preparation of the Writer

1. Fasting and Prayer.
2. **Prayer before Writing:** O Divine Master of all that exists, enlighten and direct the soul, the heart and the mind of your servant: guide my hands so that I might portray worthily and perfectly Your Image, that of Your Holy Mother and of all the Saints, for the glory, the joy, and the beautification of Your Holy Church.

D. Preparation of the Board

E. Colors

1. Red - divinity
2. Blue - holiness/purity
3. White - divine energies - only used for resurrection and transfiguration
4. Gold - divine light - traditional background of holy image

F. Process of Writing

1. Application from dark to light - journey of faith
2. Light and shading acknowledges Christ as the origin of light
3. Gold (Divine Light) is the last "color" to be applied

VI. Process & Analysis of Our Lady of Kazan written by Fr. Trowbridge

A. Recall the preparation of the board

B. Background is a deep blue

C. Stenciling of the original image for faithful reproduction

D. Spiritual discipline in writing

E. Eyes of Jesus and Mary

F. The angle of Mary's head

G. The illumination of Mary's face

H. The blue of Mary's inner garment

I. The two stars on Mary

J. The banding on Mary's garment - *Ave Stella Maris*

K. The mouths of Jesus and Mary

- L. The illumination of Jesus' face and His posture
- M. The garment of Jesus
- N. The halos of Jesus and Mary differ
- O. The Letters in the top two corners of the icon
 1. *mu - roh* the first and last letters of Mater or Mother
 2. *theta - upsilon* the first and last letters of theou or "of God" Translating
 3. both together Mother of God
- P. The letters in the halo of Jesus
 1. *omega nu* or the definite greek verb 'the being one' or 'He who is'
- Q. The letters to the side of Jesus
 1. *iota sigma chi sigma* Iesus Christus - Jesus Christ
- R. The application of the gold is 24K leaf
- S. The pattern in gold around the frame

Breakout 3

(1) What details of the prayerful process of producing the icon emerged for you?

(2) What symbolism in color or posture or content in the final images inspired you?



Part 4

VII. Appreciating the Icons in our Midst

- A. Recap
- B. Reflection

VIII. Conclusion

- A. Q&A
- B. Closing prayer
- C. Blessing

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