

Russian Orthodoxy in the Twentieth Century

Summer 2011

Presented by Cory McKenzie

Museum of Russian Icons

My first field research was at the Museum of Russian Icons in Clinton, Massachusetts. The owner and founder of the museum, Gordon B. Lankton, amassed a large collection of Russian icons during his visits to Russia around the time of the collapse of the USSR. With more than 500 icons, it is the largest Russian icon museum in North America and one of the largest outside of Russia.

There is an amazing variety of icons at the museum.



Entry into Jerusalem; Museum of Russian Icons;
Clinton, Massachusetts.



A Monk Praying, circa 1550; Museum of Russian
Icons; Clinton, Massachusetts.

*Some are
rather simple...*



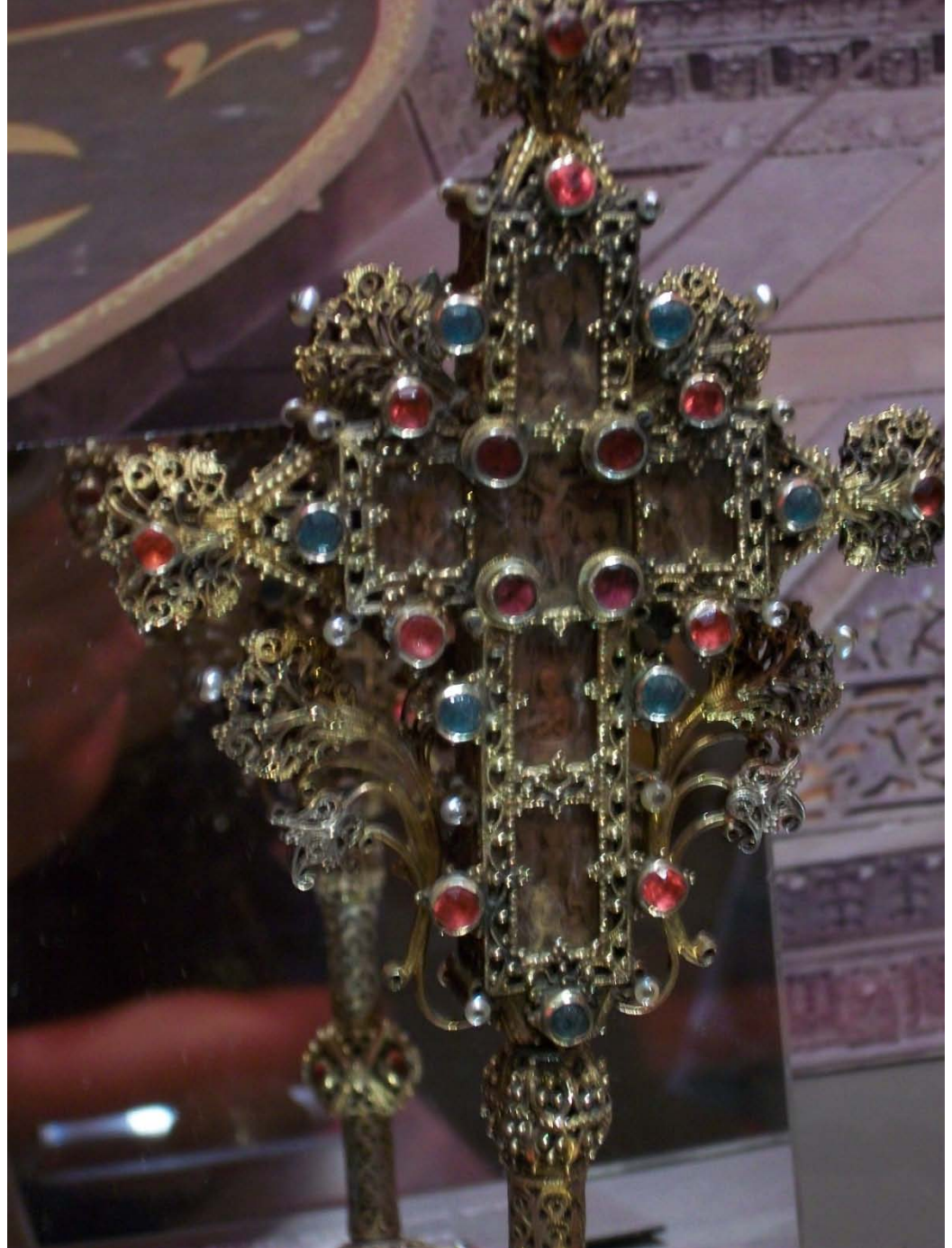
Smolensk Mother of God, circa 1580; Museum of Russian Icons; Clinton, Massachusetts.

