

As a result of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, many icon painters came to Poland. During the first year of the war, we initially met in the old manor house in Łucznanowice to work together and pray for peace. At an exhibition and conference in the Dominican Monastery in Kraków, we came across a project created by the Warsaw circle of Political Theology "To paint Catholicism anew". Its premise is the long-term work of a group of artists on the themes of the mysteries of the Holy Rosary.

The choice of this set of themes, which are important for both Eastern and Western Christian Churches (the mysteries of the rosary largely coincide with the themes of the icons of the Twelve Great Feasts of the liturgical year, which form an integral part of the Eastern iconostasis), enabled us to suggest to artists from different traditions that we work together. We decided to join the work of the Political Theology community, and at the same time widen the circle of addressees of this project. We want to embark on a common journey – a meditation of the life of the Lord Jesus in the moments which the Churches of East and West consider crucial and celebrate them as Great Feasts.

In Political Theology's project, The Mysteries of the Rosary/Great Feasts series was preceded by work on depiction of the Merciful Jesus, characteristic to the Western Church. We have decided to follow their intuition on this point as well, focusing however not on a specific image, but on the content which this image is meant to convey – on the Mystery of the Divine Mercy. We wanted to approach this Mystery from various perspectives, including that of our "elder brothers in the faith", and to leave the artists free to choose how to respond to the question thus posed. What emerged was a group of works representing the result of a common encounter with the theme of the Divine Mercy, which is so important in today's conflict torn world.

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MERCY ELEOS RACHAMIM

Polish-Ukrainian open-air workshop in Łucznanowice 2023

Exhibition
Center for Dialogue and Prayer in Oświęcim
Maksymiliana Kolbego 1
8th August - 30th September 2024

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PRAYER FOR UKRAINE
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TAMARA KOLESNYK A member of the National Union of Icon Painters of Ukraine since 2018. She enjoyed drawing from early childhood and in 1991 graduated from an art studio in her hometown. She has been painting icons since 2014. The artist studied at the schools of icon painting "Radruż", "Neopalima Kupina", "Prosopon". Tamara graduated with distinction from the State Academy of Decorative and Applied Arts named after M. Boychuk in Kiev in "fine arts, decorative arts, renovation". She defended her diploma thesis on "The Intercession of the Theotokos". Since 2002 she actively participates in art exhibitions. In particular, in the annual regional exhibitions of fine, decorative and applied arts in Vinnytsia. Two solo exhibitions have been held in Vinnytsia - „Primroses” in 2007 and „Spiritual Ukraine” in 2022. Currently, she studies at the faculty of painting of Jan Matejko Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow, Tamara Kolesnyk's works are in churches and private collections in Ukraine and abroad.

Shroud of Mercy icon, oil on canvas, 50/100 cm

My idea was to present the Shroud of Turin in the colors of light of Merciful Jesus. The blue and red rays of light of Merciful Jesus seem to penetrate and pierce the Shroud of Turin, which makes the image of the Savior extremely moving and prayerful.

Pokrov of Mercy icon, oil on canvas, 100/50 cm

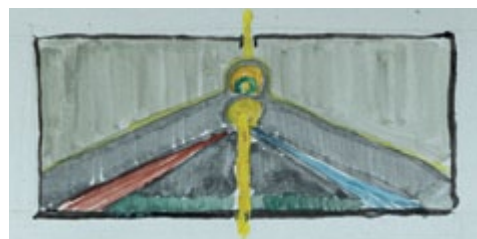
At the open-air icon painting workshop in Łuczanowice, the group of icon painters also included the Warsaw architect Lech Szymborski. He came up with the idea of creating an icon depicting Our Lady of Pokrov, caring for Merciful Jesus. But Lech said that he is not an artist, so he cannot implement his idea in a painterly way... And... oh God, I felt an incredible calling to paint this icon... Of course, with the consent of the organizer, I managed to implement this idea. I painted the icon of the Covers of Mercy in the wonderful blue-red shades of the light of Merciful Jesus, so as to preserve the symbolism of the Savior's divine rays of light.



LECH SZYMBORSKI An architect, graduate of the Faculty of Architecture of the Warsaw University of Technology. Interior architect and liturgical furniture designer. Co-author of the Temple of Divine Providence in Warsaw, author of the church in Guzów with its interiors, co-author of the church in Warsaw-Szeligy.

