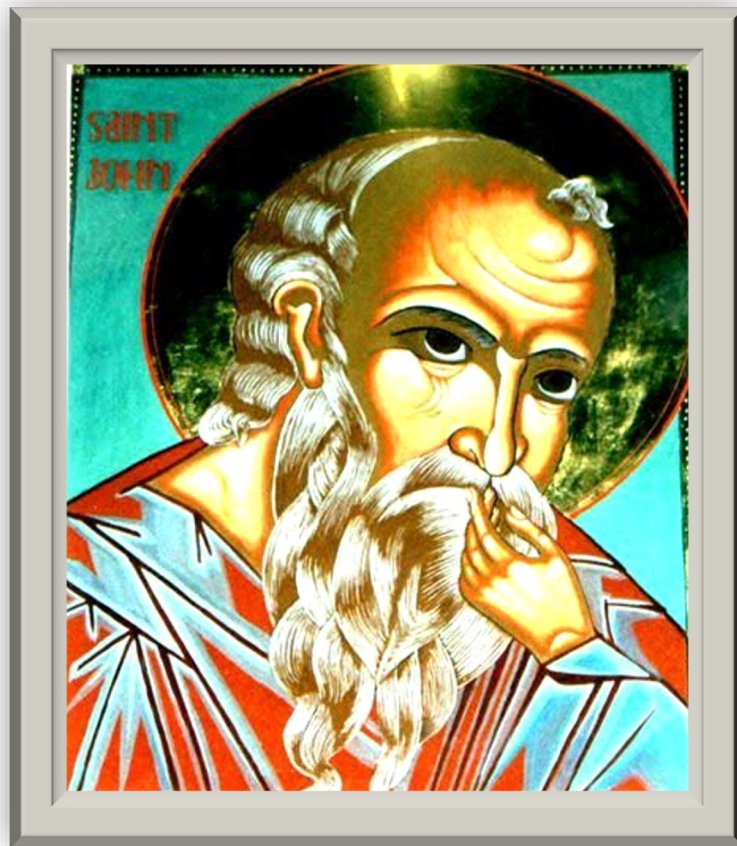




**Heritage Features
of
the Church
of
St John the Evangelist
Sandymount**

THE ICON OF ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST



The Icon was dedicated by Archbishop Walton Empey on May 4th 2002. It is an original Icon based on a XVIth Century Russian prototype of St John the Divine or Evangelist written by Fearghal O'Farrell. St John the Evangelist is traditionally regarded as having taken the Virgin Mary to Ephesus after the Crucifixion. It is also believed that in the persecution of Damascus (AD 93-96) he was plunged into a cauldron of boiling oil but was delivered unharmed. Afterwards he was banished to the Isle of Patmos where he wrote the Book of Revelation. He died at Ephesus. His day is 27th December, and he is often represented bearing a chalice with a snake emerging from it, an allusion to his removing the poison from a cup presented to him to drink.

Our Icon was written by Fearghal O'Farrell, a qualified architect who has painted for many years and commenced writing icons some twelve years ago. He was founder Chairman of the Association of Iconographers of Ireland (1992). He has held several one person exhibitions and has partaken in many group exhibitions including Millennium exhibitions in Galway Cathedral and Derry Cathedral. He has also had showings in Christ Church Cathedral in Dublin and in other centres. His icons are in several Churches and Religious Centres as well as in private houses and collections.

St John is shown in a gesture of silence. The Icon concentrates on his dramatically expressive head. His wrinkled forehead and wide open eyes which seem to look in-

ward, create an attitude of deep mindful absorption. This is accented by the gesture of the hand with the fingertips drawn towards the thumb. St John speaks to us out of an intense silence, challenging us to aspire to a similar silence and internal calm where we ourselves can hear Christ speaking to us.¹

At the Dedication of the Icon the Archdeacon of Ferns, Ven. Dermot Dunne, (now Dean of Christchurch Cathedral) said:

“Icons are often referred to as the visual Gospel. St Basil said of icons ‘What the word transmits through the ear, the icon silently shows through the image’”. Nicholas Zernov, in his book ‘The Russians and their church’ refers to icons as ‘not being simply religious pictures’. They are much more - a dynamic manifestation of man’s spiritual power to redeem creation through beauty and art. The colours and lines of icons are not meant to imitate nature; The icon writer aims at demonstrating that men, animals and plants, and the whole cosmos can be rescued from their present state of degradation and restored to their proper ‘Image’”. The icons are pledges of the coming victory of a redeemed creation over the fallen one. From this description we can affirm that icons are written, not painted.”

“The icon was never intended to hang on a wall merely as an aesthetic object. The Icon is ideally placed in a church because in the variance of light throughout the day the icon takes on different forms and draws the ‘gazer’ into a different reality. What is being added to this church today is another gem in a crown of beauty directed towards the worship of God. Finally what we are celebrating today is not a memorial but a living dynamic expression of our Christian heritage. It is not only important to St John’s but to all of us that the witness of this church in this part of Dublin is nurtured and preserved as an important part of our church life.”²

Notes for Icon of St. John the Evangelist

1. Biographical notes by our Webmaster David Fitzpatrick (July 2002)
2. Sermon preached by Very Rev Dermot Dunne, Dean of Christchurch Cathedral (4th May 2002)