*...others are
more elaborate.*



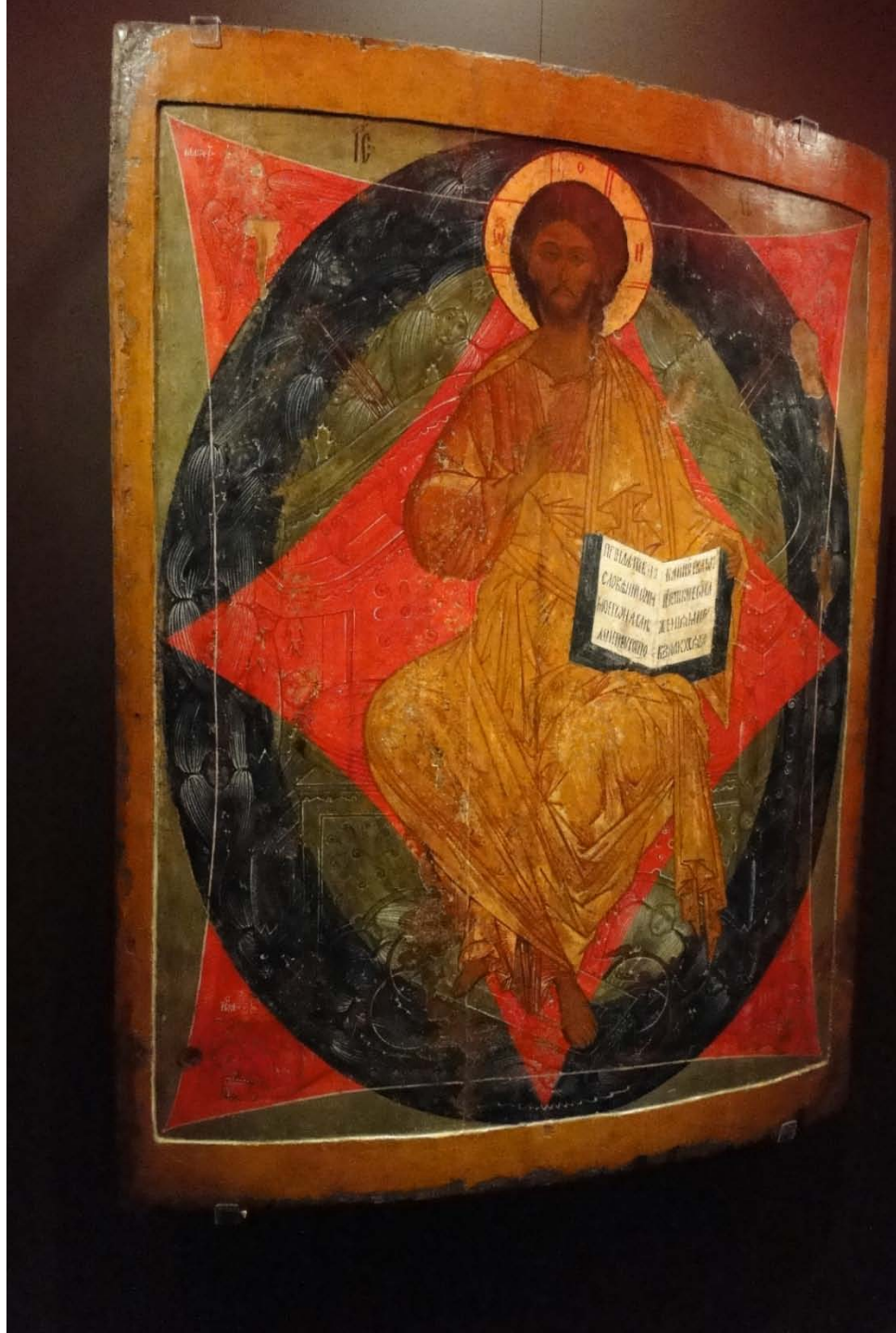
Andrei Rublev and Scenes from His Life, 2003; Museum of Russian Icons; Clinton, Massachusetts.

Some are very tiny...



Museum of Russian Icons; Clinton, Massachusetts.

