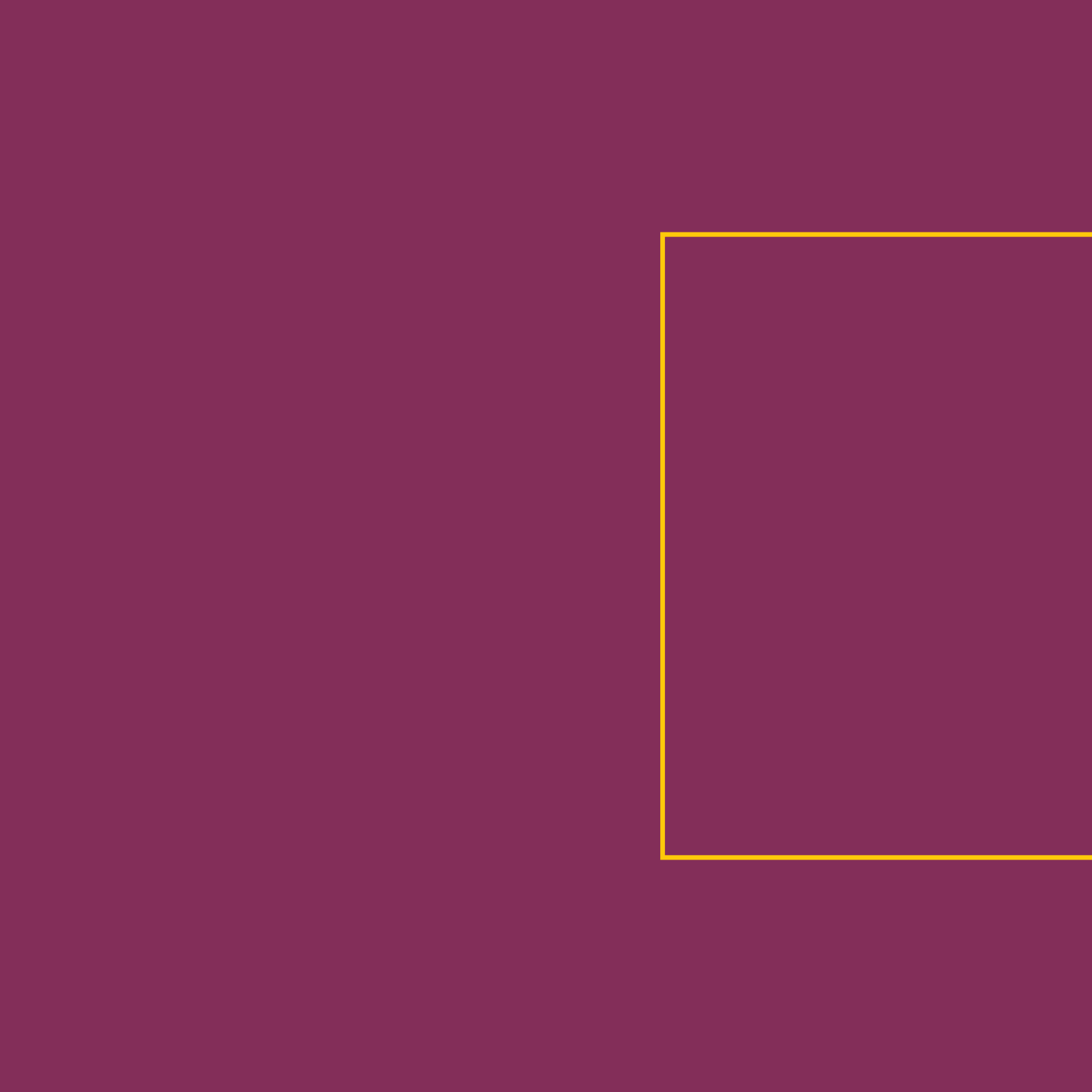




Saved by Beauty

**DOSTOEVSKY
AND AMERICA**

A Visual Tribute to the
200th Anniversary of the Birth
of Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821-2021)



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of the Birth of Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821-2021)

Painting exhibition
of the group "OCHRE"

Edited by Bishop Maxim Vasiljevic



Russian
Center of
San Francisco



Los Angeles–New York–Boston–San Francisco, 2022

foreword

The bicentenary celebration of the birth of the great Russian author Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821-2021), considered one of the most outstanding writers of modern literature, has found the world in an increasing state of bewilderment. Some believe that the dynamic and open anthropology of this classic can help rectify an issue because it has the power to break the defensive armor of the modern ego and take us beyond its ideological constraints.

Having toured Greece and New York at The Sheen Center, the "Saved by Beauty" international art installation premiered in Boston at Maliotis Cultural Center through July and at the Russian Center in San Francisco through August-September. I am especially grateful to these three centers for hosting this important show. This exhibit is a tribute to literary legend Fyodor Dostoevsky in the two hundred years since his death. The pieces reflect aspects of the author's life and struggles as well as characters and scenes from his famous novels and seek to awaken in us a sense of a deeper spiritual reality and a transformative beauty that, as Pope Benedict writing about Dostoevsky said, "unlocks the yearning of the human heart, the profound desire to know, to love, to go towards the Other, to reach for the Beyond."

I also want to acknowledge the essential roles of Professor Peter Bouteneff from St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, Professor Michael Ossorguin from Fordham University, and Professor Timothy Patitsas from Hellenic College in Boston, who have contributed mightily to the dissemination of this Exhibition.

The paintings on the walls of galleries in Athens, New York, Boston, and San Francisco, show Dostoevsky, a man, dressed in flesh and blood, who lives, suffers, falls, and rises. At the same time, these paintings are a result of a "non-Euclidean" reading of that reality. Fyodor creates art or beauty by confessing what is in his soul, hence its astonishing persuasiveness.

We never seem to think of Dostoevsky's characters absolutely in terms of themselves but rather in terms of the ideas they personify. Bakhtin said that some under-

estimate the deep personalism of Dostoyevsky, which is wrong. Because for Dostoyevsky, there are no "ideas per se" or "ideas of anyone." Although the ideas they display are essential, to appreciate Dostoyevsky's achievement, we must look at his characters as beings of interest in themselves and not just through them to what we think the author is using them to say. Dostoyevsky presents even the "truth in itself" as embodied in Christ, as a person who enters into relationships with other persons.

The depth and contradictoriness of his heroes have made systematic psychological theories look shallow by comparison. Aware of the relativity of categories of morality in human life, this Russian writer was the first to show that the physical and psychological boundaries within the context of human diversity are neither so clear nor unyielding.

The painters of the visual group "OCHRA" have attempted to visually express Dostoyevsky's world of hopeless, dark heroes and others, positive heroes, who have experienced repentance. According to Fr Stamatis Skliris, "this exhibition shows many visual trends. Some works are more emotional and more romantic, or even darker. Some seek to describe scenes from Dostoyevsky's novels; some are portraits of his heroes, others, more existential, penetrate the Dedicated streets of the psychic world, while some move into a spiritual bullet showing spiritual points and messages broadcasting the work of the great writer. The entire exhibition awakens our spiritual restoration and serves as a reminder of the first literary adventures of the psychological novel. It expresses nostalgia for the great literary genre called novel, which was popular in the author's years, and nowadays it fades away."

Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoyevsky's work, according to Fr. Stamatis, is like a submarine diving into the bottomless depths of the human soul and photographing its Dedalian landscapes to present them before our eyes as a realistic image of enigmatic existence, which, as long as there is, fights nonexistence.

Dostoevsky's sense of evil and his love of freedom made him especially relevant in a century of world wars, mass murders, and totalitarian systems. His portrait suggests a person who lived the experience of seeing an abyss before him, and he looks at nothingness directly with his eyes. The great writer is characterized by eternal restlessness of spirit, and he insists (constrained by this effort) on a twofold feeling that we would call, "waiting for the arrival of nothingness." It is as if he is above the abyss and watching his pens and notebooks flee, his table sliding, and his body, his house, above the abyss. He lived this feeling so intensely that it permeates his existence with the atmosphere of various scenes that he creates with his imagination in his work.

The gaze of the long-suffering, but blessed Dostoevsky crystallizes in that portrait. When we look at him and his eyes and then his torn coat, we can say: this man has gone through a storm, yet his eyes possess a sweetness that says: Thank God, we are saved! According to Metropolitan John Zizioulas, "Dostoevsky brings us to the edge of the abyss but does not leave us to fall into the abyss." And Dostoevsky's message to everyone is: "Compassion is the most important and, perhaps, the only law of existence for the whole of all mankind." In his prodigious literary works, this Russian novelist and short-story writer refer to repentance and redemption as pre-conditions of becoming God-like.

As Vasileios Gondikakis (the archimandrite of Iveron Monastery on Mount Athos who learned Russian only to read Fyodor in the original) said, "if you seek what is honorable, what is good, you cannot read Dostoevsky and remain the same. You cannot read him, accept his message and then simply forget it. He becomes yours, and you his. You are entwined with each other in a deep, exalted, wide space, in the open space that belongs to everyone and where everyone fits in."

Bishop Maxim of Western America



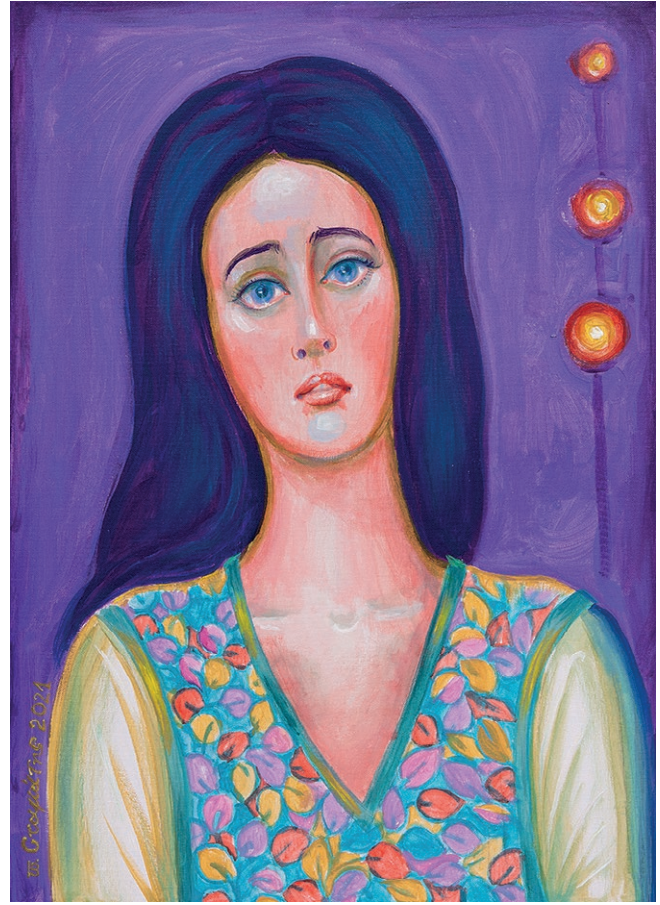
"Isaak of Syria and Dostoevsky",
acrylic on canvas, 2022,
Bishop Maxim

St. Isaac the Syrian, a seventh-century monk who is mentioned by name several times in *Karamozov*, to whose *Ascetical Discourses* (which had been recently translated into Slavoinc) Dostoevsky is said to have returned to again and again; and who likely inspired many of the ideas expressed by Dostoevsky's figure of Zosima. It has often been noted that St. Isaac of Syria had a strong and decisive influence upon Dostoevsky's thought, especially regarding the relation between God and nature.



"The Underground Man", acrylic on canvas, 2021,
Stamatis Skliris

The underground space is not a real-life one, but rather a conventional rendition of the hero's descent into solitude and alienation. His wide-open eyes desperately try to restore substantial communication channels, and his face, deeply etched by the agony of his spirit, mirrors the labyrinth he finds himself in.



