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The Trail of Russian Miraculous Icons of Our Lady

The special reverence of the inhabitants of Rus towards the Mother of God is clearly noticeable as early as the first years after the baptism of St. Vladimir. It is illustrated both by the names of orthodox churches, including one of the first churches built in Kiev – the Desyatynna Church, but also the quickly spreading cult of miraculous icons of Our Lady. The great attachment of members of the Orthodox Church to the images of Our Lady manifested itself during Russia's hard times when rulers and the Russian common folk prayed together before miraculous icons. In the beliefs of members of the Orthodox Church, Russia is under special protection of Our Lady, which is best expressed in the idea of the day of the Pokrov (Protection) of Our Lady introduced to the liturgical calendar owing to St. Andrey Bogolyubsky. A sign of this protection is the large number of miraculous icons which appeared on the Rus soil. Icons of Our Lady were one of the main destinations pursued by Rus pilgrims. Hundreds of the faithful gathered every day by the most famous ones, wishing to touch and kiss the sacred images. The miraculous icons themselves peregrinated too, and at critical moments they often accompanied the Russian troops, like for instance, the Donska or the Kazanska Icons of Our Lady. The peregrinations of icons usually followed a similar pattern – from the place of their appearance to the main orthodox church in the nearby town from where in the 15th-16th centuries they were usually taken to Moscow. After the revolution, most of the oldest icons found their place in museums (Vladimirska, Donska, and other icons), some were taken to the West by the Russian emigrés (Kurska-Korena Icon), and some were lost and have not been found to-date (Kyevo-Pecherska Uspienska Icon). In their peregrinations, the icons have always been accompanied by pilgrims. Still today, pilgrims visit and pray before the images exhibited in museums. At the same time, there are countless copies of each of the most well-known icons of Our Lady described here, which are worshipped by the faithful like the originals, and which include many miraculous images.

Bogolyubaska Icon of Our Lady shows Our Lady without the Holy Infant, with Her hands raised to God in prayer (*Hagiosortissa* type), and St. Andrey Bogolyubsky kneeling before Her with a group of the praying faithful. It refers to the events connected with the attempt to move the Vladimirskaya Icon of Our Lady from Vyshgorod to Rostov – the new capital of Prince Andrey. Where the Bogolyubovo monastery is now, the horses pulling the cart on which the icon was, stopped and did not want to move. When the Prince's prayed at night, Our Lady with a scroll in Her left hand appeared to him. Not only did the Mother of God order the Prince to leave the icon in Vladimir, but also to build, at the place of the revelation, the Rozhdestvensky church and establish a monastic community nearby. The name of the monastery itself meaning "pleasing God", refers to the prophecy of Our Lady according to which the monastery built there would be famous for Her grace. The tradition says that the construction of the first Rozhdestvensky church was immediately commenced by the Prince himself. He also ordered that all icons and the iconostasis of the church be ornamented with gold and precious stones. Soon the monastery, the castle and the Bogolyubovo settlement were built around the church. At that time the Prince called the most renowned painters and ordered them to paint the icon in such a way as he had seen Our Lady in the revelation. To commemorate those events, the day of the appearance of Our Lady of Bogolyubovo was established on 18 June 1157. In the Middle Ages, the monastery was destroyed many times by the Polovtsy and the Tatars, but favoured by the rulers, it was always rebuilt. In the 18th-19th centuries, after St. Andrey Bogolyubsky had been declared a saint, the monastery was renovated and redeveloped, and the timber structures were replaced with stone. The 18th century also saw an increase in the number of pilgrimages. It was connected with the miraculous sparing of Vladimir from plague in 1771. During the plague, the town residents, as a result of the appearances that occurred then, requested the abbot of the Bogolyubovo monastery to send the icon to Vladimir. After the icon had been brought to them, the plague disappeared completely from the area. To commemorate that event, a solemn procession was made every year beginning from 1772, during which the icon was taken to Vladimir on 21 May and returned to the monastery on 16 June.

