

The Gospel's Voice



Orthodox Parish of the Holy Transfiguration

Number 8, July 2016

The Orthodox Church of the Holy Transfiguration

Grande-Rivière N-O

Mauritius

(behind Garage BALA)

**Divine Liturgy every Sunday
at 9.30 a.m.**

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Divine Liturgy

Every Sunday at 9:30 a.m.

3rd of July: 2nd Sunday after Pentecost.

10th: 3rd Sunday

17th: 4th Sunday of the Holy Fathers of the 6 first Councils.

24th: 5th Sunday

31st: 6th Sunday

Monday 1st of August: beginning of the Fast of the Dormition of the Holy Theotokos.

The Icon of the Holy Trinity

The icon of the Trinity by Andrei Rublev is often considered as the highest point of Russian iconography. The monk Andrei Rublev lived approximately 1370 to 1430. The icon of the Trinity was painted around 1410 for the Monastery of the Holy Trinity and St. Sergius near Moscow.

What the Holy Trinity Rublev's icon tells us?

This is a representation of the episode described in chapter 18 of Genesis. The Lord appeared to Abraham in the plains of Mamre, in the form of three men. Abraham invited them to rest and offered them a meal. Patristic tradition has seen in the three visitors a figure of the three divine persons. Following

him, the Byzantine iconographic tradition has chosen to represent the Trinity under the aspect of the three men become angels, seated at the table of Abraham. Rublev's icon is therefore part of a long-honored tradition.

First, notice the rhythm of circular movement that seems to cause all the icon elements. The position of the seats, glimpsed sideways, that of their steps, the same position of feet of two angels in the foreground, the tilt of their heads: all this evokes, suggests a "directed" movement (in the direction opposite to that of clockwise). This movement is manifested



both in the background. The tree bends to the left (for the viewer) as under the breath of a strong wind. Left still inflect the cut sides of the roof of the building. This rhythm expresses movement and communication of the same divine life between three people. But these do not entrench themselves in a closed system. Their pace is a pace of adoption, bestowals, donations, generosity and grace. Their condescension admits promptly in the divine circle being created - but there will remain separate and in its own place. By bending the shaft, the circular motion of the divine life reaching nature. By influencing the roof of the building (which judging by his general style and especially by that of the window and the door is a church), it reached the prayerful humanity, humanity to its highest power. The "adopted" world is somehow the periphery. The three remain the center. This is indicated by a subtle color degradation. Shadows - blue, garnet, orange, green - angels clothes surrounded the lighter yellow fire wings and seats and pale golden transparency of the background. The maximum reality is that the three people. "I am who am" (Ex 3:14).

Rublev's icon has "introduced" the believer into the living reality of three people. Now we "see" differently, because we have been now suggested they are other, not what we believe, but what we imagined (also more or less in spite of us). And in our new vision - that of eternal youth and beauty, that of indescribable charm of three - there is more warmth, more attractive, more joy, more personal reality than in "painting abstract "we had deduced the theological patterns. "Your eyes will see the King in His beauty" (Is 33,17). Each of the three angels hands an elongated stick and very thin. Is that each divine person is a traveler, a pilgrim. Only the Word was made flesh, but was made flesh by the power and the will of the Father and the Spirit. At no time were the two others not foreign to the Son of the work of salvation, at any time they continue to come to us and act on us invisibly. The icon highlights the participation of all the Holy Trinity in the Incarnation. The three poles are a statement and a promise. They claim that the three have already come to men. They promise that the three will come again. Our Triune God comes, comes forever.

The term of this coming is the home of three persons among men. That is why the three angels have accepted the hospitality of Abraham. They sit at his table near his tent (Gen. 18.1-2), under a tree (Gen 18.3). The tree and

the church represented in the icon still mean the tree and the tent of the biblical narrative. The icon evokes the divine life of the three, but it puts in connection with a human table, with human needs. The three people want to be more than visitors or overnight guests. There is a dwelling of the Trinity in the soul of God's servants. The meal of the Messianic kingdom it accomplishes invisibly. "If someone opens the door, I will come in to him, and will supper with him and he with me" (Rev. 3:20). "We will come to him and we will make our abode with him" (Jn 14:23).

The pilgrimage of the three angels would not be complete if it wouldn't end at Calvary. The icon evokes the board of the three divine persons for the redemption of mankind. The angels are strikingly similar. Their features are almost identical. Yet their eyes and gesture manifest own way each of them approach the mystery of Redemption. The angel who faces the viewer and which in relation thereto is sitting beyond the table represents the Father. His hand refers to the dish; it suggests the sacrifice, she prompted. And the look, loaded with sadness, turns away. The angel sitting in front and right of the table, always with respect to the viewer, is the Son. The look of the Son, too, is sad. While the head gently slopes in acceptance, eyes, both fascinated and mortally sad - "My soul is sorrowful even unto death" (Mt. 26,36) - attach to the dish. Whole attitude expresses a fiat obedient, resigned, painful. Angel sitting left, at the table, is the Paraclete. This is the case to say the Paraclete rather than the Spirit, for it is here that the third person exercises his supremely comforting ministry. Both hands held with a kind of solemnity thin red stick in front of the Son. It is as if this stick was presented to him to tell him about earthly pilgrimage and bloodshed. Eyes set the face of the Son. The attention of the third person is deeply, totally focused on what the Son will do. All being the third angel exhale silently sympathy and pity.

Andrei Rublev did not intend to suggest thoughts, but a prayer.

From: A Monk Church of the East,
Excerpt from *Irénikon* magazine, No. 26, 1953

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