



Our Lady of Perpetual Help

What intrigued me in 2019 when I began my journey into iconography, was the meditative process of contemplating the saints. I incorporate the practices taught at the Institute and begin by crossing myself, contemplate the rules of icon painter, ask God and the saint to be with me, and pardon my enemies to begin with a clean heart.

Our Lady of Perpetual Help is the most venerated icon in both the Christian East and West. This image introduced me to iconography and touched my heart for its story about the little boy Jesus, who while playing was made aware of his path to crucifixion. It scared him, and while running to his mother for comfort, his sandal came loose, which is why it dangles from his foot. I imagined the humanity of Christ as a little boy and Mary's motherly love comforting him, being fully aware of the prophesy.

This icon is classified as the Hodegetria genre, “she who shows the way” in which Mary leads us to Christ, so she is the focal point. It uses typical Byzantine hierarchical scaling and because it is focused on Mary as intercessor to God, she is larger in scale than the other figures. Theologically, her role as intercessor is conferred upon her by Christ, who places his hands in hers. Because she has divine foreknowledge, she gazes at us with the look of “bright sadness” which means holding joy and sadness in her heart at the same time.

The original icon is egg tempera painted over gold leaf with the fine lines in the garments scratched away to reveal the gold – a technique called Sgraffito.

This has been a wonderful journey for me. I hope you that when gaze at her, you might ask what journey Our Lady of Perpetual Help/Healing is inviting you to travel?

Dee Passmore, Iconographer

