

<i>Project Title</i>	"Litany of Loretto"
<i>Image Title</i>	"Janua Coeli - Gate of Heaven"
<i>Medium</i>	Iris giclee print on Arches Cold Press
<i>Size example</i>	"Janua Coeli - Gate of Heaven" "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 "Janua Coeli - Gate of Heaven" is a visual interpretation of this title and theme. As reference points for understanding the imagery the following quotations are invited:

Our Lady has been invoked by the faithful as Gate of Heaven. It was through she which the Word incarnate, Jesus Christ, has come into the world and through which we pass to God in paradise. Mary and Christ are the two way door which lead from the finite created world into the infinite divine world of Heaven.

Mary is "The door giving the Word of God access to the world of redemptive salvation: Janua coeli (Gate of heaven). In virtue of her divine motherhood Mary was the door through which the Word of the Father made himself present in the world to renew and restore it by means of the mysteries of his flesh and by means of the sacrifice of himself offered in an infinite act of love. The compassion was the Mother's contribution to the sacrifice of her beloved Son, a collaboration representing also that of redeemed mankind so as to recover the beauty and loveliness of spirit disfigured by original sin and by all the sins of the world." - Fr. Enrique Llamas, O.C.D.

"Mary is called the Gate of Heaven, because it was through her that our Lord passed from heaven to earth. The Prophet Ezekiel, prophesying of Mary, says, 'the gate shall be closed, it shall not be opened, and no man shall pass through it, since the Lord God of Israel has entered through it-and it shall be closed for the Prince, the Prince Himself shall sit in it.' - Venerable John Henry Newman, C.O.

According to Tradition, this gate/door is the intact virginity of Mary, which before, during and after divine childbirth "has always kept intact the virginal seal, as a door sealed, to remain always closed", all the more so because "Christ has passed through it, but not opened it" - St. Ambrose.

"This is the gate of the Lord, the just shall enter through it" [Ps 117:20]

The liturgy in the antiphon for the Gospel of the Mass of the Blessed Virgin Mary prays: "Gate of Heaven - The gate of paradise, shut by the sin of Eve, has been reopened by you, O Virgin Mary."

John 10:9 "I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture.

Hebrews 10:20 "by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body,

Visual Symbols:

Contained within this image are many symbolisms including:

- **Atrina rigida** – Fan shaped shells. Shaped in the form of a welcoming gate or door. The shelled creature produces a valuable pearl which is considered the "soul" of the creature. The pearl is symbolic of the kingdom of heaven and the pearl is used as a symbol of the word of God. Jesus would be the "pearl" of his mother's womb. We may consider the quote from Mathew 13:45. *Again the kingdom of heaven is like to a merchant seeking good pearls. (Iterum simile est regnum caelorum homini negotiatori quaerenti bonas margaritas).*
- **Seed Pods** - Milk seed pods and flower montaged into the shape of a vessel. The imagery of seed have multiple meanings which include:
 - The creation of the World through the power of the Creator.
 - The seed of the Holy Spirit
 - Seed in the line of Abraham
 - Seed as a symbol of Faith
 - Milk seed as mothers milk
 - White seed as symbol of purityShape of the pods as a vessel denotes (the Holy Spirit being poured into a loving and obedient container which is the soul of the Virgin Mary. The seed pod's frame the background of this image and are another "gate" symbol.
- **Butterfly** - a symbol of the resurrection, but also stages of the caterpillar representing life and the chrysalis representing death. The butterfly having come through the gate now returns upward towards the Divine Father in Heaven.
- **Smoke** – Representative of the Holy Spirit, smoke is also a symbol purification and of washing away sin and impurity. Smoke is also a symbol of prayer as incense smoke wafts upward, so prayer ascends before God "And the temple was filled with smoke from the majesty of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled." [Rev. 15:8]

Litany of Loretto

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