Donska Icon of Our Lady, icon of the Eleusa type. According to the tradition, it was originally mounted on a flag-staff and carried as a banner by the Cossacks *inter alia* during the battle of Grand Prince Dmitri against Mamai on Kulikovo Pole (the Snipes' Field) in 1380. To commemorate the event, the icon was called Donska after the Don River, on whose banks the battle had taken place. From that time on, the icon always accompanied Rus troops during their battles. Moved to Moscow, it was placed on the Kremlin, first in the Uspensky Cathedral, and later in the Cathedral of the Annunciation (Blagoveshchensky Sobor). The miracle attributed to that icon is connected with the victory of Boris Godunov over the troops of the Crimean Khan Nur ad-Din in 1591. To commemorate that victory, the Donsky monastery was founded in Moscow at the place where the icon had



Donska Icon of Our Lady, late 14th century (c. 1392?)

been among the troops before the battle. The oldest and small cathedral of the monastery was founded by Boris Godunov and built in 1593. The Grand Cathedral (1684-98) was founded by the Tsar's daughter Sophia, and its construction was continued by Peter I the Great. The day of the icon is celebrated by the Russian Orthodox Church on 19 August. Now the icon is in the collections of the Tretyakov Gallery.

Iverska Icon of Our Lady, the icon of Our Lady Protecting the Gates (*Potraitissa*) from the Iviron monastery on Mount Athos, numerous copies of which have been revered in Russia since the 17th century. An icon of the Hodigitria type, with a characteristic scar on the right cheek of the Mother of God.

According to the tradition, the history of the icon dates back to the beginnings of the 9th century, and during the period of iconoclasm it belonged to a God-fearing widow. Cut with a sword or spear by one of the soldiers sent by Emperor Theophilus the Iconoclast, the icon started bleeding. The scared soldiers surrendered to a bribe from the widow and left the icon with her for the night, and the widow, in order not to allow the destruction of the icon, threw it into the sea.

The icon appeared again only after 200 years to the monks of the Iviron monastery on Mount Athos, who saw it standing on the sea waves in a column of fire. Brought to the monastery by the old man Gavriilo, who, upon the order of the Mother of God herself, walked on the waves to fetch it, the icon was first placed in the altar part of the monastery church. However, upon the explicit wish of Our Lady, who wanted Her image to be placed over the monastery gate, since, as She herself said She did not want to be protected, but Herself to protect others, the monks built a shrine over the gate, especially for the icon, where it was put on an iconostasis, left of the tsar gates, and where it has been worshipped until the present times. Since then the icon has been called Our Lady *Portaitissa* or Iverska after the name of the Iviron monastery.

A special cult of the icon in Russia was initiated in the 17th century, when in 1647, upon a request from Nikon, the then the abbot of the Novospassky monastery in Moscow, Tsar Aleksey Mikhailovich requested the abbot of the Iviron monastery, who was staying in Russia at that time, to send a true copy of the icon of Our Lady *Portaitissa*. It arrived in Moscow on 13 October 1648, and was welcomed by a procession with the participation of the Tsar and patriarch Josif. The meeting of the icon and residents of Moscow took place by the Gate of the Resurrection. First the icon was placed in the Nikolska Church of the Greek monastery built by the monks of Athos. On 19 May 1669, it was moved to the chapel built especially for it, by the Gate of the Resurrection, by analogy to the place which Our Lady had selected for Herself in Iviron, where it was famous for many miracles. The icon left Moscow only during the war with Napoleon in 1812, when it was moved for a short time to Vladimir. In Moscow a habit established for the icon to be taken from home to home. For the chapel not to remain empty during its absence, copies of the image were painted. After the destruction of the Iverska Chapel in 1932, the

icon was moved to the Church of the Resurrection at Sokolniki, where it has been worshipped until the present.

