



The Vindicator/Edward A. Shuba

FESTIVAL FEATURE — Rarely is it possible to acquire original hand-painted Byzantine icons locally, but St. John Greek Orthodox Church at 4955 Glenwood Ave., Boardman, has imported nearly four score of them to sell at the fourth annual festival Thursday through Sunday. Dr. Costas A. Sarantopoulos, festival chairman, holds St. Demetrius and the Virgin and Child; Mrs. Kay Stratakis (center) has the Assumption and St. Constantine and Helen, and Mrs. Peggy Touris displays the Resurrection and the Hierarchy, St. Basil, St. John and St. Gregory.

Greek Artist Paints Vivid Icons For Sale at Orthodox Festival

By JANIE S. JENKINS
Vindicator Feature Writer

Gold leaf and vibrant blues and reds and purples strike the eye almost more than the painted figures themselves. Across the bottom of the picture is the firm signature of the Greek artist, Georgios Angelopoulos.

He is, more accurately, an iconographer and the picture, done on wood and heavy to heft, is actually an icon, and each color he's used is a symbol in the ancient theological art of iconography.

Close to 80 of these original religious paintings, steeped in the tradition of the Eastern Orthodox Church and commissioned directly from Angelopoulos, have been obtained by St. John Greek Orthodox Church to sell at the fourth annual festival, which begins Thursday and continues through Sunday.

It was Dr. Costas A. Sarantopoulos, festival chairman and member of the church board, who last summer personally spoke to the aging iconographer at his home near Athens about

doing the work.

"He is a very pious man in virtual seclusion and, like all iconographers, works only when religious inspiration is upon him," Dr. Sarantopoulos says. "He uses the same techniques that were used in iconography as early as the sixth century, and the paints are derived from a mixture of egg yolk, vinegar and varied inorganic pigments, mostly products from the earth."

He further explains the symbolism of the colors: white signifies light; black, the mystical depth; blue,

freshness and clarity; green, hope; yellow, divine glory and illumination; violet, purity; and red, the warmth of the mythical substance.

While the scenes depict traditional dogmas and iconographers must follow the age-old standards, each is different according to the painter's interpretation.

Backgrounds are always surrealistic so as not to detract from the subject matter, and the religious figures are purposely not romanticized so that the observer looks at the inner spirit rather than the exterior beauty.

Icons, the only form of Byzantine art that has effectively endured into modern times, are in all Orthodox churches and many orthodox homes, but it is rare that they can be acquired locally.

And while it will be primarily members of the Orthodox community that will be interested in buying the icons, one need not be of any particular faith or ethnic background to attend and enjoy the upcoming "panegyri," or festival.

Hours Thursday and Friday are from 5 p.m. to midnight, Saturday from 3 p.m. to midnight and Sunday, noon to midnight.

There'll be Greek dancing and music and shish kebab and spit-roasted lamb and gyros. There'll be spanakopeta and dolmatoes — spinach pie and stuffed grape leaves — and pastitsio, the Greek version of lasagna, and thousands upon thousands of calories in the mouth-melting pastries homemade by the Daughters of Penelope.

Panel Rejects P