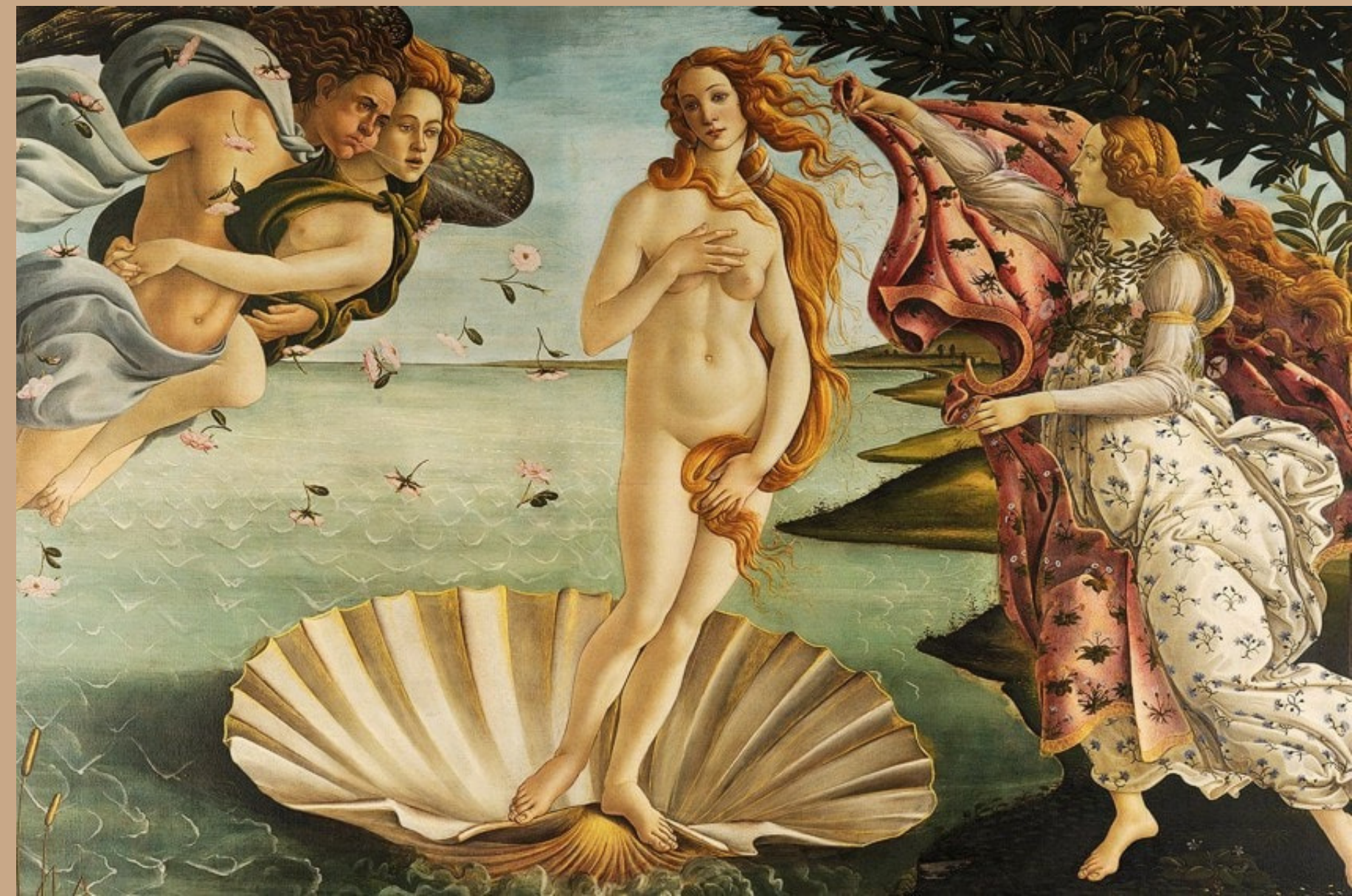


MOST FAMOUS ITALIAN PAINTINGS



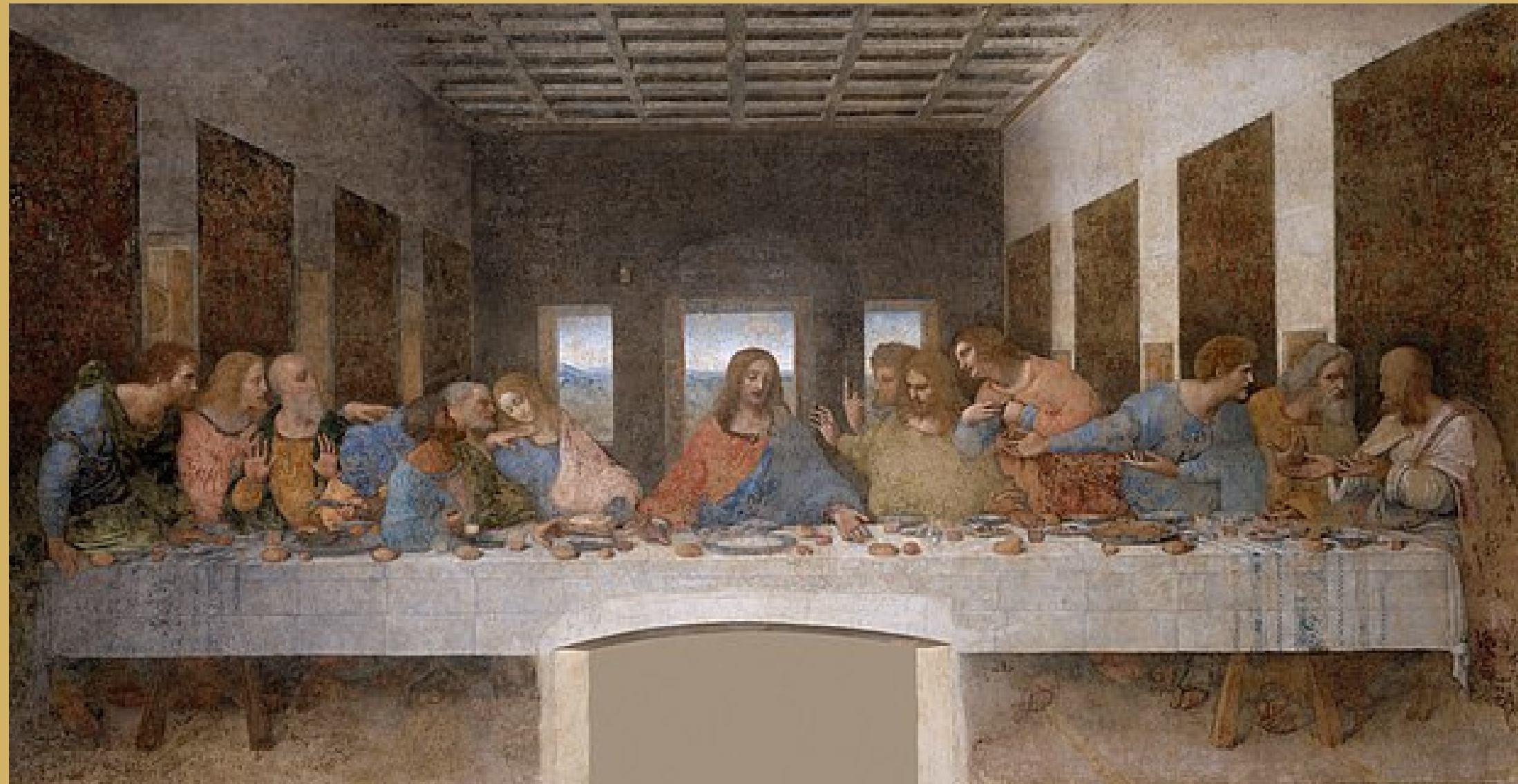
Birth of Venus depicts the goddess Venus arriving at the shore after her birth, when she had emerged from the sea fully-grown. In the centre the newly born goddess Venus stands nude in a giant scallop shell. At the left the wind god Zephyr blows at her, with the wind shown by lines radiating from his mouth. He is in the air, and carries a young female, who is also blowing, but less forcefully. Both have wings. At the right a female figure who may be floating slightly above the ground holds out a rich cloak to cover Venus when she reaches the shore, as she is about to do. She is one of the three Horae or Hours, Greek minor goddesses of the seasons and of other divisions of time, and attendants of Venus. The floral decoration of her dress suggests she is the Hora of Spring.

THE BIRTH OF VENUS BY SANDRO BOTTICELLI



THE LAST SUPPER BY LEONARDO DA VINCI

The painting represents the scene of the Last Supper of Jesus with the Twelve Apostles, as it is told in the Gospel of John – specifically the moment after Jesus announces that one of his apostles will betray him. All twelve apostles have different reactions to the news, with various degrees of anger and shock.