*...others
are quite...
large.*



Christ in Majesty, circa 1580; Museum of Russian Icons; Clinton, Massachusetts.

Many icons are adorned with elaborate coverings, which serve to focus your attention particularly toward the icon's face and eyes.

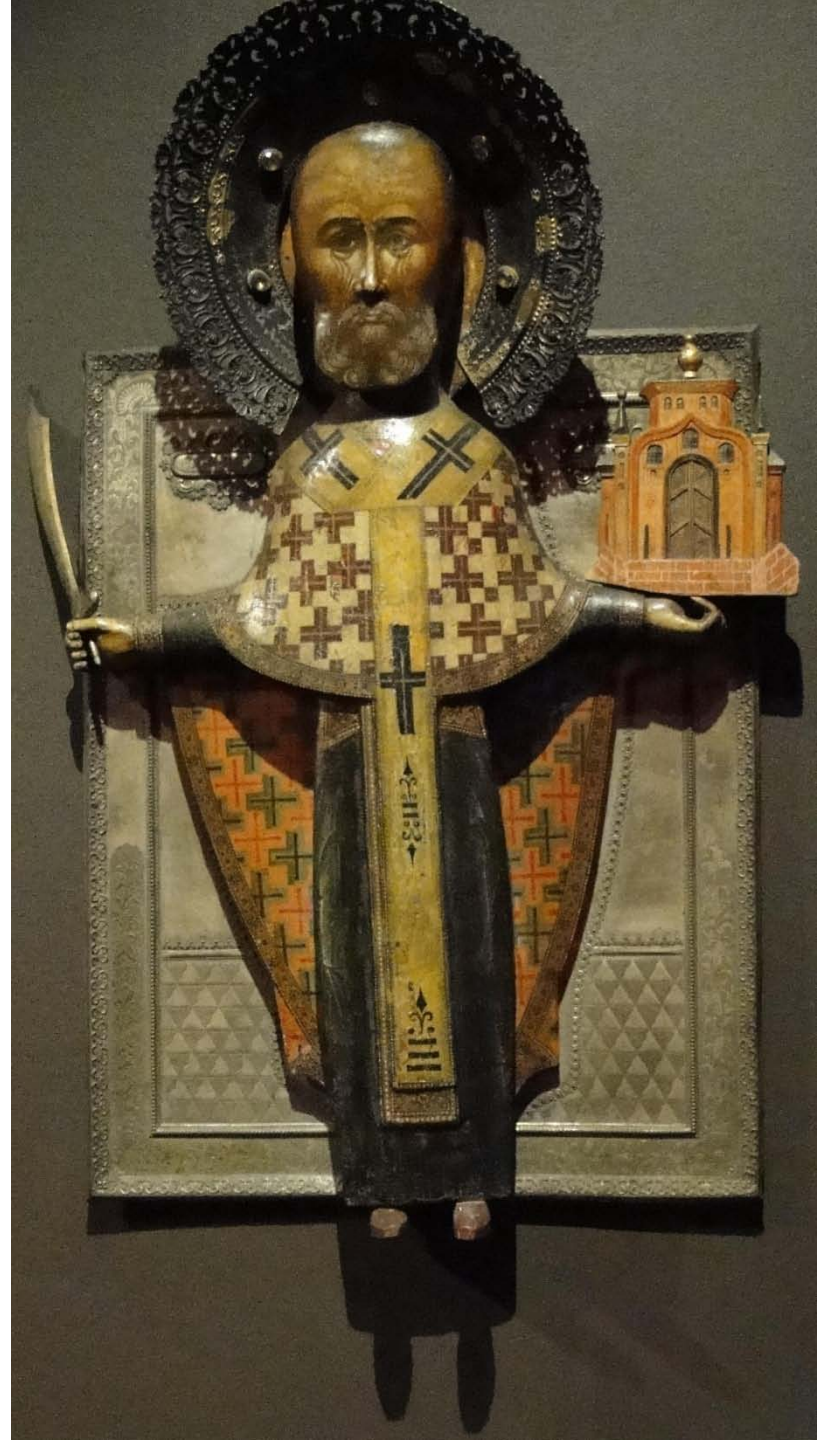


Smolensk Mother of God, circa 1600; Museum of Russian Icons; Clinton, Massachusetts.

Icons are “windows” to the souls of saints. When Orthodox Christians pray “to” an icon, they are actually praying to the saint *through* the icon. When they kiss an icon, they kiss the saint *through* it. By decorating an icon with gold and silver, they are giving gold and silver gifts to the saint.



