

# CHURCH OF THE DEPOSITION OF THE ROBE OF THE HOLY VIRGIN OF THE MOSCOW KREMLIN

PRIVATE CHURCH OF THE METROPOLITANS AND PATRIARCHS OF MOSCOW AND OF ALL THE RUSSIA.

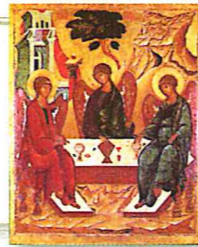


Foundation of the Church of the Deposition of the Robe by the Metropolitan Gerontius in 1484. Miniature.

**Holy Hierarch Gerontius** – Metropolitan of Moscow and of all Russia since 1471. He actively participated in building the Dormition Cathedral and the Church of the Deposition of the Robe. Canonized.



**Trinity of the Old Testament**, an icon of the Veneration tier of the iconostasis, 1627. Nazary Istomin. Three angels on the icon symbolize the Holy Trinity.



**Nativity of Christ**, an icon of the Festival tier of the iconostasis, 1627. Nazary Istomin.



**Holy Hierarch Jonas** – in 1448 he was the first to be elected Metropolitan by a synod of Russian bishops without being confirmed by Constantinople. He was a partisan of Russian church independence. Canonized.



**Deposition of the Robe of the Holy Virgin in Blachernae**, main icon, 1<sup>st</sup> half of 17<sup>th</sup> century



**Miracle of the Robe of Holy Virgin during the Siege of Constantinople**, fresco on the southern wall, 1644.

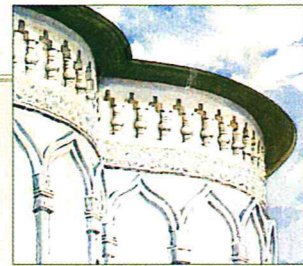
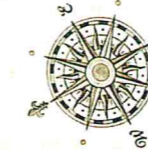
**Murals** are created in the fresco technology (painting the sheetrock) in 1644 by painters Sidor Pospejev, Ivan Borisov and Semyon Abramov. The images on the walls narrate the earthly life of the Holy Virgin Mary and chant a solemn hymn in her honour – the Acatistus to the Most Holy Mother of God. In the dome, there is Christ Pantocrator, and on the vaults, there are Gospel stories.

On the columns one can see the "spiritual genealogy" of the Moscow church hierarchs and images of the Grand Princes illustrating the continuity of the power.

**Main icon – the Deposition of the Robe of the Holy Virgin in Blachernae.** In 5<sup>th</sup> century the Robe of the Holy Virgin was solemnly deposited in the church in Blachernae, a suburb of Constantinople. This event became celebrated as the Festival of the Deposition of the Robe. The main icon which is to the right of royal doors shows the ceremony. The Emperor and the Empress of Byzantium, together with the Patriarch of Constantinople, surrounded by numerous retinue, bow before the reliquary with the Robe. In the upper part of the icon there is a seven-figure deisis. In 1627, when the iconostasis of the church was designed, the team of painters headed by Nazary Istomin created the Deisis tier, the Festival tier and the Prophets tier as well as some icons of the bottom Veneration tier.



1. Entrance
2. Northern gallery with an exhibition of Russian wooden sculpture in 15<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> centuries
3. Western entrance-portal
4. Northern entrance-portal
5. Iconostasis
6. Royal doors
7. Old Testament Trinity icon
8. Altar part
9. "Meagre" candles
10. Murals on the church vaults. The Entombment fresco.



Ornamental belt on the apses

**Architecture** of the church is influenced by early Muscovite and Pskovian traditions. The walls are divided by vertical **lesenes** into bays and are roofed by **ogee-shaped gables**. The central bay and its gable are much larger and taller than others. An elegant drum is crowned by a helm-shaped golden dome and encircled by a **triple ornamental brick frieze**. Walls and apses are adorned with a decorative band of terra-cotta balusters. Central gables of the northern, western and southern facades have shallow niches-icon cases. In the northern facade niche there is a fresco with the celebration of the Deposition of the Robe of the Holy Virgin.

**The depiction of Holy Virgin of Pechora** was put in the niche on the western facade in 17<sup>th</sup> century. To make the approach easier, a porch with a ladder was made, and later a stone chapel. The chapel was demolished in 20<sup>th</sup> century, but the venerated image was lost.



**A peculiarity of the interior of the church** is its stylistic unity: the iconostasis, the murals and the decoration all date from the same historical period – 17<sup>th</sup> century. Two massive square pillars divide the space into three naves, and two others are hidden behind the iconostasis. The light drum of the dome opens in the point of intersection between two barrel vaults. The light also penetrates the church through seven windows in the upper part of the walls. A small cozy church was really meant to be a private one.



**Northern portal**, leading to the gallery, reconstructed in 17<sup>th</sup> century, is adorned with carved columns. The arch carries a small fragment of old painting.



