

Mary (Mother of God) *Eleousa* Icon



(Picture above from The Crypt Icons Exhibition in Sofia Cathedral)

This icon is one of the most well-known and best-loved Russian icons and is housed in the Church which is part of the Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow. This type of icon is called *eleousa*-a Greek word which can be translated as tenderness, tender mercy, merciful love, loving kindness. The icon can be recognised by the arm of the child around the neck of the mother. The face of Mary is looking towards us is full of warmth and human compassion but also of deep sadness.

Questions for reflection and discussion

1. Which of the four translations of *eleousa* (tenderness, tender mercy, merciful love, loving kindness) best describes this icon? Or what other word or phrase would you choose?
2. What do you imagine Mary is thinking?
3. What do you think Jesus wants to say to her?