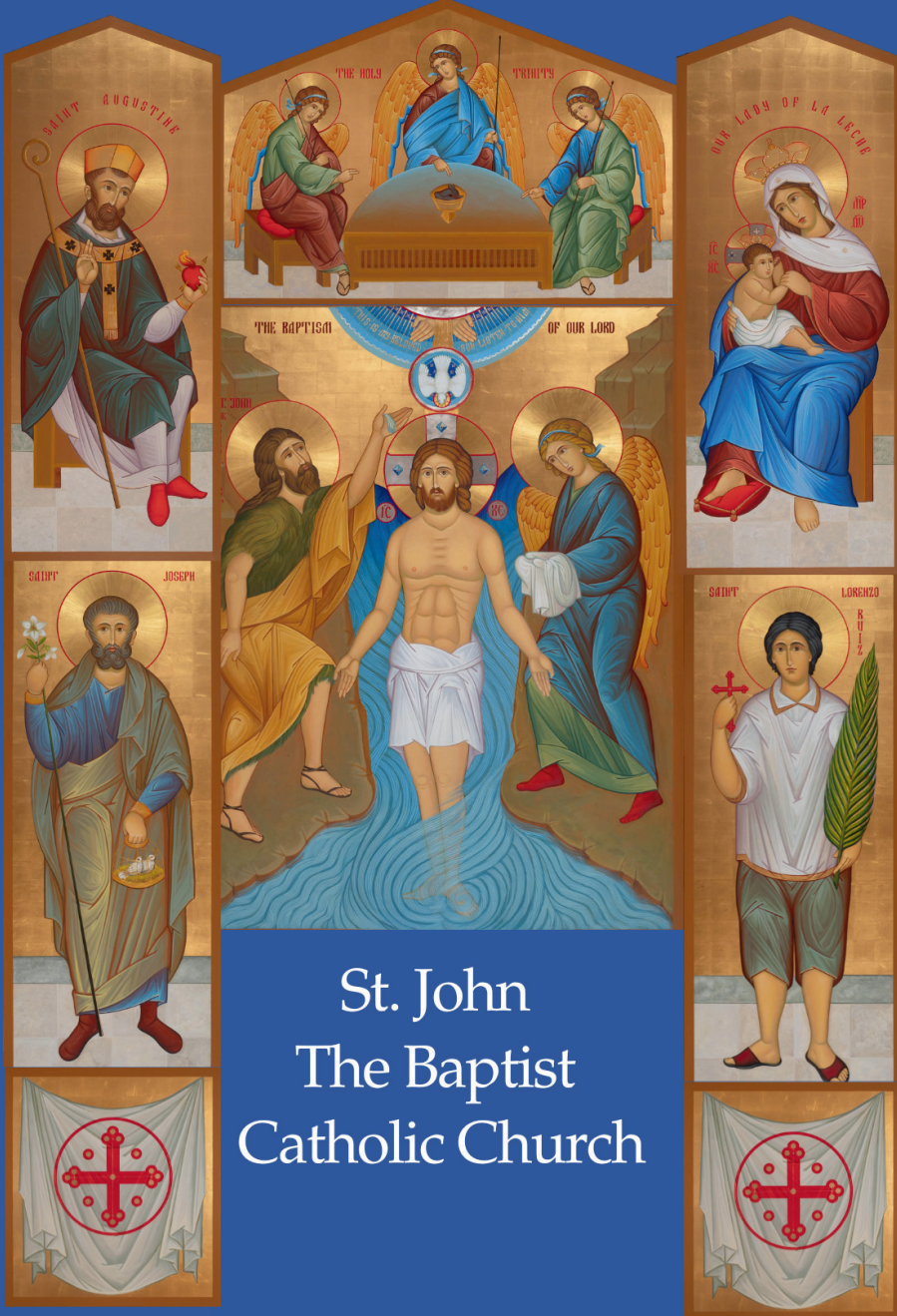


# THEOPATHY OF THE LORD



# INTRODUCTION

This project is an act of devotion as a testament to our faith. *Theopathy* refers to a mystical union with God characterized by an experience of divine presence in communion with Christ. It is often associated with the spiritual lives of Saints and Mystics who surrender to God's will allowing his grace to transform them.

