



Our Lady of Tenderness (aka) Our Lady of Vladimir

Presented by
Dr. Catherine Collins
New Mexico Second Vice State Regent

So what do we know about Our Lady of Tenderness?

Various traditions claim the Gospel writer St. Luke drew one or more portraits of the Virgin Mary from life.

According to tradition St. Luke was a very talented young man. He not only wrote a Gospel account and the Acts of the Apostles, he was also a Greek physician and an artist.



Why St. Luke?

He is held by the Eastern Church as the original "iconographer," responsible for writing the first icon of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Many painters throughout the centuries have depicted this scene by placing St. Luke in front of an easel, painting a portrait of the Blessed Mother holding the Child Jesus.

Whatever truth there is behind the traditions surrounding the image, there are a few more widely known icons attributed to St. Luke. Among these are Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Our Lady of Czestochowa, and Salus Populi Romani

Our Lady of Tenderness

The Our Lady of Tenderness icon is in the tradition of the Mother of God Eleusa icons. The Greek word eleusa means "compassionate one" implying intimacy, gentleness and grace.

The Eleusa image is characterized by the expression of tenderness. The Mother of God is in a caress with the Child. Their cheeks are touching, connecting them to each other, while the gesture of the hands connotes universality.

The Virgin offers the Son to man, while the Son offers the Virgin. Mutuality of intention is the emphasis of this particular rendition.



So who is Eleousa?



Eleousa (Madonna of Tenderness) is one of the foundational Marian representations known in East and West to the present.

The image stresses the intimacy between mother and son, a telling symbol of the intimate relationship between God and humanity actualized in the incarnation

One of the most famous examples of this type is the Byzantine icon of Vladimir (early 12c).

So who is Eleousa? (2)

In the Russian tradition, the Eleousa becomes Our Lady of Mercy or Umiļjēne

In Orthodox Christianity, the Our Lady of Tenderness icon belongs to the main iconographic form of the Mother of God.

The so-called Eleusa, where the Virgin Mary embraces the Son of God, with His head pressed lovingly against her cheek.



History of the Icon of Our Lady of Tenderness



It is known that the original icon of the Blessed Virgin Mary "Tenderness" is a copy of the famous Our Lady of Vladimir icon, one of the most revered icons of Russia, which was delivered from Kyiv by Prince Andrei Bogolyubsky in the 12th century.

The sacred image arrived in Moscow, or more precisely, the Assumption Cathedral, in the late 1300s.

According to historical records, the divine masterpiece was saved from destruction more than once, and thanks to it, plenty of people were cured of serious diseases.

Icon Types

There is a large number of versions of Our Lady of Tenderness icon.

In Christian Orthodox iconography, the Holy Virgin is most often depicted in this form.

The symbolism of this celestial art piece is the inseparable, boundless love and the absence of any distance between the Lord, His Son, and the Blessed Mother.



Legendary variations of Our Lady of Tenderness

The Icon of the Mother of God of Novgorod. Created at the end of the 12th century, it is now kept in the Uspensky Cathedral. The icon depicts the Virgin Mary and the baby Jesus in the typical position of the Hodegetria icon but with their cheeks touching. The infant Christ holds a scroll in His right hand while making a gesture of blessing with His left hand.



The Pskov-Pechersk Icon. It represents a copy of the highly worshipped Our Lady of Vladimir icon, which was created in 1521. This miraculous artwork is widely known for a large number of marvelous properties.

Legendary variations of Our Lady of Tenderness (2)



The Feodorovskaya Icon of the Mother of God. This revered image stored in the Epiphany Cathedral is considered the shrine of the House of Romanov.

The Don Icon of the Mother of God. This one is a double-sided icon featuring the Assumption of the Virgin Mary on its reverse side. It is dedicated to the Church holiday commemorating the death of the Blessed Mother.

ELEUSA VIRGIN ORTHODOX ICON

The Eleusa (or Eleousa) (Greek: Ἐλεούσα – tenderness or showing mercy) is a type of depiction of the Virgin Mary in icons in which the infant Jesus Christ is nestled against her cheek.

In the Western church the type is often known as the Virgin of Tenderness.

