12/10/2021

Iconography Installation at St. George Cathedral of Stockholm



From the very first day of his ministry in the Ecumenical Patriarchate's historic eparchy in Scandinavia, His Eminence Metropolitan Cleopas of Sweden and All Scandinavia ascertained the need for iconography in the Metropolis Cathedral in Stockholm, which would be added to certain areas so as not to alter the landmark structure's historic design or intervene in its aesthetics.
However, before this could take place, the complete restoration of the church's interior and exterior needed to be completed, to ensure that the walls would be protected from humidity and other dangers threatening historic buildings like the Cathedral, which was built in 1890.

Long before the completion of the church renovation (the work to the exterior was completed in 2019 and the work to the interior in 2020), the Metropolitan reached out to individuals who contributed to this current project through their expertise.

Specifically, he contacted Michael and Demetrios Androutsos of Ioannina, two brothers serving as iconographers, with the latter sending their proposal on April 21, 2017 and the first models featuring the designs of the saints on April 26th of that same year.

On April 13, 2019, the Androutsos brothers and their associate Spyridon Metsis visited the Cathedral in Stockholm to install the large section of iconography featured in the Museum of Hellenic-Christian Heritage depicting Christ the Lord sitting on His throne surrounded by angels.

The aforementioned iconographers remained in the Cathedral until April 18, 2019 to continue their work, including taking precise measurements for the iconography to adorn the Holy Sanctuary, the interior entrance to the Cathedral, and the balcony. This project was preceded by the installation of iconography in the chapel of the St. Nicholas Hermitage in Rättvik, Sweden (the iconography for the iconostasis was installed in December 2015, and the iconography in the Holy Sanctuary was completed in December 2016 and 2017)

From October 4-8, 2021, the following iconography was installed in the Cathedral. The Archangels Michael and Gabriel, along with six pieces of iconography depicting sanctified Hierarchs, were installed on either side of the old Holy Altar, in the apse of the Holy Sanctuary. Iconography depicting three Hierarchs of the Ecumenical Patriarchate – Sts. John Chrysostom, Basil the Great, and Gregory the Theologian – was installed on the side of the Prothesis/Oblation Table, while iconography depicting three Hierarchs of the Patriarchate of Alexandria – Sts. Athanasius the Great, Cyril of Alexandria, and Nectarios of Pentapolis – was installed on the side of the Diakonicon.

The originality of these icons lies in the fact that there is characteristic background scenery accompanying each Hierarch that is associated with the place in which he served. The Hagia Sophia can be seen in the icons of Sts. John Chrysostom and Gregory the Theologian, the mountains of Caesaria in the icon of St. Basil, the Lighthouse of Alexandria in the icons of Sts. Athanasius the Great and Cyril, and the Holy Trinity Convent in Aegina in the icon of St. Nectarios.

Along the interior entrance of the church, the iconography depicting the life and martyrdom of the church’s patron saint, the Great-Martyr George the Trophy Bearer, whose presence was felt intensely at every step of the project, leading and spiritually strengthening those who undertook this lengthy and challenging effort, was installed and spans a length of 15 m2.
Above the doors to the office of the parish priest and the entrance to the balcony,

iconography depicting the four Evangelists was installed, each featuring them in pairs. There are depictions of six angels at the edges of the iconography, while four great-martyrs of the Church were chosen to be depicted on either side of the main interior entrance: Sts. Demetrios the Myrrh-Gusher, Menas the Miracle-Worker, Theodore of Tyre, and Theodore Stratelates. Additionally, the icon of Christ the Lord, which was missing, was added to the pulpit.

Two major depictions were installed on the balcony. To the rear of the historic archive, an icon depicting a young Jesus (Emmanuel) surrounded by two angels was installed, while to the rear of the library, Christ Resting (Christ Anapeson) in the arms of the Theotokos, along with an angel, is depicted. The choice of these icons depicting Christ during infancy and childhood, according to His human nature, was influenced by the fact that the church's Sunday School students and youth group meet in these areas.

At the end of the Sunday Divine Liturgy of October 10, 2021, Metropolitan Cleopas spoke about the aforementioned project during his sermon, citing teachings from the Great Fathers of the Church regarding holy icons. He also gave glory to the name of the Trinitarian God, Who showed the local Church worthy of designing and installing this initial iconography in the Cathedral, thanks to the moral and financial support of its members and supporters, and he entreated God to provide the illumination and vision to continue these initiatives which will yield more works of spiritual edification and supplication.

Photo credit: Holy Metropolis of Sweden and Mr. Nikos Kitsios

Metropolisofsweden