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THE ORIGINAL ICON OF OUR LADY OF PERPETUAL HELP  
AND ITS COPIES IN THE MONASTERIES OF THE SISTERS  
OF THE ORDER OF SAINT BASIL THE GREAT IN UKRAINE

Introduction: This article is dedicated to the artistic analysis of the styles, iconographic and color features of the well-known icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, which is found in the Church of St. Alphonsus de Liguori in Rome. It reveals new understandings of the iconographic elements and colors of the icon. This analysis of the iconographic elements suggests the time of its creation – the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, thereby questioning the identity of the iconographer. It is proposed to study five representations of this icon of the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century which are found in the monasteries of the Order of Sisters of Saint Basil the Great in Ukraine. There are similarities and differences in the artistic variants of these icons compared to the original one. In studying these representations, it was discovered that some are artistic works of known artists. The given material is presented in historical context. Regardless of whether the icon is of the Byzantine tradition of the Cretan school of iconography, it has world-wide esteem among many Christian Churches, leading to the idea that the icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Help is historically recognized as protecting the ecumenical movement, potentially uniting the Christian East and West.

Consideration is given to the historical context of the ancient icon. Investigated are the icon's features and new elements of iconography and the use of color. In turn, the historical and iconographical features of the examined monastery icons of this list and their artistic evolution are studied. The oldest sources regarding the Cretan Our Lady of Perpetual Help icon are found in historical chronicles in archives. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century devotion to the icon notably

broadened. Books were published with prayers to Our Lady of Perpetual Help and histories were written. Until the current time, most of the research focused on the historical and theological-spiritual aspects of the icon. Recently, the Redemptorist Fathers published a collection of articles dedicated to the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Our Lady of Perpetual Help icon under their protective care.<sup>1</sup> Among the interesting research especially important are results of the analysis of paint layers and the icon boards.<sup>2</sup> More precise research is needed in the study of the images and the artistic features of the ancient Our Lady of Perpetual Help icon. Until now, little attention has been given to the artistry of the icon and these copies. The copies are numerous and serve the prayerful purpose for which they were intended. They are often found in Roman Catholic as well as Greek Catholic and Orthodox churches. This article attempts to add some humble thoughts on this theme.

*I. Historic and artistic features of the original Our Lady of Perpetual Help icon located in the Church of St. Alphonsus Liguori in Rome and new outlooks on its theological interpretation.*

First references to the Our Lady of Perpetual Help icon were due to the large number of healings which took place in the ancient Church of St. Matthew the Apostle, beginning in the year 1499.<sup>3</sup> The icon in the Cretan style, measuring 51,8 x 40,4 cm., according to historic tradition was brought from the island of Crete to Italy by a merchant, who died shortly after arriving in Rome.<sup>4</sup> Before his death he asked his friend to give the icon to the church. The icon was covered with precious metal making it

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<sup>1</sup> SHCSR 64 (2016) 376 pp.

<sup>2</sup> A. MARRAZZO, *L'ultimo restauro dell'icona della Madonna del Perpetuo Soccorso*, in SHCSR 64 (2016) 307-349.

<sup>3</sup> A. S. WODKA, *Ikona Matki Bożej Nieustającej Pomocy jako uobecnienie Bożej zbawczej medytacji*, in *Uczyńcie ją znaną całemu światu. Kult i symbolika ikony Matki Bożej Nieustającej Pomocy w zarysie*, a cura di M. Sadowski, Homo Dei, Kraków 2011, 11-20.

<sup>4</sup> L. BOSKI, *Maty Boza Nieustannoy Pomochy*, Filadelfia (PA) 1916, 33.

appear expensive, causing the wife of the mentioned friend to refuse the removal of the icon from their home. Versions of the story say that it was through the lips of their five-year old daughter, that the Blessed Virgin revealed that she was to be known as Our Lady of Perpetual Help. At the request of the Blessed Virgin to this little girl, in 1499 the icon was given to the Church of St. Matthew the Apostle on Via Merulana, where it was kept for more than 300 years under the care of the Augustinian friars.<sup>5</sup> During that time it was considered as the most famous icon in Rome. The church was located between two major Basilicas: Santa Maria Maggiore and San Giovanni in Laterano. During the times of the Napoleon wars, the church was destroyed and the icon was transferred to the Church of Santa Maria in Posterula. From that time, no mention of the icon was found.

The icon was rediscovered in 1865 and Pope Pius IX put it under the care of the Redemptorist Fathers, who had purchased the land where the Church of Saint Matthew the Apostle had stood and built a new church, the Church of St. Alphonsus de Liguori, and a monastery at that location. The icon was restored by Leopold Nowotny.<sup>6</sup> On April 1866 the icon was transferred to the newly-built Church of St. Alphonsus de Liguori witnessed by a multitude of clergy and laity. The following year, Cardinal Ruggero Antici Mattei, dean of St Peter's Chapter, titular Patriarch of Constantinople, crowned the icon in the presence of a huge crowd of people. At the time of the crowning, the first exact copies of the icon were created and were endowed with plenary indulgences and Papal blessings.<sup>7</sup> The copies were created by the Swiss artist Jacob Wuher during the years 1866–1876. The largest number of his copies of the Our Lady of Perpetual Help icon (250) went to Germany and Austria-Hungary. According to the detailed accounts of the Fathers of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer the greatest amount of copies were created the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A large number of

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<sup>5</sup> A. S. WODKA, *Ikona Matki Bożej Nieustającej Pomocy...*, 11-20.

<sup>6</sup> M. SADOWSKI, *Redemptorists as Promoters of the Devotion to Our Mother of Perpetual Help*, in *SHCSR* 66 (2016) 119-136.