The second famous copy of the icon of Athos was created also in mid-17th century upon the initiative of the same Nikon. After he had been conferred the status of the patriarch, he decided to build, on one of the islands of the Valdayske Lake, a monastery modelled on the Iviron monastery. Upon the permission from Tsar Aleksey Mikhaylovich, he went to Mount Athos requesting that a second copy of the icon of Our Lady *Portaitissa* be painted and an accurate plan of the monastery made according to which the Iversky Bogorodichny Sviatoozersky monastery in Russia was erected. The copy of the icon, placed in the monastery church, was brought in 1655 by two Greek monks Kornil and Nikifor.

Kazanska Icon of Our Lady, an icon of the Hodigitria type. According to the tradition, it was a copy of the miraculous icon of Our Lady *Blachernotissa*. The Mother of God holds the Holy Infant with Her left arm. Jesus has His face turned to the faithful and blesses them with His right hand.

The icon appeared in 1579 in Kazan – the capital of the Tatar Khanate after its conquest by the Muscovy in 1552. Our Lady appeared three times to a nine-year-old girl Matrona in her sleep and ordered her to indicate to the secular and ecclesiastical authorities the place where Her miraculous icon was buried in the ground. Neither the clergy nor the secular officials believed the girl and then she persuaded her mother to help her in the search. After it had been found, the icon was ceremoniously taken to the Church of the Annunciation in Kazan, where it soon became famous for many miracles. Its copy with an account of the miracles was sent to Moscow and in reply Tsar Ivan the Terrible ordered that a brick church and a convent devoted to the Mother of God be built in the place where the icon had been found.

The widespread cult of the Kazanska Icon began only after 1612, as help in the liberation of Moscow from Polish troops in 1612 was ascribed to it (the event is commemorated on 22 September). After the victory, Prince Dmitry Pozharsky built at the Lubyanka in Moscow a church to worship Our Lady, in which he placed the icon of Our Lady of Kazan. When Tsar Michael Romanov learned about its numerous miracles during the battle for Moscow, he made it the family icon of the Romanov dynasty. In 1636, the icon was ceremoniously taken to the Kazan Cathedral built by Pozharsky on the Red Square. Now the icon is in the Bogoyavlensky Patriarshy Cathedral on the Kremlin.

In 1710, upon the order of Tsar Peter I, one of the copies of the miraculous icon was moved to Petersburg and initially placed in a small church on the Vasilevska Island. In 1721, it was moved to the Trinity Cathedral, and 16 years later to the newly built Rozhestvensky Church at Nevsky Prospekt. At the same time the icon was ornamented with a precious relief funded by Empress Anna. After the construction of the Kazan Cathedral, on the date of its consecration in 1811, the



Kazanska Icon of Our Lady, mid-17th century

icon was moved in a procession to the shrine intended for it and ornamented with a new relief made of gold and pearls. On 29 June 1904, the Petersburg Icon of Our Lady of Kazan was stolen and has not been found to-date. There are numerous copies of this icon revered as miraculous. These include the images from Suz-

dal, Tobolsk, Vyazniki in the Vladimir county and many other. The Russian Orthodox Church celebrates the day of the icon twice – on 8 July and on 22 October.

Kurska-Koreenna Icon of Our Lady, small in size (15.6 x 15.6 cm), a copy of [Novgorodska Icon of] Our Lady Znamenye, which appeared in 1295 in the vicinity of the former Kursk stronghold completely destroyed by the Tatars. At the time it was found, the icon was lying with its face to the ground, among tree roots, and when it was lifted, a spring gushed from that place. The miraculous image was placed in a small chapel on a mount by the Tuskara River, near the tree by which it had been found. The icon very soon became famous for numerous miracles. Owing to numerous pilgrims visiting the icon in the chapel, the settlement on the Kursk land was gradually reviving. During the Tatar invasion in 1385, the chapel was burnt down, and the miraculous icon slashed in half. It was only after many years, when the priest living close to the chapel returned from captivity, its both parts were found. After they had been put together, they grew into one whole immediately, and the crack remaining after the cut filled with water. Having heard of the miracles, the residents of nearby Rylsk tried many times to take the icon to the church in the town, but the icon each time returned miraculously to its place. The traditions also says that in the second half of the 15th century the Rylsk Prince Vasily Shemyaka ordered its moving to the town, but during the welcome ceremony he became blind and only after long prayers and after returning the icon to its previous place did he regain sight.

