



## 'Moving on with Icons' September 2018

Once again, we enjoyed something of an Indian summer for our 6 days at the end of September. And despite the summer drought, the gardens of the Shrine were blooming with autumn colour, especially the beautiful blue Michaelmas daisies, most appropriate, given the approaching Feast of the Archangel Michael and for those writing an icon of the Archangel.

Of the seven participants, the majority had done some icon painting before, even if it was only to have painted one icon, a few years ago. Our one absolute beginner did fantastically well and seems to have got the bug. There was an opportunity for everyone to assess their own level and establish what specific skills and techniques needed to be worked on during the week, something possible within a small group.

To this end, the painting course included various drawing and painting exercises designed to develop individual practice. The participants also had the freedom either 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). The various choices of archetype enabled us to contrast and compare the different techniques, styles and art historical context as well as the different spiritual aspects.

One of our Reverends in the group took the opportunity to paint two icons of *Christ Pantocrator* simultaneously and clearly had a great time creating both using both traditional and non-traditional techniques.

Another participant chose to interpret a contemporary Russian icon of *Mary Magdalene*, bearing symbols of both the jar and red egg. In addition, we had 2 more *Pantocrators*, 2 *Archangel Michael* and one *Kazanskaya*. In spite of the location, no one chose to write a *Mother of God* icon this year.

All the icons were completed ahead of time and as is customary, were then processed to the Holy House for the work to be blessed in a special private ceremony. The feedback was 100% positive and this retreat course had clearly encouraged people to continue. Of the 7 participants, 5 will carry on developing their icon painting practice and the other 2 would like to do so!

On the social side, we enjoyed a little of the current trend in artisan botanical gin trend, along with our Quiz Nite. The locally produced 'Archangel Gin', was found to be very good (made with Walsingham water and the mysterious botanical 'Grains of Paradise')! Congratulations to Mr H who won the quiz with his knowledge of royal babies, amongst other things.

**A very similar course will be offered in 2019. If you are interested, please check the website for updates, phone Helen +44 (0)203 673 6417 - or email: [info@iconadventures.co.uk](mailto:info@iconadventures.co.uk)**

