

Pysanky: Pushing Back the Darkness

Pysanky is the traditional art of Easter egg decorating. With origins in Slavic countries, especially in Ukraine, these eggs are a proclamation of the Gospel throughout the decorating process and as a finished result. The decorating is done through Lent as we look forward to Easter and to remember the good things God has done for us.

The first step is to empty out your egg with a small hole and a special syringe. Practically, this prevents the egg from rotting and exploding, but this first step also initiates the prayer: the hollowing of the egg symbolizes Christ emptying himself, taking the form of a servant, and being born in the likeness of men. It also is the first step that proclaims His Resurrection, as the egg is emptied like His tomb.

Then you get to sketch your design onto the egg. Each line and symbol has deep meaning, and becomes a bit of a code with which you can write God's Word. Some popular symbols are ribbons (which encircle the egg and divide it into sections), animals, plants, dots, the sun and moon, the cross, rakes, and waves. The ribbons symbolize eternal life and love. Different animals symbolize fertility (birds), strength (lions and deer), sacrifice (lambs and rams) and our role as Christians (fish and sheep). Plants remind us of growing in God and bearing fruit, and rakes petition good weather for bountiful harvest. The dots are the tears Our Lady wept at the foot of the Cross. The sun and moon are signs of God's supreme divinity, and waves remind us of His strength and when He led us out of Egypt.

Once the design is sketched, you are ready to begin the colouring process. Melted black beeswax is applied to the white egg on the areas you hope to keep white with the traditional tool (a kistka), then the egg is submerged in yellow. Once the dye dries, you apply wax to those areas you wish to keep yellow, and submerge it in orange. So on and so forth, working from lightest colour to darkest, applying wax to where you wish the colour to stay, until you have an egg totally black from wax and black from dye. Then you begin the most important work of pysanky: pushing back the darkness. Slavic tradition holds that as long as pysanky are made, darkness will not prevail over the world. The black egg is held over flame until the cooled beeswax once again melts, and is wiped away by a clean white linen (symbolizing Christ's burial shroud, and His innocence taking on our sin). The wax removed reveals the brilliance of the colours, red, pink, blue, yellow, and glowing white, and the intricacy of design, stamped with the proclamation of the Gospel: Christ is risen! Truly He is risen!

The word 'pysanky' means "to write," and this goes to show all the more how much this art is indeed a time to share the Word, both with yourself and with whoever sees it. The process is rich and opportune for prayer, with the peace, order, and symbolism filling your mind and heart with the Presence of God. Whenever I see a pysanka now, I behold it and am reminded of the good things God has done and is doing for His people. Thank God for this form of prayer and evangelization! Christ is risen! Truly He is risen!

by: Julie Kautz

A POOR SINNER TO WHOM GOD HAS GIVEN MERCY

I HAVE A LOVE FOR ART AND FOR LIVING A SACRAMENTAL LIFE, FULL OF SIGNS THAT REMIND ME AND THOSE AROUND ME OF GOD. I LOVE TO LAUGH AND TO SING AND DANCE, AND I'M STRIVING TO FOLLOW GOD IN EVERY MOMENT.



YOUTHINK