Pokrov of Mercy, watercolor on paper, 21/15 cm

The original sketch showing the idea of combining two icons: Merciful Christ and Our Lady of Pokrov (the Pokrov icon corresponds to the image of Our Lady of Mercy with a cloak of protection). In this way, the PolishUkrainian icon "Pokrov of Mercy" is created. The above idea was developed by Tamara Kolesnyk as a painter. It is a testimony to the meeting, interaction and inspiration between the participants of the open-air workshop, thanks to which a new image emerged.



EWA ZALEWSKA A graduate of the Institute of Art in Cieszyn, Branch of the University of Silesia, curator - museologist for 17 years associated with the Icon Museum in Supraśl, author of publications and studies in the field of icon art and Jerzy Nowosielski's work in Podlasie region.

Eleos, tempera on board, 30/40 cm, 2023

The best-known image of the Merciful Christ is associated with the apparitions of Sister Faustina. The image of Jesus described by Sister Faustina has found a number of painterly editions. The most widespread ones are by Eugeniusz Kazimirowski and Adolf Hyla. Currently, the theme of Divine Mercy has been taken up by Political Theology as the opening theme of a long-term action under the motto "To paint Catholicism anew." As part of this idea, last year the invited artists painted the image of Jesus, I Trust in You, having previously become familiar with Sister Faustina's Diary and the theological message of the image. The risen Jesus appears to Sister Faustina, with visible wounds of the suffering of crucifixion. My attention was particularly drawn to the diary's words about Jesus' gaze "as if he were looking from the cross." Father Sopoćko interpreted these words by believing that Jesus was simply looking down. For me, Faustina's words remain the key, and that is why I interpret Christ's gaze as full of suffering and love at the same time. Christ appears to Faustina, resurrected, and therefore coming from a transformed heavenly reality, detached from the realities of our world. He is with the Father - in the unity of the Holy Trinity. These are the thoughts I wanted to include in my work.



Mater Misericordiae, tempera on board, 94/117 cm, 2018. 2023

Mary, as the Mother of God, remains the Mother of Mercy who is Christ. An iconographic variant derived from the depiction of the Virgin at the Annunciation is the Gate of Dawn Icon of Our Lady. The Vilnius image dates back to the first half of the 17th century and is associated with the Vilnius convent of the Carmelite Order, which originated from Kraków convent, and worships the Immaculately Conceived Virgin Mary. The literary source of the image of the immaculate Mary are the words of the apocalypse (12:1-2): "A woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a wreath of twelve stars. And she is pregnant (...)." The image of the Gate of Dawn, like the fiat representations, contains a gesture of acceptance of God's will. Additionally, the figure of the Mother of God is surrounded by a radiant halo and stars depicting the words of the apocalypse. The rays symbolize the divine nature of Christ, referred to as sol verus - the true sun, which, thanks to the Incarnation, is present in the womb of Mary. The image of Mary from the Gate of Dawn, called the "Mother of Mercy", is present in the cult of the Western and Eastern Churches, and due to the way of imaging it is a meeting of these two traditions.



SALE OF ICONS FOR UKRAINIAN CHILDREN

If you are interested in purchasing an icon, please contact us by e-mail: fundacja@dobrygrunt.org. The total income from the sale of icons will go towards organizing respite camps for children of soldiers injured during the war in Ukraine.



SISTER GAUDIA SKASS From the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy, she is a graduate of the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw, but she usually paints not with a brush, but with words. In the Congregation, she is primarily concerned with proclaiming Divine Mercy. She currently runs the evangelisation space "Near Rahamim".

Merciful Jesus, oil on canvas, 41/51cm

When painting the image of Divine Mercy, I started by covering the canvas with a dark layer of green, almost black, but still green. This dark background from which emerges the luminous figure of Jesus with rays is a symbol of our sin. Sin brings us into great spiritual darkness. The background in this image is very dark, but at the same time, in places you can see that it has a shade of green, which is the color of the Holy Spirit, the color of hope, the color of life! Since the Resurrection of Jesus, there has been no such great darkness, no such great sadness, no space of suffering into which He would not enter with us, into which He would not enter constantly with the gift of hope of His saving presence, with the gift of mercy. When painting, I wanted to show a strong contrast between our poverty, our darkness and the powerful light of God's mercy. I also wanted to maintain an atmosphere of mystery. Whenever we talk about God, we touch upon an impenetrable mystery. Our God is very close to us, but at the same time he remains a great mystery.

