

The Story of 'Mater Admirabilis'

In 1844, a young French girl, Pauline Perdrau, who later became a Sacred Heart nun, asked her Mother Superior to be allowed to paint a picture of Our Lady along a corridor in the convent. The Mother Superior wasn't very keen.

Pauline Perdrau prayed to Our Lady and, eventually, the Mother Superior granted her permission. Pauline worked very hard at the task, spending six or seven hours each day for months preparing the surface of the wall and finally painting the likeness of Mary.

When the painting was completed, the wet paint was thought to be too vivid and was left to dry under a protective drape. When the curtain was removed, the paint appeared in the lovely shades that are admired today. Pauline Perdrau thought this to be a miracle.

On October 20, 1846, Pope Pius IX visited the convent. During his tour, he asked what was hidden behind the curtain. Pulling back the curtain, to everyone's surprise, the Pope saw the most beautiful painting of Mary. The Pope exclaimed

Mater Admirabilis
meaning **Mother Most Admirable**.

Word spread quickly of the beautiful painting and miracles began to happen in front of it. Father Blampain, a missionary of the Congregation of the Holy Heart of Mary, was given back the power of speech which he had completely lost.
Many pilgrims came to kneel at the feet of 'Mater'.

As well as the many priests and pilgrims praying before 'Mater', two special Saints also prayed before her:
Saint Madeleine Sophie Barat and Saint Rose Philippine Duchesne.

The image shows a young Mary at the temple in Jerusalem getting ready for her future mission in life. Her **pureness** is represented by the traditional white lily, her **work** by the spindle she is holding and the book on her sewing basket stands for her **education**. The thoughtful look on her face reminds us that **prayer** was so important to her.

'Mater' became a great symbol for the Society of the Sacred Heart and it was agreed that all Sacred Heart Schools would display this beautiful image of Our Lady.

The Feast of Mater Admirabilis is celebrated on October 20th