

Subject: Letter to Fabrizio Diomedì



Martin Luchansky

to info

Dear Mr. Diomedì,

First of all, thank you so much for agreeing to help us. As you know, copies of your icon are being shared throughout the Knights of Columbus councils, and we are expecting to receive a copy of your icon in our area soon.

I view this as an important opportunity for our Church, our parish and for assisting persecuted Christians. So first thank you for creating the icon and again thank you for helping us plan for its visit to our parish.

Our planning is in the early stages now, but it's already clear that folks will be very interested to hear details about the art. So far we plan on presenting the icon during Mass, and following Mass will conduct a prayer service which will include a homily about the state of Christian persecution.

Our objectives are to increase prayer to our Blessed Virgin, increase awareness of the persecution situation, and to increase support to those persecuted. To accomplish these goals, our homilist will be of the Trinitarian Order, which Order has been helping persecuted Christians for centuries. Also important to our efforts is a description of details that will engage the congregation ... that's where you are key.

Here is a brief paragraph from the Knights' announcement of the general program of distributing the icon:

As the Knights' 18th Prayer Program launches, a new Eastern-inspired religious icon will travel from parish-to-parish across the country to raise awareness and inspire support for persecuted Christians. At the conclusion of yesterday's concelebrated Mass, the Knights launched its 18th Marian Prayer Program, this year featuring an icon of "Our Lady Help of Persecuted Christians," created by Italian artist Fabrizio Diomedì. In the image, we see various people gathered under Our Lady's mantle. These men, women and children died as martyrs in recent times. They together illustrate an inspiring example of Christians who so bravely and faithfully died for love of Christ. The traditional process of making an icon is also symbolic, according to Loyola Press. An icon is painted on wood, representing the Tree of Life and Tree of Knowledge. Coats of glue symbolize the soul and life of the icon's subject. Certain areas receive a thin layer of clay, representing man's physical nature. Then the iconographer blows the clay off and paints those same areas with gold, recalling the act of creation and breath of life. He adds layers of paints, with darker colors applied last, so that light seems to come from within the image. This represents the unseen God's glory breaking through from heaven. As the icon travels from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, it will help focus the eyes of our Church on the sacrifice of our brothers and

sisters in Christ. May it serve to inspire us all to stand strong in our faith and continue our efforts to protect the free practice of religion throughout the world. Our Lady, Help of Christians, pray for us!

We would like to present a more in-depth insight into your work, and thus have so many questions that I hope I will not be burdensome. If it is better for your schedule that you answer some now and some later, we would like to have the information by late September or mid-October so we can look at your answers and try to anticipate the audience's interests.

Is the creation process described above the same as the basic process you used? In what areas did you use clay? How do you recommend the viewer should concentrate? How do you envision that people will be drawn to the icon?

What is the significance of the designs such as WITHIN the halos?. Why did you choose that type of 'star' design on the veil, or the type of cross (relating to the area of the Eastern Church?), what other details did you include to enhance the general theme?

How should we view the representation AROUND the main figures? Did you specifically represent particular persons or groups of people under the Mantle?

In the photos on your page, I liked your inclusion of interesting effects of light and texture ... and photos of earlier art with a focus on facial expressions. What are the expressions we should take away from the icon?

What would YOU like us to relate to our parishioners? We would perhaps quote your words in your personal message to them.

In our publicity regarding the prayer service, can we include a picture of you?

Hopefully, I have not poured out too much, but my hope is to garner your participation in our forum and help more people receive your message.

Molte Grazie

Peace.

... *Martin*

Subject: Letter from Fabrizio Diomedì



Fabrizio Diomedì

to me

Dear Martin,

thanks for the email and I apologize for the delay in the reply. My commitments allowed me only now to be able to respond. I am pleased that you live the prayer program of the Knights of Columbus so intensely and it is a pleasure for me to share my experience as an iconographer with you.

I will try to answer the questions in a somewhat free way.

Regarding the technique I use in making icons, yes, it is substantially similar to the one described in the release. The table is covered with a canvas glued with rabbit glue; the same glue is then mixed with gypsum which is spread in various layers until a homogeneous surface is obtained which is then rendered perfectly smooth with sandpaper.

So I traced the sketch on the table that I have already prepared on a sheet of paper. With a red color, the design is then finished and corrected directly on the table.

At this point we proceed with the gilding, which involves the laying of a red clay called bolo armeno and which allows the gold to be polished and decorated. On this clay the golden leaves are placed with the gouache technique.

The colors I use are pigments in powder (some natural, others artificial) mixed with the red of the egg, according to the ancient technique of egg tempera of ancient origin.

This technique lends itself to many symbolic interpretations, some right, some fanciful.