<sup>7</sup> B. ŁUBEŃSKI, *Historia cudownego obrazu Matki Boskiej Nieustającej Pomocy*, Kraków 1916, 2.

printed copies were taken by pilgrims to Rome back to their native countries. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century many publications began to appear centering on the history and miracles of the icon.

As to the artistic features of the icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, which is found in the Church of the Redemptorist Fathers in Rome, they are attributed to the byzantine tradition with indications of the Cretan school of writing and Venetian influences (*Drawing 1*). Speculation exists that it may have been written in Venice between the years 1450–1550 by Cretan iconographer Andrea Rico (Rizo) da Candia.<sup>8</sup> However, the author of this article did not find identical fundamental artistic traits in the miraculous Cretan icon and the works of the mentioned iconographer. Based on iconographic-appearance and coloring indications of the mentioned icon compared to the works of the iconographer Andrea,<sup>9</sup> it appears to have been created earlier than the Cretan icon. The author made a careful analysis of the manner of copying icons at a time when the masters of the byzantine tradition came under various influences, specifically, Venetian,<sup>10</sup> as well as from iconographers in various parts of Italy.<sup>11</sup> This led her to look for the painter of the icon among the contemporaries of Duccio, Cimabue, Segna di Bonaventura or Paolo Veneziano (the years between 1250–1350). The island of Crete, which from the 13<sup>th</sup> century belonged to the Venetian Sea Republic, through various political ties, sustained certain intercultural influences. This is evident in the supple treatment of colors used in portraying parts of the body and in the manner of depicting the eyes, nose and mouth. This type of supple treatment is characteristic of frescoes of the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century in Serbia (monastery in Sopočany, the fresco of the Annunciation).<sup>12</sup> The painters are also similar in their spe-

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<sup>8</sup> A. S. WODKA, *Ikona Matki Bożej Nieustającej Pomocy...*, 11-20.

<sup>9</sup> The author of the article needed to analyze the icons of Andrea Rico da Candia in the Basilica of St. Nicholas in Bari and in Venice.

<sup>10</sup> M. SBORNIK, *Iskustvo Zapadnoy Yevropy e Vizantiyi*, in *Nauka* (1978) 248.

<sup>11</sup> A. S. WODKA, *Ikona Matki Bożej Nieustającej Pomocy*, 11-20.

<sup>12</sup> O. POPOV, V. LAZAREV, *Drevneruskoje iskustvo: Wizantia, Rus, Zapadnaja Yevropa : eskustvo e kultura*, San Petersburg 2002, *passim*.

cial way of treating gold-highlights in the clothing of Christ and the Blessed Mother. It is important to notice that the mentioned characteristics are also found in Ukrainian icons of the Kyivan style of that time. This is clearest in the icon of the Blessed Mother, «The Sign», which according to tradition belongs to the brush of the iconographer and monk of the Kyiv-Pecherska Lavra St. Alipij. The icon is known as the Jaroslavska.<sup>13</sup> Notice that the creator of the Cretan icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Help's use of the gold-highlights comes close to the byzantine icons, which fell under the Venetian influence, especially the icon of John the Baptist<sup>14</sup> and the works of Cimabue<sup>15</sup> and Segna di Bonaventura.<sup>16</sup> This tradition of golden highlights, or golden folds in the clothing comes from the desire to embellish churches with icons, imitating the elaborateness and effect of mosaics, when those were not accessible due to their expense. It is assumed that the golden-highlights, especially on the mantles (cloaks) of the Blessed Mother, were longer than the ones found on images in current icons. This is supported by the works of Duccio and other artists mentioned above.<sup>17</sup> This idea is also supported by longer gold-highlights on the tunics and cloaks of Christ in the studied icon. With time the re-painting, restoration and changes in esthetical taste, these details were lost. This is especially noticeable in the mantle (cloak) of the Blessed Mother.

In published studies of the icon, which were done between 1992-1994 along with the restoration of the icon, it was found that the board of the icon is dated as originating from either 1308-1358, or 1381-1457.<sup>18</sup> The original icon was repainted be-

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<sup>13</sup> G. LOGVYN, L. MILAJEVA, *Ukrainskyy serednyovichnyy zhyvopys*, Mystectvo, Kyiv, 1976, Tabl. 5, 6, 8.

<sup>14</sup> M. SBORNIK, *Iskustvo Zapadnoy Yevropy e Vizantiyi*, in *Nauka* (1978), 248.

<sup>15</sup> D. FABBRI, *I maestri del colore. Cimabue*, Fratelli Fabbri Editori, Milano 1965, 113.

<sup>16</sup> B. B. FREDERICKSEN e F. ZERI, *Censimento dei dipinti italiani precedenti al XIX secolo nelle collezioni pubbliche di musei del Nord-America*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1972, passim.

<sup>17</sup> Cecilia JANNELLA, *Duccio di Buoninsegna*, Scala, Firenze 1991, 4-9, 18-19, 72, 79.

<sup>18</sup> A. MARRAZZO, *L'ultimo restauro dell'icona...*, 330.

fore 1798. Among the paint layers is found white paint from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>19</sup> An older manner of painting the parts of the body in a darker color is found on the neck of the Blessed Mother. Other paintings have markings of a later time. In agreement with a previous analysis only the board of the icon is acknowledged as being from the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Other studies on the icon do not support the evidence of that age for the icon. Icons of Our Lady of Tenderness of the Venetian-Cretan writing period of the XV-XVII centuries found in the National Museum of Ravenna, have iconographic-stylized markings that are similar to the studied icons but, at the same time, differ in esthetical taste in their images and color, which are found in different ways in every artistic period.

