

<i>Project Title</i>	"Litany of Loreto"
<i>Image Title</i>	"Vas Spirituale – Spiritual Vessel"
<i>Medium</i>	Iris giclee print on Arches Cold Press
<i>Size example</i>	"Vas spirituale – Spiritual Vessel" 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 Loreto", 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 *Vas Spirituale* or *Spiritual Vessel* is a visual interpretation of this title and theme. The Virgin Mary is the spiritual vessel to which God will pour out His love for all men and to fulfill His covenant with humanity by sending us the Messiah.



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

Song of Songs 3:4 *When I had a little passed by them, I found him whom my soul loveth: I held him: and I will not let him go, till I bring him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that bore me.*

Wisdom 7:1 *I myself am a mortal man, like all others, and of the race of him, that was first made of the earth, and in the womb of my mother I was fashioned to be flesh*

Wisdom 7:12 *And I rejoiced in all these: for this wisdom went before me, and I knew not that she was the mother of them all.*

Chambered Nautilus: *an 18th c poem by. Frenchman, Beranger:*

Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul,
As the swift seasons roll!
Leave thy low-vaulted past!
Let each new temple, nobler than the last,
Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,
Till thou at length art free,
Leaving thine outgrown shell by life's unresting sea!

Isaias 61:11. *For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth her seed to shoot forth: so shall the Lord God make justice to spring forth, and praise before all the nations.*

Visual Symbols

Contained within this image are many symbolisms including: (from top to bottom):

- **Paper Nautilus** – The Argonaut female makes this protective shell for her eggs. After she deposits her eggs in the floating egg case, the female takes shelter in it herself, often along with the male. The maternal world of symbiotic nurturance and intimacy is symbolized in the nautilus shell. As a "cradle" or womb the beautiful paper thin shell bears witness to the power of dependence and protection from the outside world. The internalized world of the shell is an enclosure of love and security.
- **Chambered Nautilus**- A symbol of life, internal harmony, and the perfection of nature, the nautilus shell evokes a sense of mystery and awe. Its spiral structure displays perfect mathematical proportion. The nautilus shell is lined with mother-of-pearl and is a relatively unchanged form for 450 million years. The cephalopod grows into increasingly larger chambers throughout its life cycle symbolizing protection, expansion, and renewal.
- **Adiantum capillus-veneris**– (maidenhair fern) Flowers associated with Mary, the Mother of Jesus, are deeply intertwined with ancient lore that can be traced back beyond the Christian era. This particular fern originally was the symbol of the "hair of the goddess Venus", but has since been transformed into another of the Virgin Mary's flowers.
- **Birds Nest** - The birds nest has long been a symbol of the circle of life. The nest is built by the maternal instincts and is a protective vessel woven with twigs, mud and fiber which symbolize the tapestry of life.
- **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.)*