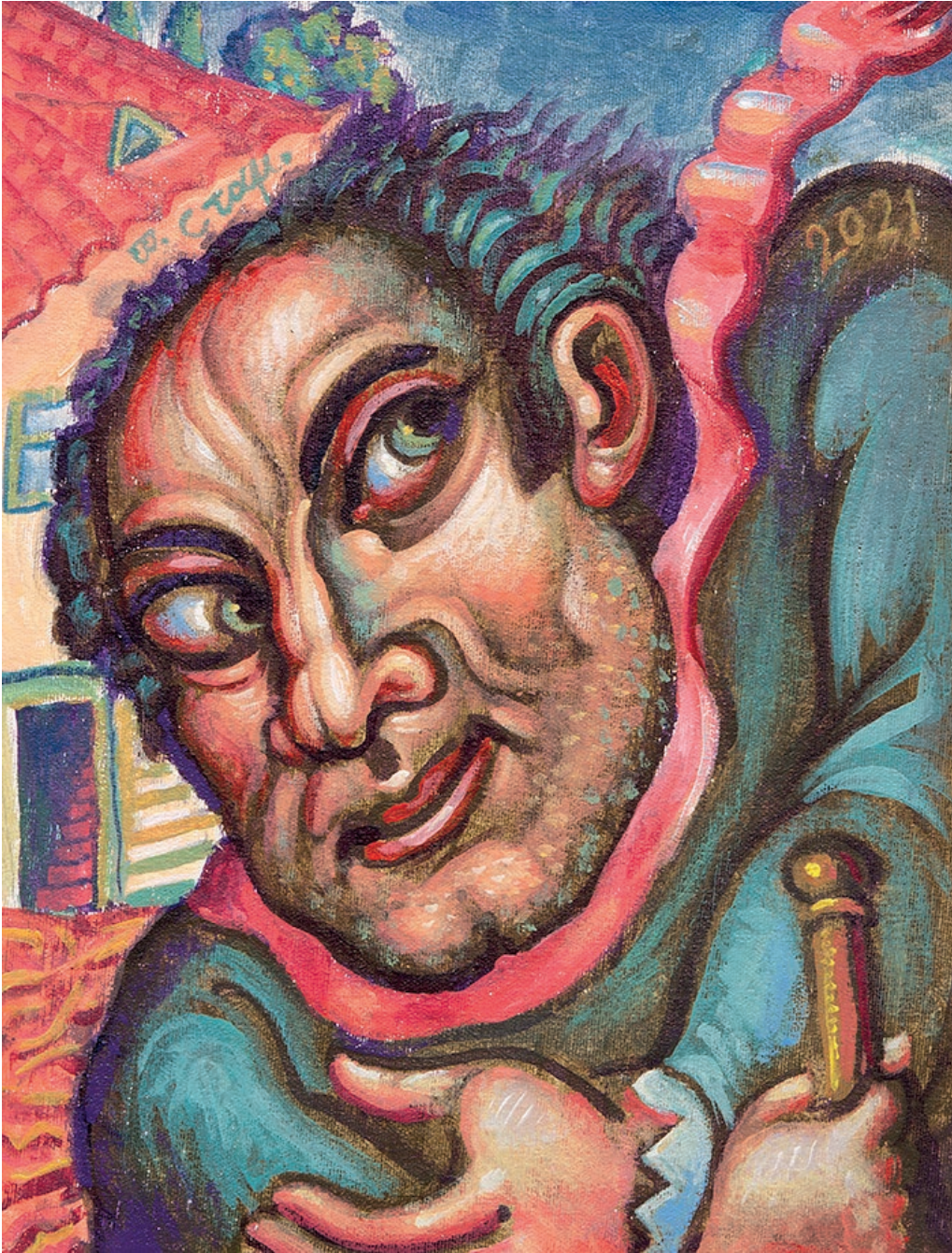
"Sonia Marmeladova", acrylic on canvas, 2021,
Stamatis Skliris

She looks like a simple young woman who is led astray into corrupt paths by her beauty and love for her failed father. Yet, her eyes show the ethereal oil of her devotion to her father and her loved one, and this devotion is precisely what saves an uncorrupted integrity deep in herself.



"White Nights by Dostoevsky",
acrylic on canvas, 2021,
Stamatis Skliris

The gloomy hero at the bottom of the square offers his hand to his beloved woman who climbs down the stairs towards him. The shady square, however, together with the church, the romantic streetlight and -above all- his sorrow anticipates the dead-end to their affair.

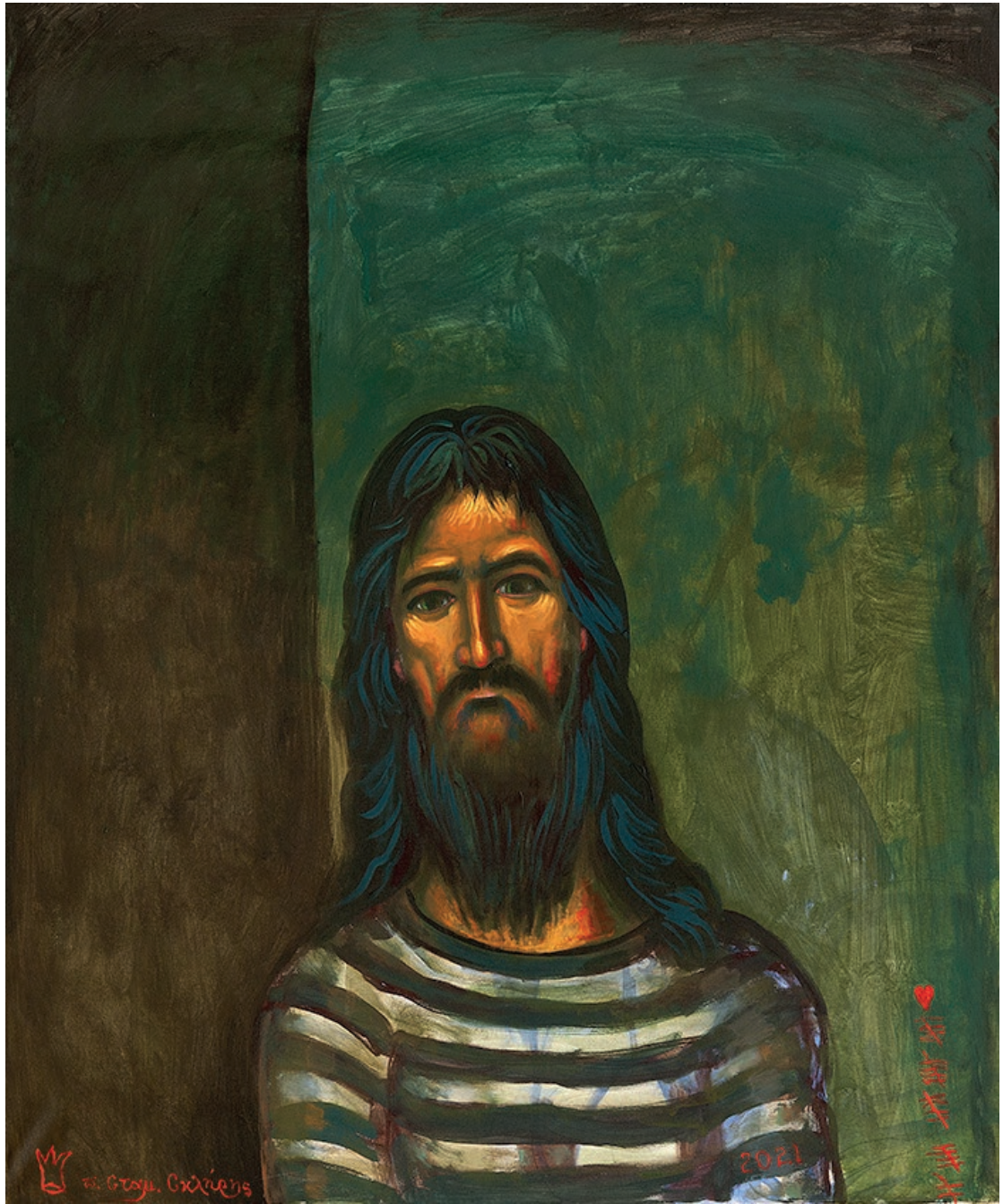


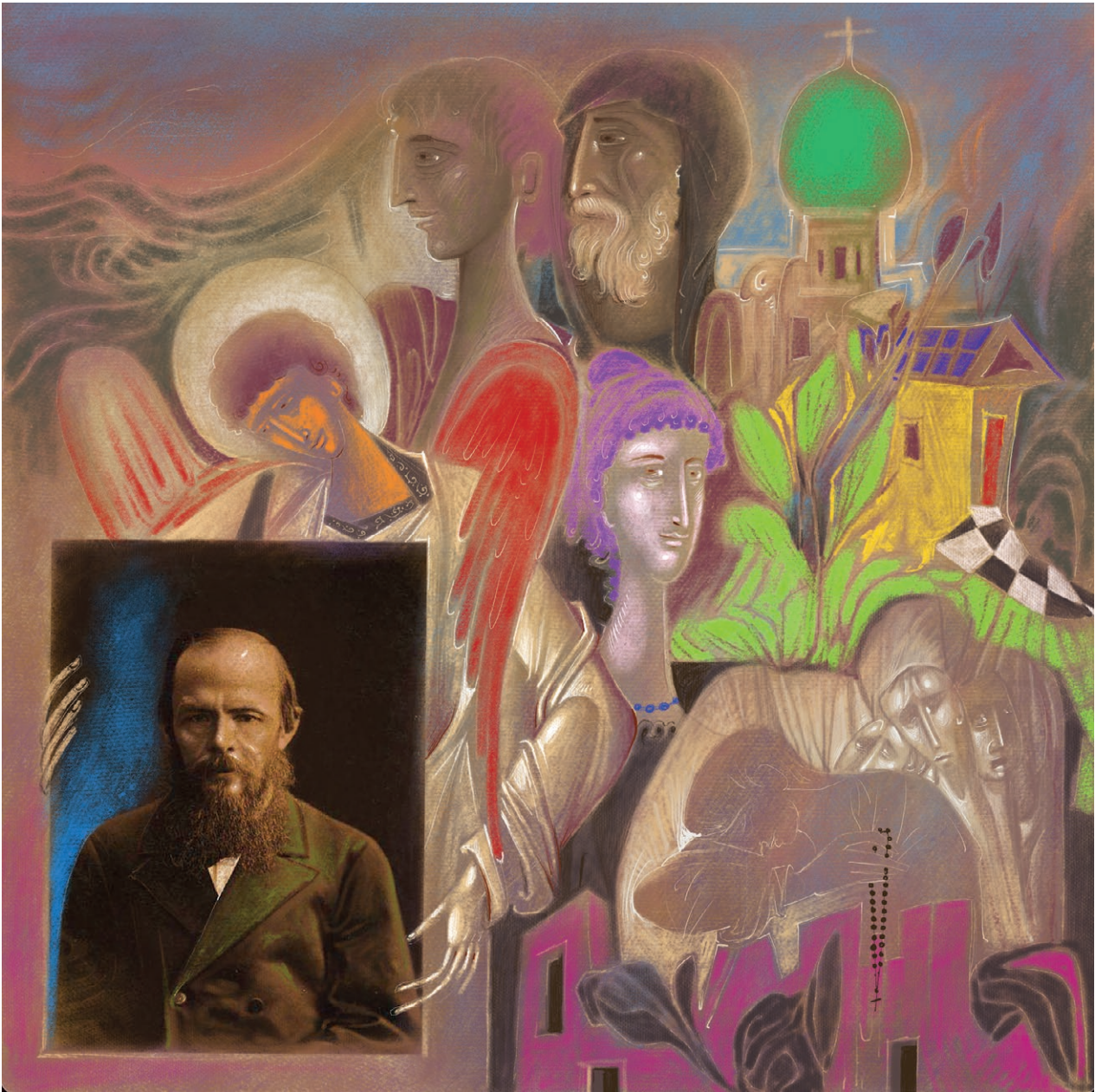
"Smerdyakov",
acrylic on canvas, 2021,
Stamatis Skliris

As repulsive, immoral, half-witted and divided as he is, Smerdyakov hurries in his intense impulse to blow a fatal hit with the bronze pestle held tightly in his palm. This appalling painting depiction of him is, in a way, concealing some hidden sympathy for the tragic hero.

"Dostoevsky in
the Prison Ship",
acrylic on canvas,
2021,
Stamatis Skliris

This portrait of
Dostoyevskiy does
not aim to reproduce
his physical
appearance but
rather his inner
relationship with
Christ Crucified. His
vision encompasses
the Void. The cell
space is alive, as if
shredded by the
breaths of
martyrdom of the
many convicts that
have covered its
walls with rust.



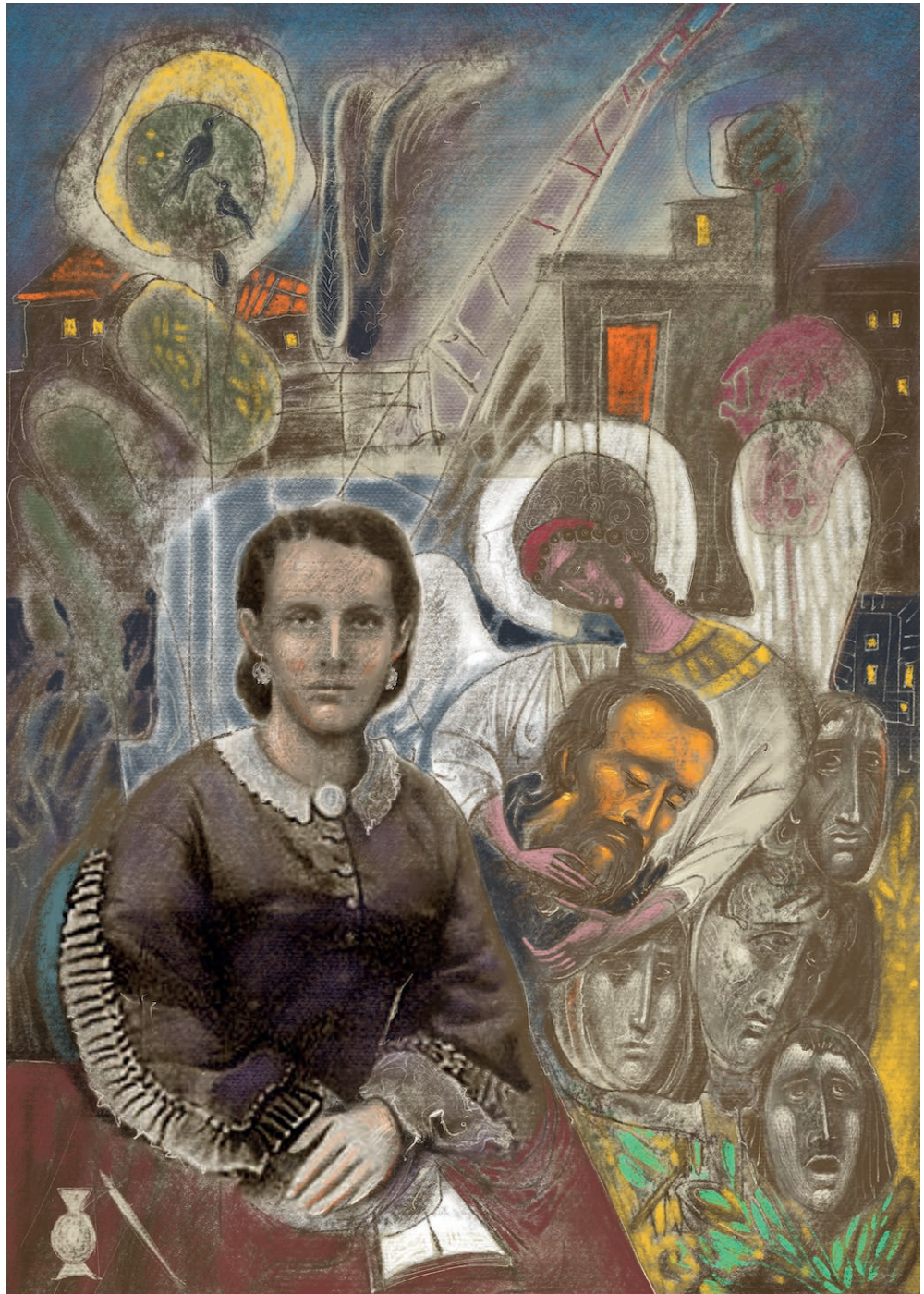


"Dostoevsky", Digital Painting, Giclee print, 2021, George Kordis

A portrait of the great writer surrounded by imaginary people-heroes of his stories.
An Angel is holding the writer's portrait in order for the divine inspiration of his work to be revealed.

