



### Icons in Transformation

*Icons in Transformation* is an exhibit of icons filling the church and the parish hall of St. Mark's by Russian artist, Ludmila Pawlowska. Ms. Pawlowska's art includes both traditional Russian icons and contemporary art inspired by traditional icon-painting techniques. St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Little Rock will host this exhibit through August 17. Carey and I had a sneak preview this week. It is breath taking. It is an exhibit that you will want to spend some time looking at and praying with.

An icon is painted as act of worship, a doorway to the divine. It is theology written in paint. Often when we pray, we close our eyes. Praying with icons is an ancient prayer practice that allows us to keep our eyes open. We focus not on what is seen in the icon, but on what is seen through it, the love of God expressed through it. This

is a right-brain prayer, experiencing touching seeing feeling what is holy, a divine mystery, a way to let God speak to us. The language of icons is the language of prayer as God's presence is communicated on a deeper non-verbal level.

Traditional icons have prototype images which have been approved by Church fathers in the Eastern Orthodox tradition.

The smaller figures and things on an icon are there to tell the story. They are there to remind us also that we do not travel on our own to God but are surrounded by others making the same journey, who are our companions on the way. The figures cast no shadows. They stand in the eternal realm and come to meet us to take us back with them to that realm.

Most of the icons in the exhibit are contemporary, the artist's response to traditional icons. Almost all of the icons have eyes, our way to see through the icon to the presence of God. Using icons is a spiritual practice from our eastern tradition that is another prayer technique, a way to prayer with our eyes open.

Joanna