

## **Telling the Story.....**

The story begins in 2004. Alice Vaughan and I had planned to study Icon Painting at the British School of Art in Florence, Italy. With everything organised, we set our hearts on going to Italy until after prayer one morning Russia came into being.

Now Alice's desire to paint Icons was the main reason for further studies for the both of us. I, the teacher at the time, needed this basic instruction for the teaching of future students in Iconography.

Cathy Solano, mercy sister who was part of the community had just returned from Uganda offered to locate a Course for us in Russia. After two hours of searching, she gave up.

Not to be deterred, I placed my trust in the God who placed Russia into my head and typed in the specifics of an Icon Course in St Petersburg, Russia. Up came 'The School of Religion and Philosophy' - Dr Natalia Pecherskaya as the Rector. To see that a Russian woman was the Rector of such an Institution in Russia was totally amazing. It was all meant to happen. This was just the beginning.

After twelve months of negotiations with Natalia and Gippsland Travel , the Mercy and Little Company of Mary Sisters, four Australian women ( Alice Vaughan, Marie Davis, Pauline Pervan LCM and Margaret Broadbent RSM travelled to Russia in 2005 to Study Icon Painting under the guidance of Philip Davydov – Professional Iconographer and Instructor. We studied the prototype "Christ the Redeemer" in a small Franciscan Church for ten days under Philip's expert care.

Thanks to one Russian woman who said "yes" an incredible journey between Russia and Australia is continuing to evolve. Something that one would never have imagined possible. Today, I am proud to introduce you all to the former Rector of St. Petersburg School of Religion and Philosophy, who welcomed us into her country in 2005 – Dr Natalia Pecherskaya who is now, officially called the President of the Centre for Science, Religion and Philosophy Programs.

Please welcome Dr Natalia Pecherskaya....

Margaret Broadbent

18<sup>th</sup> May, 2019

Mercy Hub, Carlton North