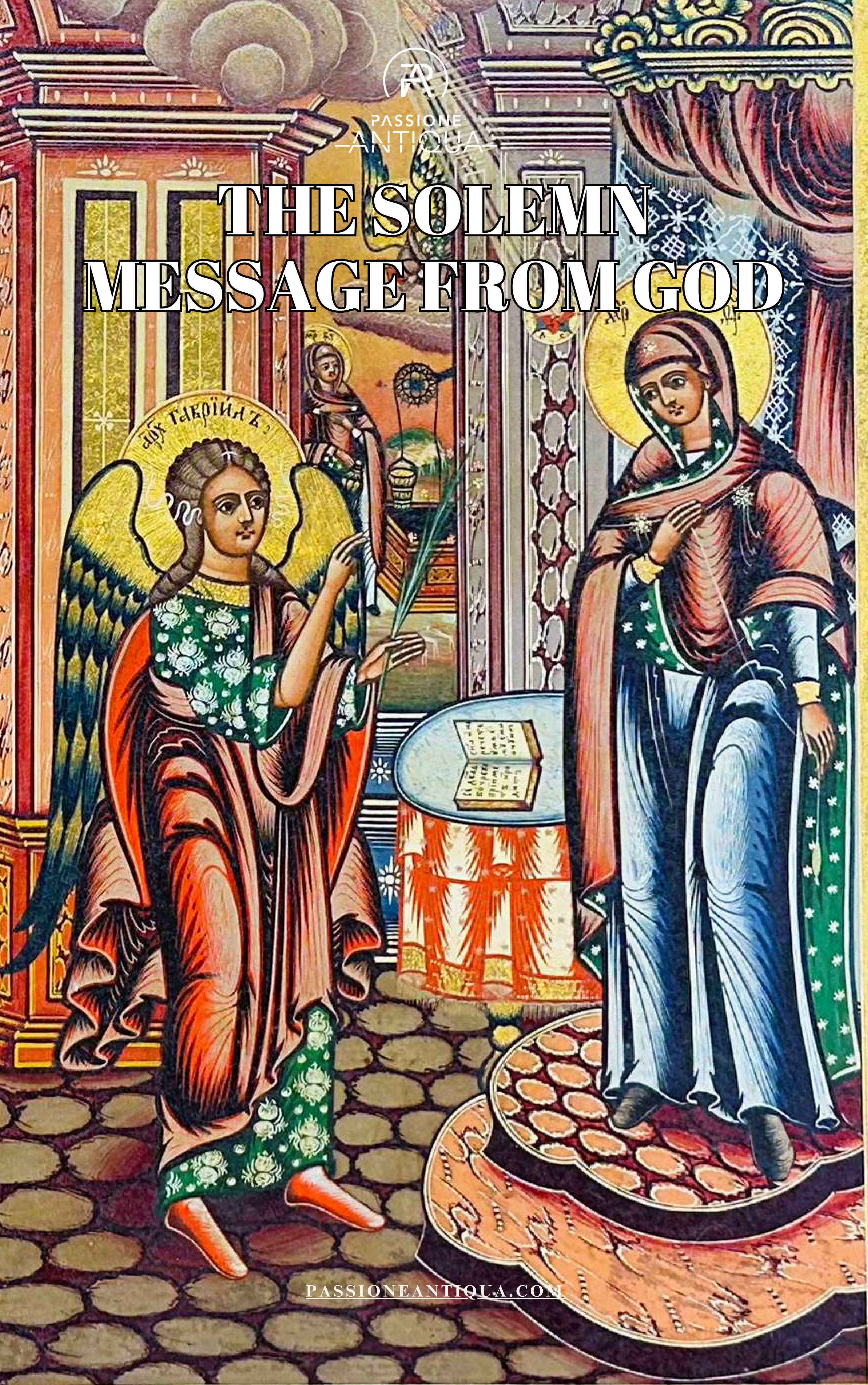




PASSIONE
ANTIQUA

THE SOLEMN MESSAGE FROM GOD



The Art of Icons

Icons represent one of the highest expressions of Eastern Christian sacred art. They are not mere decorative images, but instruments of contemplation, true windows open to eternity. Their function is liturgical and theological: every stroke, every color, every gesture is laden with meaning and follows precise rules, handed down through the centuries to preserve the purity of the message. The origin of this tradition dates back to the early centuries of Christianity, with an extraordinary flourishing during the Byzantine era and a widespread diffusion in Russian and Slavic lands, where painting schools developed distinctive and recognizable styles.