In 1597, upon the order of Tsar Fyodor, the icon was moved for a short time to Moscow, where it was put in a cypress board frame with the image of God – Sabaoth surrounded by prophets, who blesses Our Lady with the Infant with His both hands. It was also ornamented with a silver relief with precious stones. In the same year the Tsar ordered the rebuilding of the Kursk stronghold, and erected the monastery (Koreenna Hermitage) in the place where the icon had been found. The “Live Spring” Church was built by the miraculous spring, and the icon was placed in the main church of the monastery, the Rozhestvensky Cathedral. Soon, however, (in 1598), as a result of the invasion by the Crimean Tatars, it was moved to Kursk, and replaced in the monastery with a copy. The icon came to Moscow again together with the troops of the False Dmitry I (Samozvanets), who in 1603 ordered that it be taken to his camp. However, already in 1615, upon the request from the town’s residents, the icon returned to Kursk and was placed in the church of the Znamensky Monastery built as an offering of thanks for the miracle of repulsing Polish-Lithuanian troops from the city in 1612.

The Kurska-Koreenna Icon of Our Lady was the patron of the Russian troops, and miracles connected with the defence of the Russian borders, and in particular the defence of Kursk from the troops of hetman Wiśniowiecki in 1634, or the miraculous healing and protection against epidemics (e.g. cholera in 1892) are ascribed to it. Many copies of the Kurska icon are known – two made in 1676 upon the order of Tsar Peter, which accompanied the army on its march to the Crimea,

one donated by the residents of Kursk during the war with Napoleon in 1812, and many others. Particularly revered was the copy of the icon regarded as miraculous and placed in the Vvedensky Church at the Lubyanka in Moscow, which, according to the tradition, belonged to Prince Dmitry Pozharsky. The original Kurska icon was taken to the West after the revolution and is now in a church in Montreal, which belongs to the Russian Orthodox Church outside of Russia.

Maximovska Icon of Our Lady, the miraculous icon painted about 1299, showing the whole figure of the Mother of God holding the Holy Infant on Her left arm, and on the column at Her feet there is a small, almost invisible figure of metropolitan Maxim. Our Lady is handing to the saint the *omoforion* – the symbol of the bishopric status, and Jesus blesses the metropolitan with His right hand, bending slightly over him.

The icon shows a scene from the vision which St. Maxim was to experience in his cell soon after his office had been moved from Kiev to Vladimir in 1299. One night, in his sleep, not sure whether his decision was right, the metropolitan saw the figure of the Mother of God with the Holy Infant. Our Lady spoke to him approving the choice of the town which She had already selected, ordered him to “feed sheep” from that place, and, as the sign of Her blessing, She gave Maxim the *omoforion*. After waking up, the metropolitan held the *omoforion* in his hand. Placed in a gold reliquary funded by Prince Andrey, it became one of the most precious Rus relics. Upon the Prince’s request, an icon was also painted showing the vision of St. Maxim, which after the metropolitan’s death in 1395, was placed over his tomb in the Uspensky Cathedral in Vladimir. Now the icon is in the collections of the Vladimir–Suzdal museum.

Novgorodska Icon of Our Lady (The “Sign”) (“ZNAMENIYE”), the icon of Our Lady of the *Blachernotissa* type, illustrating the miracle of Incarnation. The Novgorodska Icon shows a half-figure of the Mother of God with Her hands raised in prayer and with Immanuel in a mandorla on Her chest.