This icon literally
“leaps out” at
the faithful.



St. Nicholas, circa 1800; Museum of Russian Icons; Clinton, Massachusetts.

This is a *minyeya*—a liturgical calendar marking the feast days of the saints. Each feast day is represented by an icon of the saint in whose honor it is observed.

Minyeya Calendar Icon, circa 1680; Museum of Russian Icons, Clinton, Massachusetts.



St. Nil inspired one of the most distinctive icons. This pious monk made crutches so he could sleep standing upright, allowing him to pray even as he slept. Wooden statues of St. Nil in prayer, supported by his crutches, became ubiquitous throughout Russia.



St. Nil of Stolbensk; Museum of Russian Icons; Clinton, Massachusetts.

Holy Trinity Monastery

In 1927, amidst violent persecution of the Church, Metropolitan Sergius of Moscow fatefully declared, “We wish to be Orthodox and at the same time recognize the Soviet Union as our civil homeland, whose joys and successes are our joys and successes, and whose failures are our failures.”* Appalled, Russian émigrés separated from the Moscow patriarchate and began to create institutions to preserve Russian Orthodoxy. Established in 1930, Holy Trinity Monastery in Jordanville, New York, was one such institution.

*Hilarion Alfeyev, *Orthodox Christianity: The History and Canonical Structure of the Orthodox Church*, vol. 1 (Yonkers, New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2011), 270.