The iconographic model, created by the artist in the studied icon, has specific changes from the traditional treatment of Blessed Mother icons of the time. Atypical is the figure of Christ in the arms of His Mother. It differs in several distinct manners of composition: the proportions of the Child, which are those of a twelve-year old, the face turned away from the Blessed Mother, the upward gaze of the Child, and the sandal on the right foot, which appears about to fall off. The iconographic portrayal of the hands is unusual with Christ leaning on the palm of His Mother with both hands. As in the ancient style of the Hodegetria, the right hand of the Blessed Mother motions towards Christ, while her left hand supports Him. In the upper corners of the icon, one finds half-figures of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel, which were often portrayed in icons of the Blessed Mother since the time of the iconoclastic heresy.<sup>20</sup>

Let us consider the painter's treatment of color. The ultramarine color of the mantle of the Blessed Mother is seldom used in the era of Byzantine iconography, which was regularly used in the western tradition. From this arose two distinct symbolic treatments of the color for the outer clothing of the Blessed Mother. Layers of tradition melded through the centuries. At times, it

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<sup>19</sup> *Id.*, *Ibid.*, 332.

<sup>20</sup> One example of this would be the Blessed Mother icon of the V – VII century, found in the side chapel of the Church of St. Maria in Trastevere in Rome.

appears to researchers that both traditions are used simultaneously.<sup>21</sup> In western iconography it was widely accepted that the ultramarine (dark blue) color of the cloak of the Blessed Mother indicates that this person belongs to the divine sphere, while eastern iconography accents her humanity. In this case, the author of this study holds yet another traditional understanding, where the deep, dark color of the cloak of the Blessed Mother (whether maroon or blue) was used to designate the suffering or passion of the Blessed Mother portrayed in the icon. The side-by-side use of the colors on the researched icon, not only denotes the artist's depth of symbolism, but the conscious desire to present an esthetical portrayal. A similar decision regarding esthetical-coloring is found in the icon of the Blessed Mother with Child, which is found in the National Gallery of Palazzo Venezia in Rome.<sup>22</sup> It is believed that each historical period leans to its specific juxtaposition of colors, reflecting the thoughts and needs of the time, as well as incorporating the personal style of the artist.

Another continuing dialogue among professionals is the question of the treatment of the outer clothing – the cloak of Christ in the given icon. There is a supposition that the cloak should be dark maroon, given that this was an ancient symbol.<sup>23</sup> Previous to the 1866 restoration, indeed, Christ's cloak was portrayed in a dark color.<sup>24</sup> However, in some icons Jesus is not clothed in a cloak, but just a shirt, a portrayal which is regulated by strict byzantine norms, which lean towards naturalistic portrayal. This maroon color is found in Christ's shirt, such as in the "The Blessed Mother with Child" works of Segna di Bonaventura.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> M. KOTYŃSKI, *A Theological Outline and the Spiritual Message of the Icon of Our Mother of Perpetual Help*, in *SHCSR* 64 (2016) 26-40.

<sup>22</sup> Giovanni Salamone da Bologna (Venezia e Treviso 1377-1389) *Madonna con Bambino*, inv. 10233.

<sup>23</sup> M. KOTYŃSKI, *A theological outline...*, 35-46.

<sup>24</sup> *Uczyńcie ją znaną całemu światu. Kult i symbolika ikony Matki Bożej Nieustającej Pomocy w zarysie*, a cura di M. Sadowski, Homo Dei, Kraków 2011, il. 1.

<sup>25</sup> Specifically, "Blessed Mother and Child" (1325-30), which is found in the Academy of the Arts in Honolulu, Hawaii, USA.

The rich yellow-brown color of the outer clothing of Christ, which remains after the last restoration, is analogous to icons of the 12–15 centuries, preserved most often in museums. Examples may be found in the icons of the Blessed Mother of this period, preserved in the National Gallery of Umbria in the city of Perugia, Italy, the Museum of Byzantine Arts in Athens, as well as, icons of the Kyiv iconographic schools (in Ukraine), which were taken to museums in Russia,<sup>26</sup> along with other icons. This color used alongside with gold highlight symbolizes a human nature made divine. A green colored tunic on Christ, during this period, was used in icons of the Blessed Mother, showing mercy, which is characteristic of icons of the Passion.

Iconographic symbolism in the studied icon of the Blessed Mother is special. It alludes to the Trinitarian aspect of God. The Blessed Mother, Christ and the Archangels are portrayed on a gold background. This indicates that they belong to the realm of “the new heaven and new earth”, in the state of eternal Trinitarian salvation of humankind. Divine life shines forth in the gold in their garments. Christ is portrayed in the icon as Savior. At the age of 12 years, in accordance with Old Testament Jewish regulations, the teenager becomes a son of the Law, capable of answering to God’s Word.<sup>27</sup> Christ’s gaze is raised upwards beyond the Archangel Gabriel, who holds a cross. There is a conversation between the Son of God and the Heavenly Father. Due to the unusually direct gaze of the Son, the unseen Father is made present in the icon. The presence of the Holy Spirit “who comes from the Father, through the Son” is symbolized by the green color of Christ’s tunic. This color is also used to emphasize the moment when the Holy Spirit, through Jesus Christ, comes upon the Blessed Mother – the Mother of the Church. This is visualized through the bright green color of the lining of the Blessed Mother’s cloak or mantle, as well as asthrough the green shades on the outer side, which symbolize how the Blessed Mother is clothed in the strength of the Holy Spirit. Through her, the actions of the

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<sup>26</sup> G. LOGVYN, L. MILIAJEVA, *Ukrainskyy serednyovichnyy zhyvopys*, Mystectvo, Kyjv 1976, Tabl. 2, 8.

