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The Icon of Our Lady of Jasna Góra as a Biblical and Theological Synthesis¹

The subject matter of the Icon of Jasna Góra is the Blessed Virgin Mary as the Mother of Christ (*Theotokos*). It is a synthetic representation of theological and biblical truths by means of pictorial techniques. The artistic vision imparted by the Icon on the basis of personal religious experience and on the basis of the *Scripture* and the teachings of the Church took a concrete form thanks to the use of colour, contour, light and, most of all, through the symbolism of colours. The language of theology, which is a living testimony of tradition, takes upon it the language of art in an iconological representation to carry the same message expressed in a different manner. The Icon of Jasna Góra in its subject matter reaches the fundamental truths of Christianity which stem from the *Scripture*, especially from the *Gospel*, and are transmitted by the established Church tradition. The Icon portrays the Virgin and Child. It is a pictorial representation of the truth about the Divine Motherhood of Mary and her exaltation by God in the act of Redemption. Because Mary is in the foreground, it contains the whole teaching of the Catholic Church presented in the documents of the Second Vatican Council, e.g. the following: “*St. Mary, who was by God’s grace exalted above all angels and people, second only to her Son, is appropriately revered by the Church as the Holy Mother of God, who participated in the mysteries of Christ. From time immemorial, the Blessed Virgin Mary has been venerated under the honourable name of the Mother of God, whose protection is sought by all the faithful in their prayers in any adversity and need*”.

Especially after the Council of Ephesus, Mariolatry grew amazingly among the people of God, who worshipped, loved, invoked and followed her, according to her own prophetic words: “*From henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For He that is mighty hath done to me great things*” (Luke 1: 48-49)*. This cult, as it has always existed in the Church, though exceptional, is significantly different from the cult of adoration of the Incarnated Word coequal with the Father and the Holy Spirit, and is most conducive to it².

Apparent in one glance, in the Icon of Jasna Góra it is possible to see the whole history of the Marian cult, all the theological achievements of the Church, the dogmatic definitions of the Teaching Office, the common teaching and the

development of the Marian doctrine throughout the centuries. But above all, this picture embodies all the events in which people elected and foreseen by God participated: *“When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman”* (Galatians 4: 4), according to the proclamation of the prophets that *“a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel”* (Isaiah 7: 14). The Icon of the fulfilled promise is an illustration of the meeting described in the *Gospel according to St. Luke*, where, as the angels had announced, the Bethlehem shepherds *‘found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger’* (Luke 2: 16). Also the Magi from the East, who came following the star, experienced the same event as the shepherds because *“they saw the young child with Mary his mother”* (Matthew 2: 11). These events and all other situations where we find Baby Jesus in the arms of Mary take place and are repeated in every contact with the Icon of Jasna Góra because the Icon continually embodies them. These experiences can be encountered by all those who have faith and obey the word which brings the Good News about Salvation.

The basis of all of Mary’s privileges is her Divine Motherhood. Therefore each icon representing Mary clearly and legibly magnifies this truth by portraying Jesus in the arms of His Mother since *“the gifts and privileges of the Blessed Virgin Mary always refer to Christ”*³. One cannot separate the Mother from the Son. This was well understood by painters of sacred icons, who knew that in their work they presented the mysteries of the faith based on the fundamental truths taught by the Church. Thus their paintings are compact, homogeneous compositions. The Icon of Jasna Góra is also such a compact compositional homogeneity based on biblical and theological criteria. This is why the recent popularisation of the images reproducing only the head of Our Lady from the Icon of Jasna Góra should be considered a inauspicious phenomenon, resulting from a misunderstanding of the basic iconographic and dogmatic criteria.

The golden halo additionally emphasises the relationship of unity between Mary and the Child. Because the head of Jesus is situated closely to the head of the Mother, both halos merge into a compositional unity, thus reminding us of the total unity between Mary and Christ⁴. Halos are a typical feature of icon paintings and appeared as early as the late sixth and early seventh century in the monuments of Christian mosaic art⁵.

