



Panagia Kecharitomene

The icon of the Panagia Kecharitomene, (Mother of God, full of grace), is based on the 13th century icon located at the Monastery of Xenophontos in Mount Athos, Greece. It is the Eleusa genre in which the Mother and Child in their cheek-to-cheek embrace show us love, vulnerability and prophetic sorrow.

The title Panagia Kecharitomene was given to the virgin Mary by the Archangel Gabriel during the Annunciation when he said “Rejoice, Kecharitomene, the Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women.”

In this icon, Mary tenderly holds the Christ child as he caresses her face. In one hand, Mary holds Christ’s foot, in the other she holds a closed scroll. The scroll represents the divine message given to Mary during the Annunciation.

Christ’s twisted posture and clinging grasp prefigures his suffering on the cross. The tense compositional structure draws the viewer’s eye into the icon and breaks the silence to draw your attention to His position in the plan. The emotional energy foreshadows the crucifixion.

I have been painting icons for 8 years and am now working on a series of icons of the Sorrowful Mother. This icon inspired me for its powerful contrast between the playful posture of the Christ child and Mary’s sorrowful expression as she contemplates her son’s impending Passion. My goal with this icon was to use warm, rich colors to evoke a sense of gentle tenderness. The halo was created by painting the decorations with a brush and warm gesso, followed by two layers of gold.

Laurie Muench, Iconographer

