

## **Receptive ecumenism and peacebuilding between Russia and Ukraine through icons**

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### *Receptive Ecumenism; Peacebuilding; Icons*

The Gospel commandments enjoin the Churches to be artisans of peace among parties or states which are in conflict. Unfortunately, official representatives of the Churches in Russia and in Ukraine refuse to carry on a dialogue which would be respectful of the rights of each. This responsibility falls upon Christians as the faithful of the Church of Christ and as representatives of civil society in Russia, in Ukraine and in Western Europe. We should use all the possibilities of dialogue with the conviction that a stable reconciliation comes about through a joint search for truth and justice, but also for beauty.

In this sense the concept of receptive ecumenism is very useful. What do we need, if we are a Ukrainian citizen, to learn from the Russians in order to understand their understanding of the “Third Rome” and, one day, to forgive them for their aggressive policy? What do we need, if we are a Russian citizen, in order to understand the differences of the Ukrainian identity and, one day, to accept the specificity of the Ukrainian nation?

Icon painters can help in this process. The Collège des Bernardins in Paris organized in January 2020 an exhibition of icons with Ukrainian and Russian icon painters (<https://www.collegedesbernardins.fr/node/25446/>). Ukrainian icon painters present icons written on ammo boxes in order to show that a tool of war can be converted in a tool of peace. Russian icon painters present icons representing the princes Borys and Gleb taking on their shoulders the violence of their elder brother in order to actualize the Sermon on the Mount. The whole issue here is not to insist on what divides the nations but to discover carefully what unites them on spiritual and artistic levels. This is the way to produce mutual recognition, dialogue and trust...