



## Nôtre Dame de Grace

Nôtre Dame de Grace, casually referred to as the Cambrai Madonna is a Byzantine icon from the 1300's or earlier, likely finished in the Sienese style (see slant of the eyes and the choice of the garments as well as the Roman lettering.) This is an Eleusa icon, or an icon of Tenderness, marked by the close embrace of Our Blessed Mother and Baby Jesus.

I first saw this icon at Lourdes, one of St. Bernadette's favorites, and its intimate connection to me on several levels drew me close. My twin sister and I were confirmed in a little church in Belgium, called St. Remigius, by the Abbot of the Benedictine Abbey of Affligem, where my Grandfather fled for guidance as he sought protection from the German military police during WWII. St. Remigius (Our Confirmation Church) was the Bishop of Cambrai who baptized Clovis, the first Frankish King.

The similar icon I was inspired to write, is slightly more Byzantine in style. I love the warm gaze of both Holy Mother and Holy Child, and their tender embrace, as well as the beautiful colors. The original far outweighs my own skills but I loved writing this icon as it is so interwoven in the fabric of my life and heritage. I hope that Our Dear Lord and Our Blessed Mother may similarly touch you with joy and Truth.

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