

## The Re-Dedication of the Icon of the Guardian Angel

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We had a major change in our main church! As many already know we have moved the **Icon of the Guardian Angel** to our Prayer Corner.

The icon was first dedicated on October 1, 2000 and was 'written' by Debra Korluka, an iconographer in the Byzantine Orthodox tradition who resides in Stillwater. Since that time it has been in the Historic Church. About a year and a half ago the decision was made to move it from the Historic Church to a more prominent place to be enjoyed by everyone who enters our sacred space.

Throughout the history of the Church icons have held an important place in the spiritual life of communities. The icon is not simply an aesthetic object or an object of study, it is **living art**. The icon is meant to transfigure and to inspire the person to prayer and contemplation.

*"What one sees in prayer before an icon is not an external representation of a historical person but an interior presence in light, which is the glory of the transfigured Christ, the experience of which is transmitted in faith from generation to generation..."* Thomas Merton

The icon is concerned only with the sacred; it is a window into heaven thus it is theology in images and color.

In our **Icon of the Guardian Angel** the primary figure is the Guardian Angel who looks over our parish family in the symbol of lovingly holding the Historic Church. The angel is clothed in both blue and red. The color blue represents that the angel is a celestial being who dwells with God. The red is the color of activity. The angel inspires us to be a community that is vibrant and dedicated to the work of the Kingdom. The Historic Church rests on a green oak leaf and an acorn symbolizing growth and abundant life and the geographical location of our church in Oakdale, Minnesota.

*The following are notes taken in part from a letter by Debra Korluka about the icon in 2000:*

As in all icons in this tradition the primary figure faces outward bringing it into direct relationship with the viewer and giving fullest expression to its face. The facial features are determined by the canons of iconography. They are based on two legends: the Western story of the veil of Veronica on which during his passion Christ blotted his face on a cloth which retained his image and an Eastern story of a king who sent an emissary to Christ to come to cure a sick servant. Christ took the cloth and blotted his face on it and sent it back. This cloth stayed in Odessa, Russia until it disappeared in the 10th century. Thus the face of the subject of an icon is the Holy Face of Christ. The image of the Holy Face teaches us that we are unable to discover God, to know God, unless God reveals himself to us in a direct personal relationship. The icon is then a revelation of the living person of Jesus Christ in the deepest sense and becomes for the one who prays before it the mystery of the personal meeting with God.



The angel holds a staff which is significant in guarding the flock. The symbolic elements in the style of the image are:

- the ribbons falling from the ears denoting an increased sensitivity to the word of God and obedience to God's commands .
- the halo denoting the radiation of divine grace.

The other three images were included to present to the faithful that all material existence has been sanctified by Christ's incarnation:

Christ taking human form – the Holy Face

Death – the angel holding the spear

Resurrection – the angel holding the empty cross.

The angels sit on the sun and the moon indicating that Christ's death and resurrection affected all of creation and the New Adam came to save all earthly creatures.

The dove represents the Holy Spirit that gives breath and transformation to all life.

The seraphim in the upper corners follow the description in the Book of Isaiah (6:2) and express God's fiery love for His creation, for these angels are of the highest order and surround the throne of Glory and unceasingly intone the trisagion "holy, holy, holy."

The scroll under the guardian angel is a verse taken from Psalm 91.

The entire image is immersed in a gold background of unlimited space signifying the heavens, eternity and timeless boundaries.

The overlapping circles in which the figures are placed represent God who has no beginning or ending.

There is no natural source of light in icons. There are no shadows. There is only the inner light of the sacred figures

and the divine light of Christ.

The work is unsigned because the artist ascribes inspiration and creative achievement to God's grace. For the iconographer, the writing of the icon is a very personal act of prayer.

*"The composition (of this icon) supports not only true elementary theological dogma, but with its movement of direction, calls the faithful to open (their) hearts to God and to be transformed by the Holy Spirit into the image and likeness of God and enjoy communion with the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit. Amen."*