

# Doni Tondo

## Madonna and Child with the Young Saint John

The original iconography of this tondo has been interpreted in many different ways. It has been seen as an allusion to the surname of the family who commissioned the work (Joseph «donating» his son to Mary) or as a sacred representation in which the Madonna is a symbol of the church and the naked figures are prophets or pagan ephebes. More recently critics have tended to identify the naked figures as a symbol of humanity before the advent of Christ (*ANTE LEGEM*), while John the Baptist, Mary, and Joseph stand for humanity during Christ's sojourn on earth (*SUB LEGE*). The Infant Jesus, brought into the foreground by his parents' arms, represents humanity charged with the grace of Christ after the Baptism (*SUB GRATIA*). This would explain St John's position behind the balustrade and in front of the naked figures, as a witness to the moment of transition. The work, whose presence in the Doni house was recorded by the Magliabechian Anonymous Author (1537-42), was later placed, by an inventory of 1653, in the Tribune of the Uffizi. It was probably painted for the marriage between Agnolo Doni and Maddalena Strozzi (whose coat of arms is reproduced on the frame), which took place between 1503 and 1504, although recently critics have tended to date the work to a few years later. It is most frequently compared with Signorelli's tondo in the Uffizi, though the *Doni Tondo*, rather than deriving from precedents, was the starting point for the artists of Early Mannerism, in relation both to the handling of the figures (the serpentine attitude of the Madonna) and the boldness of the color, which the recent restorations have revealed to be particularly bright and luminous.