<sup>27</sup> A. S. WODKA, *Ikona Matki Bożej Nieustającej Pomocy...*, 22.



Holy Spirit are given to us – her children and the praying faithful. That is why Mary's gaze is focused on us, with her right hand guiding us towards the presence of the reality of the Blessed Trinity: the Son of God in conversation with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, who comes from the Father through the Son, waiting for us to open our hearts. An unusual iconographic detail, confirming the moment of sacrifice bringing eternal salvation and which is an element of an ancient tradition amongst people in the East, is the sandal on the right foot of Christ, which at any given moment, will no longer be His, but will be surrendered to the Father. In ancient times in the East, this is the way important agreements were made – covenants between two people. Instead of the present day signing of a treaty, the parties would exchange an article of clothing or footwear.<sup>28</sup> The presence of the Holy Spirit witnesses to the moment of the covenant between the Father and the Son who is offering His life for the salvation of humankind. Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the promise and the prophecies. The Blessed Mother, looking upon us, invites us, the praying faithful, to enter and understand the meaning of the history of our salvation. In this manner, we see that the untraditional iconography and coloring of the icon of the Blessed Mother, denotes the Trinitarian presence, that is, the presence of the Holy Trinity in the icon.

In our opinion, the artist is a deeply aesthetical person, rooted in many centuries of byzantine theological tradition, who has command of traditional icon-painting techniques and an artistic understanding of iconography and color. Regarding iconographic style, this icon is unique. It belongs to the icons of Our Lady of Sorrows, in which the main theological aspect centers on the unseen reality of the relationship to Trinitarian God. The Blessed Mother, as Our Lady of Perpetual Help, continually brings the praying faithful to this theological truth. The Gospel essence of the icon – the Son of God agrees to give Himself as a sacrifice and become the fulfillment of the new covenant between humankind and God for our salvation.

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<sup>28</sup> This moment of salvation reality is present in iconographic portrayal of the Crucifixion. Jesus Christ on the cross points to the covenant made with the Father and sealed with the blood of Christ. The promise is witnessed by the Holy Spirit, Whose presence is indicated in the green-colored loincloth of Christ.

Examining the iconographic and other artistic characterizations of the Our Lady of Perpetual Help in the Church of St. Alphonsus de Liguori in Rome, we come to the conclusion that the artist wrote the icon in the first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. As a result, we believe that the icon in the Church of Saint Alphonsus belonging to the Redemptorist Fathers in Rome is not simply a good copy of the ancient icon, as some current researchers believe,<sup>29</sup> but is a copy which represents the ancient icon with numerous additional features and restorations. This makes it difficult to uncover the actual iconographic hand of the artist. For researchers this poses a distinct difficulty, to conclude on the basis of given iconographic techniques and pigments, the exact time of the writing of this icon. Nonetheless, not concentrating on the different additions to the icon, an opinion is formed, that the clear, authentic, exact portrayal of the face of the Blessed Mother, the form of the hands, specifically, the right hand, clearly reflect the iconographic style of the time. As a result, the studied icon stands on equal ground with its contemporary works, profoundly reflecting antiquity, rooted in and bringing forth different artistic movements of the following centuries, always bridging unity between East and West and between the past and the present.

*II. Icons of OLPH found in Monasteries of the Basilian Sisters from the end of the XIX century to the beginning of the XX century painted in the Ukrainian tradition; their historical context and evolution*

Having shared the new understanding of particular iconographic and artistic elements of the oldest icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, consideration needs to be given to five previously unknown copies and representations painted at the end of the XIX century and the first half of the XX century. A special feature of this research is the fact that the mentioned icons were found and preserved in the monasteries of the Sisters of the Order of

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<sup>29</sup> A. MARRAZZO, *L'ultimo restauro...*, 333-335.

St. Basil the Great in Ukraine, who belong to the Eastern Catholic Church. Analysis and synthesis of specific artistic elements point to three clear outstanding artistic tendencies that appear in the artistic rendering of the icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Help.

Historically, the appearance of this type of icon on Ukrainian territory is attributed to the Redemptorists. The first foundation of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer Fathers of the Roman Catholic Church from Poland was made on Ukrainian territory in the city of Mostyska in 1883. Eventually, Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky invited Redemptorist Fathers from Belgium. In 1913 they began an Eastern branch of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer in an ancient monastery in Univ, in the Lviv Archeparchy of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (later abbreviated as UGCC). Starting in 1922, the Redemptorist Fathers conducted numerous missions for parishes in many cities and villages,<sup>30</sup> distributing holy cards that reproduced copies of images of Our Lady of Perpetual Help. In 1922 Pope Pius XI proclaimed Our Lady of Perpetual Help the Protectress of starving children in the lands occupied by Russian Bolsheviks. Icons with the imprints “Holy Father for the starving children of Russia” and “Salvation of the world, save Russia” were prohibited by law and not allowed to be brought onto any territory under Soviet rule.<sup>31</sup> In western Ukrainian territory worship of the icon quickly spread. This occurred mainly through praying the Akathist to Our Lady of Perpetual Help, a service composed by Reverend Father Roman Bakhtalovsky, C.S.S.R. (UGCC). Through this means these icons entered into the liturgical life of the faithful of the UGCC.

The icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Help entered into the prayer life of the Basilian Sisters in 1893 when Karol Heimroth

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<sup>30</sup> K. KOROLEVSKYY, *Mytropolyt Andrey Sheptytsky (1865–1944)/ kyrylo korolevskyy svashchennyk vizantiyskoho obriadu, konsultsnot Kongregatsiyi u spravah Skhidnykh Tserkov, Skhidnoyi liturgiynoyi komisiyi i Komisiyi skhidnoho kanonichnoho prava*, Svichado, Lviv 363.