Tempera on wood *The Annunciation*
Russia 19th century





The creation of an icon is never the result of improvisation. It is a rigorous process that combines technique and spirituality. The wooden panel is prepared with layers of gesso and glue, creating a perfect surface on which to lay natural pigments mixed with egg yolk according to the tempera technique. This choice gives the colors a unique luminosity, capable of withstanding the passage of time. Every phase, from sketching the design to gilding, from final glazing to detailing, is accompanied by prayer, as the creative act is considered a sacred service.

The iconographic language is equally strict. Proportions do not follow natural perspective but inverse perspective, which draws the gaze toward eternity. Faces and hands are stylized to express spirituality rather than individuality. Colors carry symbolic meaning: gold represents the uncreated light of God, red indicates divine life, blue signifies transcendence, and green symbolizes hope. Nothing is accidental; everything is designed to convey a message that transcends the material dimension.



The Annunciation

Among the most venerated subjects, the Annunciation holds a central place. It celebrates the moment when the Archangel Gabriel brings Mary the message that will change history: the birth of the Son of God through the Holy Spirit. This event, narrated in the Gospel of Luke, is the prelude to the Incarnation, the foundational mystery of the Christian faith.



The work under consideration immediately stands out as an extraordinary testimony of the Russian iconographic tradition, not only for its generous dimensions and rich chromatic palette but above all for its ability to convey, through matter and form, a message that transcends time and space.

It is an authentic icon painted with vivid colors on a pure gold background, following the most rigorous and refined canons of sacred art. The chosen subject, the Annunciation, is interpreted with a narrative complexity that reveals the hand of a master belonging to the prestigious Vetka School, active in Imperial Russia between the 18th and 19th centuries.



The scene does not merely reproduce a Gospel episode but expands it into a theological and symbolic dimension, where every element, every gesture, every chromatic nuance contributes to creating a visual language that speaks of eternity.

The compositional structure is surprisingly rich and deserves careful contemplation, as the artist chose to depict the Archangel Gabriel in three distinct moments, creating a sequence that guides the devotee's gaze along a spiritual path.

In the background, almost like a silent omen, Gabriel observes Mary at the well, a symbol of purity and life, evoking the inexhaustible source of grace.

Closer, in an intermediate position, the Archangel approaches the dwelling, bearing the solemnity of a message that does not belong to earth but descends from above.



inally, in the foreground, the angelic figure stands with an eloquent gesture, in the act of pronouncing the fateful words:

«The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. The one who is to be born will be holy and called the Son of God.» Then Mary said: «Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.» (Luke 1:35–38).



Mary, at the center of the scene, is depicted standing, with an attitude that combines wonder and acceptance, surrounded by architectural elements that are not mere ornamental details but signs of intimacy and recollection, almost as if to emphasize that the mystery of the Incarnation unfolds in the silence of a home, far from the noise of the world.



Above her, in the upper part of the icon, the heavenly dimension opens: the Eternal Father, depicted with majesty, sends forth the ray symbolizing the descent of the Holy Spirit, completing the Trinitarian representation of the event and imparting to the scene a theological depth perceptible even without words.



The gold enveloping the composition is not mere decoration but uncreated light. It is a reflection of divine glory permeating all things. The colors, distributed with wisdom, speak through their symbolism: the red of the angelic garments evokes divine life and the power of the message; green recalls hope and renewal; blue, woven into the folds of drapery and architectural spaces, alludes to transcendence and the depth of mystery