There exists a certain parallel between the iconographic “word” and the dogmatic content because *“according to the Orthodox doctrine, the icon is a testimony of the Incarnation of the Word of God. That is, like the Eucharist it is a living testimony of God and the saints, while saints in turn are regarded the living icons of God”*⁶. The Blessed Virgin Mary, through her exceptional part in the mystery of the Incarnation, becomes the Mother of God and is the one and only *“living icon of God”* in the fullest measure. Because of her extraordinary sensitivity and obedience to God’s will, she became the most faithful image of the living God. She expressed her readiness and utmost confidence in God when, ending her dialogue with the Archangel Gabriel, she formulated the most beautiful utterance which God’s creation, man can offer God: *“Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it*

unto me according to thy word” (Luke 1: 38). Therefore, having becoming so humble and obedient to God’s will, she never tried to overshadow God. Her mission was to give God to the world and to show Him to people in her embrace, for thanks to her and in her “*the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us*” so that we can behold “*his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth*” (John 1: 14).

Thus it is easy to agree that although the Icon of Jasna Góra puts the Virgin Mary in the foreground, Mary is the image of God and the representation of His face, being a living icon of God thanks to her part in the mystery of the Incarnation and to her obedience. Therefore her countenance is the dominant motif in the Icon of Jasna Góra. Christian iconography attempts to show a likeness, not to imitate faces naturalistically. “*Iconography does not allow for sensuality in representations, which remain formally abstract and schematic. They consist of the form and of the paint only. Any naturalism is alien to them. Thus the icon does not have three dimensions or depth perspective. What suffices here, as it once sufficed in Egyptian iconography, is a two-dimensional representation with reversed perspective. This alone removes any sensuality and secures the domination of form and colour with their symbolism. In this way the artistic means of iconography become characterised by austere and lofty asceticism*”⁷.

The likeness of the face of Mary, characterised by such austerity and lofty asceticism, mellowed by her motherly goodness, is the most striking element of the Icon of Jasna Góra. Her face thoroughly absorbs the attention of the viewer. It is the leading motif of the whole composition and forces the viewer to concentrate.

In this face the painter represented what is purest and most refined in man: his spiritual world and inherent beauty. He based the composition on soft half-tones and shades which merge in the eye of the beholder, thus obtaining the delicate contour of features with a prominent nose and widely opened eyes. The eyes, although they look into the distance, establish some contact with the viewer so that he feels that he remains within the range of their sight. This phenomenon was described most concisely by Jan Długosz: “*She inspires the viewers with a special kind of piety, as if they were looking at a living person*”⁸. There is no escape and no shelter from this gaze as it follows man and looks for him. These eyes seem to concentrate the whole life of the Virgin, and by virtue of a most wondrous mystery one can find in them also one’s own life. The light which is arranged symmetrically in the eyes of Mary, as was done in all early Christian and Byzantine icons, does not precisely correspond to the slightly lateral illumination of the face, but it contributes to the impression of extraordinarily vibrant eyes. In this way the painter succeeded in stressing effects of contrast by using the proper colour and lighting techniques. Mary’s face emanates motherly goodness towards man, as well as tenderness and severity stamped with suffering. This face is simply very serious. One can discern in it not only the profound mystery of motherhood and the joy springing from it, but also the decision to accept suffering, to submit to it in the name of voluntary sacrifice. The face discreetly hides Mary’s answer from the Annunciation scene: “*Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word*” (Luke 1:

38). It also hints at Mary's fear upon hearing the prophetic words of old Simeon: "Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed" (Luke 2: 35). Perhaps the iconographer wanted to reproduce tacitly in this face the Johannine description of the events on Mount Calvary: "Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene" (John 19: 25). Moreover, while expressing this infinite pain, the painter managed to emphasise in Mary's face the infinite peace and freedom with which the Holy Spirit endowed her. Our Lady in the Icon of Jasna Góra nurses in her arms Jesus, who is still a child, but already experiences everything that the prophets had foretold "that the scripture's of the prophets might be fulfilled" (Matthew 26: 54). Mary's gaze seems to pierce to and touch the very bottom of the unfathomable mystery of suffering whose source is her Divine Motherhood crowned with the Mystery of the Cross⁹. Mary's face reflects the burden of her vocation to participate in the saving act of Redemption from the moment when she heard the amazing salutation of the Archangel Gabriel "the Lord is with thee" (Luke 1: 28) till Jesus said on the Cross: "Behold thy son!", "Behold thy mother!" (John 19: 26–27).