The purpose of *Theopathy* in the Catholic tradition is to lead the soul to conformity with God's love and divine plan. It serves as a witness to others of God's transformative power. Ultimately, *Theopathy* serves to glorify God, sanctify the individual, and call for us to share in his divine life.

Iconography has always played a significant role in history of our church. The icons serve as a visual catechesis deepening our understanding of the mysteries of Christ, the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Communion of Saints.

Each image was created to reflect our sacred heritage and draw inspiration from the rich traditions of Catholic iconography. We have created an environment that invites contemplation, inspires worship and strengthens our faith and personal encounters with our Lord.

May these sacred images help all who enter the church to experience the presence of the divine and grow in holiness and devotion to our Lord.

Yours in Christ,

Reverend Valanarasu Irudayanathan

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# SAINT AUGUSTINE

On the upper left side, the patron saint of the diocese, Saint Augustine, sits in the cathedra or bishop's throne. His pose parallels the seated Virgin on the opposite side.

Like the icon of Our Lady of La Leche, he turns towards the center, looking down at Our Lord in the icon of the Baptism. Saint Augustine wears the vestments of a bishop: a mitre, and pallium, holding a crozier. He blesses us with his right hand.

In his left hand he holds his attribute, a heart burning with love for God and his neighbor. Each virtue is symbolized by a piercing arrow.



# THE HOLY TRINITY

The meeting of Abraham with the three heavenly visitors has always been interpreted as a manifestation of the Trinity. Even before the incarnation, God existed as a loving community of three persons.

In Eastern Orthodox iconography, this prototype was declared the definitive and only depiction of the Holy Trinity allowed.

The three angels are seated around a semi-circular table. Somewhere outside of the scene, Abraham is preparing a freshly slaughtered calf to feed his unexpected guests. On the table is a chalice containing the sacrificed calf's head.

The angel on the left, representing God the Father, points to the chalice asking the central angel to sacrifice himself for mankind. The central angel, representing Jesus, shows his consent by extending his hand in blessing over the chalice. The angel on the right, representing the Holy Spirit, echoes both the Father's request and parallels the Son's consent.



# OUR LADY OF LA LECHE

On the upper right side is the icon of the Mother of God of La Leche. The Florida shrine has several representations of the nursing virgin that have been venerated. For this icon, the papally crowned statue was chosen with small changes made according to the mandates of iconography. In iconography, to show someone in profile or from the back, means they have turned their face away from God. In this icon, the Christ child's face is fully visible and pressed up against our lady's breast.

On our Lady's veil are three additional stars. This is an ancient symbol on every icon of her to teach she is a virgin before, during and after the birth of our Lord. Also included are the other traditional Greek transcriptions MP OV for Mother of God and IC XC for Jesus Christ. The papal crowns are engraved into each halo.





# THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD

In Eastern Orthodoxy, the baptism of our Lord is titled "*The Theophany*" or "revelation of God". The icon of the Trinity is also a theophany, but from the Old Testament. Despite being centuries apart, these two theophanies are connected. The half circle of the Trinity's table and the half circle of light is called a mandorla. A central axis runs down the two icons, from the top to the bottom. On it are the angel representing Christ, the chalice, the table, the center of the mandorla, the hands of God, the Holy Spirit, ending with Jesus Christ himself.

The patron saint of this parish, St. John the Baptist, is dressed in a camel hair tunic covered with a cape; he raises his arm to baptize our Lord. On the opposite shore, an angel prepares to minister to Jesus once he emerges from the water.

Jesus stands in the Jordan River with arms outstretched. This is a gesture of submission to the will of the Father, and humility by submitting to St. John's ritual.

