

Frame restored to former glory

The condition of the frame on the painting of Our Lady of Good Counsel had deteriorated significantly over time. There were many chips and it had been painted over with a dull bronze paint. Michael O'Brien of The Gilder's Workshop discovered that the frame was made of molded and carved pine, with numerous layers of gesso (a plaster like powder mixed with rabbit skin glue) over the molded wood. Then coats of a colored bole (red and black clay mixed with rabbit skin glue) is brushed over the gesso and polished to act as cushion for the 23Kt gold leaf, applied over the entire frame. Sometime after the fire of 1898, the entire frame was painted with gold bronze paint over the original finish and glass covered the canvas painting, both of which needed to be removed to restore the frame and painting to its original condition.

First, the bronze paint on the frame's gold leafed surface was removed with chemical strippers, which took off only the bronze paint but did not harm the majority of the original gold leaf. Then any structural damages to the frame's wood molding or gesso finish were repaired and missing ornamentation was cast and re-



Michael O'Brien with restored frame

placed. Finally, all missing gold leaf was reapplied with 23Kt, to match the original gold finish.

The back of the frame was cleaned to remove loose surface dirt or soot. At the top, a paper label identifying the frame makers was found, which was cleaned, photographed and covered for further protection. The paper label on the back of the frame identified the maker as "George F. OF, 4 Clinton Place (today the address is just 8th Street), one door west of Broadway, New York City". According to the New York City directories and census records

George OF established his business in 1873, having just migrated from Germany the year before. From 1885 until 1899, his business was located at 4 Clinton Place and survived at least till the 1920's. George OF is well known and his work has been documented and auctioned in various books on frames of important American Frame Makers. The glass in front of the painting was not reinstalled as the painting needs to breathe and only a foam dust cover was applied over the back of the painting. Thank you to the ladies of the Cathedral CCW, for funding the restoration of this historic artistic treasure, to its former glory.