ANASTAZJA KRONIK A painter, iconographer. She was born, educated and worked in Moscow. Since 2013, she has been married to a resident of Odessa, with whom she moved to war-divided Ukraine. In March 2022, she came to Poland with her eight-year-old son. She lives in Krakow and runs iconographic school courses.

Merciful Christ, egg tempera on board, 20/34 cm

It is difficult for a painter, even a contemporary one educated in the iconographic tradition, to talk about his thoughts, especially feelings about his work. Because tradition is about thinking independently as little as possible, and trying to imitate the thoughts and feelings of the "priedania": we pray by reading the prayers of the saints, we sing in eight traditional voices, and we try to repeat the icons in accordance with the old images. This is the essence of the "canon" - do as you have always done and don't think twice. It's not even about special rules and prohibitions. However, we have some rules regarding art. For example, the Moscow Council of 1554 accepts the idea of apparitions of saints and angels. From the 16th century, this kind of icons appeared, depicting the apparition of a saint or an allegorical image, for example of a brother monk. So, according to this principle, we can imagine Sister Faustina's apparitions. When imagining Christ, the painter presents what was revealed in his imagination. True or false, the saints appear on the icon, created by the hands and imagination of the painter. This is a basic thing. The icon should be



a revelation of the saint to those praying. So, painter, be so kind as to imagine God! Have a heart pure enough and hands capable of doing so. I don't necessarily have it. I don't know for sure how Sister Faustina saw Jesus. Who knows how to visualize it in the right way according to how it really is. Where are the boundaries between situations when God revealed himself to someone, when a sensitive person saw his fantasy with his own eyes, when a painter presents his understanding of God. In addition, old biographies of brothers from Egypt and the Kiev Lavra describe apparitions of demons as angels or saints. How can we solve all this? The theme of the image of Merciful Christ and the story of Sister Faustina can be contemplated in all these questions.

Merciful Christ, acrylic on cardboard

I painted this picture while contemplating Sister Faustina. She saw Christ in her own room while praying. Was it at night? With the windows covered? Maybe in the morning? When is the room full of sunlight? How to imagine it? A luminous figure, rays falling from the window and from under Christ's robes. Lots of light and air. I don't know what Sister Faustyna's room was like. I tried to convey the interior as abstract as possible. However, so that you can imagine objects, or imagine your own room and Christ, who could come to anyone who is waiting to meet God.



ANNA KOPEĆ-GIBAS An artist specialising in graphic arts, painting and icon writing. She runs her own studio in Warsaw. The artist obtained her diploma with honors from the Faculty of Graphics and Painting of the Władysław Strzemiński Academy of Fine Arts in Łódź in 2003. The most important individual exhibitions of Anna Kopeć-Gibas took place in: Galeria pod Plafonem in Wrocław, Galeria Brzozowa in Warsaw, BWA in Skierniewice, Regional Museum in Bełchatów, Museum of the History of the City of Łódź, Galeria Delfiny in Warsaw, Galeria Logos in Łódź, Gallery "Zielona 13" in Łódź and twice as part of an artistic exchange in Paris. The artist also participated in numerous group exhibitions. In 2018, she took part in the exhibition "In the footsteps of Jerzy Nowosielski" at the BWA in Olsztyn, and in 2023 in the exhibition "Sacrum-icon-abstractation around Jerzy Nowosielski" at the IMO Gallery in Stary Sącz. Anna Kopeć-Gibas is the winner of many prestigious graphic competitions, including several competitions for the best Warsaw graphic of the month and three Władysław Strzemiński Competitions. In 2008, she won the second prize at the Olsztyn Quadrennial of Polish Woodcuts and Linocuts, and was also a participant in post-competition exhibitions of the Józef Gielniak Graphic Competition at the Karkonosze Museum in Jelenia Góra and the Polish Graphic Triennial at Bunkier Sztuki in Krakow. The artist's graphics were awarded in a competition organized by the publishing house Św. Wojciech and illustrate an artistic edition of the Bible. Anna Kopeć-Gibas was also a scholarship holder of the Minister of Culture of the Republic of Poland. The artist's icons decorate the interior of the Church of the Savior in Gdańsk and the chapel in Komańcza. In 2019, the artist won the icon competition in Supraśl, receiving the third prize for the icon of St. George.

