

## **Heavenly Hosts Take Church By Storm!**

### **Church News**

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Some of the final touches to the chapel of St Mary and St Stephen have finally arrived.

Amidst a general atmosphere of great joy, the icons of St Mary & St Stephen's Chapel have finally arrived to adorn the walls of the hitherto bare walled Church. After being delayed in transit for nearly two years, a complete set of 38 icons in the neo-Coptic style, written by the nuns of St Demiana's Convent have finally arrived and were rapidly and enthusiastically installed in their niches on the walls and iconostasis of the Church.

The icons of the iconostasis are organised in the traditional pattern, with St Mary to the left of the Royal Door, followed by the Annunciation, Archangel Michael and St Mark. To the right of the door are the Epiphany, Archangel Raphael and St Stephen. The icon of Christ the Pantocrator is missing - this is on purpose. The traditional Coptic rite is not to place any icons of Christ on His heavenly throne outside the sanctuary, since the sanctuary symbolises heaven, where Christ is since His resurrection and ascension. He is not physically to be found on earth except through His Holy Body and Precious Blood in Communion, and through His Body which is the Church.

At the head of the the line of icons adorning the left hand wall is the icon of Mother Dolagy and her children, the patrons of the northern side altar, together with St Rebecca and her children. These saints were chosen to represent a group of saints who until recently had no altars in their name in Australia - saints who were married women! (St Mary doesn't count of course, because she was only betrothed to St Joseph and never completed the marriage process).

Plush red velvet curtains have also arrived, decorated with intricate embroidered images of the patrons saints of the Church, but they will be installed after some adjustments are made to them.

Marble slabs to encase the Church's two altars have also arrived and await installation. They include a set of four short columns for each of the altars which will help support the top surface slab at each corner.

Unfortunately, not all the items arrived intact. Noticeably missing was the central icon of the Last Supper, to be displayed in the niche directly above the Royal Door at the centre of the iconostasis. The large marble slab that was to form the top surface of the middle altar was also damaged in transit and is sadly unusable. However, it should not be difficult to replace it with a slab of similar size, colour and quality.