"Annia Snitkina",
Digital Painting,
Giclee print, 2021.
George Kordis

A portrait of Anna who was
the person writing down an
"evangelist" Dostoevsky's
stories. She is surrounded by
an Angel who is holding in his
hands the dead Dostoevsky.



Notes de passage

André Gide wrote that “though pregnant with thought, Dostoevsky’s novels are never abstract, indeed, of all the books I know, they are the most palpitating with life.”

Having been gifted with the ability to dive deep into the realm of the subconscious, Dostoevsky soon realized how unpredictable human beings can be. His underground man insults his readers, then apologizes and berates himself, which culminates in his becoming aggressive, only to calm down a moment later. And the circle is repeated. He constantly pulls the rug under his own feet, and at the same time he is aware that he is trapped in the labyrinth of his character. He confesses and announces: “Hell, that’s me.”

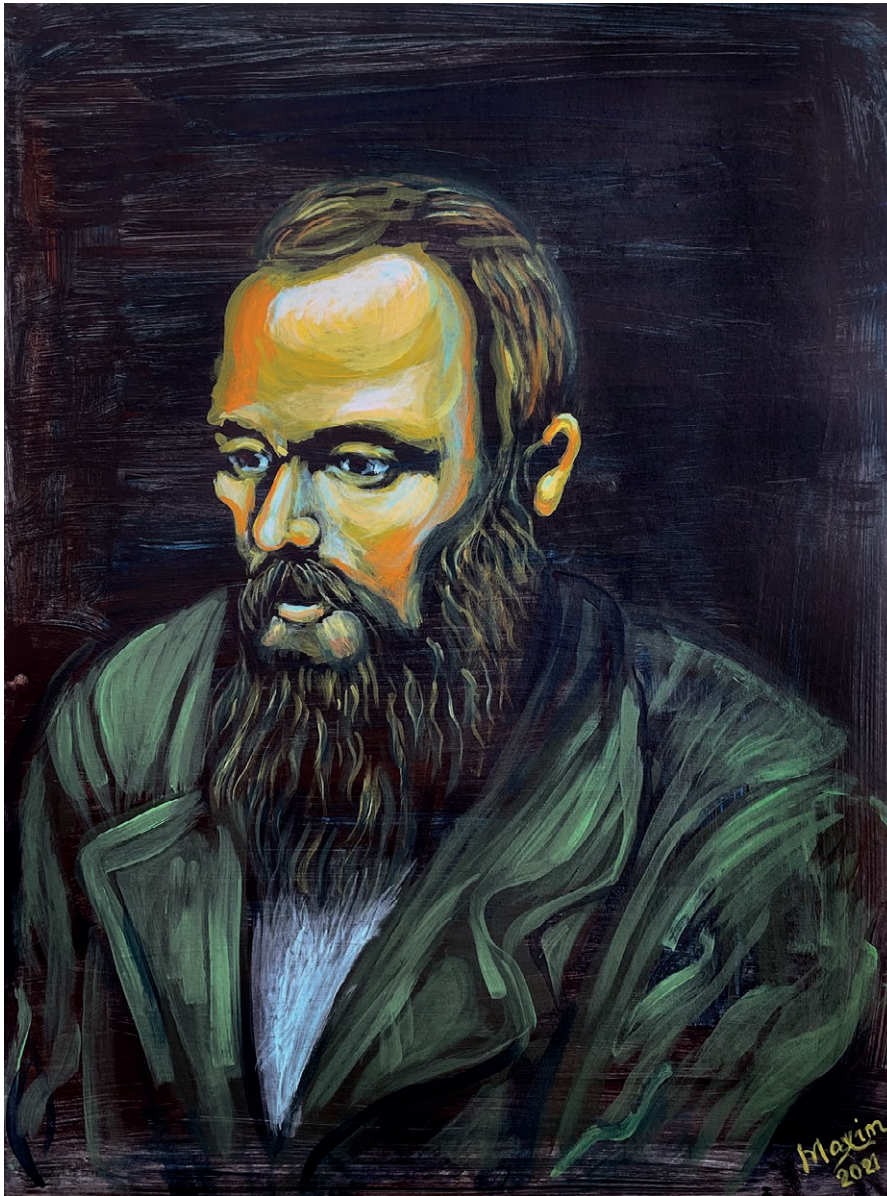
Long before Sartre, and more disturbingly than Dante, Dostoevsky described hell in a similar manner, but more accurately: “I maintain that hell is the suffering of being unable to love.” Unlike Sartre, this definition of hell does not seek the cause of torture in others but only in oneself, “in my inability to relate to the ‘other,’ the tragic loneliness of my existential self-containedness, of my ‘freedom,’” as Yannaras lucidly observed.

By saying that "to love a person means to see him as God intended him to be," Dostoevsky seems to have set eschatological expectations as the measure of existence in history. By not embellishing the conflicting image of the inhospitable world before him, Dostoevsky composes a grand symphony of life in which paraphony, cacophony and harmony alternate, and moreover coexist, giving us a complex but compelling anthropology.

When Dostoevsky rearranges the coordinates of reality in his storytelling (in one story, the snow falls horizontally), he helps the reader to flee from the comfort of the casual narrative. A grave monotony reigns over many devilish forgers of better and brighter futures (Verkhovensky, Stavrogin), whereas those who cherish life, even in bad times and with notable fluctuations in their fortunes, give off a resonance of hope. After all, the latter resonate with a universal frequency, which is why only such people experience a resolving crescendo that comes after a change of heart (metanoia) and repentance.

Although a profound psychologist, Dostoevsky does not assess the spiritual rebirth of man in Christ by human criteria alone, nor does he provide a documentary account of such a process. What he does is help us to see how much we have fallen into the trap of self-deception so that we do not dare begin the fight against inherent sinfulness. Whenever we achieve some moral victory, vainglory so muddles our minds that we begin to think that the pride engendered reflects our true self. Alyosha, though, tells his crafty brother: "The ladder's the same. I'm at the bottom step, and you're above, somewhere about the thirteenth. That's how I see it. But it's all the same. Absolutely the same in kind."

Dostoevsky's novels illustrate all poles of the antinomy of life, and they can stir us up in this age of trans-human technology. We hope for this to happen while there is still time, so that we can also have heroes worthy of Dostoevsky even in this age.

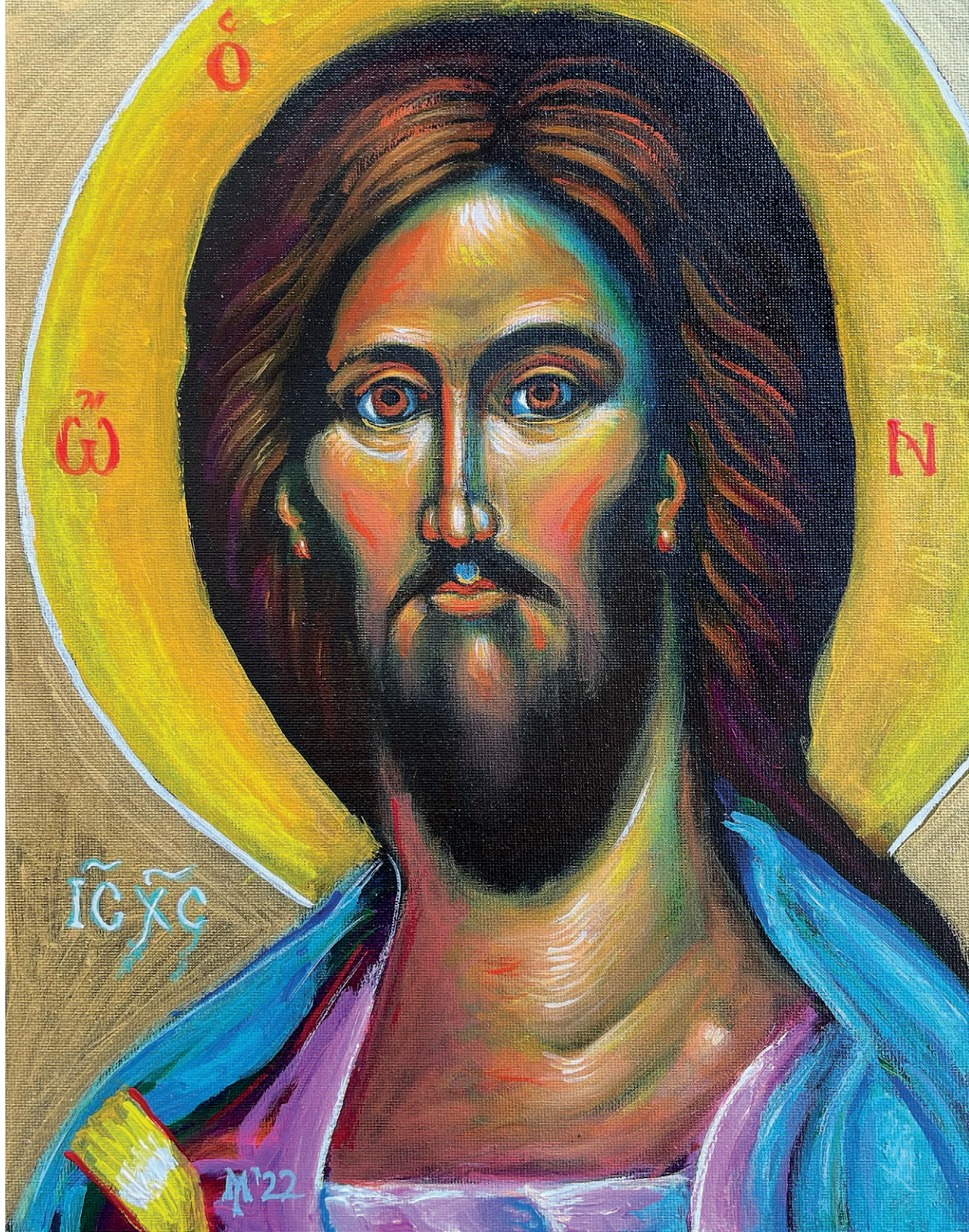


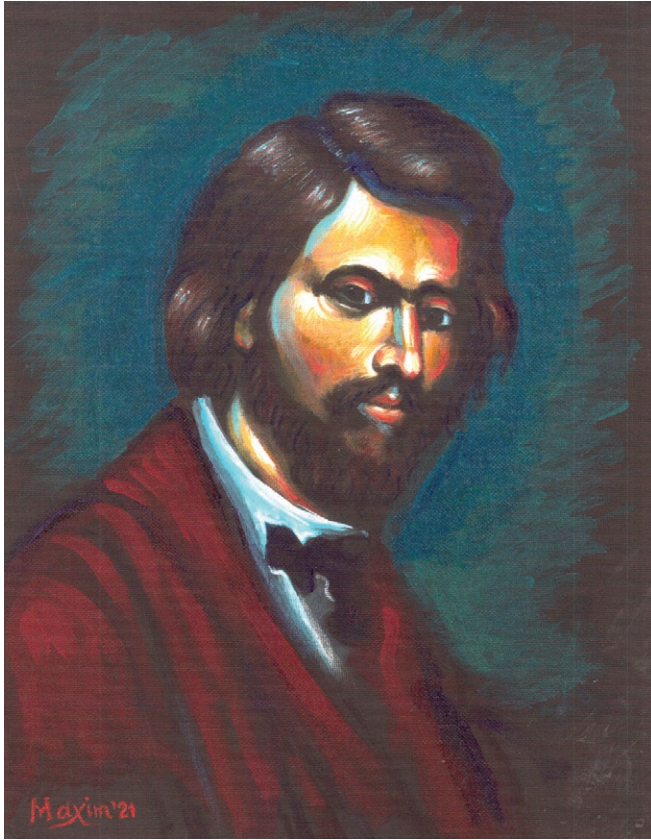
"Fyodor Dostoevsky",
acrylic on cardboard, 2021
Bishop Maxim

The portrait crystallizes a multifaceted but blessed gaze of Dostoevsky. By looking at the painting one realizes that this man has lived a storm and his eyes have a sweetness that says: *Glory to God, we are saved! We have escaped from nothingness!* To right and left, two huge boulders jut forth, the prominent cheekbones typical of his race; a sparse moustache and a straggling beard veil the sad-looking mouth and delicate chin. All is dark and preeminently earthly in this unbeautiful face, so flat and colorless is it, so lacking in brightness: a piece of the Russian steppe cast high and dry upon the stones. The radiance of the deep-set eyes, gleaming from within their sockets, is directed inward.

