



Our Lady of the Don

The historical origins of this icon date to the Don Cossacks, who presented it to Grand Prince Dmitry Donskoy before his victory over the Mongols in 1380 which marked the beginning of Russia's liberation from Tatar rule. The icon became forever associated with divine intervention at Russia's darkest military hour. The battle site near the Don River gave the icon its name.

Historically, the icon was two sided with the Eleusa (Tender Mercy) image on the front with the Dormition of the Virgin on the reverse. The tender embrace between Mother and Child utilizes an S-shape geometry to bring the two figures into communion, focusing on maternal love and God becoming truly human. Mary's slightly tilted head and downcast eyes suggest her foreknowledge of Christ's passion, while her protective gesture around the Child symbolizes her ongoing intercession for humanity. The intimate scale invites personal devotion rather than distant veneration.

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