<sup>31</sup> M. SADOWSKI, *Uniwersalny wymiar kultu Matki Bożej Nieustającej Pomocy w latach 1866-1966*, in *Uczyńcie ją znaną całemu światu. Kult i symbolika ikony Matki Bożej Nieustającej Pomocy w zarysie*, a cura di M. Sadowski, Homo Dei, Kraków 2011, 43.

painted a copy on canvas at the request of Ilingar family. The following year the couple donated the icon to the Basilian Sisters for the Church of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, part of the educational girls' institute in Lviv in Zyblykevych Street. The size of the canvas is 120 x 160 centimeters (*Drawing 2*). In the lower right hand corner one can find the author's name and the year of its painting. The icon was placed in the side altar of the church and adorned with lights. Students from the institute and parishioners remembered the icon as miraculous. Chronicles describe that there were many votives underneath the icon, given as gifts of the faithful in gratitude for favors and miracles received. Every year there are "majivky" (Moleben to the Mother of God celebrated daily during the month of May), when people asked for particular graces and received them.<sup>32</sup> A momentous occurrence transpired on June 22, 1897. The Lviv Metropolitan Sylvester Sembratovych gave written confirmation that a supernatural healing occurred in the church at the Basilian Sisters at the girls' boarding school.<sup>33</sup> A young girl Olympia Avdunoivykova from Kamianka Strumylova had come to Lviv to consult doctors at a hospital regarding healing her eye, which was diseased and in a serious state, with the disease already spreading to her other eye. The doctors explained that there was nothing they could do to help in the hopeless situation. Leaving the doctors the girl went to the church of the Basilian Sisters and with fervent faith prayed to the Blessed Mother before the miraculous icon asking for help with her condition. She left an offering for a Divine Liturgy to be celebrated for that intention. Afterwards, Olympia returned to the hospital. When a specialist again examined her, he cried out in amazement: "The eye has been healed". A miracle had occurred. Returning to the church, the young girl found out that the Divine Liturgy for her requested intention had just been celebrated by Reverend Father Evhen Husar. The incident was written up and confirmed by church officials, as a supernatural healing. In 1939 the church

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<sup>32</sup> Khronika monastyria Sester Vasyliyanok pry ulytsi Dlugosha 17. vid 1933 roku (Rukopys)

<sup>33</sup> Tsentralnyy derzhavnyy istorychnyy arkhiv u Lvovi, f. 684, op. 1, p. 2585. – ark. 44.

was in the possession of the Redemptorist Fathers, who returned the icon to the Basilian Sisters for their monastery on Dluhosha Street.

Today this icon is preserved in the Basilian Sisters' monastery of the Immaculate Conception in Lviv. In 2014 it was professionally restored with a few renovations. Before the restoration in the lower left corner of the canvas, one could detect the loss of paint and the layer of gesso. Insignificant splintering evenly covered the entire area of the icon. The restorer testified that the deeper layer of the icon was a deep blue-green color. The icon had sustained painted renovations after its return from the Redemptorist Fathers' church.<sup>34</sup> A repainting was done in 1939 in a bronze color. The bronze background after the 2014 cleaning, took on an ochre-gold coloring. Around the heads of Christ and the Blessed Mother the haloes were filled in with a simple plant-based relief of bright golden ochre. The traditional writing in large letters on the background of the icon were also lifted and filled in. This is indicated through the detailed analysis of the icon and the research and observations of the restorers.

The knee-length portrayal of the Blessed Mother with the Christ Child in her arms was not wide-spread during the time of the oldest mentioned copies of the Our Lady of Perpetual Help icon. The subtle portrait image of the faces of the Blessed Mother and Son indicates that the artist attempted to combine traditional iconography with the acquired style of European artistry of the time, specifically that of the Krakowian school of art. The postures of the Blessed Mother and Christ, the positioning and the angle of the faces, and the symbolism of the hands are in keeping with the aforementioned type of icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Help. On the top corners of the icon are found waist-length portrayals of Archangels Michael and Gabriel, whose hands

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<sup>34</sup> After the Sisters were forcefully removed from the church by the Muscovites and later the pro-Polish government, which greatly protested by the Ukrainian community, this church was bought by Metropolitan Andrej Sheptytsky and given to the Redemptorist Fathers. The Fathers transferred their miraculous icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Help to the church. Because the Basilian Sisters' icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Help was not needed there, the Sisters asked that it be returned to them.

covered in brightly-colored cloth, hold the implements of suffering used in the Savior's Passion. In the Cretan icon Archangel Michael holds a vessel, filled with bile, and a reed with a sponge, which the soldier offered Jesus on the cross and a spear which was used to pierce His side. To the right, the Angel Gabriel carries a cross with four nails. On the icon from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the composition repeats the images maintaining the tradition with only the nails missing. It may be assumed that the nails may not have been restored after the repainting of the background. The angels on the canvas bear signs of having undergone significant renovations at that time.