„The Christ of
Dostoevsky”,
acrylic on canvas,
2021, Bishop Maxim

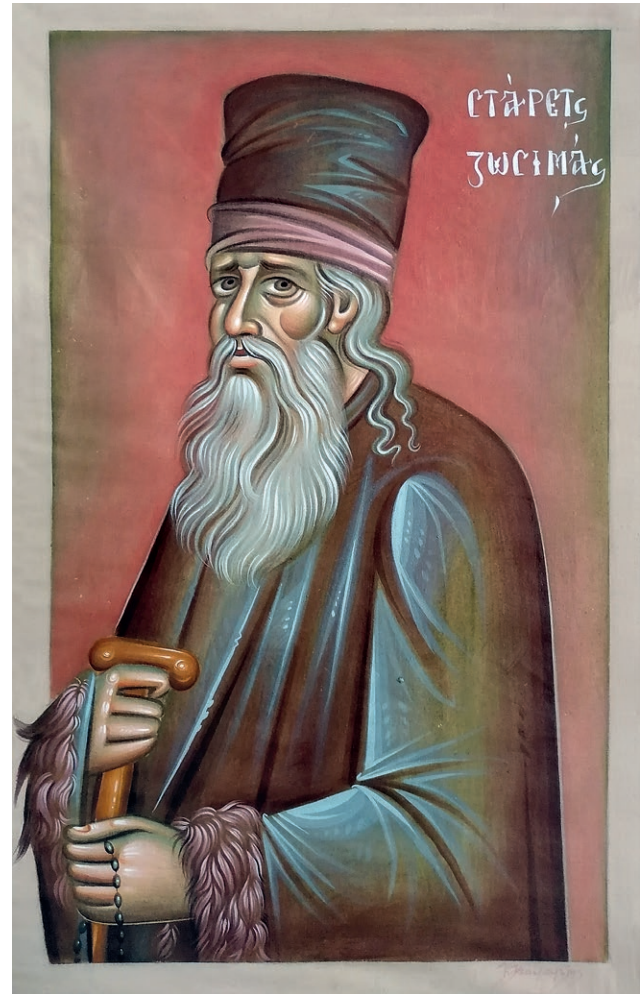
His eyes have a gaze
as if they were teary,
in pain, looking at the
suffering people. It is
the same Christ of all
humankind, but here
he expresses himself
as the Christ of
Dostoevsky who
answers the prayers
of the unfortunate
and the desperate.
Yet, the illumination of
a character in the
style of a Byzantine
icon, the majesty of a
neck holding the
head of a God-man,
seems to be a work of
art, not only humble
but also expelling and
twisted iconography.
It is an icon of
redemption.





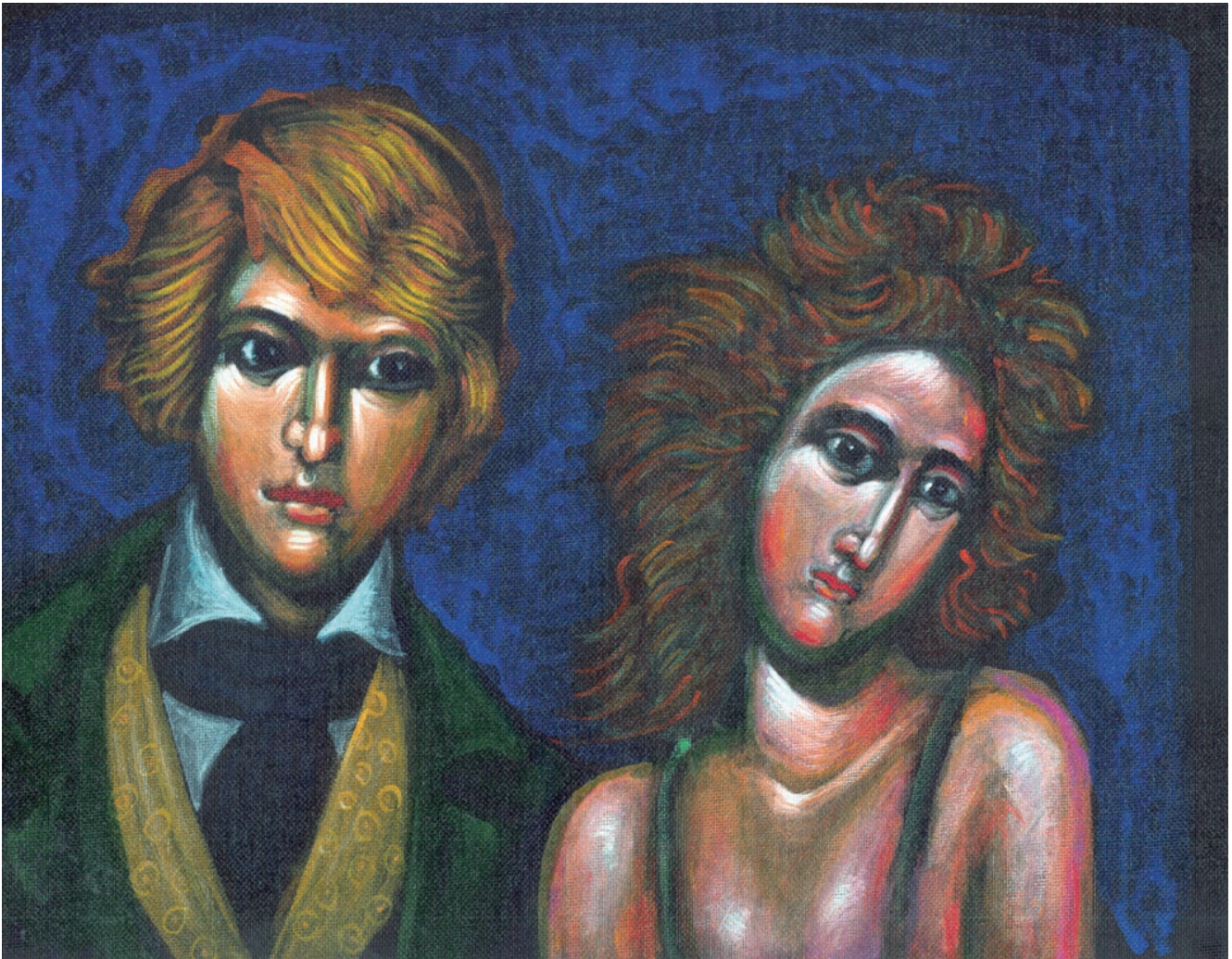
"Karamazov", acrylic on cardboard, 2021.
Bishop Maxim

This painting depicts a hero who embodies the characteristics of all the Karamazovs: Fyodorov's passion, Dimitry's curiosity, Ivan's seriousness, and Alyosha's spirituality. Ivan has long suffered until he realized that Smerdyakov was his dark alter ego. This painting depicts a hero who embodies the characteristics of all the Karamazovs: Fyodorov's passion, Dimitry's curiosity, Ivan's seriousness, and Alyosha's spirituality. Ivan has long suffered until he realized that Smerdyakov was his dark alter ego.



"Starets Zosima", acrylic on cotton fabric, 2021.
Konstantinos Kougioumtzis

The painting depicts Starets Zosima from Dostoevsky's novel *The Brothers Karamazov*. "Love all creation, the whole of it and every grain of sand within it. Love every leaf, every ray of God's light. Love the animals, love the plants, love everything. If you love everything, you will perceive the divine mystery in things." This "divine mystery" of which Starets Zosima speaks is precisely the interdependence, the reciprocal coherence, of all created things in God. Illustrated in the Byzantine art style.



"Alexei Ivanovich and Polina Alexandrovna", 2021.
acrylic on canvas, Bishop Maxim

Every now and then I would glance at Polina Alexandrovna, but she paid me no attention; until eventually I became so irritated that I decided to play the boor.. Polina was not at all pleased at my questions; I could see that she was doing her best to irritate me with the brusquerie of her answers. But I took no notice of this.. Again, therefore, I put to myself the question: "Do I, or do I not love her?" and again I could return myself no answer or, rather, for the hundredth time I told myself that I detested her. Through *The Gambler* Dostoevsky rationalized his dependence on gambling. From that point on, the novel can be considered for some kind of self-condemnation and excuse.



"A Repetition", digital, 2021,
Maria Panou

"A Repetition", digital print on canvas painting is inspired by Dostoevsky's short story "The dream of a ridiculous man". The hero travels through a dream to another Earth, almost identical to the one we know, looks like a copy, a repetition of what we know, but soon he realizes that nothing is the same.



"Klara Olufsievna", acrylic on canvas, 2021,
Bishop Maxim

In the novel *The Double*, Klara Olsufyevna, "pale, tired and sad, but richly dressed", gradually becomes a "enchantress" for Goliadkin's bipolar personality. Klara is Osulfy Ivanovitch's only daughter. Engaged to marry a Prince she doesn't want to marry, Klara contacts Golyadkin and asks him to take her away. In the novel *The Double*, Klara Olsufyevna, "pale, tired and sad, but richly dressed", gradually becomes a "enchantress" for Goliadkin's bipolar personality. Klara is Osulfy Ivanovitch's only daughter. Engaged to marry a Prince she doesn't want to marry, Klara contacts Golyadkin and asks him to take her away.



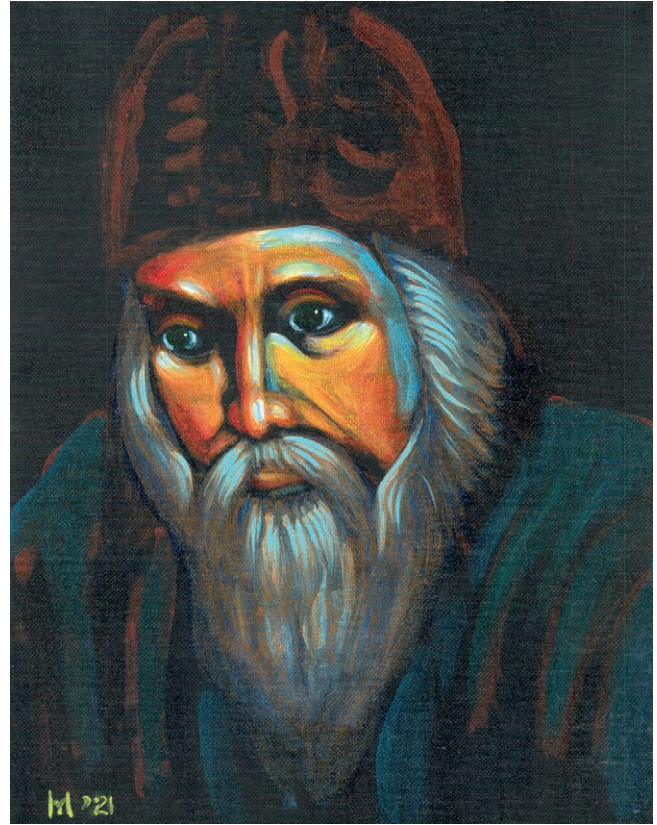
"Return to a Dream", acrylic on canvas, 2021.
Despina Karantani

Inspired from the book "The Dream of a Ridiculous Man", the painting causes a nostalgia for a return to lost innocence.
"Sorrow compressed my heart, and I felt I would die, and then ... Well, then I woke up."