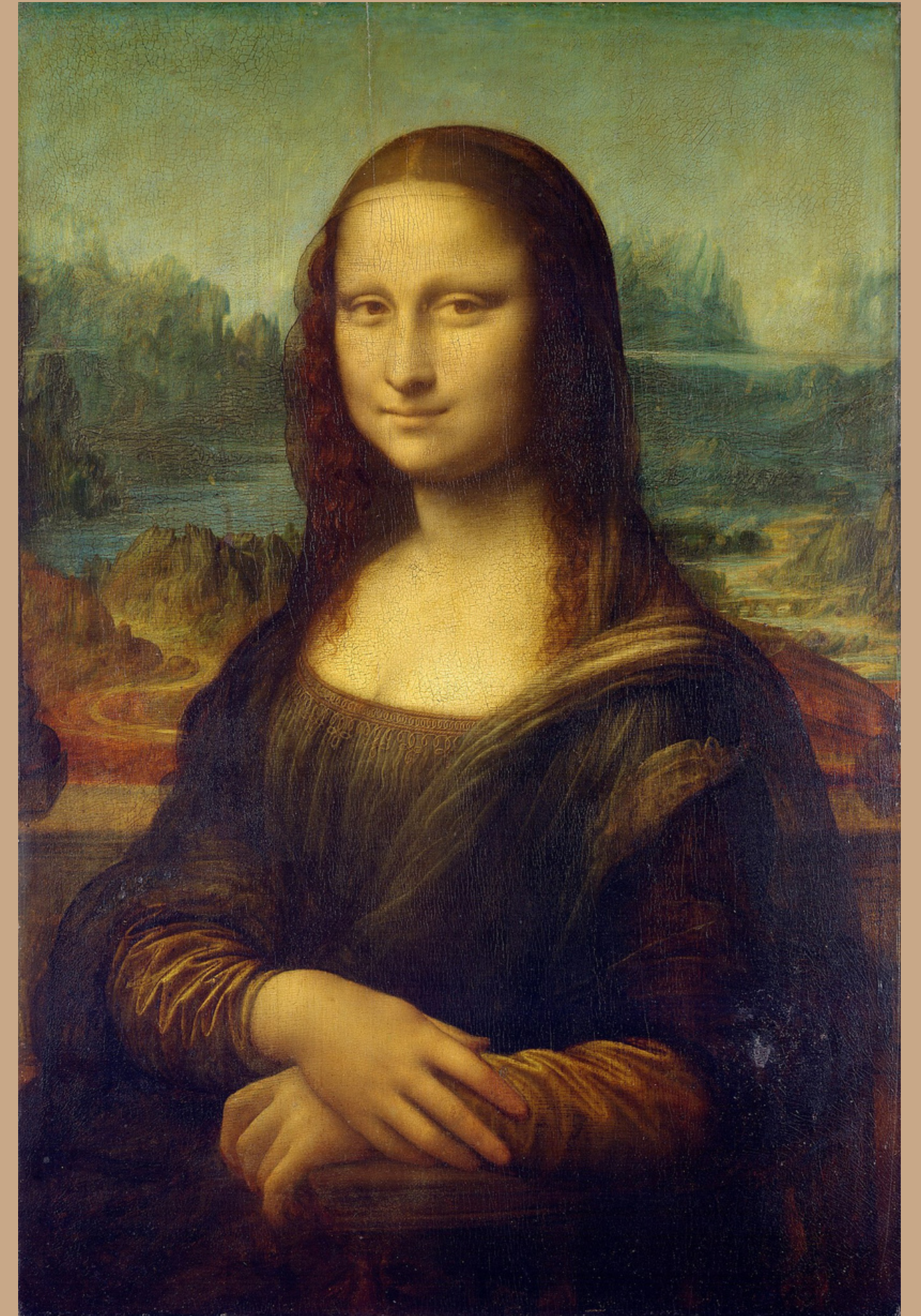
MONA LISA

BY LEONARDO DA VINCI

Considered an archetypal masterpiece of the **Italian Renaissance**, it has been described as "the best known, the most visited, the most written about, the most sung about, the most parodied work of art in the world".

The painting has been definitively identified to depict Italian noblewoman **Lisa Gherardini**.

She was a member of the Gherardini family of Florence and Tuscany. The painting is thought to have been commissioned for their new home, and to celebrate the birth of their second son, Andrea. The Italian name for the painting, La Gioconda, means 'jocund' ('happy' or 'jovial') or, literally, 'the jocund one', a pun on the feminine form of Lisa's married name, Giocondo.



LADY WITH AN ERMINE BY LEONARDO DA VINCI

It depicts a half-height woman turned toward her right at a three-quarter angle, but with her face turned toward her left. The animal in her arms twists in a similar manner, resulting in considerable contrapposto with the lady.

The subject has been identified with reasonable certainty as **Cecilia Gallerani**.

