

Conversation on Andrei Rublev- Commentary of His Life and Work

It is a wonder to understand the life of Andrei Rublev. The film, **Andrei Rublev**, by Andrei Tarkovsky is a remarkable and contemplative experience into the spiritual struggles and work of Andrei Rublev. Rublev's canonization was mostly attributed to the radiance of the Holy Spirit bringing forth the icon of The Trinity, the famous Rublev Trinity, through the work of his hands. Rublev's life mentors iconographers today...and into the future.

As you watch the film, the purpose of this essay is to connect your experience in icon class as a framework towards a deeper knowledge of Orthodoxy and its traditions.

Christianity is a liturgical religion. Christian dogma has been handed down to us in both word and image. Dogma consists of both the intellectual system as a collection data found in texts, and that which is given to us in the experience of our faith in the life of the Church...that being a field of vision wherein all things on earth are seen in their relation to things in heaven, first and foremost through liturgical celebration.

The saints our those true friends of Christ who have struggled against the passions and acquired the Holy Spirit. The saints have imitated Christ who died for them by dying for Him through their life of self sacrifice, cutting off their own will and shedding their blood. Having partaken of Christ's suffering and death, the saints receive a share in His Resurrection and Glory, becoming co-heirs with Christ. One of the Holy Fathers exclaimed: "The saints are Christ Himself extended into eternity, an image or icon of their prototype, Christ." Saint Basil says: "The veneration given to the icon (saints) is transferred to its prototype (Christ)." The saints reveal the mysterious ways in which we can reach UNION with God and how today the reality of the Incarnation, Crucifixion and Resurrection can be lived in our everyday lives.

The experience of approaching and learning how to write an icon invites one into deeper prayer. This is achieved through prayer, study and practice. Iconography is a discipline leading the beholder or practitioner of icons to respond through immersion and contemplation. Immersion is being absorbed into the image and silent Word of God and contemplation is pondering and listening to the tiny voices from deep inside when gazing at the image. The response provides a platform of feeling how one interiorly and in a state of conscious attachment to the image and Word of God gives knowledge and sensitivity to one's sacred and spiritual needs. On a deeper plane, one can continue to travel inward, remove noise from the mind and the heart and let them unite. The process involves change that prepares the body for an action of communication with the Divine.

History has not provided us with an account of the many lives of iconographers. In the case of Andrei Rublev, fortunately, we do have facts handed down to us about his life. After watching the film, my interpretation of how Rublev is to be understood is realized in the cruelty of the times surrounding his life which was called the Time of Troubles in Russia. He, Andrei Rublev, the observer in everything humanistic and passionate, searches for all the good in people, wants to inspire and is interested in perceiving all aspects of existence. The film is amazingly profound in depicting the tensions present while seeking the depths of such a pure existence and attempting to contemplate the movement of creativity as self-realization and a path to enlightenment.

Icons derive their prototype on 3 levels of information which iconographers adhere too. Biblical, dimensional and spiritual. Rublev's creative genius is expressed in the icon of the Trinity. The icon embraces every event in the course of his life. The icon of the Trinity represents the image of the absolute church of 3 Divine persons and is the guiding image of the earthly church of men, a community of mutual love, a unity of multiplicity, a unity of all human persons in a single nature recapitulated in Christ. 3 persons depict the basis of absolute unity and absolute diversity. They contain each other mutually. Each person is a unique way of containing the identical essence of

receiving that essence from others and giving it to the others- thus being the foundation of others. Rublev's Trinity is the epitome of theological synthesis, symbolic richness and artistic beauty. It is a WINGED vision. 3 persons are always in conversation. The economy of salvation derives itself from the interior life with God. It is an expression of the superabundance of His love. Gregory of Nyssa said, "Stability and movement are the same thing."

Rublev's colors express their own language. Musical harmony brings us into divine silence and concentration. Contrast is produced by density of color. Deep Purple- divine love. Dense Blue- Heavenly Truth. Gold- divine abundance and overabundance of love. Harmony is achieved by a soft tonality. The "Rublev Blue" speaks of Paradise. The Father's hand holds the beginning and the end and is extended over the cup. Timeless eternity is symbolized by the cup shining in whiteness of the WORD which reflects all colors of Truth. This represents the mystery- the radiance of the Divine heart- the reciprocal gift of the 3 Divine persons. Be one as I and my Father are One. Man is the image of the Trinitarian God. Man's ultimate truth is inscribed in his nature of church-communion. All men are called to unite around one and the same cup.

In closing, I deem to say that the depth of Andrei Rublev's existence and portraying holiness embraced his spirit to not be just a pious believer; but somebody who struggled with God as Jacob and Job did. No doubts, during our journey to God we also make a lot of mistakes, we might even betray our faith, come back, and fall down again. It's a constant process, a perpetual struggle of ups and downs --- all for the love of God and for compassion in God. The last scene of the film is surprisingly depicted in color after the entirety of the film is in black and white. Might that represent that the Beauty of faith and salvation in the end is truly eternal as incomprehensible by the human mind and revealed in the mysteries of the Holy Spirit? In the end, does the film express that Heaven exists by the fact that the Trinity exists, that we are loved, and that everything is given in grace?

My interpretation further implies that the film sought to reflect Rublev's life as an icon. A vision anticipating the Kingdom of Heaven bathed in a light not of this world, but of a transfigured transcendental world. The discovery of Paradise bathed in pure disinterested joy; Divine joy. Mysteries never speaking about the summit- silence alone discovering it.

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