Non-traditional in the general iconography of the Blessed Mother are the double symbols found on the center of the cloak (mantiya) draped over the forehead of Mary. These double symbols – a star and an ornamental cross with equal sides is found on the Cretan icon and on four others studied in this article. In accordance with tradition, an eight-sided gold star symbolizes, not only that the Blessed Mother is the prophesized star: “Hodegetria”, who leads all humanity to Christ, but also points to the Messiah, born of her, who brings on the eighth day – the day of eternity – a new creation. An ornamental even-sided gold cross confirms that the Blessed Mother is the Christ-bearer – the “Christophora”, the “God-bearer” – the “Theophora” and the Spirit-bearer – the “Pneumatophora”. As mentioned above, the composition, iconography and color of the icon leads to the glorification of the Blessed Trinity. In theology the iconographic place of the Blessed Mother in an icon is rooted in the fact that the Trinitarian God in His love for humanity called her to be “the instrument through which God would come among His people”.

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century this type of icon of the Blessed Mother quickly spread throughout Ukrainian territory and was venerated throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially, during the difficult years between the two World Wars. Due to the name of the icon and multiple miracles attributed to it copies of the icon (which this analysis centers on) continually beckoned individuals to prayer. The open, sympathetic gaze of the Blessed Mother and her hand, into which Jesus the Savior places His two hands, more fully reveal the meaning of the name: Our Lady of Perpet-

ual Help. Christ, who endured suffering and death on the cross for us, places all His saving graces in the hands of His Mother, who steadily gazes upon us, waiting to gift these generous blessings to each praying person.

Karol Heimroth is the creator of an iconographic canvas, that used a monumental method to portray a young, bright, blue-eyed woman, who holds in her arms a rather large child. The iconographer unites the monumental iconographic portrayal of the figures with delicately depicting the bodily details of the portrayed individuals. The soft light color of the eyebrows hints at the light-colored hair, which can easily be imagined beneath a light head-covering. The grey-blue eyes of the Blessed Mother, realistically portrayed, gaze deeply in front of her. The technique of presenting the parts of the body: the straight, long nose, the slight lips, the proper form of the delicate face on a long, strong neck, earn the painter a place among renowned and educated portraitists at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The proportions and the detailed facial forms direct the observer to classical iconographic examples of Ukrainian, actually to most European, iconography of the 17<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> centuries. The rich white curves throughout the neck and the gold border of the mantle of the Blessed Mother point to the painter's love for details from people's life at that time. Yet, on the other hand: the draped clothing of Jesus and the Blessed Mother with its aspects of coloring and shading are portrayed very simply by the painter, not showing any detailed tender nuances. The largest space is taken by the coat/mantle of the Blessed Mother draping her right shoulder and the cloak covering the left leg of Christ. Ignoring the light-shadow details, the graphic and coloring of the clothing is treated by the painter in a way similar to iconographic portraits on cloth. The traditional shortening of the names of Christ and the Blessed Mother, as well as the Archangels Michael and Gabriel in the top part of the icon, underscore the symbolic ideas behind the rendering.

Karol Heimroth, a Lviv artist, is also known under the name of Yosyf Heymroth. During 1889-1892 and in 1894 he displayed his works at an exhibit in Krakow. During 1890-1891 he participated in exhibits in Lviv. He is known from his Polish biography. He painted the interior of the Jesuit Lviv cathedral and other

churches. He wrote the icons for the iconostasis in the monastery church of the Basilian Fathers in Krystynopil.<sup>35</sup> His work is found in the Lviv Portrait Gallery and in the National Museum in Warsaw, as well as in the Jewish Historical Institute. The aforementioned icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Help from the Basilian Sisters' monastery belongs to this creative period of his life.

The importance of exploring the artistic characteristics of the icon of the Mother of Perpetual Help, is emphasized in the conclusions of the author based on the teachings of the Krakow School of Fine Arts (Poland). On canvas, clearly portrayed is the basic tenet of artistic training, founded in Krakow by the master-artist Zenon Pschesmytski<sup>36</sup>. During a lecture in 1891 he presented a new outlook, that of the ability of an artist to present simultaneously both emotional and ethereal realities. Pschesmytski centers this basic belief on the fact that "true artwork always has been and continues to be symbolic. It conceals under emotional analogies infinite elements, unlimited premises, unattainable horizons".<sup>37</sup> Therefore, taking advantage of the understanding of live portraiture, obtained at the Krakow School of Fine Art, Karol Heimbrodt applies the theory of Z. Pschesmytski and unites a fine sensitivity in the presentation of the human body presented in the paintings with a hint of traditional symbolic color and fundamental characteristics of the older miraculous icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Help of the Cretan style. There, the Our Lady of Perpetual Help icon of K. Heimroth, 1893, is a monumental new artistic comprehension of the small ancient icon in the Cretan style. The work is saturated with the spiritual-esthetical tastes of the society of the time. The continued prayerful connection for a multitude of people, especially young girls, and the occurrences of miraculous healings, evidence the actual spirituality of this picturesque work. With the special protection of the Blessed Mother in this miraculous icon, the Basilian Sisters were safeguarded

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<sup>35</sup> O. YASYNETSKA, *Novyy Dvir – Krystynopil – Chervonohrad [tekst] z istoriyi*, Kray, Lviv 1992, 25-31.

<sup>36</sup> O. LAHUTENKO, *Vplyv khudozhniho zhyttia Krakova na rozvytok ukraiyinskoho mystetstva na pochatku XX stolittia*. Visnyk Kharkivskoyi derzhavnoyi akademiyi dyzaynu i mystetstv. Vypusk. 9. – Kh.: KhDADM, 2002, 80-90.

<sup>37</sup> Z. PSCHESMYTSKI, *Moris Metherlink*, in *Swiat 1* (1891) 24.



during the half-century of the underground existence of the UGCC during the time of soviet rule, until they came out of hiding.