Christmas-Covenants, tempera on board, 25/30 cm

I have painted the figure of the little Jesus surrounded by symbols of the other Covenants as an expression...

INNA KUZMINSKA A Ukrainian artist, founder of the "Byzantium" icon painting studio in the city of Chernomorsk (Ukraine). Participant of many international exhibitions of sacred art and church painting, book illustrator

Burning Bush, egg tempera on board, gilding, 30/40 cm

I wrote an icon in the likeness of the ancient Sinai Icon. The Burning Bush that does not burn. The one that Moses saw taking off his sandals when he was afraid of the great Holiness. Standing nearby is Aaron, who cannot see the bush, He is personifying the sacrifice pleasing to God. But the most important thing is the MYSTERY that was hidden from people for several thousand years, the pure Mother of God who gave birth to the Son of God, Jesus Christ. This is where special Mercy is revealed for us, the people of this land. My main goal in creating this icon was to show that there is much we cannot see with our physical eyes, but God's plan is far more powerful than our idea of life.



HANNA DĄBROWSKA-CERTA A graduate of the Faculty of Painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw (diploma 2002). Since 2003, she has devoted herself to icon painting, in practice implementing the assumptions of her theoretical work entitled Return to the image thanks to the Icon Tradition. Since 2005, she has been co-leading iconographic workshops at the Study of the Christian East at the Dominican Monastery in Służew, Warsaw.

Christ, acrylic on ayous board, gilding, 12/17 cm

The image of Divine Mercy is an attempt to present the existential emptiness and darkness of man, into which Christ enters, gently pouring light into it, symbolically referring to two materials - blood and water, which poured out from the heart of the crucified Jesus, as a source of mercy for us. The thought that accompanied me is a fragment of one of the neocatechumenal songs "(...) I have you written on my hands", referring to the reading from the book of Isaiah 49:16: "(...) behold, I have engraved you on both hands, your walls are continually before me." This is the reading from Mercy Sunday, after which in the Gospel we hear about the fearful disciples who are visited by Christ with the words "Peace be with you!" The icon was created at a difficult moment in my life, shortly after my father's death, as a fruit of dialogue, my cry and as a gift of God's Mercy for me. I'm sending it on...





MATEUSZ ŚRODOŃ A visual artist, icon painter. A graduate of the Krakow Academy of Fine Arts and the School of Byzantine Hagiography of the Holy Metropolis of Piraeus in Athens. Author of the wallpaintings in the church in the church dedicated to the Name of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Międzyzlesie and in the chapel of blessed Józef Stanek in the Warsaw Uprising Museum. Co-organizer of the exhibition Samuel Willenberg – Hero of Two Nations and coauthor of the album, released in June 2023 under the same title.

I lift my eyes to the mountains, tempera on stone, 21/25 cm
"I lift up my eyes to the mountains: From where shall my help come? My help comes from the Lord, Who created heaven and earth"
These words of Psalm 121 come to mind when I look at the icon of the Lord Jesus against the background of a mountain, which was created during an open-air workshop in Łuczanowice – as the Greeks say – through my hands. Its shape results from the joint work and conversations that took place there. The Lord Jesus is rushing to meet us. This fact of "rushing", of walking in our direction – was the topic of our conversations and was also the motive for artistic exploration. The fact that the Lord

Jesus comes down from the mountain and is presented against the background of a mountain – also resulted from mutual inspirations. While consulting with the participants of the open-air workshop on how they saw the icon being created, I asked "isn't the top of this icon too empty?" Due to some language difficulties we had, one of the plein-air participants from Ukraine took the word "mountain" literally ("top of..." and "mountain" is in Polish and Ukrainian the same word) and said "that's right, a mountain, you have to paint a mountain there." It was very inspiring for me, because the topic of mountains in spirituality has been moving me very much for many years – both Mount Horeb and the mountains of the Transfiguration, and of course Golgotha. God often chose a mountain as a place to manifest His Power. I understand mercy as the Love of God acting and coming with Power. Help from on high.