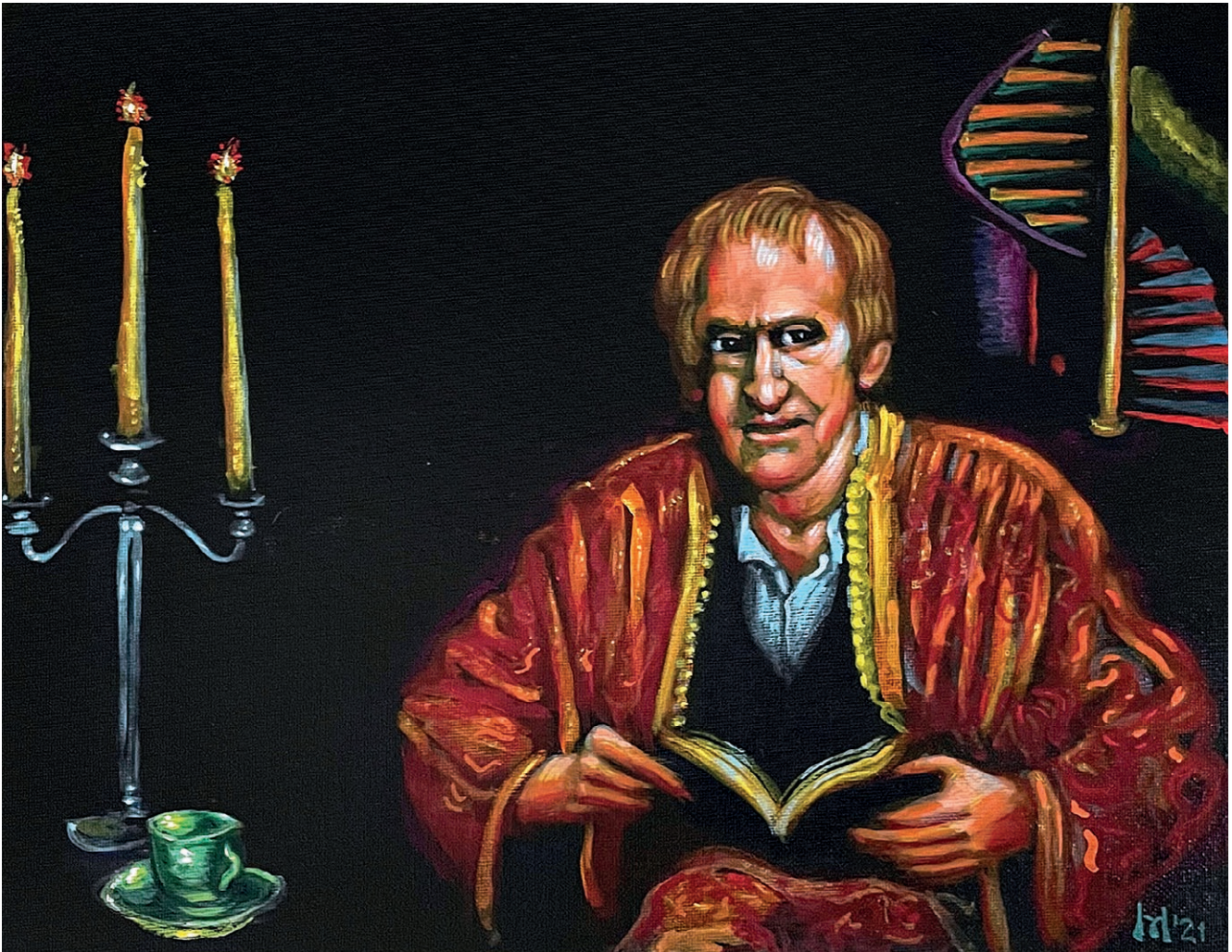
"Stavrogin", acrylic on canvas, 2021.
Bishop Maxim

The agony and ecstasy of the search for the truth consists of things done right and things done wrong; the beautiful and ugly come across not as aesthetic categories, but rather as hints of what might be hiding behind a face as *les fleurs du mal* (the flowers of evil). Except for the face, the painting is covered with red and green brushstrokes in the depths. A grave monotony reigns over a devilish forger of better and brighter future (Verkhovensky, Stavrogin, etc.)



"Elder Tikhon", acrylic on canvas, 2021.
Bishop Maxim

"Elder Tikhon" retains a subtle hue and a discreet transition from a warm to a cold one. This portrait speaks with its attitude and raised shoulders, with bowed head and face, above the strong shoulders, of an ascetic who is a brave hero of Christian asceticism. He wears a monk's hat and has a strong face, with a neat hair and beard, and is adorned by the unity of the individual elements. Head, face, chin and raised shoulders are adorned by the harmony of the drawing.



"Monologue from Underground",
acrylic on canvas, 2021, Bishop Maxim

The hero's gaze reveals indirectly that his thought is moving and that it calms down on one of the spots, just to be followed by a moment of hesitation because it immediately feels something else. This disbalance and the attitude toward the "whole" of the society, point to the fact that this indomitable "caveman" is dominated by an immeasurable "disgust" toward the normalcy he disrespects. Another work's virtue is that he laughs at us, is inclined toward us, and has a conversation with us. How naturally he holds his notebook, how he browses pages and holds the notebook with his palms!



"Sonya Marmeladova à la Fayum",
acrylic on woodboard, 2021, Bishop Maxim

A noble portrait, which after many centuries continues the tradition of Fayum portraits (naturalistic painted portrait on wooden boards attached to upper class mummies from Roman Egypt). It is characterized by an unspeakable aristocratic nobility, for which we cannot understand how it came about. This painting follows all the Byzantine lessons that the artist has in himself, but at the same time he has one "fabric" of high artistic breath, one breath that can turn and speak to modern man. It is a portrait that we can say is contemporary, a portrait of the 21st century.



"Stairs to the Underground",
acrylic on canvas, 2021, Bishop Maxim

The elliptical ladder is characterized by an expression of mystery and conspiracy, as if it were a cunning companion with intermittent thoughts protagonists from the underworld. The cold, turquoise color of the floor, in the splendor of the complementary color of the surroundings, leaves us for a moment with a feeling of refreshment at high temperatures of the tormented main hero. The black color in the background shows a fight in the houses of a man from the underground and a living sensation, which makes the hedgehog want to build stable buildings and need nothing, with whom Dostoevsky fought.

"Brothers Karamazov",
acrylic on canvas, 2021,
Bishop Maxim

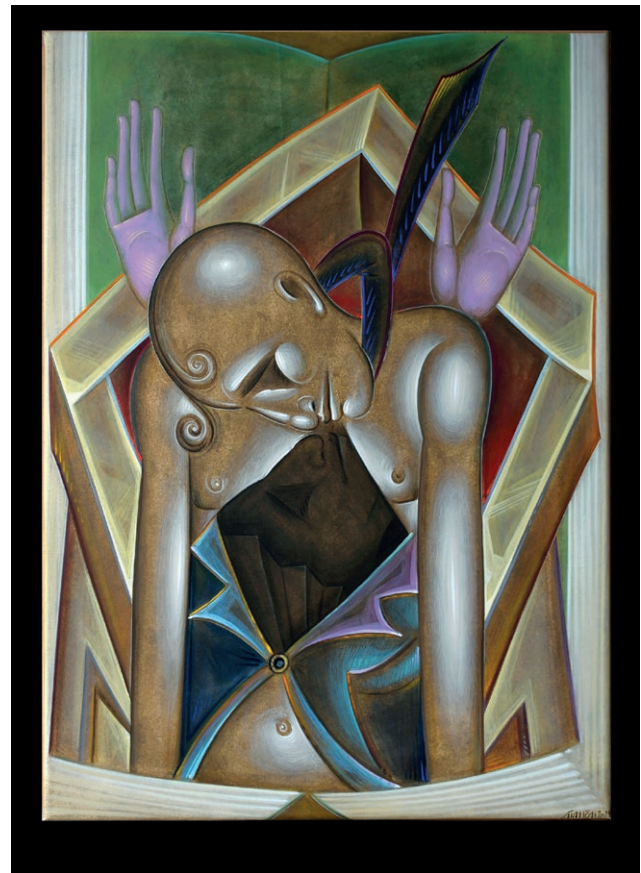
The three characters is a wondrous group as three completely different worlds. The heroes are placed in a single three-angled layout as if their faces are engraved in a regular triangle. This static setting, however, cannot prevent these static characters from having a single glance that reflects something about which three of them are asking, maybe let fate, as if they were in a house and through a window, look at the destiny that passes by the house, where it seems to be completely serious. Impressive is the seriousness of anyone who observes something that washes us away as if it were something invisible and angelic. And they seem to have a petrified expression while watching the scene, and as if it gives them a unity, to live like brothers. In its simplicity (trinity), this portrait is impressive in achieving the unattainable: three immovable men seem interesting to us thanks to the instinct of the oneness coming out of their eyes.





"Myshkin", acrylic and gold leaves on canvas, 2020,
Costas Labdas

Prince Lev Nikolayevich Myshkin, the main character in Dostoevsky's book *The Idiot*, suffers from the sacred disease (as the ancient Greeks referred to epilepsy). This painting is part of a trilogy, in which the author painted the other two characters from Dostoevsky's books (*Kirilov* and *Schmerdiakov*), who also suffered from epilepsy, exactly as their author did.



"Underground", acrylic on canvas, 2021,
Giannoulis Liberopoulos

The underground is not a space after all. It is an existential state. The anonymous hero—anyone—incompatible with the imaginary type of the everyday man of the book, ruptures the social conditions that tightly bind him and descends deep into his invisible underground. Down there, alone and naked, he converses face to face with his idol, he fights and bleeds with his weaknesses, thoughts and passions. Life in the underground desperately seeks for ascension, to experience real freedom and life.

"I'm a Ridiculous Man", acrylic on canvas, 2021.
Christos Kexagioglou

I'm a ridiculous person. So, with an assumption, between the nightmare and reality, an inner journey begins. The bed, which can be both a sanctuary and a hell, is depicted as a vessel that will lead to self-knowledge, responsibility, sacrifice, and redemption through the labyrinthine worlds of demons. A journey that never ends: "And I will continue to search, to search!"





"Dostoevsky in His Wet Loneliness", acrylic and ink on canvas, 2021, Nektarios Mamais

A portrait of Dostoevsky emerges through the watery environment of loneliness described in his works. Maybe a self-portrait of the painter himself in relation to the emotion caused by Dostoevsky's texts.



"Fyodor Dostoevsky Rapt in His Thoughts", digital, 2021, Babis Pilarinos

On a bridge over the river Neva in St. Petersburg, walks Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky, absorbed in thoughts, almost hunted. His path crosses that of a woman's; she is intrigued by how immersed in his thoughts he seems.

intermezzo

I am so very pleased to be here for this occasion celebrating the Exhibit: Saved by Beauty: Dostoevsky in Boston, and its special artist, our beloved friend, Bishop Maxim, the spiritual father of the Serbian Orthodox Church's Diocese of Los Angeles and Western America.

As you know, His Grace is known for his aesthetic sensibilities and erudition, as well as for his outstanding command of the Greek language. His sophistication and artistic accomplishment are highlighted by his natural humility and piety. In this way, he is a most appropriate exegete of the complex character of Dostoevsky. For the great Russian novelist wove his narrative from every stratum of the Orthodox world he inhabited. Beauty, to be sure, but he was not afraid to look at the ugliness that can inhabit men's souls, too.

And so, I am glad that this exhibition is here to remind us of the work ahead, and to remind us that *to kalon kai to agathon*—the beautiful and the good—are not merely two sides of the same coin, but in fact are the same thing. Thank you, and special thanks to you, my dear brother, Bishop Maxim.

Greek Archbishop Elpidophoros of America

Maliotis Cultural Center, Brookline, Massachusetts

June 24, 2022



"Unknown Dostoevsky's Character",
acrylic on canvas, 2022, Bishop Maxim

According to Stefan Zweig, Dostoevsky was volcanic, so his heroes are volcanic too, for each man testifies to the God who created him in the long run. Not one of Dostoevsky's characters is at ease in our world; in every case, their sensibilities reach back to the fundamental problems of life. Each character endeavors to review the old problems; each, in turn, though the task bloodies his hands, removes the boundary stones between good and evil; each, in turn, transforms his own chaos into a world. Each possesses the attributes of a servant and a prophet of the new Christ.



"The Wedding That Didn't Happen—Myshkin and Nastasya",
acrylic on canvas, 2022, Bishop Maxim

On the wedding day, Myshkin waits at the church for a beautifully attired Nastasya. Nastasya, however, has changed her mind. She cannot bring herself to marry the prince; he is too good, and she is too tarnished, so she flees in her wedding dress. The painter, however, sees them as united and shows the unique moment of Nastasya's happiness.



"You will never reach your destination if you stop and throw stones at every dog that barks".
acrylic on canvas, 2021, Nektarios Stamatelos

This insightful phrase from Dostoevsky's Diary gave birth to this painting. The main thing is not to stop. As they say, dogs were born to bark at us, but our task is to move forward. Big goals require the immense effort. A headwind blowing against the course of your ship is good, too—it does not increase your speed, but it does make you cleverer.



"The Dream of a Ridiculous Man",
digital, 2021, Maria Panou

Inspired by Dostojevsky's short story "The Dream of a Ridiculous Man". Somewhere faraway or deep inside, there is another Earth similar to the one we know but inhabited by perfect beings. Innocent people flow with the stream of all beings in absolute harmony. But Paradise cannot last forever. The fall of man is inevitable. Is it really possible for humans to return in an innocent state of being, or Paradise is beyond reach?



"Nastasya Filippovna 2",
acrylic on canvas, 2021, Bishop Maxim

Nastasya's character is shown in a rare moment of amazement when surprised by Myshkin's words she realizes a different way of looking at life. Prince Lev Nikolayevich Myshkin and Nastasya Filippovna are the protagonists of Fyodor Dostoevsky's 1869 novel *The Idiot*. Christian Bobin said that Prince Myshkin is a "prince of empathy."

