

Virgin Mary 'crosses the finish line' with Olympic gold runner



London, England, (CNA/EWTN News).-

Ethiopian athlete Meseret Defar provided one of the most emotional moments of the London 2012 Summer Olympic Games when she crossed the finish line in the 5000 meter race to win the gold.

She then pulled a picture of the Virgin Mary out from under her jersey, showed it to the cameras and held it up to her face in deep prayer.

An Orthodox Christian, Defar entrusted her race to God with the sign of the cross and reached the finish line in 15:04:24, beating her fellow Ethiopian rival Tirunesh Dibaba, who was the favorite to win.

A teary-eyed Defar proudly showed the picture of the Virgin Mary with the Baby Jesus that she carried with her for the entire race.

Throughout the event, Defar kept pace with three other Ethiopian runners and three from Kenya, until speeding past them on the homestretch to win gold.

The silver medal went to Vivian Cheruiyot of Kenya and the bronze to Dibaba.

Defar is also a two-time world champion in the 3000 meters. In Athens in 2004 she won the gold in the 5000 meters and in Beijing in 2008 she won the bronze.

On June 3, 2006 she broke the world record for the 5000 meters set previously by Turkish runner Elvan Abeylegesse, with a time of 14:24:53.