The following three icons, presented for an artistic review, are copies (in a very broad sense) of the ancient icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Help. Dimensions and image-wise they are not accurate copies, but they have retained the iconographic-composition and color characteristics of the ancient crowned icon. The first one (67 x 51,5 cm) is painted on canvas with a golden background and with ochre prescribed plant-based ornamentation of the Blessed Mother's halo. At the bottom of the main composition is a written title: "S. Maria de Perpetuo Succurso" (*Drawing 3*). Among the icons being analyzed, it is the only one of its type manifesting a title. The representation is close to the original in its treatment of composition, placement and inscription. The color of the Blessed Mother's cloak is of a deep ultramarine tone with green shadings. The treatment of the faces – fully the artist's rendition, is similar to paintings of the first half of the XX century. The heads of the Blessed Mother and Christ are larger than in the original. The icon was found in a photograph of the monastery chapel of the Basilian Sisters at 17 Dlugosh Street in Lviv in 1936.<sup>38</sup> At that time the miraculous icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, which we studied above, had not been returned to the monastery, therefore, the Sisters acquired this copy. The artistic hand of the painter leads to the conclusion that the artist was a good student of the European school of painting, who was attempting to find the key to becoming an iconographer. Today this icon has a prayerful place in the Annunciation monastery of the Basilian Sisters in Lviv.

Another of the mentioned three copies of the icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, a highly valued work of art, serves and is maintained in the Our Lady of Pokrov (Protection) monastery of the Basilian Sisters in Yavoriv. The measurements of the piece are 84 x 66 cm (*Drawing 4*). The artistic taste is fine and subtle, at the same time, the colors and technique used are bold. The artistic characteristics resemble that of the works of a leading

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<sup>38</sup> Khronika monastyria Sester Vasyliyanok pry ulytsi Dlugosha 17. vid 1933 roku- (Rukopys)– Pryvatnyy monastyrskyy arkhiv sester OSBM u Lvovi.

Ukrainian modern church master of the first two decades of the XX century – Modest Sosenko. Comparing the icon of the Blessed Mother with the preserved legacy of the artist, one may assume that it belongs among his early works. In 1905 the artist returns to Ukraine after having spending eight years studying in European art schools in Krakow, Munich and Paris. In 1907 M. Sosenko officially becomes an employee at the Church museum founded by Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky in Lviv. The studied icon includes a background, crowns and clothing highlights of bronze paint. Most likely, the monastery Sisters who requested the icon could not afford gold for the icon. At that time bronze powder, mixed with lacquer of tree sap was widely used in painting. This was used by the artist who worked on the ornamental backgrounds of the icons in the iconostasis found in the Church of St. Nicholas in Zolochiv as well as other churches. Outstanding in the Basilian Sisters' monastery icon of the Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Javoriv is the vivid presentation of the physical aspects of the body. Thick strokes of oil paint which were used to indicate raised features of the face affect a dimensional appearance. The faces in the icon give the impression of finely worked delicate portraiture. The remaining composition is very plain. In the icon one finds an outstanding but subtle portrayal of the deep color of the Blessed Mother's mantle. The decorative graphic depiction of the folds of the garment, created with massive gold lines, is perceived gently. This manner of treating clothing folds in Cretan icons greatly influenced the artist and is repeated in many of his succeeding icons. Among those that best highlight and closely exhibit this trait are the main icons of the iconostasis in the Onufrij monastery in Lviv (1907-1909) and the Church of Saint Nicholas in Zolochiv (1911-1913), as well as numerous icons of the Priest-martyr Josaphat, commissioned by Metropolitan Andrey (Sheptytsky)<sup>39</sup>. Our assumption is that the above mentioned iconostasis are later, more daring and expressive works of Modest Sosenko. Therefore, the icon of Our Lady

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<sup>39</sup> G. O. TURKEVYCH, A. KLIMASHEVSKYY, O. NOHA, *Ukrayinske tserkovne mystetstvo 1880-1920. Zakhidnyy region*, Ukrayinski tekhnologiyi, Lviv 2012, Tom I, pp. 223-244.

of Perpetual Help in the Basilian Sisters' monastery in Javoriv initiates a previously unseen phase in the formation of the style of Modest Sosenko, wherein he decides to graphically depict in gold the clothing folds in all his later works. This completes the creative portrayal of a respected artist, nurtured by the ancient icons of his country and educated in the leading artistic schools of Europe, who is considered the founder of modern Ukrainian church painting in the first half of the XX century.

The following third icon-copy, that of the Our Lady of Perpetual Help icon from the first third of the XX century (*Drawing 5*), remains in the Basilian Sisters' monastery of the Holy Family in Khust. It is painted on a board with covered ornamented relief on the crown and the haloes. The lettering on the icon is also done in relief. The proportions of the figures and other composite details are close to the original; however, the coloring is much simpler and more defined. It is presumed that part of the artistic rendering was lost due to later restorations. It is evident that the icon has been gilded and partially repainted. All parts of the body have been retouched. The background has been gilded, but in some areas the older darker background protrudes through the top layer. Gold-leaf has been applied to the highlights in the clothing, causing the loss of the fluidity of the artist's original highlights. Noticeably, the coat (outer garment) of Christ has retained its dark color, which is observed in the ancient Cretan icon before the last restoration in 1866. It is supposed that the artist of the monastery icon may have used old reproduced copies, as well as the painted copies of the Cretan icon of the time or, possibly, it could have been painted in Rome based on the original.

