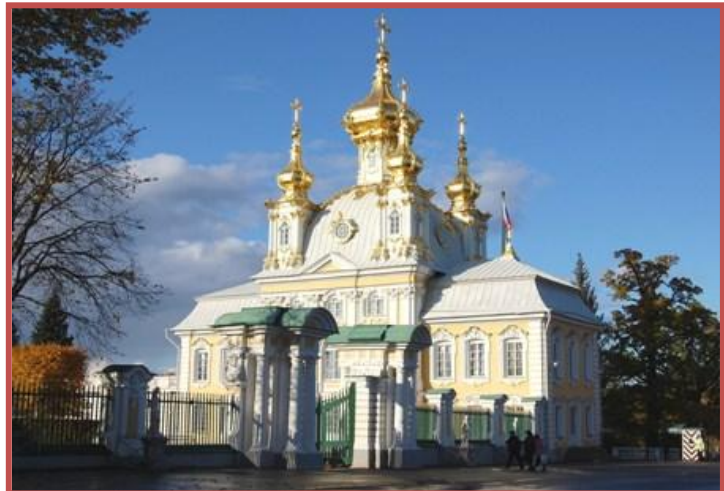


Seeking the Face of Christ in Russia 2010 - An Experiential Pilgrimage-

For centuries, iconography, the liturgical art of the Russian Orthodox Church, has provided the faithful with a spiritual connection to the divine. This sacred art is believed to be divinely inspired by God and through which the Holy Spirit conveys its truth. Icons, two-dimensional painted images of Christ, the Virgin Mary, and the saints, are revered as important tools for worship as they contain a capacity to inspire prayerfulness and contemplation.

Debra Korluka, a Russian Orthodox iconographer based in Stillwater, is organizing a special fall pilgrimage to Russia, Sept. 26-Oct. 10. The tour, "Seeking the Face of Christ in Russia" is a uniquely designed opportunity to build deeper bridges of cultural and spiritual understanding between American Christianity and the Holy Orthodox faith in Russia. The pilgrimage begins in St. Petersburg, Russia's former historic capital, and continues to Moscow and Novgorod, a provincial city south of St. Petersburg. United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities and Benois Institute in Russia are partners in this tour.

The experiential "Seeking the Face of Christ in Russia" tour will introduce travelers to the theology, spirituality, and philosophy of the Orthodox Church in Russia along with the arts and practices of Orthodox tradition. The itinerary includes visits to monasteries, museums, onion-domed cathedrals, artist studios, iconography schools, seminaries, and cultural centers. Travelers will also have



plenty of opportunity to experience Russia's rich tradition of culture and the arts through visits to the Hermitage Museum, palaces of the Czars, and optional evening excursions to the theatre.

Tour leader Debra Korluka grew up in the Russian Orthodox Church and has worked as a professional Byzantine iconographer for 15 years and an artist for 25 years. She studied with master iconographers in Ukraine and Russia, and has studied icon restoration at the University of Restorative Fine Art in Kyiv, Ukraine. She was the first American invited to exhibit iconography in the former Soviet Union and has been commissioned by churches and private individuals throughout the world. Debra teaches Byzantine iconography and leads pilgrimage tours to important sites of historical iconography.

The Byzantine style of icon painting has its origins in the 5th and 6th centuries. Each image carries a wealth of detail and symbolism, making the icon a visual storehouse of tradition and Orthodox belief. The images are canonical, based closely on centuries-old prototypes and stylized to emphasize their holiness rather than their humanity. The style of writing (painting) icons remains timeless and is

intended to provide a window to another world. Each icon carries a wealth of information. Colors are highly symbolic. “Iconography is two-dimensional,” says Debra, “we are the third dimension. We are invited — we are asked — to participate in the event being described. The power of the icon is its ability to invite people into prayer.”

This experiential pilgrimage will invite participants into community, to engage in respectful conversation about deeply human questions to build bridges of understanding across cultures and faith traditions. “We can learn much by sharing our interpretations and perspectives,” says Debra.

The cost of this (very inclusive) 14-day experiential tour is \$4950. A \$500 deposit is due April 1. More travel information is available at www.unitedseminary.edu or please call Debra Korluka at 612-889-5868.

The photo above is taken from the grounds of Peterhof, Peter the Great's majestic imperial palace outside St. Petersburg.