The Icon of Our Lady of Calvary

The icon dates back to the seventeenth century. Its author is unknown. It was painted on canvas with oil paints. The canvas was then glued to a board. The icon is fifty-eight centimetres wide and eighty centimetres high.

The icon depicts Mary, Mother of God, and an infant Jesus. The figures are presented on a plain, dark brown background. Mary is portrayed up to her waist. Jesus is standing, nestled against her right shoulder. He is portrayed up to his thighs.

Mary tilts her head to the right, toward her son. On her head she wears a delicate, transparent veil and an embellished red bonnet. The front of the bonnet is crescent-shaped, framing Mary's brown hair. A string of white pearls adorns the edge of the bonnet. Precious stones – green emeralds and red rubies – are also attached to it, surrounded by gold embroidery in the shape of flower petals. A ruby cross is attached to the lower edge of the bonnet, hanging over Mary's left eye. The left edge of the bonnet is adorned with a small red rose. Mary has a long, glowing face, with a smooth forehead, regular brows and a straight nose. Her large, brown, thoughtful eyes are gazing to the right. Her red lips are expressively shaped. Mary is clad in a plain, dark blue cape with a pink lining. A red dress emerges from beneath it. Mary raises her left arm bent at the elbow. Her slender-fingered hand, positioned at the height of Mary's chest, is stretched towards Jesus.

Jesus is plump and half-naked. His brown hair is covered with a bonnet, almost identical to Mary’s. The only difference is that the cross is attached to the upper edge of the bonnet, and from its right edge hangs an ornament in the shape of a flower with golden petals and an emerald centre. With his left hand, Jesus embraces his mother's neck. He presses his chubby face against Mary's cheek. The left side of his face is obscured by the right side of Mary's. His brown eyes are gazing at his mother's face. His full red lips are parted. Jesus holds the edge of Mary's cape with his right hand. A gauzy fabric covers his hips, softly falling towards his thighs.

Along the lower edge of the icon runs an inscription: “IMAGO B.M.V. CALVARIENSIS”.

This type of artistic depiction of Mary and Jesus is called Eleusa. Its distinctive feature is Mary holding baby Jesus nestled against her cheek.

The icon is placed at the altar of the Chapel of Our Lady of Calvary. It is always presented in a so-called dress, which is a type of overlay adorned with embroidery of gemstones, silver and golden threads. The overlay has openings that only reveal the faces and the hands of the figures depicted in the icon. The rest of the icon is concealed.