By grace of the Annunciation salutation, which assured Mary of the special presence of God in her life, she was with Him in the Bethlehem stable, during the flight to Egypt, in Nazareth, in Cana of Galilee and in all the situations when the Word of God richly fructified in her. It was she, as the Evangelist significantly noted, who "kept" the words of Jesus and "pondered them in her heart" (Luke 2: 19, 51). She was also the first to be embraced by the blessing given to those, above all, who "hear the word of God, and keep it" (Luke 11: 28). Therefore she also stood under the Cross on Mount Calvary and, with her faith unshattered, experienced the "scandal of the Cross", when many broke down and fled. She fully participated in the reality of the Resurrection of her Son, and at Pentecost she was lavishly "endued with power from on high" (cf. Luke 24: 49), having become the Mother of the Church so as to accompany it in its pilgrimage throughout the centuries. This is why the moment "when the fullness of the time was come" and "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman" (Galatians 4: 4) is captured in the Icon of Jasna Góra and is a reality that is constantly re-occurring. It performs its function resembling that of a sacramental sign, it is a means of grace, and through its saving function of representing the face of God it is a testimony of the living Pre-Image, its Prototype. This significance and sense is bestowed on the Icon by the prominently displayed face, lively and meditative, so full of God, a face which every mortal man can look upon and still live (cf. Exodus 33: 20).

The face of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Jasna Góra urges us to pray and stimulates reflection no matter whether it speaks from among the abundance of ornaments and jewels or from the 'unpopular' image, that which is deprived of its crown and votive robe. This face is permeated with sorrow which does not kill, and with stately seriousness which is not forbidding. It carries the believer to a world of different values although it does not take him away from this world. It records all human tensions, the gift and the mystery of human existence, man called to life by

the mystery of the Cross honoured by the grace of Christ's Resurrection. One is reminded of this by the scars on Mary's cheek which commemorate the raid on Jasna Góra in 1430 and which were preserved four years later when the Icon was being renovated in Cracow. Some theories connected with the sphere of legends maintain that it is a special tradition that icons should bear the traces of wounds and cuts inflicted upon them in various ways¹⁰.

The Story of St. Mary's Icon of Jasna Góra and of Sundry Miracles of this Honourable Painting (Historya o Obrazie w Częstochowie Panny Maryey y o cudach rozmaitych tey wielebney Tablice), published in Cracow around the year 1568 and written by the famous Mikołaj of Wilkowiecko, a Pauline, presents on its title page the image of Our Lady of Jasna Góra. The Mother of God has a crown as her head-dress, while Baby Jesus does not wear one. This fact is worth noting because the very first coronation of the Icon took place as late as 1717. On the other hand, the face of the Virgin does not bear any traces of sword slashes, although they had been there for one hundred thirty years or longer according to the legend that the scars testify to the wounds inflicted on the Icon by the Tartars at the siege of Bełz castle.

1. The events connected with the origin of the scar marks on St. Mary's face in the Icon of Jasna Góra are related by the author of the *Story* as follows: "One of them [assailants] approached in rage and flung the honourable painting against the floor so that the painting broke into three pieces, the head of the Blessed Virgin Mary remained whole, however. He was surprised by this miracle and called to his companions: Look how the painting broke into pieces, but the head and the face remained whole. A more audacious one of them took out his sword and twice struck the face of the Virgin. Soon he went blind as did another one who attempted to do the same. On their return to the monastery, the monks found the painting destroyed and profaned, and they pieced it together and hid it with great reverence. Having heard then about the happy arrival of the King Władysław (Ladislaus) from Prussia to Cracow, they took the honourable painting with them, and complained to the King about the great cruelty. The King regretted such a heavy loss and conferred a benefaction on the poor monks, and he ordered that the painting be kept under guard in his castle. There the painters mended the honourable painting except for the scars, which were not to be mended by any means. In this way the painting was restored to the monastery and it was brought back to its abode by a great multitude of lords, nobility and worthy burghers"¹¹.