On the door of the prothesis the Good Thief Rach is depicted. One of two bandits crucified together with Jesus, Rach believed in Him while dying and is shown entering the paradise carrying his cross on his shoulder. The story was often depicted on altar doors during 16<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> centuries.



**Royal doors**, end of 16<sup>th</sup> century. The composition of altar doors is traditional: in the top part, the Annunciation, giving hopes of Redemption and opening the gates of the kingdom of God; in the bottom part, the authors of four Gospels.



**On the diaconicon door** the Calvary Cross with the Instruments of Passion is depicted – a reminder of Jesus' suffers for the redeeming of the mankind. The Adam's skull under the cross is the embodiment of the original sin. Small doors leading to the prothesis and to the diaconicon belong to the old iconostasis of the church. They were presumably made in 1627.



**"Meagre" candle** – a big hollow wax candlestick, painted with colour ornaments. Candles were made in 1649 for the Patriarch Joseph by the artisans of the Moscow Kremlin. They have small silvered copper trays reposing on lion's figures.



# AN EXHIBITION OF RUSSIAN WOODEN SCULPTURE IN THE CHURCH OF THE DEPOSITION OF THE ROBE OF THE MOSCOW KREMLIN

One of the most important museum collections with unique samples of woodcarving of 15<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> centuries from the great cultural centres – Moscow, Novgorod, Rostov and Russian North.

**Saint George**, high relief (fragment), end of 14<sup>th</sup> – beginning of 15<sup>th</sup> century, Moscow. The image of the great saint is one of the oldest known carved icons. Such sculptures stayed in special arks inside a church.



1

The exposition includes sculptural images of saints, carved icons, iconostasis sculpture, crosses and small icons, sometimes folding, of 15<sup>th</sup> – beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century. There are about eighty items in the collection. Its nucleus consists of 17<sup>th</sup> century wooden sculpture created by the artisans of the Moscow Kremlin Armoury. Besides that, there are unique works made by woodcarvers from the Russian North – Solovetsky, Kirillo-Belozersky and other northern monasteries. There are also rare carved icons made in great artistic centres – Novgorod and Rostov Veliky.



**Descent from the Cross**, icon-relief, 1<sup>st</sup> half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Novgorod. Joseph of Arimathea takes the body of Christ down from a seven-pointed cross.

3



**Saint Nicholas of Mozhaik**, high relief, middle of 17<sup>th</sup> century, artisans of the Armoury, Moscow. The image of Saint Nicholas was considered protector of brides.

10



**Holy Virgin of the Passion**, high relief, 2<sup>nd</sup> half of 17<sup>th</sup> century. The Virgin and the Infant are looking at the Instruments of Passion carried by angels. The relief is only partly conserved.

11



**Saint Paraskevi of Iconium**, low relief, end of 17<sup>th</sup> century, Russian North. Paraskevi was venerated as a patron of the home and women's handwork.

9



**Apparition of the Angel to the Myrrbearers**, relief, end of 16<sup>th</sup> – beginning of 17<sup>th</sup> century, Rostov. The Angel shows the empty tomb to the Virgin and other women.

4

**A reliquary cross**, end of 16<sup>th</sup> – beginning of 17<sup>th</sup> century, Solvychevodsk. Made of the sepulchral plank of the Metropolitan Peter, it belonged to the rich Stroganoff family.



5

**Saint Jonas the Metropolitan**, high relief, last quarter of 17<sup>th</sup> century, Armoury, Moscow. The cover of the shrine. The Holy Hierarch Jonas is depicted in full length, in his sacerdotal robes, with a closed Gospel in his left hand and two fingers of his right hand folded in a blessing.



