



Mary, Mother of God Our Lady of Grace

As the mother of the Savior, Mary is the patron of all mothers. She is also the spiritual mother of us all. As he hung dying on the cross, Christ placed his mother in the care of St. John, and gave John to Mary as a second son (Jn 19:26-27). Ever since, the Church has understood that John stands for all of us – that we are all children of Mary.

After Christ's ascension into heaven, the apostles and disciples gathered around Mary in the upper room, the site of the Last Supper and of the Risen Christ's appearances to the apostles. After nine days of prayer – the very first novena – the Holy Spirit descended upon them all, and the Church was born. For this reason, Our Lady is also venerated as the Mother of the Church.

Our Lady of Grace is one of the many titles of Mary. In general, the expression Our Lady of Grace is of medieval origin, especially well known in France, connected frequently with the Marian sanctuary of Cambrai, France. [See below] However, the roots of this title are much older. They are of biblical origin where Mary is called *kecharitomene*: the fully-graced one, the all-graced one (Lk 1:28). The Eastern tradition calls Mary *Panhagia* (the all-holy one).

The first meaning of Our Lady of Grace refers to her own holiness. But very early on, Mary was invoked as the uniquely blessed one (see the *Sub tuum praesidium*, fourth century) and as the mother of mercy (see the *acathist* hymn, perhaps around 530). She is also the one who intercedes for us with God to obtain his grace.