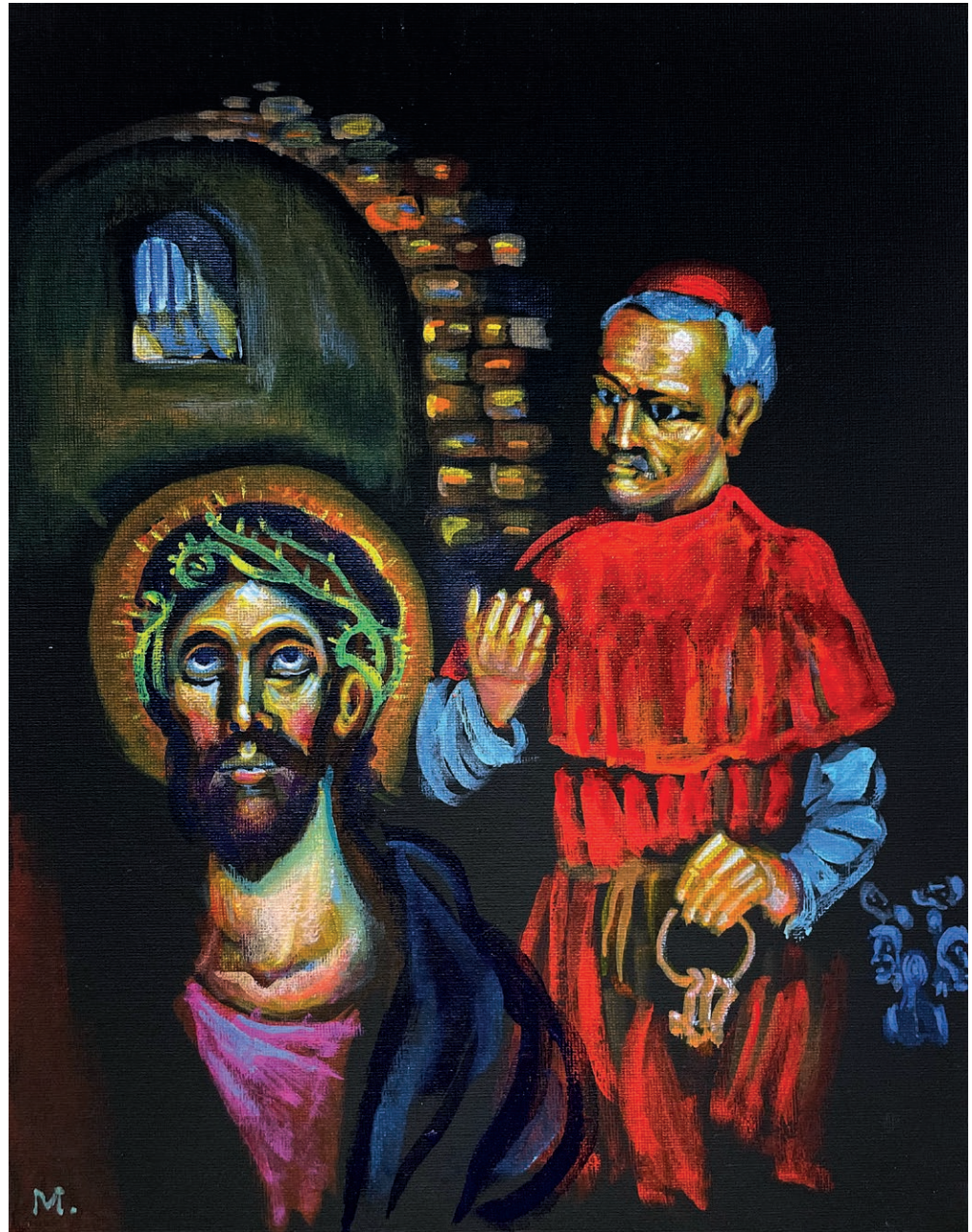


"Ivan Karamazov",
digital painting, 2020, Bishop Maxim

We observe a suit painted with "heavenly" colors that we cannot find in any clothing store. The jacket's structure is warm, brownish-red, and the collar and shoulders come out of those lines, with a combination of greenish, yellowish, and azure-turquoise brush strokes, from which a miracle jacket is obtained! This miracle jacket allows a thin, noble neck and a face lit by direct light to be shown, with eyes that are "protruding" (ecstatic) because they see something we have not seen, and the character remains ecstatic and voiceless. This ecstatic figure is covered with hair with bluish strands, similar to the mustache and beard. But all this is similar to a decorative frame that frames the bright face of an ecstatic look.

"The Grand Inquisitor",
acrylic on canvas, 2021,
Bishop Maxim

The Grand Inquisitor says to the Prisoner: "We corrected and improved Thy teaching and based it upon Miracle, Mystery, and Authority." The prisoner rejects that triptych and kisses the Inquisitor. The kiss of Christ on the anemic lips of the Inquisitor planted the seeds of doubt in him, because he felt that supersensible, non-Euclidean spirit with his heart, while his mind remained constrained in the earthly, Euclidean spirit. Which one usually does.



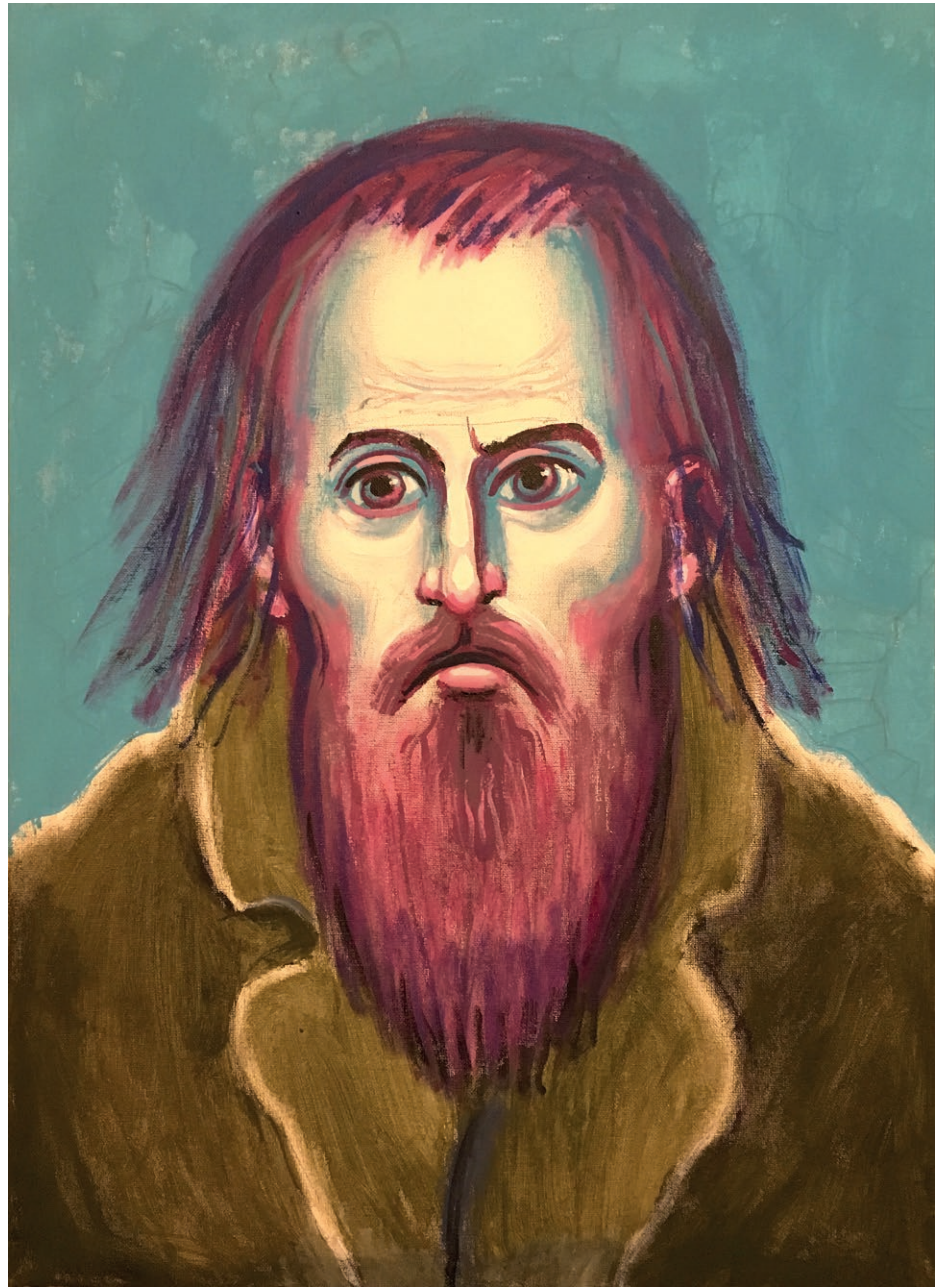


"Fyodor Dostoevsky and Maria Skobtsova",
acrylic on canvas, 2021, Bishop Maxim

Mother Maria Skobtsova admired the dramatic Dostoevsky. On this contemporary icon of young Maria, it can be seen that she is eagerly rushing towards her martyrdom. Here, the painter-portraitist, who put the Moscow domes and the Eiffel Tower in the background, conveys a restrained but very convincing smile, which, combined with a sideways glance, hints at her future life as a martyr. Young and beautiful, foreboding where she is going, Marija reveals that unique personal expression with an incomparable smile, which is rarely found in portraits.

"Dostoevsky", acrylic on canvas,
2018, Stamatis Skliris

"At first, I was thinking of filling the background with thick snow and the hero wearing a thick vest. I rendered the face with a transparent turquoise color, peripherally, and once I saw how the face is shining from the white color of the canvas I changed and left the canvas uncolored. When I saw that the portrait is unfinished, I thought that the cold snow was rendered as if it were inside and not around it." Stamatis Skliris



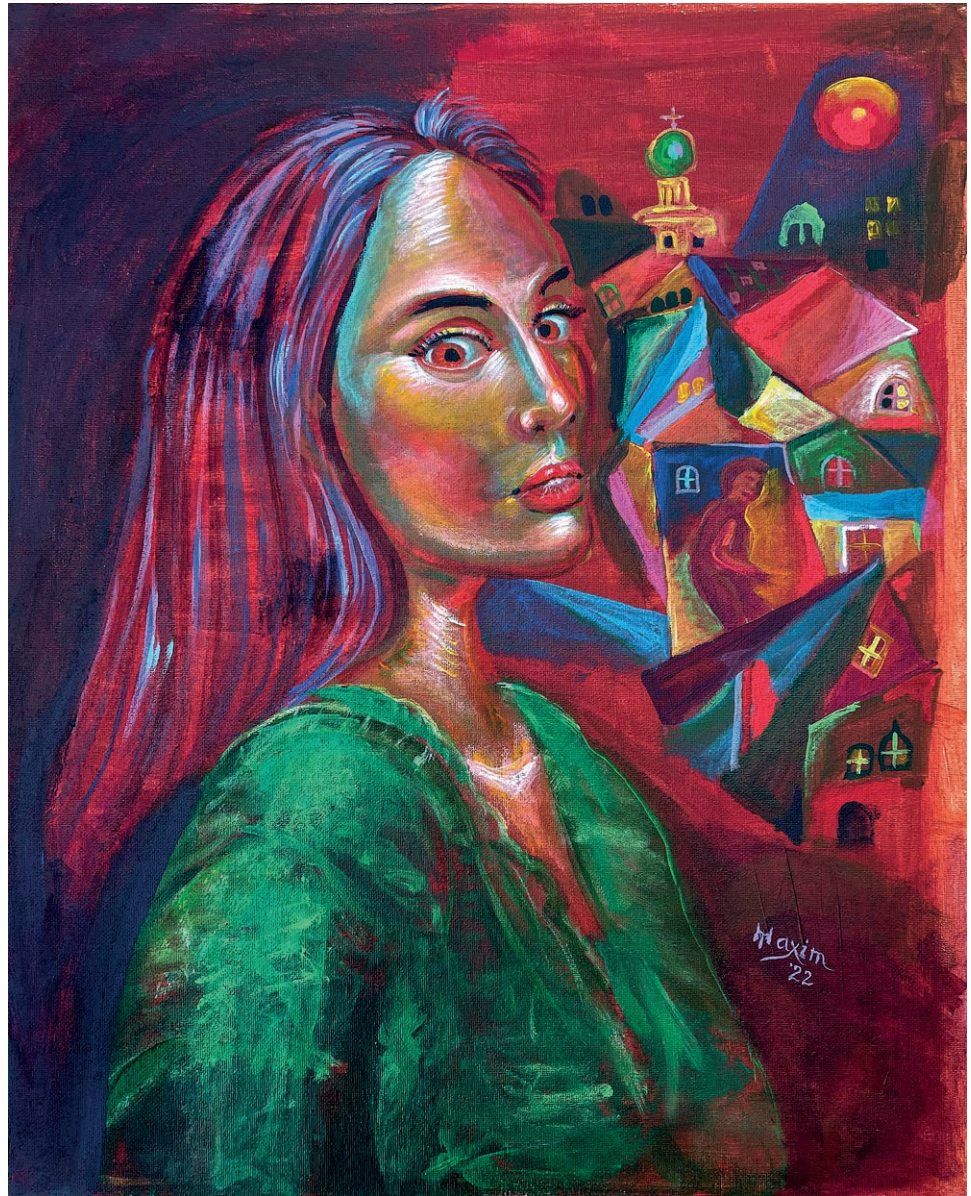


"How Ends a Poem",
wood engraving, 2021.
Fothis Barthis

This print draws inspiration from the chapter The Grand Inquisitor from the novel The Brothers Karamazov where Ivan tells a tale/poem to his brother Alyosha. This poem ends with a kiss as a final response without words.