Inside Jesus's halo is an important symbol- a three bar cross, inscribed with the Greek letters omega, omicron and nu. These are the first three letters for the phrase "I am who am". By adding these symbols, the icon points to Jesus' divinity. Jesus is the icon, or living image, of the Father. In the gospels, Jesus states "He who sees me sees the Father" and later "before the world began, I am".

In obedience to God's commandment to Moses, "make no images of Me", Eastern Orthodox iconography forbids any depiction of God the Father. In this icon He is symbolized as a pair of hands releasing the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove.

SAINT

JOSEPH



# SAINT JOSEPH

The lower left side panel contains a full length standing icon of Saint Joseph. The ancient Proto-Evangelium of Saint James recounts how God demonstrated his favor toward Saint Joseph over the Virgin Mary's other suitors by making his staff miraculously bloom. He holds this staff as a sign of their betrothal.

His left hand holds a cage with two turtledoves, which he offered as a poor man's tithe at the presentation of the infant Jesus in the temple.







# SAINT LORENZO RUIZ

On the bottom right side panel is a full size standing icon of Saint Lorenzo Ruiz. He is the patron saint of the Philippines, Filipino youth, people working overseas and altar servers.

Martyred for his faith in his forties, he is depicted as a mature man. He wears traditional Filipino clothes - a barong shirt with cropped pants and sandals. To witness to his Christian faith, he raises a cross. In his left hand he holds a palm branch, the sign of victory and martyrdom.

He has black hair and olive skin; his father was Chinese, and his features reflect both sides of his heritage.



# BYZANTINE DRAPERY

In the 10th century *De Ceremoniis Aulæ Byzantinæ*, or Book of Ceremonies, the ability of curtains in medieval Byzantium allowed other artifacts, persons, and spaces with mystery desirability and sacredness. This symbolic potency stems from the curtains primary function as partitions and screens that separate and offer the promise of admittance and revelation.

The Byzantines were well aware of the symbolic effect of curtains as evidenced in their art and literature. Their prominence in imperial and religious ceremonies, and the visibility of curtains in religious spaces and rites, was a common occurrence with widespread use.



# MAREK CZARNECKI

## ICONOGRAPHER

Marek Czarnecki is an artist, iconographer, restorer and community scholar for Connecticut's Polish-American Community. An unexpected commission began his three decades studying historical Byzantine iconography.

An apprenticeship grant from the CT Traditional Arts program allowed him to study under the tutelage of noted Russian Orthodox icon painter Ksenia Pokrovsky, within the Izograph School she founded in Moscow.

His icons are marked by a loyalty to canonical criteria, historical materials and a high level of craftsmanship. They serve many diverse ethnic communities, building an ecumenical bridge between east and west.

His icons hang in homes and public spaces across the US, including the Franciscan University of Steubenville, The Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Springfield, IL, St. Thomas More Chapel at Yale University and St. Meinrad's Seminary. The United States Council of Catholic Bishops chose his icon of "Jesus Christ the Eternal High Priest" to commemorate the year of the priest; over a million copies were printed and distributed internationally. He has restored hundreds of church statues, murals, and lectures on the importance of sacred art in American immigrant communities, which disappear with each church closing.

He has curated several exhibitions on the art and material culture of Connecticut's Polish community and was featured in the WGBY documentary "Sharing Stories: Polish Life in Our Valley". Interviews and articles about the iconographer have appeared in the New York Times, The Hartford Courant, CT Public Radio, CT Public Television, The St. Anthony Messenger, The Catholic Digest, Our Sunday Visitor et al. He continues to teach workshops nationally and work out of his studio in Meriden, CT.

