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Japanese Madonnas

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JAPANESE MADONNAS



Japanese Mother and Child

THE CHRISTIAN MESSAGE is not bound either by geography or by a specific culture. Christ's spirit is the spirit of incarnation. It permeates history and features the thousand faces of human endeavor. Religious art is only one of its many expressions. So why shouldn't there be a Japanese Madonna to portray Christ's coming and presence among his brothers and sisters in Japan? Wherever her Son, there is Mary.

Carmelite Nuns of Tokyo, Japan, made this display of Marian images possible. The convent's prioress recently wrote: "We would like very much to avoid publicity, so unbecoming of poor Carmelite nuns, and so we ask you not to mention the artist's name. Our greatest privilege is to be instrumental in spreading the Marian devotion--Mary, who is our Queen and Mother of Carmel."

The artist-nun of the Tokyo Carmel was born in Aichi Prefecture in the Nagoya diocese. She is the youngest of four children. The family eventually moved to Tokyo, where the future artist-nun entered the Futaba School run by the Sisters of St. Maur.

Sister is self-taught, having studied art only in the school's mandatory hour-a-week course. At the age of thirteen, she began painting with watercolors, but long before this age, she had enjoyed drawing familiar Japanese scenes.



Japanese Madonna

She entered the Carmel at the age of twenty-one, and was immediately inspired to paint a Madonna in traditional Japanese garb. Thanks to a senior monastery-artist, Sister was able to learn and perfect the art of painting holy persons, something she had never been taught before. However, in 1964, the senior artist was confined to her bed with cancer. It was at this time that the work of designing the monastery's Christmas cards was passed on to her. Proceeds from the sale of these cards support the twenty nuns who form the community.

Sister began her new duty by painting "copies" of some of her mentor's works - until at last she was proficient enough to create her own charming images that we know today.

When asked how long it took her to paint an original Madonna, the cloistered nun responded: "It is difficult to compute the hours spent on each painting, as the time of work is cut up by hours of prayer, and dispersed throughout the day."

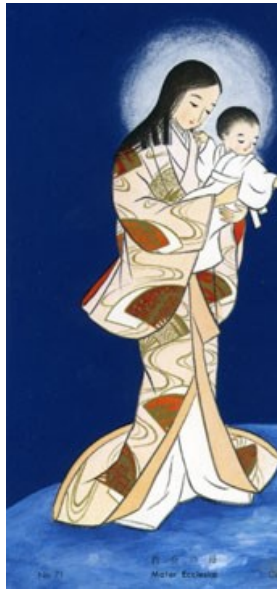


Japanese Madonna

It is quite doubtful that this humble Japanese nun is aware of it - but her Madonnas are fondly admired throughout the world. And it is truly an honor to have been offered to exhibit twenty-seven of her original paintings across the United States.

As the Carmelite nun paints, she is silent with her thoughts. And if you study her beautiful images with this same gentle quietness, almost assuredly you will be able to hear her messages of hope and peace for the whole world.







by the Carmelite Nuns of Japan

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