"A Story of Sonya Marmeladova's
Love", acrylic on canvas, 2022,
Bishop Maxim

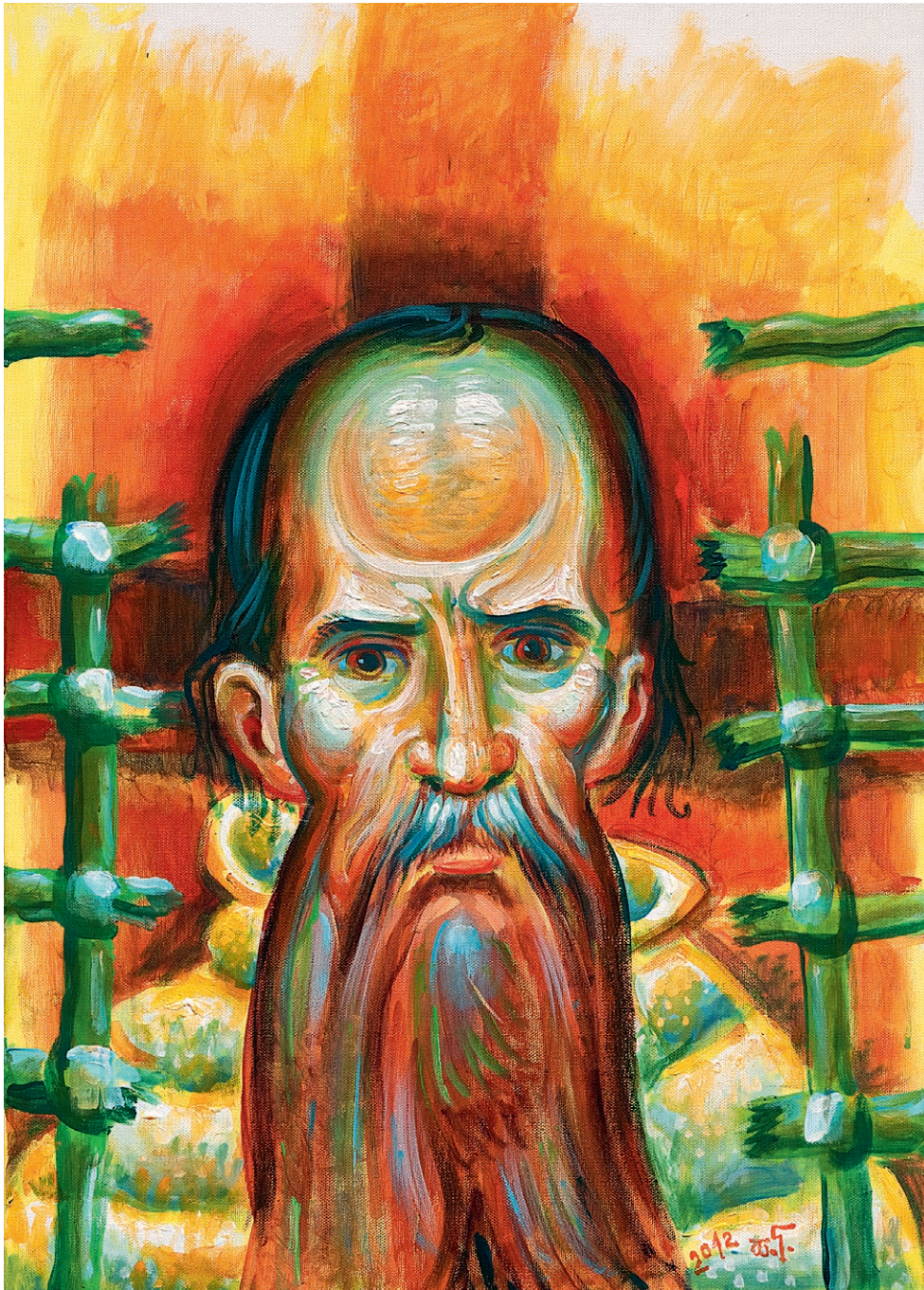
In *Crime and Punishment*, Sonya appears as the antithesis of Raskolnikov. At the same time, an "easy woman" and a saint, Sonya accepts her existence as a long way to martyrdom. Having learned about Raskolnikov's crime, she does not give up. Still, she takes on the salvation of his soul in an unforgettable scene when she teaches Raskolnikov with her Bible, recounting the event of Lazarus' resurrection. Sonya can forgive Raskolnikov because she believes that God forgives.





"Christ and the Grand Inquisitor",
acrylic on card board, 1990,
Stamatis Skliris

Christ gives no other argument when confronted with the Grand Inquisitor, an ascetic who has no material ambition, who accused him: "You did not want to bring man to you by miracles, because you wanted their freely given love rather than the servile rapture of slaves subdued forever by displays of power. And here again You overestimated man." The epilogue of *The Grand Inquisitor* is startling: Christ rises and goes over to the old man and kisses him gently on his old, bloodless lips and with that kiss gives a divine response to the inquisitor's "self-confinement and self-imprisonment."



"Dostoevsky",
acrylic on canvas,
2012, Stamatis Skliris

The theme depicts a man dressed in prison cloths realizing that the dungeon's iron bars are broken, leaving the man, therefore, free to exit. After many inhumane tortures and deprivations, he gazes upon the suffering people, wishing to console them, through the experience of Christ Whom he met within the four walls of a prison cell.



"Grushenka's maid", acrylic on canvas, 2022, Bishop Maxim

Grushenka had two maids: one very old, a cook, from her parents' house, and her granddaughter, a young, living girl in her twenties, a maid. The painter conveys maid's world not only with her clothes and characteristic scarf and simple work clothes but also with her eyes, mouth, and eyebrows. To understand a person's character, it is important to consider the eyes, together with the eyebrows and mouth. The painter managed to crystallize in her eyes the expression of a girl who works, listens, works, and suffers in calm. The lips also contribute to that, as if asking the question: why am I enduring all this? The maid has a lay expression, but also a blessed expressive activity of the anatomical elements of the character. This picture is so convincing that we think that the girl seemed to have just finished cleaning with rags, put her hands on her hips, and walked toward us. The way in which the painter painted this girl serves as a halo that crowns her character.



"Netochka Nezvanova 2" (female hero of Dostoevsky), acrylic on canvas, 2022, Bishop Maxim

This is a woman who, from an uninvited girl to high society, managed, despite obstacles, to become an artist. But how to show all this in a painting? The face and neck stand upright like a pillar holding the whole temple. The look of two strong eyes of a strong female idiosyncrasy is added to this factor of balance. The portraitist made his eyes beautiful and his eyes strong. Eyelids and eyelashes contribute to that, as well as lips that show a woman, on the one hand beautiful, but also strong, who won and proved herself despite the opposite reactions and jealousy of others. An aristocratic hat on her head introduces an imbalance towards the vertical axis and assures us that this woman fought and achieved through struggle.



"Fyodor Dostoevsky and Maria Skobtsova",
acrylic on canvas, 2021, Bishop Maxim

Freedom, in contrast to dry rationalism, allowed Dostoevsky (who, by observing people in a prison setting, revised his earlier, "progressive" views) to tackle several Christian themes. The focus is more on the gateway to finding freedom in suffering. Dostoevsky raises the question in almost all his works: suffering serves as a proof of man's independence, of him being alive and having the power to renounce even his own happiness in the name of freedom. The three pillars of power—miracle, mystery and authority—in his view deprive man of freedom. Long before Sartre, and more disturbingly than Dante, Dostoevsky described hell in a similar manner, but more accurately: "I maintain that hell is the suffering of being unable to love." His heroes do not want to spend their lives in the elusive pursuit of happiness—they want the true, living life.



"The Last Look of Nastasya Filippovna"
(female hero of *The Idiot*), acrylic on canvas,
2021, Bishop Maxim

The painting depicts Nastasya's death scene. Rogozhin stabbed her under the left breast and there was no more than half a tablespoon of blood; the bleeding was internal. Without a doubt, Nastasya is the most dramatic and most complex character of the novel *The Idiot*; it is she who steers the course of this novel and the fate of Prince Myshkin and Rogozhin. No one in *The Idiot* can understand Nastasya Filippovna's abrupt changes of mood. Nastasya is highly emotional, full of guilt, out for revenge. Prince Myshkin insists that Nastasya is not what she seems, that she is more kind and sweet than her haughty demeanor seems to indicate. One can see suffering beauty in her eyes. She sees an absurd morality play with good and evil on either side of her. So, not knowing what role she must play, she plunges into the comedy and turns the course of events upside down. Nastasya's imminent death hovers ominously throughout the novel. What makes the scene horrible is not the murder but Myshkin's comforting of Rogozhin. Myshkin's goodness and compassion are more terrifying than Rogozhin's murder of Nastasya. Dostoevsky shows us the ultimate in goodness, and it is grotesque: Myshkin's embracing the murderer, forgiving him as it were, weeping on his cheek as though in sorrow, but also in relief that, at last, the fate of the three has unraveled itself.

Dostoevsky, beauty, and America

I ask myself whether America is approaching its own 1917 moment equivalent to that of Russia in October/November of 1917, a moment of radical political and social iconoclasm, a moment when in the effort at reform of real problems, we lurch rather headlong, as Holy Russia once did, into an abyss with no visible bottom.

If we in America in fact are at a 1917-level moment of peril, it is obviously because we as Americans have set out upon a course of reform from some of our past mistakes, and have not yet figured out how to combine the best of the new with the best of the old. Or, because at the moment of any reform, there is liable to rise to the surface a fair measure of suppressed rage that strikes out blindly for revenge. Or, because when certain suppressing controls are lifted, there invariably appear a fair number of scalawags and malcontents eager to take advantage of the general uncertainty and chaos to work their own malice.

Or, more generally, because when we seek to move to a higher realm of social order, we must face the fact that we don't quite yet know what we're doing. We don't recognize the music; we haven't learned the steps; we aren't familiar with the social etiquette and protocol, so to speak, of the new social place to which we are headed. Of necessity, we stumble blindly until we've become acclimated.

But if we in the West are not sure where we're headed—just that it's uncharted territory, that it perhaps will involve the dethroning of what we take to be an array of idols propping up our political, economic, and gender orders—it's helpful to ask where we've been, or how we reached a moment of such crisis in the first place.

For me, the longstanding Western challenge—and the peril we face now as we seek to extricate ourselves from that crisis—comes down to the role of beauty, and to the absence of the third of Socrates' three great Transcendentals in our academic, everyday, and official concerns. Our crisis began when we ceased to prioritize the beautiful, and simultaneously divorced Beauty from the realm of reason, placing it instead within the realm of opinion, prejudice, or bias.

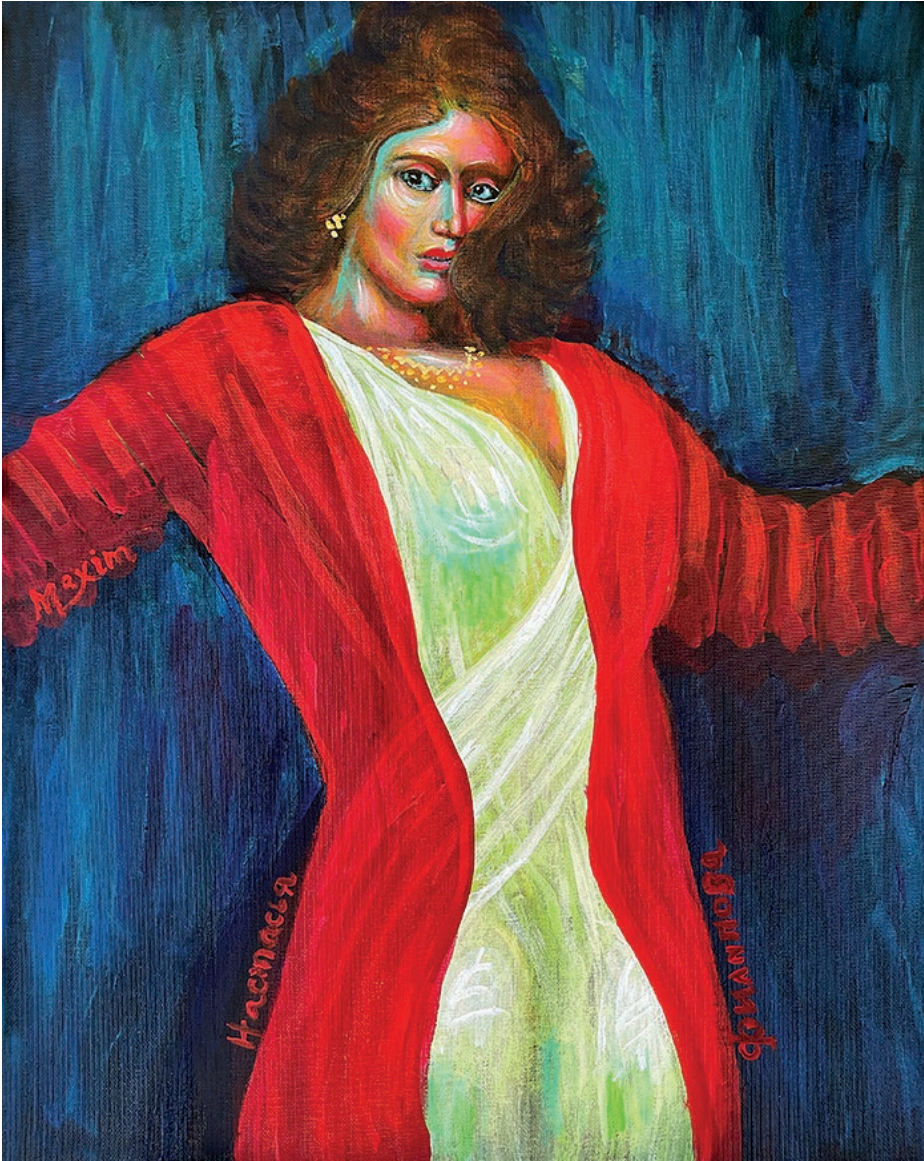
For Truth, we in the West have long held a great reverence—in the modern era, we called it Science, or sometimes Social science.

