

The Painted Life

A guide to the historical background and meaning of each painting is being developed by Dr Claire Renkin and Angela Slattery ibvm.

PL 1

In this opening scene the artist announces the essential idea that will underpin Mary's life and mission. The word "JESUS" written in gold appears in reverse as if coming from little Mary's lips. Jesus is to be first and foundational in Mary's life. Her central position accentuates the importance of this initial insight in her spiritual journey. Symbols of new life pervade the painting. According to oral tradition, Mary's mother, Ursula, was pregnant at this time. The gold IHS (the Latin abbreviation for the word "Jesus") pendant at her waist reinforces the painting's theme as well as signifying family faith. Behind Mary is the birthing chamber with cradle and fire suggesting the birth is imminent. At the right servants prepare garments for the new-born. One turns and glances towards Mary's mother. Perhaps her movement is in response to Mary's word?

Themes to unfold throughout this lifecycle are established in this first painting. The word 'Jesus' evokes the future direction of Mary's life. Much good will come through the mission of this one woman.

Short bibliography:

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