For many generations the scars on St. Mary's face in the Icon of Jasna Góra have been an indispensable detail accompanying its religious and aesthetic perception. The scars are identified with the image and are an integral part. It seems that a particular sensitivity to them appeared during the Baroque period. The motif was frequently used in sermons to incite listeners to alter their attitudes in life and return to the path of repentance, or to invoke certain moods, move human hearts and minds. When the existence of the nation was in jeopardy, especially at the time of the Partitions, the scars were mentioned to awaken patriotic and nationalistic feel-

ings. In the consciousness of many Poles the motif was linked ever more often with the invocation of St. Mary as the Queen of Poland. This is fairly conspicuous in the songs of the Bar confederates. Following the loss of independence, from the outbreaks of national uprisings till the years of German occupation, the motif of the scars appeared with increasing frequency in poetry and prose. It was employed to point out analogies with the suffering of the nation, could be applied to individual situations, and inspired hope and trust. This interpretation, which is constantly broadened, enriched and updated, can also be found in contemporary poetry because the Mother of God, who looks at us from the Icon of Jasna Góra, knows the mystery of the Cross and bears our wounds¹².

It has already been mentioned that the dominant element in the Icon of Jasna Góra is the face of St. Mary. As the viewers perceive it, the face is the primary object of contemplation. It is known, however, from the general principles of iconography that in multi-figural compositions it is not always the central figure which is the most important one¹³. Each icon, first and foremost, is a testimony to the presence of God and, no matter who it represents, the iconographer intends the viewer to see the prototype, that is, God Himself. St. Mary's Icon of Jasna Góra is a special testimony of the Incarnation of the Word of God. In relation to God the notion of "face" is a very significant one. But the face of God cannot be seen by mortal man. When Moses asked God to be allowed to see His face, he received a clear answer: "*Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live*" (Exodus 33: 20). This will be possible only after crossing the threshold of death, when seeing God "*face to face*" will become fact. "*For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face*" (1 Corinthians 13: 12). St. Mary is '*the true Mother of God and the Redeemer, united with Him by a close, indivisible knot, is the Mother of the Son of God, and thus the most beloved daughter of the Father and the shrine of the Holy Spirit*'¹⁴. She, therefore, became the most faithful image of God Himself. By grace of her part in the mystery of Redemption the eternal Word of God became closest to man in His human form. And St. Paul wrote: "*Who [Jesus Christ], being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself*" (Philippians 2: 6-8). If we accept the thesis of the Orthodox theology, based mainly on the teachings of St. Gregory Palamas, that the icon encodes the energies of God¹⁵ which influence the man who prays before it, then St. Mary's face emanates such energies. It is the face that is at the foreground of the painting, and it also represents the face of God, whose Mother (*Theotokos*) was Mary herself. In the Icon the Divine Motherhood of Mary is self-evident thanks to the figure of the Babe, whom the Virgin holds in her embrace. It is not just a baby, it is the Son of God, the eternal Word of the Father, which "*was made flesh, and dwelt among us*" (John 1: 14). In a dynamic gesture, the Virgin points with her right hand to her Son. It is He who is the ultimate justification of her enormous exaltation.