Merciful Jesus, oil painting, 25/40 cm

Merciful Jesus gives us an example of how to win. Mercy is victory over evil.

DOROTA ŁOSKOT-CICHOCKA She graduated from the Warsaw Academy of Fine Arts, in the studio of prof. Janusz Stanny. She draws and paints icons, writes and illustrates books, and is the author of the idea of evangelization workshops for children and parents "Crayons to Heaven". She is involved in the coordination of Polish-Ukrainian cooperation within the Warsaw KIK. She is a wife and mother of four children.

Jesus, I trust in You, egg tempera on board, 22/35 cm

When painting the Icon of Merciful Jesus, the most important words for me were the words "Jesus, I trust in You", which I repeated to myself like a prayer. It was an important moment in my life and that of my family. I was glad that I could devote myself to this work at this moment. I was delighted that I could paint the Image of Divine Mercy according to the idea given by Sister Faustina. It had never occurred to me to try on such an image! I was grateful to the initiator of the open-air workshop, Mateusz Środoń, for the idea and inviting me to it. I was also a bit unsure whether I would be able to cope with this challenge – whether my image of Christ would be good, whether it would encourage others to pray and trust. I hope it will.



MICHAŁ PŁOSKI I have been painting icons since 1988, despite having no artistic education. I wanted to serve the rapprochement between Catholics and Orthodox. I made these three works to express solidarity with Ukraine affected by the tragedy of war. I painted them in some haste on unprimed boards with acrylics.



Protection of Our Lady – Pokrov, acrylic on board, 47/111.5 cm

The icon is based on the image from the Lemko Orthodox Church (the original was created in 1932 in the workshop of Serhiy Stelmaszczuk). It is intended to express prayer for Ukraine.



Crucifixion, acrylic on board

This icon is painted on fragments of a broken door. In my mind, this is a reference to the bombing of civilian buildings and the homes of ordinary people.



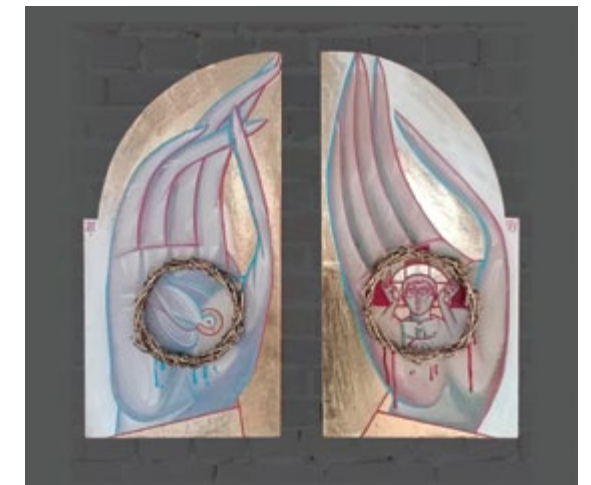
Don't cry for me, Mother, acrylic on board, 20/25 cm

This small icon was created for mothers mourning their fallen sons.

DMITRO HORDITSA A Ukrainian artist working on sacred art. He graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in Lviv, worked as an assistant at the Academy of Fine Arts and Architecture in Kiev, and then as a teacher at the Faculty of Monumental and Decorative Art of the Kyiv State Academy of Decorative and Applied Arts and Design named after Mykhailo Boychuk. He created and in 2009–2018 headed the Center for the Study of the Sacrality of Ukrainian Culture at the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy National University. He is an interior designer of churches in Ukraine and Poland. Organizer of many exhibitions of sacred art, member of the National Union of Artists of Ukraine and the National Union of Icon Painters of Ukraine.

Annunciation, tempera on board 2x 50/80 cm

Two hands, luminous, in blue and red colors bringing to mind the rays of Mercy. On the hands there are figures – the Son and the Spirit in the circles of thorns. Stigmata? From under the thorns flows...Blood? Water? Tears? Are these the hands of the Father, who by giving us the Son and Spirit at the same time accepts suffering? Only a second glance makes it possible to distinguish the hand of Mary and the hand of the Archangel from the Annunciation scene. Mateusz Środoń



The work was created in December 2022, and is a requiem for little Kyril, who lived only two days – he died during Moscow's rocket attacks on the maternity ward of the Zaporozhian Hospital on the night of 23 November 2022. Dmytro Horditsa