12



Holy Virgin



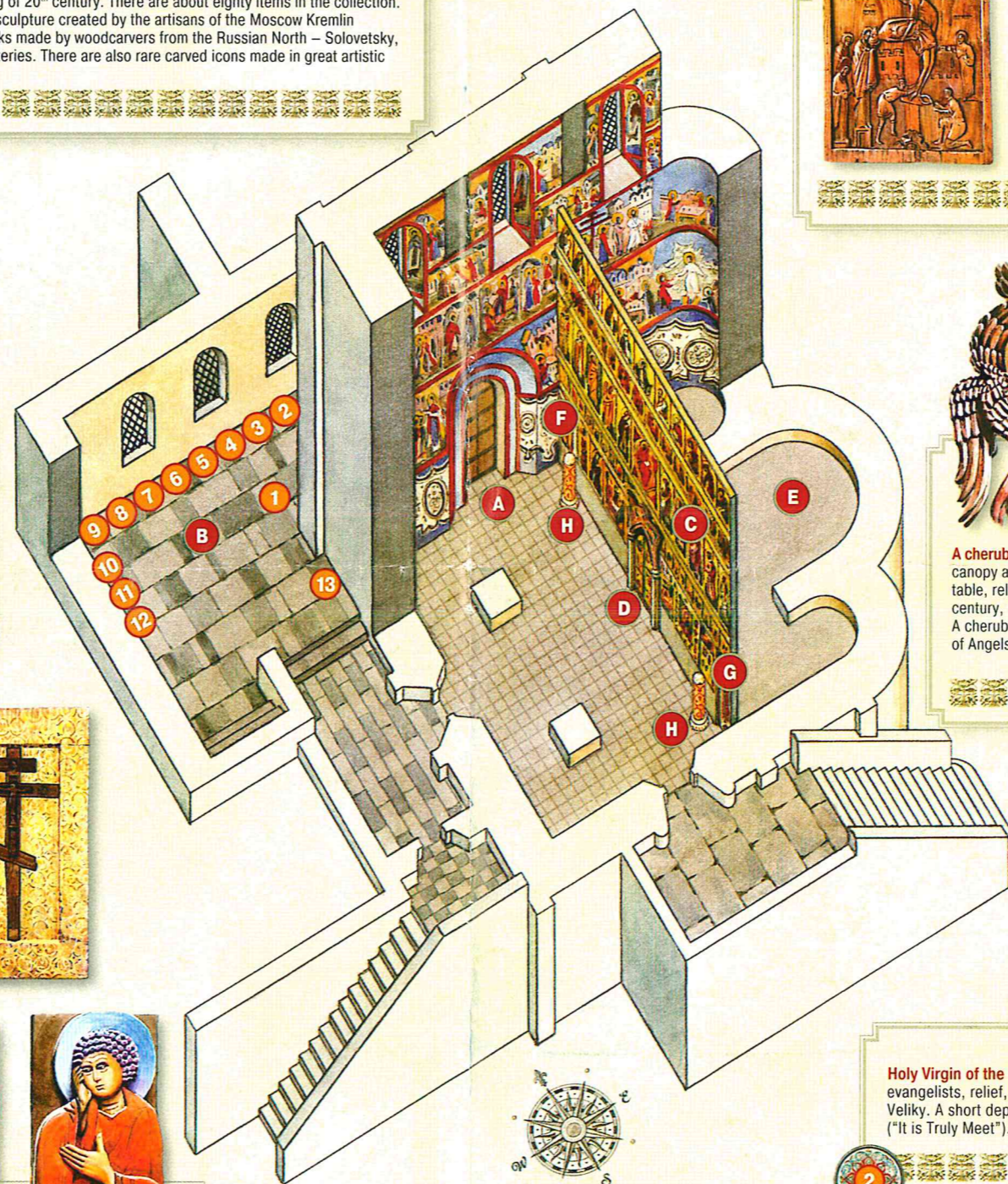
Saviour Not Made by Hands



John the Divine

**Carved icons**, 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Solovetsky monastery. The images of the Virgin and of St. John are turned to the central icon of the Saviour that was especially venerated in the monastery.

8



**A cherub**, a detail of the canopy above the communion table, relief, 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Solovetsky monastery. A cherub is one of Nine Choirs of Angels.

7



**Crucifixion (Calvary)**, high relief, last quarter of 17<sup>th</sup> century, artisans of the Armoury, Moscow. A sample of the early Russian baroque. The central part of the icon derives from the engraving of the "Coup de lance" by Peter Paul Rubens (around 1620). But the composition was changed according to the Russian tradition.

13



**Holy Virgin of the Sign** with the symbols of the evangelists, relief, 2<sup>nd</sup> half of 16<sup>th</sup> century, Rostov Veliky. A short depiction of the prayer "Axion estin" ("It is Truly Meet").

2



**Venerable Zosimas and Sabbatius of Solovki with the monastery**, high relief, 2<sup>nd</sup> half of 17<sup>th</sup> century, Solovetsky monastery. Between the figures of two saints, the relief image of the monastery is given with a topographic precision.

6

- A. Northern portal
- B. Northern gallery
- C. Iconostasis
- D. Royal doors
- E. Altar
- F. Door of the prothesis
- G. Door of the diaconicon
- H. "Meagre" candles

**Exposition of wooden sculpture**

**Show-case 1**

- 1. Saint George, high relief

**Show-case 2**

- 2. Holy Virgin of the Sign with the symbols of the evangelists, relief
- 3. Descent from the Cross, icon-relief
- 4. Apparition of the Angel to Myrrbearers, relief

- 5. Reliquary cross
- 6. Venerable Zosimas and Sabbatius of Solovki with the monastery, high relief
- 7. A cherub, detail of the canopy above the communion table
- 8. Saviour Not Made by Hands, Holy Virgin and John the Divine, carved icons
- 9. Saint Paraskevi of Iconium, low relief

- 10. Saint Nicholas of Mozhaik, high relief
  - 11. Holy Virgin of the Passion, high relief
  - 12. Jonas, Metropolitan of Moscow, high relief
- Show-case 3**
- 13. Crucifixion (Calvary), high relief