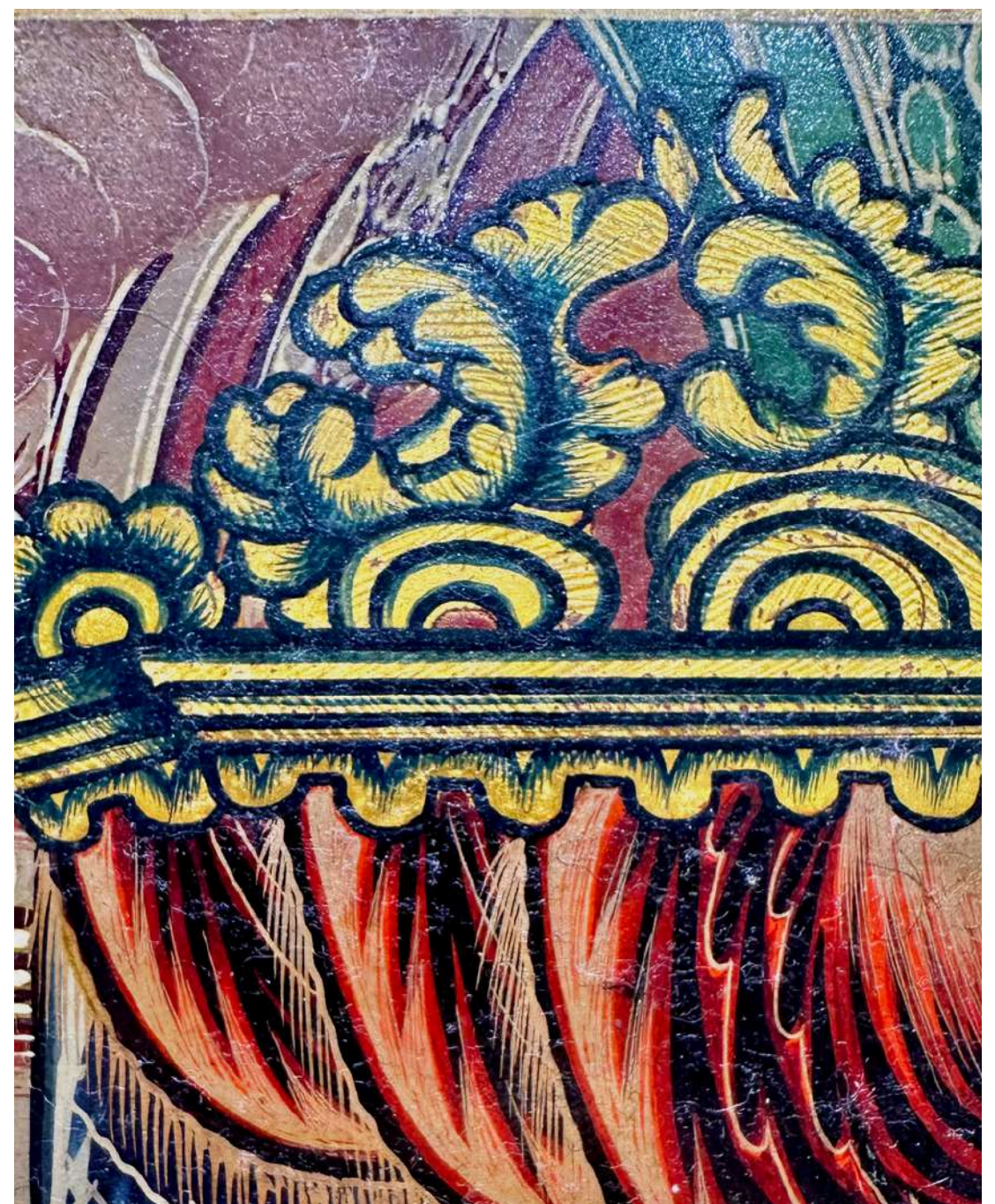
The Archangel's robes, adorned with decorative motifs of rare finesse, reveal technical mastery and meticulous attention to detail, while the posture of the figures, the delicacy of the hands, and the solemnity of the gestures compose a language that is never casual but obeys a higher order: the order of Orthodox iconographic tradition.



The dating places the work in the very last years of the 19th century, a period when the Vetka School achieved extraordinary stylistic refinement, blending fidelity to the canons with a chromatic sensitivity that gives the images an almost musical vibration.



The icon is in perfect condition, with intact gilding and still-brilliant pigments. This is a sign of execution with the highest-quality materials and careful preservation over time. It is not merely an artistic artifact but a witness of faith and culture; it is a bridge connecting the earthly world to the divine dimension, a silent voice that continues to speak across the centuries.



Contemplating this icon means entering into dialogue with a tradition that knows no oblivion; it means allowing oneself to be enveloped by a beauty that is not an end in itself but a revelation, an epiphany, an invitation to meditate on the mystery of the Incarnation. Every detail, from the Archangel's gesture to the golden light surrounding the scene, is a fragment of eternity, a sign pointing to infinity, a call to the depth of a truth that has become image to speak to the human heart.



At **Passione Antiqua**, we have chosen this work not only to immerse you in the charm of this tradition but above all to sincerely wish you a **joyful and peaceful Christmas!**





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