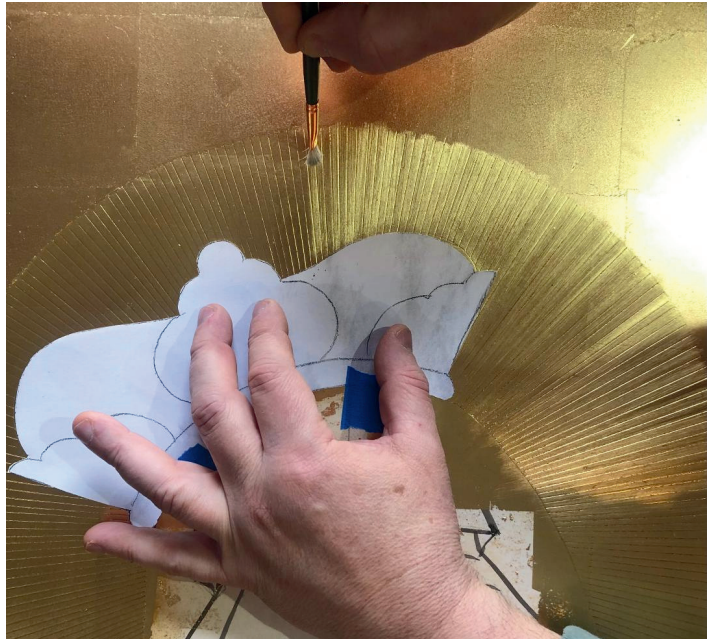


# PROJECT SNAPSHOTS



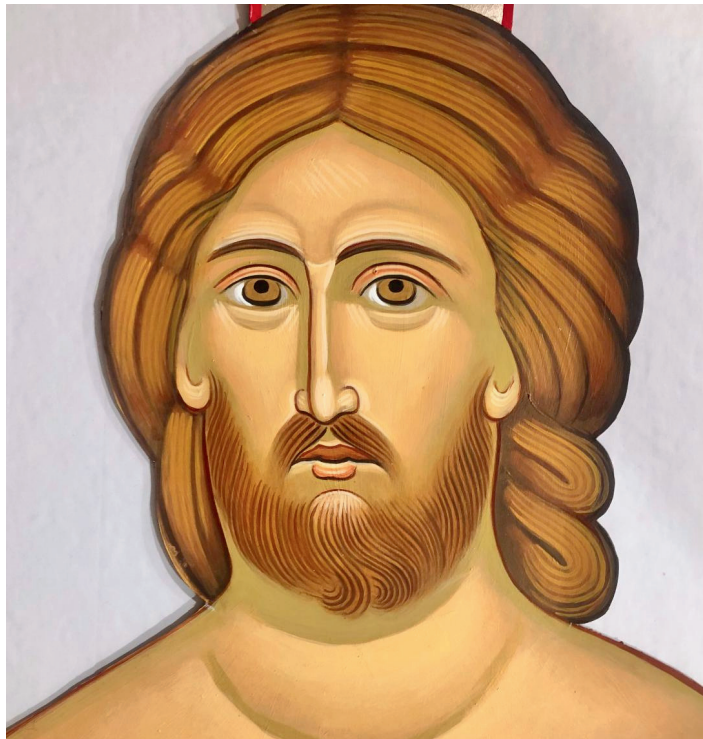


# PROJECT SNAPSHOTS





# PROJECT SNAPSHOTS



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

On behalf of St. John's parish, we would like to extend our sincere appreciation and congratulations to the entire team for successfully completing the Iconography project. The multiyear project included both current and former pastors and Bishops, numerous project team members, parish staff, and parish organizations. Your hard work, dedication, and commitment to excellence contributed significantly to the success of this amazing accomplishment.

Throughout the project, the iconographer and core team's collaboration, problem-solving skills, and perseverance were unwavering. Their dedication ensured that timelines were met which delivered outstanding results. The effort and professionalism displayed by each team member have not gone unnoticed, and we are truly grateful for your contributions.

St. Johns parish community extends our profound gratitude for a special donor whose generous donation enabled us to commission this significant artwork for our church in memory of a loved one. This iconography is dedicated to the cherished memory of her granddaughter Molly whose unwavering spirit touched the lives of all who knew her.

May these icons serve as a lasting tribute and legacy of love, and inspire and uplift our congregation for generations to come.

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