

The Pietà di San Pietro



A Legacy of Faith and Art

The Madonna della Pietà is perhaps the greatest masterpiece of Michelangelo Buonarroti, sculpted from 1498 to 1499 of Carrara marble. The *Pietà* is prominently displayed in Saint Peter's Basilica in Vatican City, where it is appreciated by millions of visitors each year. It is a masterpiece that has moved countless hearts for centuries and is considered one of the most extraordinary works of the Italian Renaissance. It captures the moment when Jesus, taken down from the cross, is given to his mother Mary. It depicts the Virgin Mary cradling Jesus after His crucifixion - a deeply moving representation of sorrow, love, and sacrifice. Michelangelo's vision, inspired in part by Dante's Divine Comedy, imbued the sculpture with unparalleled grace and emotion, balancing realism with classical beauty.

A Connection to Michelangelo's Vision

A friend of St. Joseph Church commissioned a replica of the *Pietà* to be created in Pietrasanta, Italy, by renowned artist Franco Cervietti and his team of master craftsmen. The team included Roberta Giovannini, who specializes in the reproduction of classical and modern marble and bronze sculptures.

This sculpture, which Giovannini calls the "*Pietà di San Pietro*", is dedicated to the Blessed Mother as a gift to St. Joseph from the artists and their patrons, and the village of Pietrasanta.

More than 50 years ago, Cervietti discovered a small block of extraordinary marble within the upper quarry above Pietrasanta, which he had saved for all these years until a special project came along. This is the marble block used to create our *Pietà* replica. That is the very same marble quarry designed and established by Michelangelo himself, at the request of Pope Julius II. This marble, renowned for its purity and elegance, has been prized for over 2,000 years by artists around the world. Michelangelo recognized its beauty, leading the way for countless sculptors, from Joan Miró to Henry Moore, who have drawn inspiration from this stone. The half-size sculpture is forty-eight inches wide and forty-seven inches tall and weighs approximately 1800 pounds.

Spiritual Meaning

Mary is portrayed as serene and youthful. Her youth symbolizes her purity and incorruptibility, untouched by sin or decay. Inspired by Dante's Divine Comedy, Michelangelo envisioned her as both Mother and Daughter:

"Vergine madre, figlia del tuo figlio" — "Virgin Mother, Daughter of your Son."

Mary's open left hand invites the viewer into her sorrow and faith. It is not clenched in grief but open in acceptance - an act of trust and surrender to God's will. Her right hand, which supports Jesus, does not touch His body directly, signifying His sacredness.

Although she holds Him, it is as if she presents Him to the world - offering His body as the path to salvation.

Symbolism and Hope

Michelangelo intentionally made Mary's figure larger than Christ's, creating harmony and balance while emphasizing her maternal embrace that seems to encompass all humanity.

The base on which Mary sits represents the rock of Calvary (Golgotha) - the very place where Jesus was crucified. This foundation visually grounds the sorrow of the moment in the site of redemption itself.

Christ's body shows few marks of His suffering; He appears as the spotless victim, radiant in peace even in death. The sculpture reveals that redemptive beauty can be found even in sorrow.

At Christ's feet lies a small branch, symbolizing the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy:

"A shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse."

Isaiah 11:1

"I will make a just shoot spring up for David."

Jeremiah 33:15

Jesus is this new shoot - the life that springs forth from what was dead.

The *Pietà* invites us to stand beside Mary, to share her sorrow, and to discover in the midst of tragedy the hope of the Resurrection.

Thank you to Tawfiq Hodaly for his exceptional craftsmanship in creating the beautiful wooden base that now supports the Pietà.

Madonna and Child with St. John



A 250-year-old replica of Raphael's *Madonna and Child with St. John*, radiates the serene joy of Christ's early life. Donated by a friend of St. Joseph Church.

Welcome to our Marian Chapel



Located on the left side of our nave, the Marian Chapel is a sacred space dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary - a place of quiet reflection, prayer, and devotion. This intimate chapel invites all who enter to draw closer to Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and to contemplate her unique role in salvation history. The chapel is graced by three remarkable works of art:

- A 250-year-old replica of Raphael's Madonna and Child with St. John, radiating the serene joy of Christ's early life.
- A beautifully crafted statue of the Virgin Mary, inviting us into her loving, maternal presence.
- A stunning Pietà di San Pietro statue, capturing the profound sorrow of Mary holding the lifeless body of her Son after the Crucifixion.

Together, these masterpieces offer a powerful reflection on the fullness of Mary's journey with Jesus, from the tender joy of His birth to the sorrowful grief of His death.

May these sacred gifts draw all who behold them into deeper prayer, healing, and reverence.

St. Joseph Catholic Church

Marian Chapel



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