The icon’s name is due to the miracle which occurred during the defence of Novgorod in 1170. During the prayers begging for help to the town, the town’s archbishop heard the voice of St. John who told him to put on the defence walls the icon of Our Lady *Blachernotissa* which was in the church of the Saviour. During the attack one of the arrows hit the face of the Mother of God. The force turned the icon towards the town and then the residents of Novgorod saw tears flowing down Our Lady’s face. That miracle was a sign for the town residents (hence “znamenye”) that the Mother of God prayed and, weeping, asked Christ to rescue the town. Soon afterwards the troops ceased to besiege the town. After numerous cases of healing which occurred in the presence of the icon during the plague in 1352, the residents of Novgorod funded a new church – the Church of the Znamenye of the Mother of God, where the miraculous image was taken (1354). In 1566, the icon is said to have been saved the town from fire which threatened with a complete destruction of Novgorod. Among numerous copies of the Novgo-



The "Sign", late 12th century

rod icon there are many miraculous images, such as Abalatska, Tsarsko-Selska and Kurska-Korena.

Smolenska Icon of Our Lady, icon of the Hodiditria type, ascribed to St. Luke the Evangelist, showing a half-figure of the Mother of God with Her

right hand on Her breast, and Her left hand supporting the Holy Infant. The right hand of Immanuel is raised in a gesture of blessing, and His right hand holds a scroll.

According to the tradition, the icon was moved from Jerusalem to Constantinople in the 5th century and kept in the *Blachernotissa* church. In the 10th century it was brought to Rus by the sister of the Byzantine Emperor Basil II, Ann, who was married to St. Vladimir the Great, or in 1046 by Ann Porphyrogenet, the wife of the Prince of Chernigov Vsevolod. In 1101, it was placed in the Uspensky Cathedral in Smolensk by the son of Vsevolod, Vladimir Monomakh, whom the icon is said to have helped unite the Rus lands and restore the capital in Kiev. Many miracles are ascribed to the icon. One of the first was the saving of Smolensk from the troops of Batu Khan in 1237 when the icon appeared to Mercurius who, upon the order of Our Lady, got to the enemy's camp on his own killing the commander and many soldiers.

In 1395, during the invasion of Tamerlane, the icon was moved to Moscow by the daughter of Grand Duke Vytautas and placed in the Cathedral of the Annunciation (Blagoveshchensky Sobor) on the Kremlin. In 1456, the miraculous icon was returned to the residents of Smolensk (then within the borders of the Commonwealth of Poland), and replaced in the Kremlin Cathedral with a copy. At the place where the residents of Moscow bade farewell to the icon, to commemorate the joining of the Smolensk land to the Muscovy in 1524, Prince Vasily founded the Novodevichy monastery where he placed a copy of the Smolenska Icon. Another copy of the icon was created in 1602 and placed in a tower above the Dnepropetrovske gate in Smolensk. The Smolenska Icon became particularly famous during the war with Napoleon in 1812 when the day before the battle of Borodino it was carried in a procession among the Russian troops to raise their spirits. It returned to Smolensk after the repulsing of the French troops from the city on 5 November. Since that time the icon has been in the Smolensk Cathedral. The oldest known copies, which include about 30 icons considered miraculous, originate in the 14th century.

Svenska Icon of Our Lady, also called the Kyevo–Pecherska Icon, shows the Mother of God with the Holy Infant sitting on a throne in the shape of the Kiev monastery, accompanied by its founders – St. Anthony and St. Theodosius Pechersky. According to the tradition, the icon was painted by the well-known icon painter of Kiev, Olympi.