In 1927 on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception the Redemptorist Fathers began a Confraternity of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, which was supported by the Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk and Peremysl eparchies of the UGCC. Along with the prayerful practices of the faithful members, the veneration of the Our Lady of Perpetual Help icon spread. In 1932 at the request of the current Bishop of the Stanislaviv Eparchy (currently, the Ivano-Frankivsk Eparchy), who is today Blessed Bishop Hryhorij Chomyshyn, the Holy Father issued a decree raising the Confraternity of OLPH to an Arch-confraternity with its center established in

Stanislaviv (further referred to as Ivano-Frankivsk) and imparted its members many indulgences. This event is tied with the painting of another icon, the fifth of the Our Lady of Perpetual Help icons, which was housed in the Basilian Sisters' monastery in Ivano-Frankivsk. According to eye-witnesses, the artistic canvas without a frame, was rolled up and lay in a woodshed during communist times from 1946 to 1994. Next to it was found a large painting of St. Alphonsus Liguori, stored in the same fashion. The later was returned to the Redemptorist Fathers, who were renovating their monastery in Ivano-Frankivsk.

The icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Help of the Basilian Sisters' monastery in Ivano-Frankivsk measures 250 x 350 cm. Today it is prayerfully venerated in the mentioned monastery. The icon itself unites the historical and liturgical aspects of the UGCC of that time, which continues to be relevant today. The iconographer divides the canvas into three horizontal visual panels, which together present the unique idea of the artist (*Drawing 6*).

On the lower front panel are pictured representatives of the current day Plast youth, a boy and a girl<sup>40</sup>, who kneel prayerfully on each side of the center. Above them in a row are portrayed Ukrainian saints: Prince-martyrs Borys and Hlib, priestmartyr Josaphat Kuntsevich, and in dimensions equal to the Apostles Princess Olha and Prince Volodymyr. Next to them are portrayed generally known historical figures who fought for the freedom of Ukraine: Hetman of the Zaporizhia army, and a Sichovij Strilets (soldier) with a bugle calling to battle. Also pictured is a grave of a dead strilets (soldier). The background is a green field, covered with flowers. The top panel/plain of the composition is a monumental figure of the Our Lady of Perpetual Help portrayed to her knees, rendered according to traditional iconography. With a bright yellow background on each side of the figure of the Blessed Mother is visible a depiction of the Cathedral of Saint Sofia in Kyiv and the Cathedral of Saint George (Yuriy) in Lviv. At the feet of the Blessed Mother is a sky-blue ribbon symbolizing a river and lightly sketched upon it is the Ukrainian coat of arms

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<sup>40</sup> B. SAVCHUK, *Tverdnyia viry. Istorია Stanislavivskoho (Ivano-Frankivskoho) monastyria sester Vasyliyinok*, Nova Zoria, Ivano-Frankivsk 2011, 6.

from the times of St. Volodymyr the Great – a trident topped with a cross.

The theology of the icon centers on the iconographic portrayal of the figure of the Our Lady of Perpetual Help, who rises above the troubled skies to the heavens. The painting ponders the history of Ukraine from the prospective of eternity. The Blessed Mother with Christ represent heaven and are pictured in the company of the saints of Ukrainian nation. The artist depicts young people kneeling, eluding to the future of Ukraine which unfolds in struggles and holiness, constant prayer and remembrance of the past.

It is known that the renowned artist Antin Manastyrskyj worked in Ivano-Frankivsk during the period of creating the painting. However, it is not possible to definitely identify this work as the work of his brush, given that in 1992 the entire painting was restored by Michale Kolak. Practically nothing remains of the original painting. Its composition, technical details and color choices can only be derived and compared with numerous preserved works of artist Antin Manastyrskyj,<sup>41</sup> featuring his original style and thoughts. The canvas is an artistic document of historical stormy events of the first half of the XX century and reveals the artist's perception of the people's faith in the aid of the Blessed Mother – Our Lady of Perpetual Help.

Returning to the studied icons, it is important to note that the Blessed Mother icons of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, beginning from the earliest samples, become a pictorial theological language of many generations of iconographers,<sup>42</sup> differentiating only in the esthetical artistic accents of each artist's era. At the end of the 19th century, due the veneration and praise of the miraculous icon spreading throughout the world, many copies and replicas of the icon were created. The first copy of the above-mentioned icon, which was found in the Basilian Sisters'

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<sup>41</sup> G. O. TURKEVYCH, A. KLIMASHEVSKYY, O. NOHA, *Ukrayinske tserkovne mystetstvo 1880-1920 ...*, Tom I, pp. 258-261.

<sup>42</sup> The iconographer Andrea Rico da Candia, in our opinion, is the successor and painted his icons 100-150 years after the icon which is being studied. See: G. CIOFFARI, *San Nicola di Bari. Breve guida storico artistica*, Padri Domenicani, Bari 1988, 33-34.

monastery in Lviv is a unique artistic replica, fully based on the symbolism and esthetical European artistry of the end of the XIX century. The other three studied icons are also copies of the Our Lady of Perpetual Help icon. Fundamental attention on them centers on the maximum replication of the original icon. In their works the artists depended on the contemporary portrayal style and techniques, which are most apparent in their depiction of the faces. The last studied icon reflects the historical and theological aspects, resulting in a totally unrepeatably monumental work of the XX century, created for appreciation of the masses and viewed at a distance.

Considering the Byzantine source of the original icon, the world-wide veneration and its spread to the Christian tradition of various churches, this study considers the icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Help as a historically confirmed protector of the ecumenical movement, which foreshadows the unity of the East and the West. Today, this question of spiritual unity is of prime importance due to various religious, historically-political and cultural events. All the mentioned artistic works are authentic cultural-spiritual messengers of the circumstances of their times, as well as keepers of the inherited past, which stand as a link and basis for the formation of fine art in the future, passing on the most significant values, hidden within the symbolism and inviting us to discover its deeper meaning.

*Translation by Sister Lydia Anna Sawka, OSBM*