Such icons have been venerated in the Eastern Church for centuries.

Similar types of depictions are also found in Madonna paintings in the Western Church where they are called the Madonna Eleusa, or Virgin of Tenderness.



13th century Byzantine Eleusa mosaic, Athens



Our Lady of Vladimir



The miraculous image given the title, Our Lady of Vladimir, is known as an Eleousa, the Greek word meaning, Mother of Tenderness.

The Christ Child nestles tenderly close to his mother, he gazes at her and is so closely linked to her that his left arm embraces her fully.

His right hand gently touches her left cheek.

Mary looks out at the people.

Yet, there is no doubt that she is intimately united to her Divine Son.

Origin of Our Lady of Vladimir

The origin of the ancient Marian icon, Our Lady of Vladimir, can be traced back to 1125.

For many, The Lady Who Saves Russia is the most loved image of the Eastern Church.

The oldest known representation of Our Lady of Vladimir is presently located at the Tretjakow Gallery in Moscow.

Due to the honor and reverence of the people, who attributed gracious assistance to Our Lady's help throughout the Ukraine, a large cathedral was built for her in Vladimir.



Miraculous Character of the Icon



This image is the Theotokos of Vladimir

When the Mongol invasion threatened Moscow in 1395, the icon was brought to Moscow, where she was honored as the unconquerable shield of the Russian people.

Important state transactions took place before her image; her blessing was sought before battle.

In time, Our Lady of Vladimir became the sign of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Devotion to the Vladimir icon

There are thousands of representations of the Vladimir icon. It is said that there is no Orthodox Church, nor Orthodox home's religious corner, without this image somewhere represented.

The intimate relationship of Our Lady of Tenderness with her divine son, Jesus Christ, is presented as an ideal indication of the Christian's relationship to Christ.



Devotion to the Vladimir icon (2)



Our Lady of Vladimir gained international fame, but not so much for political reasons, as for ecumenical endeavors.

The unity of the churches came to be symbolized, and hoped for, in the unity of the Child and his mother.

On an international level, devotion to this Marian icon began in the twentieth century, when the Christian faithful were instructed about the religious significance, the beauty, and the power of invocation to Mary and the saints.

Devotion to the Vladimir icon (3)

In 1995, on the six-hundredth anniversary of the transference of the icon from Vladimir to Moscow

Our Lady of Tenderness continues to "speak" to us through her icon today, to us, the culture of a Christ centered people.



God's peace to your heart! Our Lady's Message

We have been given all that we need to travel in and through this life. We have been given Jesus, and Jesus has given us the gift of His peace. Not a peace that lives in our feelings, but a peace that takes us beyond feeling.

Today, more than ever, we need Christ's gift; we need the unearthly peace and the inner freedom from fear and anxiety that His unconditional love has won for us.

Let us live our lives breathing the breath of His peace from deep within. Let us trust in the wisdom of His ways and rest within the lap of His love.



Prayer to Our Lady of Tenderness

"Virgin Mother of Tenderness, when times are dark and dreary one look at your child held safely and lovingly close to your cheek inspires a deep and lasting confidence in me.

Your calming presence is the joy and hope of my life and the pledge of your untiring care of each of us your children in Christ.

Tenderly place me near the heart of your Son.

Help me hear His words of love whispered for my heart alone, and ask Jesus to increase my longing to be satisfied in Him alone. Amen."

Mary taught us by example

In his encyclical letter on mercy, Dives in Misericordia, Pope St. John Paul II held up Mary as one who has experienced the mercy of God in a unique manner. He said, "Mary is also the one who obtained mercy in a particular and exceptional way, as no other person has."

She (Mary) did this because she participated in God's act of giving mercy especially by standing under the Cross of her Son as He gave His life for us. She also did this because she openly received the many graces which God bestowed upon her even though she realized she was not worthy of any of them.

Mary never committed sin but she always realized whatever gifts she had were due to the grace of God to which she was always open. That is why she can be an instrument of God's tenderness in such an intimate manner.

In Closing.....

*Mary asks that we
act justly,
that we walk humbly,
that we love tenderly
....and so we sing*

**Walk Humbly
by
Melissa Salazar Porter**
