

OUR LADY *of the* SIGN – ARK *of* MERCY

Our Lady of the Sign

The iconic monstrance depicts the woman of Isaiah 7:14, "*The Lord himself will give you a Sign—the Virgin shall be with child and bear a son, and shall name him Emmanuel,*" and the women of Revelation 11:19 - 12:1-2, "*Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and the Ark of His Covenant was seen within His Sanctuary... And a great Sign appeared in the sky, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. She was with child and wailed aloud in pain as she labored to give birth.*" Mary is the Sign of God's promise of Mercy fulfilled—past, present and to be in the New Jerusalem. Her appearance clothed with the heavenly bodies depicts the Fourth Marian dogma of Mary's Assumption into heaven. "Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory," Pope Pius XII

Mary, Ark of the Covenant

The Ark of the Covenant was the visible sign of God's presence, and his promise of Mercy, among the covenant community of Israel. It was golden with two carrying post (for a "pilgrim people"), and two angels upon it. The Ark carried the tablets of the Ten Commandments (the law), a jar of manna (the bread that came down from heaven), and the flowering rod of Aaron (a sign of the true priesthood). These images are carved on the front of the Ark, along with the Four Living Creatures symbolic of the four Gospels. Turning to Mary pregnant with the child Jesus within her womb, she holds within her God's promise of Mercy made flesh. She is the Ark of Mercy carrying the Law made flesh, the Bread of Life, and the High Priest within her to all people. This is the First Marian Dogma, Mary, *Mother of God.*

In addition, the mystery of Mary's special role as *Co-Redemptrix* is represented and the union of the two hearts of Jesus and Mary. Jesus' real presence is at her center as she is so deeply united to Him. A crown of thorns surrounds the Sacred Host pointing to the suffering heart of Jesus on the cross, and the mystery of Mary's heart suffering with Him. Forty rubies drip from the crown of thorns for the sacrificed blood of the Lamb: thirty small rubies for Jesus' hidden life; seven medium stones for the seven sacraments, seven sorrows and the blood of the new covenant; and three large rubies for the public ministry of Jesus, and the revelation of the Holy Trinity - Father, Son and Holy Spirit.



Red and Blue Garments

The monstrance composition is based on the ancient tradition of Byzantine Catholic Iconography along with the sacred arts tradition of the Latin rite. Pope John Paul II called the Church to "*breath with both lungs*" by drawing spiritual nourishment from both the East and West - Byzantine and Latin rite traditions.

In the Byzantine tradition, Mary is depicted with a red outer robe to symbolize her humanity, the red flesh and blood, while she also has a blue inner garment (seen at her wrists and neckline), that symbolize her sanctity, the blue of the heavens. In the tradition, Jesus wears the opposite - a blue outer garment for his divinity and the red inner garment for his human nature. Jesus is the Son of God who entered into the flesh so that we who are flesh might enter into God, the Holy Trinity. Mary is a woman of flesh who through the Immaculate Conception and life of holiness was assumed bodily into heaven. The blue interior garment is a sign of the Third Marian Dogma - Mary's Immaculate Conception.

Upon Mary's red robe are three stars, one on her forehead and one on each shoulder. These symbolically, depict the Second Marian Dogma of Mary's Perpetual Virginity - virgin before, during and after the birth of Jesus.

Scripture Passages

On the fringe of the robe is a passage from Isaiah 61:10 in Greek: "*I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness.*" The passage continues to invoke that imagery of spousal union and a global New Spring Time of Faith: "*as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it spring up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.*" (Is. 61-10-11)

On the fringe of the garment at the neck line is the opening passage of the Magnificat from Luke 1:46 "*My soul magnifies the Lord.*" This is a reference to her Immaculate Conception and her interior sanctity.