

<i>Project Title</i>	"Litany of Loretto"
<i>Image Title</i>	"Foederis Arca – Ark of the Covenant"
<i>Medium</i>	Iris giclee print on Arches Cold Press
<i>Size example</i>	"Foederis Arca – Ark of the Covenant" 30" x 30" unframed
<i>Artist</i>	Lisa A. Johnston
<i>Style</i>	Montage Photography
<i>Synopsis</i>	This image is part of a series currently in progress and is a visual study on the names given to Mary the mother of Jesus in the "Litany of Loretto", a solemn litany of titles sung or prayed in honour of the Virgin Mary. The imagery is concerned with examining these <i>titles</i> through contemporary photographic technique which is supplied heavily with the vigorous usage of religious and poetic literary symbolism and iconography.

Particular Image Statement

This particular image Foederis Arca or *Arc of the Covenant* is a visual interpretation of this title and theme.



As reference points for understanding the imagery the following quotations are invited:

In the Old Testament the Ark of the Covenant contained the stone tablets of the law given to Moses upon Mount Sinai. This was God's refined covenant with His people. In the New and Everlasting Covenant, the law comes in the form of God the Son, Christ the Redeemer of man. It is Christ who is contained within the Ark of the Covenant, the Virgin's womb.

As the mana came down from heaven to miraculously feed the Israelites, so does the Son of Man come in the form of life giving bread in the form of the Eucharist. Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst." [John 6:41]

In the Old Testament, the cloud, now obscure, now luminous, reveals the living and saving God, while veiling the transcendence of his glory—with Moses on Mount Sinai, at the tent of meeting, and during the wandering in the desert, and with Solomon at the dedication of the temple. In the Holy Spirit, Christ fulfills these figures. The Spirit comes upon the Virgin Mary and "overshadows" her, so that she might conceive and give birth to Jesus. On the mountain of Transfiguration, the Spirit in the "cloud came and overshadowed" Jesus, Moses and Elijah, Peter, James and John, and "a voice came out of the cloud, saying, 'This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!'" Finally, the cloud took Jesus out of the sight of the disciples on the day of his Ascension and will reveal him as Son of man in glory on the day of his final coming. The glory of the Lord "overshadowed" the ark and filled the tabernacle (CCC 697).

From a Vesper hymn on the Feast of the Sacred Heart it is written:

O Heart, Thou ark containing the Law, not of the old servitude, but of grace, and indulgence, and also of mercy.

O Heart, Thou spotless sanctuary of the new covenant, Thou Temple, holier than the ancient one, And Veil, more profitable than that torn of old.

Charity willed Thee to be wounded; by the spear thrust opened, that we might venerate the wounds of an invisible love.

Under this symbol of love, having suffered bloody and mystical torments, Christ the Priest offered each in sacrifice.

Visual Symbols:

Who would not love in turn the One so loving him? Who, being thus redeemed, would not love, and choose eternal dwellings in this Heart?

O Jesus, to Thee be glory, Who pourest grace from Thy heart, with the Father and the loving Spirit unto everlasting ages.

Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple; and there were flashes of lightning, voices, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail. And a great portent appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars; ^(Rev 11:19 - 12:1)

"Today the sacred and living ark of the living God, who conceived her Creator Himself, takes up her abode in the temple of God, not made by hands. David, her forefather, rejoices" -- St. John Damascene

'Her womb made flower a Fruit, a Bread that has filled us with an angelic gift. Mary restored to salvation what Eve had destroyed by her sin' - Saint Hilary of Poitiers

The Virgin Mary is the living shrine of the Word of God, the Ark of the New and Eternal Covenant. "Then the creator of all things commanded, and said to me: and he that made me, rested in my tabernacle" [Ecclesiasticus 24: 12]

"Let us chant the melody that has been taught us by the inspired harp of David, and say, 'Arise, O Lord, into thy rest; thou, and the ark of thy sanctuary.' For the Holy Virgin is in truth an ark, wrought with gold both within and without, that has received the whole treasury of the sanctuary" (Homily on the Annunciation to the Holy Virgin Mary). – St. Gregory the Wonder Worker (c. 213–c. 270)

"As Christ our priest was not chosen by hand of man, so **neither was His tabernacle framed by men, but was established by the Holy Ghost; and by the power of God is that tabernacle protected, to be had in everlasting remembrance, Mary**, God's Virgin Mother" - Saint Dionysius of Alexandria, (*Respons. ad Qucest. v. Pauli Samos*)

"**The ark is verily the holy Virgin, gilded within and without**, who received the treasure of universal sanctification. Arise, O Lord, from the Father's bosom, to raise up again the ruined race of our first parent" -- St. Gregory Thaumaturgus (*Orat. in Deip. Annunciat*)

Visual Symbols:

Contained within this image are many symbolisms including:

- **Tree Branches** – The branches are used to form the shape of a *Chalice* which is an emblem of faith. Also, the branch is used as a symbol of Christ. The "tree of life" is mystical symbol and common to many world religions. The prophet Isaiah "There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots." ^[IS 11:1] The branch is also a prefigurement of the tree upon which Christ will be crucified and Redeem all men.
- **Tree/Twigs with Buds** – The "tree of life" from the Garden of Eden in Genesis. The bud spoken of by the Prophet Isaias: *In that day the bud of the Lord shall be in magnificence and glory, and the fruit of the earth shall be high, and a great joy to them that shall have escaped of Israel.* ^(Isaias 4:2)
- **Paper Nautalis** - Symbolising the wings of the Cherabim. As the original ark was overlaid with gold on the inside and outside. Two golden Cherubim guarded a propitiatory which was a lid of pure gold. This propitiatory was the "Glory Seat" or "Shekinah" where God's glory dwelt, and from which God would speak to Moses. The Cherubim faced each other and their wings spread over the top of the Holy Ark. Also, there is the angel with shield and flaming

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