

An event of particular importance in our Holy Metropolis



“Iconography Gathering I”

A hopeful inauguration



By the Grace of God, through the prayers of our ailing Metropolitan, the Most Reverend Cyprian of Oropos and Phyle, and the blessing of Their Graces, Bishops Cyprian and Chrysostomos (acting on His Eminence’s behalf), the first “Iconography Gathering” was held on Saturday, February 8/21, 2009 (6-9 p.m.), in the parish hall of the Annunciation of the *Theotokos* Spiritual Center, in downtown Athens.

The gathering was held within the context of the classes offered by the Iconography Studio of the Monastery of Sts. Cyprian and Justina, Phyle, Attica, regarding the use of design, light, and color in Iconography.

These classes began three months ago with a substantial number of students from Greece and abroad participating, primarily by correspondence and over the Internet. There are now over fifty students, with an increasing number of enrollments.

An indication of the great interest generated by this event was

the heartwarming arrival of two Iconography students from Thessalonica solely for the purpose of participating in this “Iconography Gathering.” Immediately thereafter, they returned again to Thessalonica, so as to be back in time for the Sunday Divine Liturgy!

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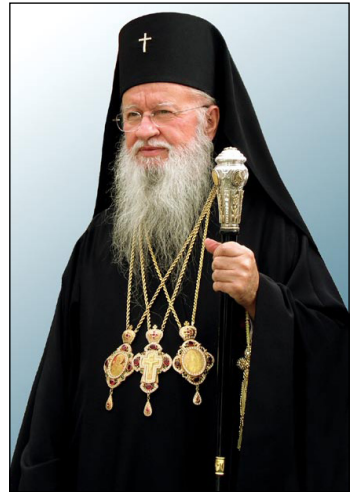


The program began with prayer. Young students chanted *Troparia* relating to Iconography (“Thine Immaculate Icon...,” “Thy Divine Icon...,” etc.) and all of the students present chanted the *Apolytikion* of the Apostle Luke the Evangelist, the Patron Saint of Iconographers.

The introduction, by the monastery’s Iconography Studio, entitled “The Iconography Studio of the Holy Monastery of Sts. Cyprian and Justina, Phyle, Attica, 1961-2009” gave the new students, as well as the other aficionados of Icons who filled the hall of the Spiritual Center—the gathering being open to anyone interested—the opportunity:

a) to become acquainted with this aspect of the activity of His Eminence, Metropolitan Cyprian, our spiritual Father, who was our monastery’s first Iconographer, and of the Iconography Studio that he founded; and

b) to become familiar—particularly with the help of texts by Monk Dionysios of Phournas and by Photios Kontoglou—with the conditions that must be fulfilled by those who wish to occupy themselves with the *most honorable art* and *science* of Orthodox Iconography.



The following six long-term goals were likewise set:

1) The development of new, capable Iconographers, by whom the Iconography of the Churches belonging to our Metropolis might be

completed.

- 2) The foundation of a “regular” Iconography school.
- 3) The Iconological training of our faithful—both clergy and laypeople alike—which we have already begun to accomplish by means of these lessons.
- 4) The creation of a website and a periodical.
- 5) The creation of an Iconography Studio for missionary purposes, both to paint Icons for the Churches of our needy brothers and sisters in developing countries and to provide economic aid for endeavors to relieve the hardships that beset them (hunger, thirst, disease, etc).
- 6) To provide an Orthodox witness to the worldwide realm of art—and, in particular, of color—which many religions and philosophies have overrun for the promotion of their own goals and aims, to the detriment of the unsuspecting who approach this “realm.”

Two screen presentations, entitled “Iconography’s Little Dove of Paradise” and [“A First Digital Icon Exhibition: Gifts to our Patera.”](#) lent emphasis and force to the introduction through the power of images. As the wise old saying goes, “A picture is worth a thousand words.”



In the second part of the program, Mr. Philippos Markopoulos—who has been the revered and beloved teacher of our monastery’s Iconographers for twenty years now—gave the audience, by his astonishing fluency and profundity of speech, the opportunity

to marvel at the simultaneous childlike simplicity and wisdom of Orthodox Iconography's painting methods.



Of especial importance were Mr. Markopoulos' views on:

a) the place of the Iconographer in the Church, which is that of a simple "servant" holding a particular position, but without special honor or worth in relation to any other member of the faithful; and

b) the direct dependence and link between the technique of Orthodox Iconography—and, by extension, of the Iconographer's work—and the Theology of our Church.

The general interest was further heightened by a demonstration of the use of color. The participation of the students, prompted by their teacher, generated in them great enthusiasm for the new knowledge transmitted to them in such a powerful and ingenious manner.