The gesture of St. Mary's right hand, peaceful but resolute, is a silent order reminiscent of the words spoken by Mary to the servants in Cana of Galilee: "*Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it*" (John 2: 5). These words were both the foreboding and the reverberation of the words of God which He uttered from a cloud on the Mount of the Transfiguration to Peter, James and John: "*This is my beloved Son; hear him*" (Mark 9: 7). In this gesture Mary carries out her mission as the Mother of God and the Lord's handmaid by telling all those who look at the painting that her Son is the one God. In this gesture she speaks to all those who have faith and to those who have none to keep the words of Jesus and to apply them to their hearts. In this painting she is the "*handmaid*" of the Lord since she serves people to achieve what is most important in life: to allow God to find them and to find themselves in His love. She reminds us of the oldest and most important message of God directed to His people, through Moses: "*Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up*" (Deuteronomy 6: 4–7).

This admonition, embodied by the dynamic gesture of Our Lady's hand, is extremely significant. It concerns the Word of Life and comes from the Mother of Life. The Gospel states twice that Mary dutifully kept the Words/Facts in her heart (cf. Luke 2: 19, 51), independent of the crucial event of the Annunciation, when with utmost trust and immense faith she received the Word of God, which was made flesh (Luke 1: 38; John 1: 14). By grace of this Word she preserved her attitude as the true "*handmaid of the Lord*" from the Annunciation till the Crucifixion, experiencing neither despondency nor collapse when faced with the difficult mystery of the Cross. At the moment of his supreme test St. Peter was saved from despair by the words of Jesus when, having denied Christ, he had to face up to his own sin. When his eyes met the Lord's, "*Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly*" (Luke 22: 61–62). There is no such a mention of Judas. And perhaps because he could not lean on the Word, which had been given also to him by Jesus (cf. John 13: 21–30), he could not bear the burden of his sin. By introducing this gesture the iconographer directs the viewer to Jesus Christ, who is the Son of Mary but most of all the Word of the Father: "*For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me*" (John 17: 8). Jesus, being the eternal Word of the Father, passed this Word to people in human language when He became Man. The gesture of the Virgin then contains also the teaching of the Church about Jesus Christ in the mystery of the Incarnation and Redemption. At the same time, it presents the truth about the redeeming mission of Christ and His love towards people, summarised in the words of Jesus to Nicodemus: "*For God so loved the world, that he*

gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3: 16).

The hand of Our Lady, pointing to Jesus, brings to mind these events from the Gospel which show Jesus teaching about the Kingdom of God in His numerous parables, performing many signs and miracles, awakening faith in the multitudes that listened to Him. This gesture communicates Peter's declaration full of faith and love: "*Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God*" (John 6: 68–69). It is the Babe, to whom Mary's hand does point, "*God from God, Light from Light, born and not created, consubstantial with the Father*" (Creed), who is the Lord and the Teacher. He alone has the words of truth because He is the Truth. He opens human hearts because He is the Root of David who has might and power to open any book and loose any seal (cf. Revelation 5: 5; 6: 1–13). In His left hand He holds the Gospel because He came into the world to preach the good news that there is death no longer, that sins are forgiven, that for those who believe there is no condemnation (Romans 8: 1). His words have redemptive power, He has power over Satan and all unclean spirits, He speaks with authority as no one else before (cf. Mark 1: 23–27; Matthew 7: 29).

Baby Jesus in the arms of Mary holds His right hand raised as if to preach or bless. Emperors also used to keep their hand raised when they took their seat on the throne, thus emphasising their authority. The gesture frequently signified grace granted, forgiveness, or a sentence. Such a gesture was typical as well of ancient teachers (two fingers straight, the others folded). Jesus is Wisdom Incarnate, the Teacher and the Master. He holds His hand raised in a royal gesture because He was given by the Father all power and authority over every man. He alone is "*the King eternal, immortal*" (1 Timothy 1: 17). By His presence in the arms of His Mother He only confirms the truth about the arrival of the Son of God to the lowest strata of human reality, which St. Paul called *kenosis*, i.e. self-emptying (cf. Philippians 2: 6–8). His obedience towards the Father became obedience towards the Mother in a concrete situation. He '*came to Nazareth and was subject unto them*' (cf. Luke 2: 49–51).