The legend says that in 1288, when the Prince of Chernigov Roman Mikhailovich suddenly went blind during his stay in Briansk, he requested the Kyevo-Pechersky monastery to send him the miraculous Pecherska Icon of Our Lady. The monks complied with the Prince's request and sent the icon. When the boat with the image was sailing along the Dyesna River, the monks taking care of the icon decided to stop for the night, but when they woke up on the following morning they did not find the icon in place. After a long search it was found on the bank of

the nearby Svena River. The Prince, acknowledging that it was the place which Our Lady had selected for Her seat, went to Bryansk on foot and when he prayed before the icon, he was healed. He immediately started cutting wood himself for the church of Our Lady and a monastery which he decided to build there (Uspensky-Svensky Monastery in the village of Suponyevo). During the reign of Tsar Ivan the Terrible, the icon was sent to Moscow for a short time where its relief was made of gold, silver and precious stones. The icon was known for many miracles and attracted thousands of the faithful to the monastery. The miraculous saving of Bryansk from the French troops in 1812 is attributed to it, and to commemorate that event, until 1917, a solemn procession with the icon went to Bryansk on 11 August and from Bryansk to the Svensky Monastery on 15 August. Now the icon is in the collections of the Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow.

Tolgska Icon of Our Lady, the icon from the Vvedensky Monastery on the Tolga river near Yaroslavl, combining features of images of Our Lady Eleusa and the Mother of God on the throne. The Mary of that image personifies “the living church” and “the throne of God”. The Holy Infant is shown standing on His Mother’s lap, when He is making a step towards Her and trying to embrace Her. The Mother of God supports Jesus with Her both arms.

According to the legend, the icon appeared in 1314 to the bishop of Rostov and Yaroslavl, Prokhor, during his trip along the Volga River to seek a place for the construction of St. Cyril Belozersky’s monastery. One night, during his stay at the place where on the opposite side the Tolga River meets the Volga River, Prokhor was woken up by great shining. He saw a column of fire on the other side of the river and a bridge of water leading to it. Without waking anyone up, the bishop went to the other side and saw there an image of Our Lady with the Holy Infant on a cloud, which he was unable to reach. He spent the whole night praying, and in the morning, forgetting his crosier, he returned to his companions. When all of them went to collect it, they saw an icon lying on the ground, next to it the bishop’s crosier. The first Vvedensky Church, small in size, was built by the residents of the nearby Yaroslavl in one afternoon. The icon very quickly became famous for many miracles, and even Tsar Ivan the Terrible owed to it the healing of an illness in his legs. Now the icon is in the Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow.

Tykhvinska Icon of Our Lady, an icon of the Hodigitra type, brought to Rus from Constantinople or Italy in 1383, revered in the Uspensky Church in the Tykhvinsky monastery in the Novgorod eparchy, to which thousands of pilgrims came every year. The icon was ornamented with a gold relief and precious stones. It disappeared after the revolution.

According to the tradition, the icon was to appear in Russia in a miraculous way. It was first seen in shining light on a cloud above the waters of the Ladoga Lake near Novgorod. Since that time, carried by angels, it looked for a place for itself until it stayed by the Tykhvinka river in the town of Tykhvin. The Uspensky Church was built where the icon appeared. Despite numerous fires which damaged

the church, the miraculous icon there always remained untouched. The brick church was built in 1510 by Prince Vasily, and the monastery of Tykhvin was founded in 1560 by Tsar Ivan the Terrible. The icon was famous throughout Russia for many miracles. During the siege of the monastery by the Swedish troops, Our Lady appeared to the monks many times, and the repulsing of the enemy is attributed to Her miraculous influence. The repulsing of the Swedes from Tykhvin and Novgorod is also ascribed to it. For that reason a copy of the miraculous icon accompanied the Russian envoys during the signing of the peace accord with Sweden in 1617. One of the most famous copies of the icon is the Old Rus icon of Our Lady from the Monastery of the Transfiguration in Rus.

Vladimirskia Icon of Our Lady, a Byzantine icon from the Comnenus period (mid 9th to mid 11th century), combining elements of images of Our Lady Hodigitria and Eleusa, the most revered Rus icon called the palladium of Russia. It shows the Mother of God with the Holy Infant nestling against Her. Our Lady supports Jesus with Her right arm and points to Him with Her left arm in a gesture of prayer.

