



— Associated Press

Virgin Mary's image?

A crowd gathers outside a Clearwater building, where believers say they can see the image of the Virgin Mary in the black exterior glass. Others say it is a discoloration in the glass of a finance company. Experts will inspect the building to see if chemical cleansers are the cause. Story, Page A-4.

Thousands go to see vision on office wall

Associated Press

CLEARWATER — It's a Christmas miracle, thousands of believers say — an image resembling the Virgin Mary on the glass side of a building.

Others say the image is a chemical residue or discoloration from sprinklers.

"But it's what you see, it's what's in your heart that counts," said 32-year-old Shelley Davis, who brought her 2-year-old daughter, Danielle, to see it. "She said, 'Oooh, look,' before I even pointed it out."

The image outside Seminole Finance has been drawing crowds since Tuesday, when a customer noticed it and called a television station, which reported it on the news.

At least 60,000 people had visited it by yesterday, said police spokesman Wayne Shelor. Eighteen police officers were on duty, setting up roadblocks and helping people cross the road.

People come in wheelchairs, on crutches and wheeling oxygen canisters, praying the 'Hail Mary,' clutching rosaries and wiping away tears.

Anita Heirs, 34, of Largo, said this was no place for doubters.

"I'm here because I believe," said Heirs, who was hoping for a little divine intervention.

Her mother, Retha Heirs, disappeared 10 years ago on her way to the grocery store. The case remains open.

"If this can appear up here like this, then my mother can reappear," she said.