

*Kimberly
Webber*

TAOS, NEW MEXICO PAINTER **KIMBERLY WEBBER**
PRESENTS “PIA MATER,” HER PORTRAIT OF THE DIVINE
MOTHER, TO **POPE FRANCIS** AT THE VATICAN

Attaining perhaps the most sacred and extraordinary milestone in her multi-faceted career thus far, Taos, New Mexico painter Kimberly Webber met His Holiness Pope Francis at the Vatican on February 20 and presented him with “Pia Mater” (Tender Mother), her original oil painting of Mary, during the intimate, one-on-one portion of the Pope’s Papal Audience.

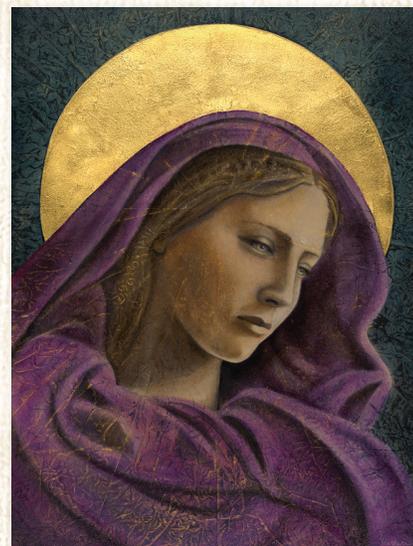
The luminous 80+ layer painting, which took the artist over a year to complete, is a 24” x 18” rice paper, earth pigment, encaustic and oil on panel. Its palette is comprised of traditional, pure mineral pigments, including azurite, lapis, manganese violet, malachite, mica, marble powder and pure 24kt gold. The custom frame is hand carved, gilt in 22kt gold, burnished and sealed with beeswax by the Gold Leaf Frame Makers of Santa Fe.

“Pia Mater” is a painting from EDEN, Kimberly’s new series of evolutionary oil based works honoring the natural world, medicine animals and the spirit of the archetypes. The work was created in Ranchos de Taos at the painter’s primary studio/historic adobe compound that was originally part of the legendary San Francisco de Asis Mission Church plaza – an architecturally significant church on the main plaza of Ranchos de Taos, New Mexico.

For the painter, “Pia Mater” is a divinely inspired act of love and devotion to Mother Mary and the beloved Divine Mother archetype. Her vision was to convey in Mary’s expression a unique blend of devotion, compassion, love and gravitas. Kimberly’s desire to take the painting to Rome to give to Pope Francis grew out of her admiration and support for the Pope’s progressive and extraordinary work on many issues that affect us all - including climate change and alleviating extreme poverty, as well as his call for unity, equality and peace.



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Pia Mater
24” x 18” rice paper, earth pigments,
24kt gold, encaustic, oil on panel

From its earliest origins as a charcoal drawing, the painter sensed that there was a different quality to “Pia Mater” compared to her other works, and it seemed from the start that there was something extraordinary in store for it.

As she was completing the painting, she was talking about it to her friend, business consultant and conscious leadership expert Tom Eddington, a devoted collector of her work. It became clear to her that it needed to be a gift to Pope Francis.

“Tom asked me what my vision was for the painting, and I said, it feels like it needs to be presented to the Pope, it needs to go to the Vatican,” Kimberly says. “He said, “Be careful what you wish for” and we laughed. From that point forward, it became an epic odyssey, with Tom and a whole network of people working with me to make it happen. There were ambassadors, filmmakers, clergy and many others from Toronto to San Francisco to Rome working on my behalf.”

“I was already aware of the incredible work the Pope is doing regarding climate change,” the painter adds, “and the call to action he had included in his ‘Laudato Si’ encyclical, which inspired Father Joshtrum Kureethadam to write ‘The Ten Green Commandments’ about how we can better care for our common home, Earth. There were so many divine synchronicities with this event, including the fact that the historic St. Francis church is right across the street from my home and studio. “Pia Mater” was created in the field of service and awareness of the beloved St. Francis. There were many other subtle serendipities, like the fact that Tom is a Knight of St. Francis.”

