



## 'Moving on with Icons' in England's Nazareth: Walsingham 2017

*Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,  
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;  
Conspiring with him how to load and bless  
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run;*

The 2017 Walsingham retreat took place in mid October giving us several days of glorious autumnal sunshine and tranquillity. The grounds of the Anglican Shrine – beautiful at any time of year - were a joy worthy of Keats's *Ode to Autumn* quoted above.

This year's painting course was far broader in scope than in previous years and designed to challenge Confident Beginners and Improvers to develop their practice. As a small group of seven, the participants had the freedom to work on their own icon projects - or choose from four archetypes.

Viz; two icons from the Russian schools (a 19<sup>th</sup> c *Mother of God of Kazan* and an 15<sup>th</sup> c *Archangel Michael* attributed to Rublev) and two Greek Byzantine icons (a Cretan *Theotokos Kardiotissa* by Angelos and the magnificent 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> c Athonite image of *Christ Pantocrator* from the Chilandari Monastery).

This choice provided the opportunity to look at the different techniques and formal element of both schools and the art historical context underlying each of these 'classic' icons. Above all, and most importantly, these images provided exemplars of Orthodox iconography and the sacred tradition we Western iconographers must always seek to understand properly and respect.

The course was supplemented by specific drawing exercises, technical practice on mixing and applying egg tempera in various ways, colour mixing and blending etc.

By the end of a week of hard work, we finished in good time and took our icons to the Holy House for blessing by the Shrine Priest, Fr Andreas Wenzel (who did it superbly). Our roll call: One *Archangel Michael*, one *St John the Theologian with St Prochorus*, one *Kazanskaya* and four '*Kardiotissi*'.

Several in the group took on the not insignificant challenge of drawing their icons, rather than transferring from tracings – and apparently benefitted hugely from this level of engagement -and its consequences - in terms of understanding just what is involved! Well done tutti.

As an ecumenical group, we also shared group meditations, reflections and a Mass offered in thanksgiving. My thanks to the ordained Roman Catholic and Anglican members of our group who generously offered their ministry.

**The next course will be 23<sup>rd</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> September, 2018.** Bookings are now open and places are limited (7-9 max) so book early. The cost will be £600 per person for 5 nights, 6 days and includes Half-Board accommodation (breakfast and evening meal) at the Anglican Shrine. Book online using the Prices, Dates & Bookings tab at [www.iconadventures.co.uk](http://www.iconadventures.co.uk) or phone 0203 673 6417.