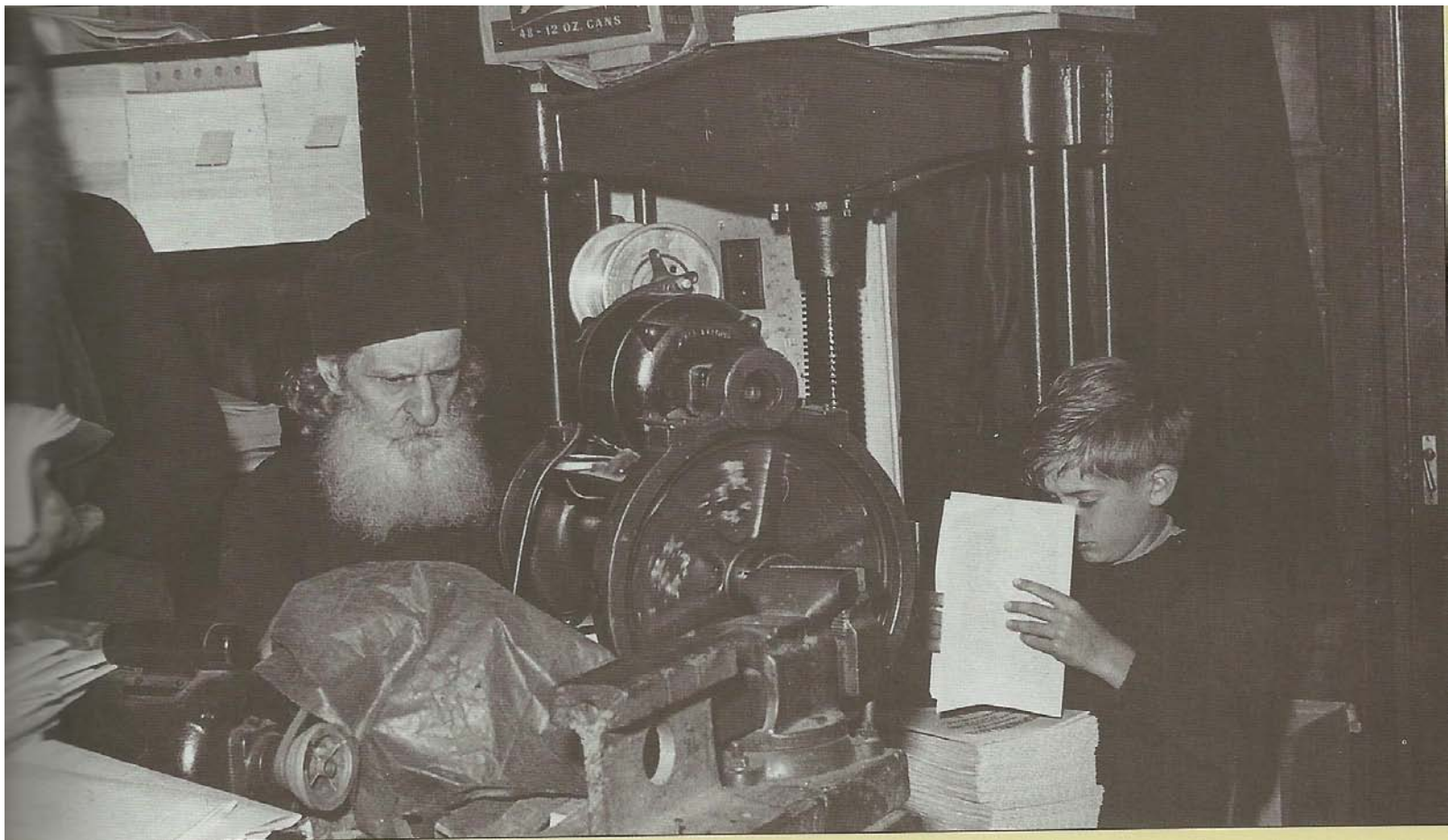


Photo from *Svyato-Troitskiy Monastir': 1930-2005* (Jordanville, N.Y.: Printshop of St. Job of Pochaev, 2005), 161. Courtesy of Fr. Victor Lochmatow.

To preserve Orthodoxy, the monks of the Jordanville monastery printed religious literature—prayer books, bibles, textbooks for seminarians, etc.—and sent them to churches in the Soviet Union. Jordanville became well-known among Russian Orthodox Christians for its books.

I journeyed to New York to visit Holy Trinity Monastery for my research. The monastery is in a rural area of the Mohawk River valley. For miles around, there is little but rolling hills and farmland.





It was a bit of a shock to suddenly come across Russian architecture in the heart of American farm country.

Before making the trip to the monastery, I wrote to the abbot, Archimandrite Luke, to tell him about my project and get his permission to interview some of the residents. The abbot assigned Father Victor Lochmatow to arrange my visit.



Father Victor and I standing with an icon of St. Michael the Archangel in front of the main monastery building

*Fr. Roman
(standing,
center) is the
monastery's
choir director.*



Photo from *Svyato-Troitskiy Monastir': 1930-2005* (Jordanville, N.Y.: Printshop of St. Job of Pochaev, 2005), 169. Courtesy of Fr. Victor Lochmatow.

Father Victor introduced me to Father Roman Krassovsky for an interview. Father Roman's narrative of Russian Orthodox history and his answers to my questions turned out to be of enormous importance to my project.

One recent event that still causes great excitement at the monastery is the 2007 reunification of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia with the Church in Russia. As mentioned in a previous slide, the two churches had been separated since 1927. The monks' life work was the preservation of Russian Orthodoxy so that they could one day rebuild the church in Russia. The 2007 reunification was a time of great joy at the monastery.



Photo from *Svyato-Troitskiy Monastir': 1930-2005* (Jordanville, N.Y.: Printshop of St. Job of Pochaev, 2005), 177. Courtesy of Fr. Victor Lochmatow.

Metropolitan Laurus was abbot of Holy Trinity Monastery in 2007. He was also head of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia. It was he who traveled to Moscow to share communion with Alexy II, the Patriarch of Moscow. Laurus and Alexy both passed away the following year. Father Roman and others told me that the reunification was “the crown jewel of their spiritual lives.”



I visited the tombs of Laurus and other abbots of the monastery. Laurus lies next to Father Kyprian, another giant in the monastery's history. Kyprian is considered by many to have been one of the foremost iconographers of the twentieth century. Father Victor recalled Father Kyprian as a spiritual father to himself and many others at Holy Trinity Monastery, including the late Abbot Laurus. In this photograph, Kyprian is on the left, and Laurus is on the right.



The most stunning building at the monastery is, without a doubt, the cathedral. Father Roman gave us a tour of the inside. I wish I had taken pictures of the interior so that I could attempt to share the experience, but they likely would not capture it anyway. Father Kyprian painted the interior with his students, and it is simply spectacular.

Photo from *Svyato-Troitskiy Monastir': 1930-2005*
(Jordanville, N.Y.: Printshop of St. Job of Pochaev, 2005),
29. Courtesy of Fr. Victor Lochmatow.

The monastery cares for several cemeteries. Russian Orthodox Christians from all across North America make their final repose there. In these last few slides, I will show pictures of these tranquil resting places.



A soldier from the tsar's army who was driven out of Russia by the Bolsheviks.



