

The Protestant Reformation Revolutionized Art

Martin Luther's Reformation ended a period of dominance and unity in Europe under the Roman Catholic Church. This unity lasted for more than 1,000 years. The Protestant reformers influenced artists who became inspired by the new ideas of faith, forgiveness, a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ, and the powerful stories in the *Holy Bible*.



Tempi Madonna, (Raphael 1508)

Mary's expression of attentive concern clearly conveys her tenderness for the Christ Child. She is completely absorbed in her child's face, seemingly unaware of her surroundings. Baby Jesus, however, turns toward the viewer and draws the observer into the intimate scene with them. *Contrapposto* is the art term that describes when one part of a subject's body is angled in opposition of the other part, as Jesus' head is here.

Raphael was commissioned to paint this *Madonna and Child* by the Tempi family in 1508. This marked the end of his time in Florence, for at the end of that year he would be called to Rome by Pope Julius II. In Florence, Raphael studied under the great masters Leonardo DaVinci and Michelangelo. From DaVinci he learned to construct his subjects using pyramidal shapes, unifying them in a unit but distinguishing them from each other using color and expression. Raphael adopted DaVinci's *chiaroscuro* (strong contrast between light and dark) and *sfumato* (using fine shading rather than line to define shape). He also employed DaVinci's simple backgrounds in order to draw attention to his subjects. Unlike the Florentines who painted dark and bold emotion, Raphael chose to portray his subjects with calmer, more human expressions which were more relatable for his viewers. Mary's veil was created by a quick brushstroke over slightly wet painted and gives her a gentle air of lightness. She is portrayed in the typical blue and red. Her mantle billows as though she was moving, maybe rocking her infant.

Since the time of the early Church, Mary had been an integral part of Christian doctrine, both Catholic and orthodox. People identified with her unconditional faith in God, first demonstrated in the Annunciation, when she was told by an angel that she (a virgin) would bear the son of God. Instead of concerning herself with the shame that Israelites would bring on her for being pregnant and unmarried, she rejoiced, saying, “**Henceforth all generations will call me blessed.**” (Luke 1:48). The Biblical passage that documents her reaction to the news is called the Magnificat.

In addition, many Christians believed that because Mary had brought Jesus into the world, and Jesus was united with God (and the Holy Spirit) in the Trinity, Mary could be considered the mother of God, or *Theotokos*, which elevated her to a divine position. Also, her key role in bringing the Redeemer to earth led believers to give Mary the title *Coredemptrix*, meaning she helped win salvation for people.

Christians found it easy to pray to Mary, seeing the tender love she lavishes on her child in works of art. They saw her as a mother figure to protect and guide them in their time of need, someone they could look to as an example of faith and goodness. Many people might look at the *Tempi Madonna*, see her personal relationship with Jesus, and believe that the way to the Lord was through her.

The importance of Mary is also in many Protestant faiths. The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod observes August 15 as a date to honor the mother of Jesus without specifically recognizing her assumption, or ascension to heaven, because it is not written in the Bible.

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