When the “all clear” came from the U.S. embassy, Kimberly, Tom and renowned independent filmmakers Paola Di Florio and Peter Rader (Awake, Waterworld) decided to chronicle the journey. Paola then joined the group and flew to Rome. Yet once they arrived, there were twists, turns, obstacles and delays back and forth as they tried to confirm that Kimberly indeed would be able to present “Pia Mater” to the Pope. Kimberly was aware that the Pope is deeply influenced by Mother Mary, and she was on a mission to place a modern image of the archetypal divine feminine energy into the Vatican collection for current and future generations “so that her grace can radiate out into the world in a symbolic gesture of restoring balance.”

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The filmmakers also decided to film Kimberly in other places in Italy where the divine feminine archetype was well represented, including the Catacombs of Priscilla and out in the Etruscan countryside and caves in Tuscania.

The first good sign that their faith would be rewarded was that the painting arrived, unscathed, at Father Joshtrum's office.

They all spoke with Father Joshtrum at his office during the un-crating of "Pia Mater". Paola and the crew rolled film as they asked him how the painting made him feel. Kimberly says, "He's an amazing man. What he's doing inside the church gives me such hope. He's helping not only Catholics, but all human beings, to understand their responsibility to be good stewards of our common home. He also spoke about the necessity for all people, men and women alike, to embrace the mother energy within to bring this wisdom back into consciousness as a way to heal our world."

The painter then had to confirm that she indeed had tickets to be part of the "Baciamano," where the Pope greets select visitors one on one. While having an assistant stash the painting at their hotel, the entourage went on a "treasure hunt" to find a bronze door (guarded by the Swiss Guard), behind which the confirmation lay. They saw a line of thousands waiting in line to gain access but pulled a unique maneuver to get inside. Kimberly was escorted down a cavernous dimly lit hallway by the Swiss Guard to a room, where a man who spoke virtually no English produced an envelope with her name on it that contained her special Baciamano ticket. It was a moment of pure elation as the whole vision finally crystallized into reality.

They did some additional filming in the beautiful and cinematic St. Peter's plaza and retreated for their 4 a.m. wake up call. After some frightening confusion which made Paola think the painting had been stolen, the painter spent the night with "Pia Mater" in her room at the historic 5-Star hotel (a converted monastery) whose windows looked out at St. Peter's Dome. The full moon illuminated the sky over the ancient land and Kimberly meditated throughout the night on "Pia Mater" serving as an emissary for the Divine Mother.

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The stylist arrived at Kimberly's room for the pre-dawn preparations, and after going through the rituals of dressing, makeup and mic'ing, Kimberly was ready for her Papal Audience.

The Pope gave an introductory talk, then while working his way down to the Baciamano, he locked eyes with her. A Papal assistant was holding "Pia Mater," and Pope Francis took Kimberly's hands. She thanked him for all the extraordinary and important work he is doing in the world.

The Pope simply said to her, "Please pray for me." She replied, "That is what my painting is. A prayer for you and all that you are doing on behalf of humanity and the world. It is meant to support you and your work." He looked at it, took it in, and in a concerned way, repeated, "Please pray for me." She assured him, "I am."

Kimberly and the rest of the team are currently waiting to find out where in the Vatican Collection "Pia Mater" will be placed for permanent display. She is also in discussions about perhaps allowing the Vatican to use the image to raise money for certain causes related to the work that the Pope is dedicated to.

"This was an amazing journey for all of us," the painter says. "It's still settling in that I was there, in front of 10,000 people, having that moment with him, watching his eyes as he looked carefully at my painting, and the one thing on his mind was a request: Pray for me. It was so completely humbling and beautiful."

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FOR MORE INFORMATION
AND FOR DEDICATED EDITION PRINTS OF "PIA MATER"
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