According to the tradition, the icon is the work of St. Luke the Evangelist who painted it on a board from the table by which the Holy Family used to eat. The legend says that when Our Lady saw Her image, She repeated the words of *Magnificat*: "... from this day forward all generations will call me blessed, ...". In the 5th century, the icon is said to have been moved from Jerusalem to Constantinople, and in 1131 to Kiev as a gift from patriarch Luke Chrysoberges to Grand Prince Yury Dolgoruky. The Prince placed the icon in the Devichy monastery in Vyshgorod.

In 1155, Dolgoruky gave Vyshgorod to his son Prince Andrey Bogolyubsky, who, in order to make himself independent of Kiev, decided to move his capital to Rostov. The legend says that Prince Andrey stayed in Vladimir for the night, but when on the next day he wanted to continue his journey, he managed to cover only 10 verst along the Klyazma river, because the miraculous icon became so heavy that the horses were unable to pull the cart on which it was placed. Seeing that as a punishment for his sins, the Prince turned to God with prayer and tears. At midnight Our Lady appeared to him and ordered him to take the icon not to Rostov but to Vladimir and build a monastery at the place of the appearance, which would later become famous for Her grace (Bogolyubovo Monastery in which Bogolyubskia Icon of Our Lady is worshipped). The Prince ornamented the icon, called the Vladimirskia Icon of Our Lady since that time, with a relief made of gold, silver and precious stones and ordered that the icon be placed in the Uspensky cathedral in Vladimir. The precious cover of the icon was stolen in 1237 during the Tatar invasion, but the icon remained untouched.

In 1395, the icon was ceremoniously moved to Moscow then threatened with an invasion of the troops of Tamerlane. The residents of the capital, led by metropolitan Cyprian, came in a procession to welcome it. At the place of the meeting



The Virgin of Vladimir, detail, early 12th century

the Sretensky Monastery was built, and the date of 26 September became the day of the Meeting of the Vladimirskaya Icon of Our Lady, during which the procession from the Uspensky Cathedral to the Sretensky Monastery was held. The icon was placed on the iconostasis of the Uspensky Cathedral on the Kremlin, and from that time on the Cathedral was called the Home of the Mother of God. According to the legend, on that very day Tamerlane had a dream in which he saw heavenly troops and the Mother of God who ordered him to leave Rus soil. When the residents of Vladimir requested the icon back after some time, on metropolitan Cyprian's advice, the decision was left to Our Lady Herself. After a full night of prayer, the faithful found two icons in the church, of which one was left in Moscow and the other was taken to Vladimir. Another tradition says that a copy of the icon taken to Vladimir was painted by St. Peter the metropolitan, at the time when he was the abbot of the Ratsky Monastery in Volhynia (Pyotrovskaya Icon of Our Lady) or by St. Andrey Rublyov in 1408. Countless copies of the icon have been created since that time, and according to the tradition of the Orthodox Church, they act like originals. The most revered icons include: Pskovsko-Pecherskaya, Vladimirskaya-Rostovskaya, Oranskaya from Nizny Novgorod, and many others.

Our Lady of Vladimir is regarded as the special protector of Russian rulers and lands. The custom of anointing (crowning) of the successive rulers in the Uspensky Cathedral on the Kremlin before the icon of Our Lady of Vladimir became a tradition. Before that icon the Moscow metropolitans and patriarchs were elected and were then blessed with that icon. Chronicles make numerous references to the help granted to Russian rulers by the Mother of God during hard times. The greatest miracles ascribed to the Vladimir icon include: the victory of Dmitry Donsky over Mamai in 1380; the departure of the troops of Khan Akhmat in 1480, to whom the Mother of God in shining robes is said to have appeared by the Ugra river and ordered him to leave the Russian lands (the event is commemorated on 23 July), the victory over the army of Mehmet-Girey in 1521 (commemorated on 21 May). Since 1918, the icon has been in the Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow, but even as a museum exhibit, it still remains a destination of pilgrimages.

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