The questions posed by the students—both young and old alike—were answered with simplicity, but also with a specialist's precision, sobriety, and sense of



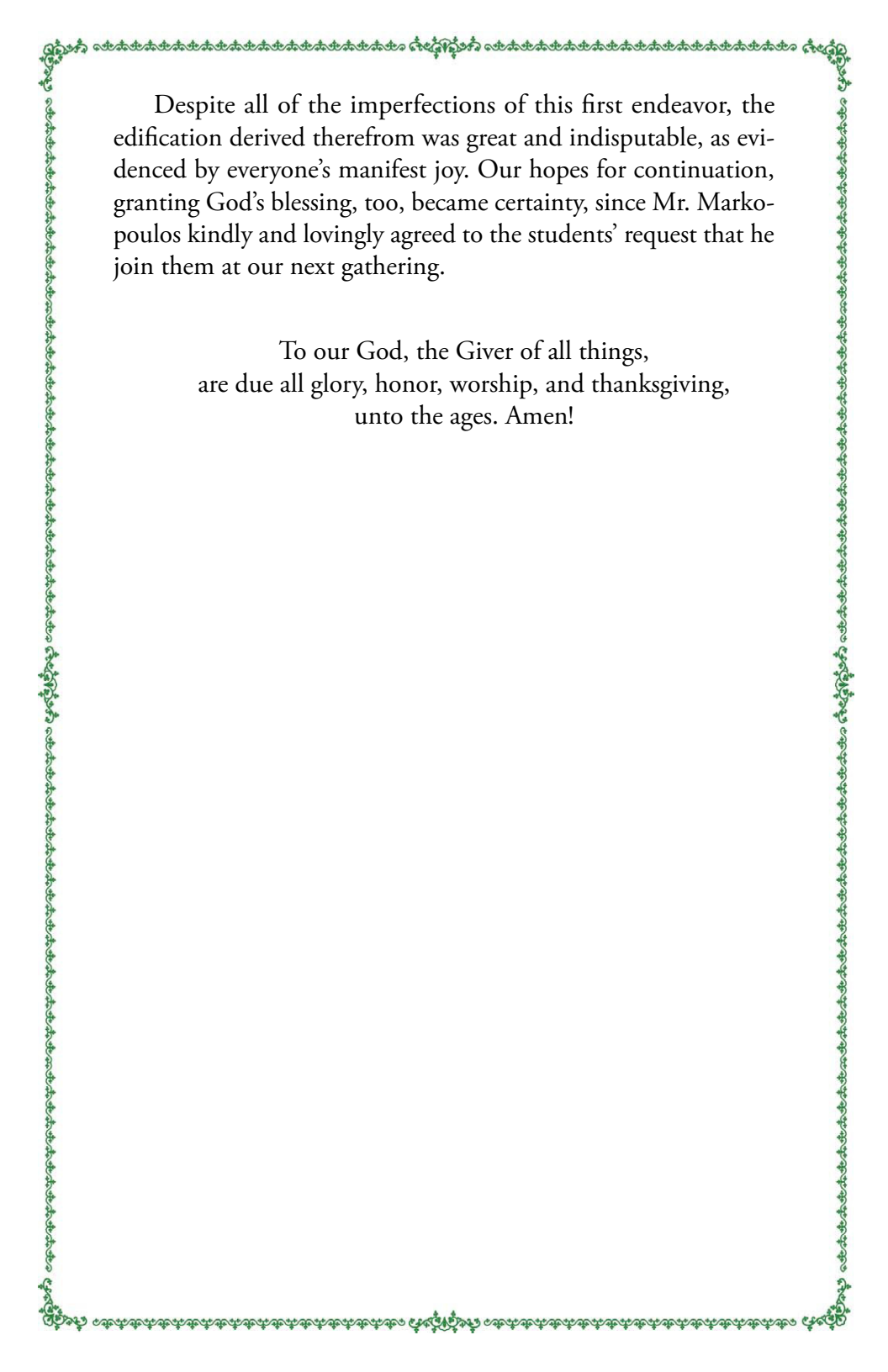
responsibility, with a view to helping everyone understand how to use color, for the ulterior purpose of expressing the Theology of the Church (by means, for example, of the use of only three primary colors for the creation of every other color; and the use of three planes and two lines for the painting of every element in an Icon).

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The gathering ended with the offering of a book of photographs of our monastery as a commemorative gift to our beloved teacher and the concluding prayer “Through the prayers of our Holy Fathers...”

At the exit, everyone was treated to refreshments, kindly provided by the program’s students. Icons printed by our monastery portraying the Patron Saint of Iconographers, the Apostle Luke, painting the Icon of the *Theotokos* were distributed to all as a memento of this first “Iconography Gathering,” as well as Icons of the Patron Saint of our classes, St. John of Shanghai and San Francisco, and of the Second Coming of our Lord. The students were also provided with a useful chart listing the “Essentials” for beginning the painting of an Icon.





Despite all of the imperfections of this first endeavor, the edification derived therefrom was great and indisputable, as evidenced by everyone's manifest joy. Our hopes for continuation, granting God's blessing, too, became certainty, since Mr. Markopoulos kindly and lovingly agreed to the students' request that he join them at our next gathering.

To our God, the Giver of all things,
are due all glory, honor, worship, and thanksgiving,
unto the ages. Amen!