The iconographer, having represented the mystery of the Incarnation with all its consequences, did not fail, however, to stress that this Babe, who was given "*a name which is above every name, is Lord, to the glory of God the Father*" (Philippians 2: 9, 11). In this representation he applied the language of pictorial signs and symbols. Even the pose of Jesus, which refers to the motif of teacher and ruler by means of this gesture, evokes such associations. Moreover, the gold of the halo and the amaranth and crimson of the garments are hues of royal attire, for gold is the royal and imperial colour and denotes greatness, richness and power. In iconography it symbolises the omnipotence and might of God, who dwells in heaven. In Jesus Christ God became a man, he descended from heaven. Therefore the gold in the icon bears the symbol of heaven as a concept which functions synonymously with the concept of God. Through the contemplation of the icon in his prayer, a believer builds up his relationships with God, leaves earthly reality and

enters the heavenly one. Through Jesus Christ he finds the way towards the Father, and even while looking at Christ he sees the Father. “*Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, shew us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?*” (John 14: 8-10).

A gold halo surrounds the heads of the Babe and Mary. Jesus is coequal with the Father, God from God. The Blessed Virgin Mary is His Mother, the Mother of God. By her acceptance of Divine Motherhood she entered a special relation with the Holy Trinity; she became the Ark of New Covenant. Therefore her head is also surrounded by a gold halo. Whoever prays before this icon is permeated with the presence of God, and by honouring Mary he worships God alone. In the icon every colour has its significance, nothing is accidental. So also the colour of Jesse’s garment is symbolic: it is a royal hue. This symbolism is generally recognised. It was known even at the time of Jesus since the soldiers, when they had plaited a crown of thorns and placed it on His head, covered Him with a purple robe. Then they approached Him and saying: “*Hail, King of the Jews!*” (John 19: 2-3). The lining of the coat of the BVM is red, while the borders of the sleeves and the coat are gold. The artist intended these secondary details to catch the attention of the person contemplating the painting¹⁶. In St. Mary’s Icon of Jasna Góra the ground of the gold halos is a greenish-blue colour. In Byzantine and Russian iconography this colour symbolises the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit brings life. In liturgy the Holy Spirit is invoked as the one who renews the face of the earth. So to speak, the Holy Spirit inclines towards the earth. He animates it. At the beginning “*the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters*” (Genesis 1: 2). The Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples assembled in a room at Pentecost so as to re-create and renew the face of the earth (cf. the Acts 2: 1-40). A. Rublov in his famous painting of the Holy Trinity represented the Divine Persons as three angels visiting Abraham under the oaks on the plains of Mamre. Two angels have radiant, transparent, light garments. Only the third one wears a green robe in addition. He symbolises the Holy Spirit. While gold in the icons always symbolises divinity¹⁷, so green denotes the Incarnation and the harmony between the Spirit and matter. The Spirit of God moving upon the face of the waters foreshadowed and introduced this harmony, which reached its fullest dimension in the mystery of the Incarnation. The rest of creation received in Jesus Christ the extraordinary chance to reinstate the harmony destroyed by sin. This possibility was fulfilled at the Descent of the Holy Spirit, which was experienced by the disciples of the Lord and St. Mary, who accompanied them in their prayer and vigil in the upper room (cf. the Acts 1: 14; 2: 1-13). The same gift can be received by everyone who will be converted with all his heart and believe in the *Gospel*.

In the Annunciation scene all Three Persons of the Holy Trinity are present. God the Father is present in the words of the archangel Gabriel, in the mere fact of his being sent by God (“*the angel Gabriel was sent from God*”), and in the pro-

nouncement that Jesus “shall be called the Son of the Highest”, that God “shall give unto him the throne of his father David”, and that “with God nothing shall be impossible” (Luke 1: 26-38). The iconographer marked the presence of God the Father in gold. This colour, light and noble, seems to dominate over other hues. It is the most conspicuous thanks to its special prominence: delicately juxtaposed with the green-and-blue background, it is highlighted around the heads of the Virgin and the Child. The presence of the Holy Spirit is signalled with green. This colour symbolises the part of the Holy Spirit in the mystery of the Incarnation. Answering the Virgin of Nazareth’s question “How shall this be?”, the angel Gabriel answered: “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee” (Luke 1: 34-35). The presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of Mary is mentioned as well in the *Acts of the Apostles*, in anticipation of this descent (cf. the Acts 1: 14), while the teaching of the Church and official documents of the Teaching Office continually remind us of this truth.