Historically, every age, every region, every school, every artist had his own technique that roughly was similar for everyone, but not identical. Moreover, there are icons in mosaic, marble, ceramics, carved wood, metal, enamel, ivory which can not be considered second-class icons compared to those painted in tempera. For this reason, here in Italy we have a certain caution regarding these interpretations, since they risk idolizing the technique at the expense of what is most essential in the icon: the encounter with the Reality of God. It is not an abstract reality, but of the encounter with living persons, Jesus, the Virgin, the Saints, who in a symbolic way are put in communication with us. The icon is a window and a bridge between our visible dimension and their invisible dimension. Invisible does not mean alien or unreal, on the contrary: the icon reveals the spiritual substance of Creation the divine nature of the redeemed man.

To do this, the Church has developed over the centuries a language that fully expresses these needs, but every language undergoes adaptations and changes over the centuries for which even the language of the icon, despite the inner coherence, has been transformed.

Today the rediscovery of the icon, which at the beginning consisted only in copying the models of the past, is becoming more creative and tries to adapt to the expression of faith that we live in the 21st century.

Personally, I am very attracted to the style of Italian and European gothic, which the most rigorous ones already consider as a drift of iconography, but which, on the contrary, I consider to be much closer to our aesthetic sensibility and our spiritual needs.

The icon of Our Lady Help of the Persecuted Christians was an explicit request from Mr. Carl Anderson, who wanted to include, under the mantle of the Virgin, many categories of persecuted Christians and many martyrs.

On our left, we can see in the foreground an Armenian priest prostrate at the foot of the Madonna, which represents the genocide of the Armenians occurred in Turkey in the twentieth century.

Behind him, St. José Maria Robles Hurtado and St. José Sánchez del Río, martyrs of the Mexican persecution. Near, dressed in the uniform of the extermination camps, St. Maximilian Maria Kolbe. Behind, a monk in white represents the Trappists killed in Algeria during the civil war, but also Bro. Jacques Hamel, killed by the terrorists while celebrating Mass in France. Nearby, in a pink cope, we have a Syro-Malabar priest, and, in orange jumpsuits, a man representing one of the Coptic Christians

martyred on the beach of Libya in 2015.

Behind, Sister Leonella Sgorbati killed in Somalia in 2006, and an African family from Nigeria.

On the right, kneeling in the foreground, the card. Joseph Slipyj, of the Greek Catholic Church of Ukraine. Behind, an Iraqi child, Adam Udai, killed in the massacre that took place in the Cathedral of Baghdad in 2010, and Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim, Syriac Orthodox Archbishop of Aleppo. Near, a Maronite priest. Behind, Boulos Yazigi, Greek Orthodox Archbishop of Aleppo; a Missionary Sister of Charity, among those killed in Yemen; Blessed Mary Yi Seong-rye, representing all the martyrs of Korea and the Far East. Finally a woman from India.

Four crosses (Latin, Coptic, Maronite and Orthodox) represent the various Christian confessions.

Even the Child Jesus supports the cross, a sign of persecution but also of redemption and salvation.

Above all, the Virgin spreads the mantle of her protection. On the mantle there are three stars that in the iconography represent the perpetual virginity of Mary.

Above and on the sides of the arch, some palm branches in gold signify the reward and glory obtained by martyrdom. "Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you [...] because of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in Heaven "(Mt 5: 11-12)

I hope that if this image arrives in the territories where the persecution takes place, the faithful can find comfort and hope in their suffering, while I would like all those who pray the Virgin to assist our persecuted brothers, may feel more in communion with the whole Church and with all those who believe in Jesus, regardless of confession.

I hope I have been exhaustive, and if you want to have some more clarification on the icon, I will try to answer.

Greetings from Italy,
PAX,
Fabrizio Diomedi

Subject: Letter 2 from Fabrizio Diomedì

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Fabrizio Diomedì

Mon, Oct 15, 2018 at 6:00 AM

To: martin

Dear Martin,

Thank you very much for the mails and for the image that illustrates the various details of the icon. It will certainly help for a greater understanding of the image.

Regarding the various types of crosses on the clothes of the Armenian and of the card. Slipyj, there is not much to say about it: I have used models that are often depicted on liturgical clothes.

I used the green in the lining of the Virgin's cloak as a sign of hope for all those who turn to her.

The colors blue and red purple, however, are typical of 'clothing of the Madonna. The Byzantine tradition reverses the position of the colors (blue the dress and purple the mantle) while in the Catholic tradition it is more typical that I have also used. The meaning is however similar. The purple is a symbol of royalty while the blue, color of the sky, indicates the deification of human nature, made heavenly by Grace.

The child Jesus wears very vivid colors: white expresses light and purity, while red is a sign of both light and life and of the blood shed.

I am very pleased that you have so much at heart the disclosure of the meanings of the icon and above all that it is a support for prayer and for the support of all the persecuted Christians.

Best regards,
Fabrizio Diomedì

Data: Sat, 13 Oct 2018 11:22:03 -0400

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