

The name of the Mother of God of Mercy is abbreviated by Greek letters **MP ΘΥ**, which mean the Mother of God. This icon conveys the special relationship of love between the Mother and the Son, with an emphasis on her humanity.

Christ (whose name is abbreviated by Greek letters **ΙϞ ΧϚ**, which mean Jesus Christ) is depicted with cross in His halo, through which He expresses his love for humanity. The Baby Jesus is wearing a light-coloured tunic bordered with a golden band, a *clavus*. This indicates that the Baby is the Ruler, the Lord of the world, who has power over all creation. Blue and red dots on the tunic symbolize His two natures: human and divine. The robe of Jesus is woven with golden threads, which represent His royal divinity.

Mary is wearing a blue tunic (blue is the colour of humanity) and an *omophorion* – a long mantle covering the head and shoulders. It is red in colour, symbolizing the grace of God and plenitude, in which Mary is enwrapped. Three crosses resembling stars on Mary's head and shoulders indicate that she remains a Virgin before, during and after childbirth.

Mary listens to our prayers and intercedes for us with her Son. Mary points us towards Jesus and leads us to Him.

**SAINT FRANCIS, SAINT CLARE, AND SAINT ELIZABETH OF HUNGARY**

At the bottom of the Icon, in three halos, we can see three most important saints of all three orders of the Franciscan Family. St. Francis of Assisi is in the centre, St. Clare of Assisi is to his right. They are the founders of two orders of the Franciscan Family. Next to them is St. Elizabeth of Hungary, the patroness of the OFS. The names of the saints are inscribed underneath their images.

The title of the Icon is the Queen of the Franciscan Family (Lat. *Regina Familiae Franciscanae*). The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order reads: *“The Virgin Mary, humble servant of the Lord, was open to his every word and call. She was embraced by Francis with indescribable love and declared the protectress and advocate of his family”* (OFS Rule, 9).

Together with St. Francis, let us offer ourselves, our families, fraternities and the whole Franciscan Family to the Queen.

Let us pray in the words of St. Francis:

*Hail, holy Lady,  
Most holy Queen,  
Mary, Mother of God,  
Ever Virgin;  
Chosen by the most holy Father in Heaven,  
Consecrated by Him,  
With His most holy beloved Son  
And the Holy Spirit, the Comforter.  
On you descended and in you still remains  
All the fullness of grace  
And every good.  
Hail, His Palace.  
Hail, His Tabernacle.  
Hail, His Robe.  
Hail, his Handmaid.  
Hail, His Mother  
And hail, all holy virtues,  
Who, by the grace and inspiration  
of the Holy Spirit,  
Are poured into the hearts of the faithful,  
So that, faithless no longer,  
They may be made faithful servants of God  
Through you.*



**ICON OF THE QUEEN OF THE FRANCISCAN FAMILY**

## WHAT IS AN ICON?

The icon is a Greek word meaning an image, a portrait. This is usually an image painted on a wooden panel, covered with canvas and primer. It is painted using natural pigments mixed with egg yolk. Pure gold leaf is used for the halo and the background.

## WHEN WAS AN ICON BORN?

The first icons appeared in the 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> century, before the split of the Eastern and Western Church in 1054. In the Western Church, icons flourished until late 14<sup>th</sup> century. Later on, as other artistic trends and styles took hold in the Western Church, the significance of an icon faded. However, since the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, icons have been living a renaissance.

## WHAT ARE ICONS MEANT FOR?

An icon represents a man's desire to see his God. The God who became man. It is the means that helps a believer to pray and come closer to God.

## WHAT IS THE MEANING OF AN ICON?

In the Old Testament, God forbid his people to make any image of God. The icon of the Lord was born together with Jesus' birth to the world, whereby the invisible God took on the human nature and became one of us. The icon of Jesus Christ is the first of all icons. The second one is the icon of the Mother of God, because Mary is the bearer of God. The icons of the saints are reflections of the holiness of Christ. An icon always represents Christ and those alike Him who are eternally living in His mystery.

## CHURCH ABOUT ICONS

The revival in the interest in the theology and spirituality of Eastern icons has been seen for several decades now. It is a sign of a growing need of authentic spiritual language of Christian art. The re-discovery of the Christian icon reveals the gaze of the invisible Other and allows us to touch on the reality of the spiritual and eschatological world.

Our oldest tradition fully shared with our orthodox brothers teaches that the language of beauty, which serves faith, is capable of reaching people's hearts and helping them to internally recognize Him who we dare to portray – Jesus Christ, the Son of God who became man, who is *“the same yesterday, today, and forever”* (Heb 13, 8).

*“Just as the reading of material books allows the hearing of the living word of the Lord, so also the showing of the painted icon allows those who contemplate it to accede to the mystery of salvation by the sense of sight. What on the one hand is represented by ink and paper is represented on the other hand in the icon, thanks to the various colours and other materials.”*

St. John Paul II, Apostolic Letter  
“Duodecimum Saeculum”

## THE QUEEN OF THE FRANCISCAN FAMILY

The icon of the Queen of the Franciscan Family was created in 2018 in Lithuania in the run-up to the 3<sup>rd</sup> European OFS and YouFra Congress.

On 17 March 2018, the icon *Regina Familiae Franciscanae* was consecrated and started its pilgrimage among the European OFS and YouFra fraternities.

## SYMBOLISM OF THE ICON

*“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it”* (Jn 1, 1-5).

A divine space appeared in the darkness. In the icon, this space is marked by the red line around the frame. It is a defined space of God. The red colour means divinity. This sacred space is divine, which is represented by gold.

The light shines in the darkness. The darkness are the days of our lives: chaotic, rushing, obliging. The icon is the light that shines in this darkness. The icon is the presence of God who dwells among us. This divine light transforms and ignites all, it illuminates all that surrounds us. We can choose to be engulfed in this light at any moment.

## MARY AND CHRIST

The image in the icon is not naturalistic, because everything is transformed by the light of God, which is represented by golden background. A halo (Lat. nimbus) means holiness, i.e. living according to the Spirit of God.

Large open eyes are a sign of attentiveness. A small closed mouth symbolizes worship in silence. A long and thin nose is a sign of upward direction towards God.

The icon of the Queen of the Franciscan Family belongs to the type of icons of the Mother of God of Mercy.