The Second Person of the Holy Trinity - the eternal Word of God - is displayed in the most manifest way in the figure of Baby Jesus in the arms of His Mother.

In conclusion, there exists an extremely clear parallel between the pictorial representation in the Icon of Jasna Góra and the contents of the evangelical message. The painting, while showing the face of the Blessed Virgin Mary, directs us to the one Face which no man can see and live. The painting appears to be a special synthesis of biblical and theological constituents which form the foundations of the whole teaching of the Church.

Notes:

¹ A reprint, by courtesy of the author, of an excerpt of his work: *Bogiem sławiona Maryja. Antologia polskiej twórczości poetyckiej o Matce Boskiej Jasnogórskiej* (St. Mary Glorified in God. An Anthology of Polish Poetry Devoted to the BVM of Jasna Góra), Rome 1981, pp. 37-50.

* Translator’s note: all biblical quotations according to the *Authorised Version*, the Bible Society: Swindon.

² *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, p. 66.

³ *Op. cit.*, p. 67.

⁴ Paul VI, *Apostolic Adhortation “On the Revival and Development of the Cult of the BVM”*, item 16.

⁵ R. Kozłowski, *Historia obrazu jasnogórskiego w świetle badań technologicznych i artystyczno-formalnych* (The History of the Icon of Jasna Góra in the Light of Technological, Artistic and Formal Research), *Roczniki humanistyczne* 20 (1972), fascicle 5, pp. 31-32.

⁶ *Prolegomena do tematu ‘Semiotyka ikony’*. Rozmowa z Borysem Uspienskim. (Prolegomena to the Semiotics of the Icon. An Interview with Borys Uspienski.), “Znak” 28, 1976, no 270, p. 1606.

⁷ S. Bułgakov, *Ikona i kult ikony w prawosławiu* (The Icon and its Cult in the Orthodox Church), *Wiadomości Polskiego Autokefalicznego Kościoła Prawosławnego*, 1975, nos. 1-2, p. 38.

⁸ J. Długosz, *Liber beneficiorum dioecesis Cracoviensis, nunc primum e codice autographo editus*, vol. 3, Cracow 1864.

⁹ *Wizerunek niepopularny* (The Unpopular Image), “Tygodnik Powszechny” 15, 1961, no 19.

¹⁰ E Śnieżnińska-Stolot, *Geneza, styl i historia Obrazu Matki Boskiej Częstochowskiej* (The origin, style and history of the Icon of the BVM of Jasna Góra), *Folia Historiae Artium*, vol. 9, Cracow, 1973,

pp. 20-25.

¹¹ Mikołaj of Wilkowiecko, *Historia ...*, Cracow 1568 (?).

¹² S. Piusa Trzebińska, *Zapłata za rany* (Reward for Wounds), typescript.

¹³ J. Klinger, 'Kilka problemów związanych z nauką o Trójcy Świętej w prawosławnej teologii XX wieku' (Selected problems of the Teaching on the Trinity in the Orthodox Theology of the Twentieth Century), *Życie i myśl* 25 (1975), no 4 (250), p. 25.

¹⁴ *The Dogmatic Constitution of the Church*, p. 53.

¹⁵ J. Klinger, *op. cit.*, pp. 29-31; J. Kłosińska, *Ikony* (Icons), Cracow 1973, p. 7.

¹⁶ W. Lichaczowa, D. Lichaczow, *Artystyczna spuścizna dawnej Rusi a współczesność* (The Artistic Heritage of Old Russia and Modern Times), Warszawa 1977.

¹⁷ J. Klinger, *op. cit.*, p. 26.