

A short history of the title *Mary Help of Christians*

- The whole of Christendom was saved by Mary Help of Christians when Catholics throughout Europe prayed the Rosary. The great battle of Lepanto occurred on the 7th of October 1571. For this reason this date has been chosen as the feast of the Holy Rosary. In 1573 Pope Pius V instituted the feast in thanksgiving for the decisive victory of Christianity over Islamism. St. Pius V resolved to add one more title in Litany of Our Lady: *Auxilium Christianorum*, "Help of Christians."

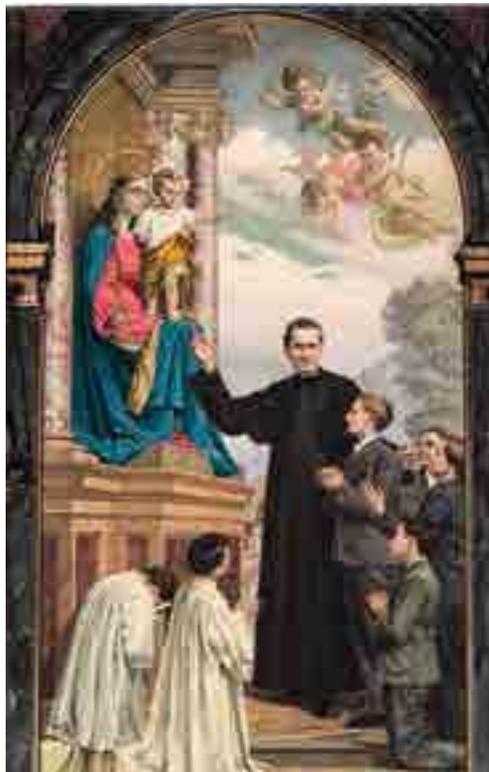
- Near the end of the 17th century, Emperor Leopold I of Austria took refuge in the Shrine of Mary Help of Christians at Pasau, when 200,000 Ottoman Turks besieged the capital city of Vienna, but a great victory occurred thanks to Mary Help of Christians: on the 8th of September, Feast of Our Lady's Birthday, plans were drawn for the battle. On the 12th of September, the Feast of the Holy Name of Mary, Polish King Jan III Sobieski and his army defended Vienna and Christianity against Islam. The King sent to Pope Innocent XI a message of victory over vizier Kara Mustafa. He included the famous words: *Venimus, vidimus, Deus vicit* ("We came, we saw, God conquered"). All Europe had joined with the Emperor crying out "Mary, Help!" and praying the Holy Rosary.

- In 1809, Napoleon's men entered the Vatican and arrested Pius VII. His imprisonment lasted five years. The Holy Father vowed to God that if he were restored to the Roman See, he would institute a special feast in honour of Mary. Military setbacks forced Napoleon to release the Pope, and on the 24th of May 1814, Pius VII returned in triumph to Rome. The Pope decreed that the feast of Mary Help of Christians be kept on the 24th of May.

- Mary Help of Christians is the patroness of Australia (proclaimed on the 17th of July 1916 by Pope Benedict XV) and New Zealand; and since 1924, of China.

St. John Bosco spread devotion to the *Auxilium Christianorum*

- The faithful have frequently witnessed miraculous interventions which prove that the Mother of God is ever ready with her help to repel the enemies of religion.
- St. John Bosco spread devotion to the *Auxilium Christianorum* throughout the world.



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Mary Help of Christians



Auxilium Christianorum

Title

Mary Help of Christians

- The title "Mary, Help of Christians" (in Latin: *Auxilium Christianorum*) honour the Blessed Virgin Mary as the Help of Christians – a title the Mother of God has justly merited by the innumerable favours she has conferred upon Christendom.
- The Holy Church tells us that it is Mary who "alone destroys all heresies throughout the whole world." If public scandals or persecutions, or the tyranny of secular interference, have at times threatened the Church, Mary stretched forth her arm, the obstacles were removed, and the Spouse of Jesus continued her onward march, leaving her foes and her fetters behind her.



Image *Auxilium Christianorum* in Basilica of Mary Help of Christians

The venerator of Mary Help of Christians – St. John Bosco

- The devotion to Mary Help of Christians could have been forgotten had not the Spirit raised up St. John Bosco for the salvation of youth. As a young priest, Don Bosco had promoted the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Mary and to Our Lady of Sorrows, devotions which had been popular for centuries.
- In 1863, a vision of Our Lady appeared to St. Bosco asking him to build a church to honour her as Mary Help of Christians. Pius IX, in a talk with St. Bosco, had shown his predilection for this title of Mary.
- With his strong devotion to Mary Help of Christians and Jesus Christ, he built the church in Turin (Italy) under miraculous circumstances with financial help coming from practically unknown devotees. In spite of numerous obstacles from anti-clerical civil officials, as well as a constant lack of funds, the grand Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Turin was miraculously completed in 1868.
- In the altar, St. Bosco put a beautiful image of Our Lady *Auxilium Christianorum*.



St. Bosco's vision of *Auxilium Christianorum*

- In May 1862 St. John Bosco shared his experience of a vision. He could see a very big ship in the sea which he understood as the Church. There were many smaller ships drawn up to do battle against the big ship, they were the enemies of the Church and persecutions.

"In the midst of the immense expanse of sea, two mighty columns of great height arise a little distance the one from the other. On the top of one, there is the statue of the Immaculate Virgin, from whose feet hangs a large placard with this inscription: Auxilium Christianorum – 'Help of Christians'; on the other, which is much higher and bigger, stands a Host of great size proportionate to the column and beneath is another placard with the words: Salus Credentium – 'Salvation of the Faithful.'"

All the enemy ships moved to attack. Sometimes the large ship, the Church, got large, deep holes in its sides. In a battle the Pope fell gravely wounded and died. The new Pope fastened a chain from the bow of the ship to the column on which stands the host, and fastened a chain from the ship's stern to the column on which stands a statue of Our Lady. All the ships which had fought against the Pope's ship were scattered and broken.

