

Spotlight on Grace: Paintings by the Pair

If you have ever fixed your gaze upon the large paintings that adorn the high walls on either side of the organ gallery at Grace Church, then undoubtedly you will have appreciated their beauty. Let's take a closer look at these two wonderful copies of master works from the Italian Renaissance and the Spanish Baroque, and how they came to Grace.



The painting that faces the West aisle of the Nave -- originally intended as the altar piece for the chapel -- is a copy Raphael's Transfiguration. The Transfiguration is Raphael's final painting (1520), and is revered even among the greatest masterpieces of the age. After viewing the piece at The Louvre in 1802, English painter Joseph Farrington (1747-1821) commented in his diary: "Were I to decide by the effect it had upon me I should not hesitate to say that the patient care and solid manner in which The Transfiguration is painted made an impression on my mind that caused other pictures esteemed of the first Class, to appear weak, and as wanting in strength & vigour."



The Grace Church *Book of Remembrance* records that in the year 1912: "The altar piece is given in memory of Belvidera Fletcher Lilley Hallett July 22, 1840 - April 13, 1900 by her children." According to *The History of Grace Church* (1931), Belvidera's father, William Fletcher, was a contributor to the 1846 construction of Grace Church. Belvidera was confirmed and married at Grace Church, her children baptized here, and her daughter and grand-daughter both married here.



In 1926, three sisters of the Anthony family together contributed the copy of the Madonna and Child by Spanish painter Bartolomé Esteban Murillo (1617-1682) that today overlooks the East aisle of the Nave. This fine reproduction was brought from Florence, Italy in 1875.

The donors were Mary B., Ellen M. and Jane L. Anthony. The Anthony family has a multi-generational legacy here at Grace, as a tablet along the West aisle celebrates nearly a half-century of service and leadership by John Brayton Anthony (1829-1904) -- the father of the aforementioned three -- from 1857 through his death in 1904 as both Junior and Senior

Warden of Grace Church. In 1912, the three Anthony sisters also donated the communion rail for the new chancel designed by Ralph Adams Cram, in "grateful memory" of their father and their mother (Ellen DeForest Miller Anthony, 1831-1891).

The Victoria and Albert Museum in London -- which holds another 19th-century copy of the same Madonna and Child composition in their collection -- describes the piece as follows: "This painting is a copy after a composition by the Spanish Baroque painter Murillo, currently housed in the Galleria Borghese, Rome. It shows the Virgin and Child in a very naturalistic manner with no apparent sign of their divinity. This new formula was probably influenced by both Flemish art and Murillo's taste for scenes of childhood. This painting is a good example of the new naturalism which developed in Spain during the 17th century and was probably destined to private devotion." The image at right is of a self portrait by Bartolomé Esteban Murillo, circa 1670.