For Goodness, we have a near obsession—our word for the Good in the modern era, is "Technology," and we obsess about the social technology known as "policy" and about possible new government or corporate frameworks for addressing our problems. That is to say, we have reduced "the Good" to the useful, and thereby reduced Goodness to Utility. Thus, our public discourse is frequently characterized by rudeness and boorishness from all sides, and our public protests veer easily into destruction of property and the targeting, by both sides, of bastions of state power.

For the eastern Church, the aesthetic sense is already a cognitive faculty. Think of the long history of life on this planet, and the near-constant occupation of every living thing with "making sense" of its environment in order to survive. If this raw physical sensing was irrational, then no organism would have survived. Rather, from single celled organisms to humpback whales, from slime molds to flocks of birds, every living thing is processing information about itself and its environment, and reacting in the appropriate way for its own survival. Clearly, sensing and reacting can be already a form of reason.

We call this process of rational recalibration "asceticism," and for 2,000 years we have known asceticism to be the foundation of thinking clearly about the world. For us, purified encounter with serious art—with the grammar of artistic perfection in literature, in music, in architecture, here today in painting—and above all with the grammar of imperfect perfection found in liturgical art—is the foundation of a social order that is simultaneously just and merciful, that can handle gender as an icon without reducing it to an idol, that can humbly submit to sexual morality without becoming beguiled into extreme statements about those around us.

Dr. Timothy Patitsas



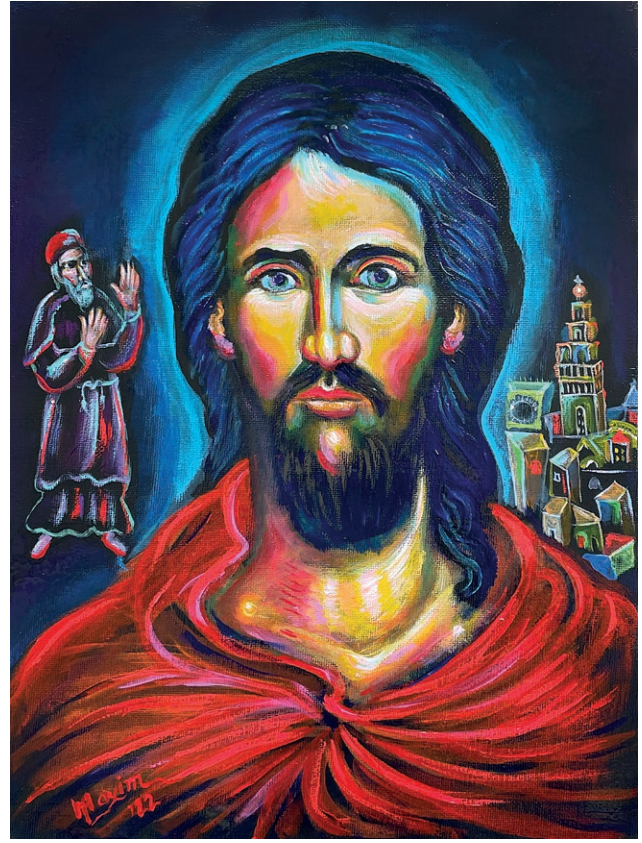
"Amour Proper of Nastasya Filippovna", acrylic on canvas, 2022, Bishop Maxim

Of the many characters we see in Dostoyevsky's novels, few of the principal characters are female. However, in one of his more famous novels, *The Idiot*, we find perhaps one of the strongest female characters of most nineteenth-century literature, if not of Europe, then at least of Russia. Nastasya is the most dramatic and complex character in the novel *The Idiot*. Defined by her sensual beauty and remarkable looks, she steers the course of this novel and the fate of Prince Myshkin and Rogozhin. Nastasya Filippovna, a proud, yet exploited woman, is by far one of Dostoyevsky's most intriguing characters. She has an instantaneous and dramatic effect on the characters surrounding her. *The Idiot* can understand Nastasya Filippovna's abrupt changes of mood, and perhaps we should not attempt to narrow the formula for her motivations.



"Sonya Marmeladova",
acrylic on canvas, 2021, Bishop Maxim

Through her suffering Sonya becomes for Raskolnikov the symbol of all the suffering humanity, that is, all the suffering of mankind is represented in her own suffering. And through her compassionate nature and ability to love, she touches deeply one side of Raskolnikov's character. Her life is one of simple expedience for existence.



"Christ and the Grand Inquisitor",
acrylic on canvas, 2022, Bishop Maxim

After Jesus performed a number of miracles in Seville, The people recognize him and adore him at the Seville Cathedral, but he is arrested by Inquisition leaders and sentenced to be burnt to death the next day. The Grand Inquisitor visits him in his cell to tell him that the Church no longer needs him.

about the artists

“OCHRE” is an informal group of painters, who have contributed to the traditional Orthodox iconography but at the same time are in dialogue with the modern artistic trends. The exhibition is organized with great passion by the 13 artists.

The exhibit is characterized by great pluralism. It hosts various currents and artistic trends, which are in a harmonious dialogue with each other. One sees Byzantine elements conversing with impressionist, expressionist, cubist, abstract, as well as features of street art, graffiti, etc.

The works emit a deep study and understanding of Dostoevsky's novels. It is very important that the painters have so seriously studied the great writer and philosopher at a time when electronic images and soap operas distract readers from great and essential works and wider Literature.

It is obvious that we have before us an important robust and fruitful spiritual event, which will be a station for the artistic events in Greece and it is not excluded that its message will spread to other countries.

Artists: Fr. Stamatis Skliris, George Kordis, Fr. Maxim Vasiljevic, Babis Pylarinos, Costas Labdas, Maria Panou, Konstantinos Kougioumtzis, Despina Karantani, Giannoulis Liberopulos, Christos Kexagioglou, Nektarios Mamais, Nektarios Stamatelos, Fothis Barthis.

epilogue

In our time, when there is a tendency to rob everything of their original meaning and purpose, this exhibit appears as an oasis of the Logos and a festival of the Spirit.

Through Fyodor (Russian pronunciation of Theodore) God (*Theos*) offers Himself to us as a gift (*doron*). It is hard to tell what a greater surprise is: through whom or to whom He offers Himself—in how fragile vessels He is willing to abide. Through a person and literary work of a suffering man who is seemingly, like his characters, falling apart, but hungry and thirsty for Christ, the Truth is concealed or revealed to everyone in accordance with their own, conscious, or unconscious, desire for Him. Every exhibited painting is a unique testimony to it.

Each of the authors, touched by the flame of inspiration, speaks of the same using a different tongue, to invite us to the unity and community of the Pentecost. It is as logical as the dream of a ridiculous man, as the Brothers Karamazov, the cubism in Orthodox iconography or Dostoyevsky in Athens. This logic transcends the fallen, calculated "logic", which enslaves. Compared to that "logic", this one is non-logical for it is the logic of the Logos, the logic of Love, which sets us free and hence it is compellingly and essentially needed, as therapeutic and salvific.

In New York, a place of cosmic outreach, the culture stemming from the experience of the cult, is offered to the suffering world without preaching, but rather compassionately. By its blessed mission even the disfigured and abused words such as "technical" and "technology" are redeemed and given back their pristine meaning and beauty.

postface

The exhibition for Dostoyevsky was an idea of Maxim Vasilievic, Bishop of Los Angeles and Western America. The artists of the group immediately embraced this idea and worked each one in his own particular style and with different artistic media. Some artists tried to picture a portrait of the great writer and some others attempted to illustrate characters of his novels. All of them, as I believe, respected Dostoevsky's spirit and the atmosphere of his narrations.

The exhibition is an homage to the great writer, and I would like to believe that is the first but not the last of events that the Orthodox Church in the USA will organize in order good quality arts to become again part of the daily life of people and simultaneously organic part of the ecclesiastic life.

The group "Ochra" was established in 2018 in Athens and its main goal is to continue the traditional Byzantine style painting in our postmodern world. Based on the belief that this style is a complete and integrated painting system the artists joined the group attempt to use this artistic language not only in rendering religious themes, but in visualizing the contemporary life, the feelings, and the anxieties of contemporary people and mostly to capture and render in visual terms their hopes and their vision for a better world. A world characterized by reconciliation, peace, love and above all by the unity of a community.

We as artists believe that this artistic language, the Byzantine painting system, has elaborated and has developed for centuries in order for the ethos and the spirit of the ecclesiastical life to be properly rendered in visual terms. For that reason, we believe that this language can serve the needs for expression of contemporary artists who are looking for a vehicle for expressing their spiritual inquiries.

Byzantine painting tradition, which was and is always open to a dialogue with other contemporary artistic trends, is a good and suitable language for presenting the daily life, the nature and the human adventure in a mode that elevates everything at a stage of sacredness.

George Kordis

artworks

- "The Underground Man", acrylic on canvas, 2021, Stamatis Skliris
- "Sonia Marmeladova", acrylic on canvas, 2021, Stamatis Skliris
- "Dostoevsky", Digital Painting, Giclee print, 2021, George Kordis
- "Annia Snitkina", Digital Painting, Giclee print, 2021, George Kordis
- "White Nights by Dostoevsky", acrylic on canvas, 2021, Stamatis Skliris
- "Smerdyakov", acrylic on canvas, 2021, Stamatis Skliris
- "Dostoevsky in the Prison Ship", acrylic on canvas, 2021, Stamatis Skliris
- "Fyodor Dostoevsky", acrylic on cardboard, 2021, Bishop Maxim
- „The Christ of Dostoevsky", acrylic on canvas, 2021, Bishop Maxim
- "Karamazov", acrylic on cardboard, 2021, Bishop Maxim
- "Alexei Ivanovich and Polina Alexandrovna", 2021, acrylic on canvas, Bishop Maxim
- "Klara Olufsievna", acrylic on canvas, 2021, Bishop Maxim
- "Return to a Dream", acrylic on canvas, 2021, Despina Karantani
- "Starets Zosima", acrylic on cotton fabric, 2021, Konstantinos Kougioumtzis
- "Stavrogin", acrylic on canvas, 2021, Bishop Maxim
- "A Repetition", digital, 2021, Maria Panou
- "Elder Tikhon", acrylic on canvas, 2021, Bishop Maxim
- "Monologue from Underground", acrylic on canvas, 2021, Bishop Maxim
- "Sonya Marmeladova la Fayum", acrylic on woodboard, 2021, Bishop Maxim
- "Stairs to the Underground", acrylic on canvas, 2021, Bishop Maxim
- "Brothers Karamazov", acrylic on canvas, 2021, Bishop Maxim
- "Myshkin", acrylic and gold leaves on canvas, 2020, Costas Labdas

- "Underground", acrylic on canvas, 2021, Giannoulis Liberopoulos
- "I'm a Ridiculous Man", acrylic on canvas, 2021, Christos Kexagioglou
- "Dostoevsky in His Wet Loneliness", acrylic and ink on canvas, 2021, Nektarios Mamais
- "Fyodor Dostoevsky Rapt in His Thoughts", digital, 2021, Babis Pilarinos
- "You will never reach your destination if you stop and throw stones at every dog that barks", acrylic on canvas, 2021, Nektarios Stamatelos
- "The Dream of a Ridiculous Man", digital, 2021, Maria Panou
- "Nastasya Filippovna 2", acrylic on canvas, 2021, Bishop Maxim
- "Ivan Karamazov", digital painting, 2020, Bishop Maxim
- "The Grand Inquisitor", acrylic on canvas, 2021, Bishop Maxim
- "Fyodor Dostoevsky and Maria Skobtsova", acrylic on canvas, 2021, Bishop Maxim
- "Dostoevsky", acrylic on canvas, 2018, Stamatis Skliris
- "How Ends a Poem", wood engraving, 2021, Fothis Barthis
- "A Story of Sonya Marmeladova's Love", acrylic on canvas, 2022, Bishop Maxim
- "Christ and the Grand Inquisitor", acrylic on card board, 1990, Stamatis Skliris
- "Dostoevsky", acrylic on canvas, 2012, Stamatis Skliris
- "Netochka Nezvanova 2", acrylic on canvas, 2022, Bishop Maxim
- "Crystal Palace: a utopian place of purely rational living" (unfinished), acrylic on canvas, 2022, Bishop Maxim
- "The Last Look of Nastasya Filippovna" (female hero of The Idiot), acrylic on canvas, 2021, Bishop Maxim
- "Amour Proper of Nastasya Filippovna", acrylic on canvas, 2022, Bishop Maxim
- "Christ and the Grand Inquisitor", acrylic on canvas, by Bishop Maxim, 2022, Bishop Maxim
- "Abbas Issak of Syria and Dostoevsky", acrylic on canvas, 2022, Bishop Maxim
- "Unknown Dostoevsky's Character", acrylic on canvas, 2022, Bishop Maxim
- "The Wedding That Didn't Happen—Myshkin and Nastasya", acrylic on canvas, 2022, Bishop Maxim

