

About the title of Perpetual Help

- Among Christians, the title "the Mother of Perpetual Help" is one of the better known titles of the Mother of God, especially among the most needy and afflicted who feel the need for love and protection.
- In 1876, Pope Pius IX erected an Archconfraternity in St. Alphonsus' church under the title of Our Lady of Perpetual Help.



• During several centuries the icon of Perpetual Help was known only in Rome. But since 1866 her presence and the devotion have spread worldwide, not only because of the favours granted by Our Lady of Perpetual Help, but also because of the faithful preaching of the Redemptorist Missionaries. A glance at the directories of dioceses all over is sufficient to see that Our Lady's icon is venerated from Vancouver, Canada to Mumbai, Bombay, India.

• In the Pontifical Directory, there is a listing of six religious congregations of Sisters with the name of "Our Lady of Good Help," and three with the title, "Our Lady of Perpetual Help."

The expression on Mary's face is that of a mother who knows pain, and yet, extends her help with serenity and tenderness, as she invites us to obey the Will of God, even when we find it in suffering and the cross, and to offer our lives in service to Him and our neighbour as He did unto death.



Our Lady of Perpetual Help



The Icon of Perpetual Help raises our consciousness of the mysteries of the Redemption in Christ and of the intercession of Mary in favour of those who follow Christ, here in the arms of His Holy Mother.



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The history of the image of Our Lady of Perpetual Help

• The image of Our Lady of Perpetual Help had long been venerated on the Isle of Crete. A merchant acquired the icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Help from the island of Crete and had it shipped to Rome towards the end of the 15th century. During the voyage, a terrible storm arose, threatening the lives of all on board. The passengers and crew prayed to Our Blessed Mother, and were saved.

• On the 27th of March 1499, the portrait of the Virgin of Perpetual Help was carried in triumph through the streets of Rome. The image was housed at the Church of St. Matthew, and became known as “The Madonna of St. Matthew.” Pilgrims flocked to the church for the next three hundred years, and great graces were bestowed upon the faithful.

• During the disturbances of the French Revolution (1789-1793), the French troops occupying Rome destroyed St. Matthew's church. One of the friars secretly had removed the miraculous Madonna. He hid it so well that for sixty years, no one knew what had become of the famous painting.

• In 1865, Pius IX gave orders to have image taken to the Esquiline Hill, in St. Alphonsus Liguori's church, built on the site of the old St. Matthew's.



• On the 26th of April 1866, the Redemptorists in their Church of St. Alphonsus in Rome solemnly enthroned Our Lady of Perpetual Help. From that time on devotion to Our Lady of Perpetual Help has had an extraordinary development.



• The icon depicts our Blessed Mother Mary, under the title “Mother of God,” holding the Child Jesus.

• The Child Jesus contemplates the vision of His future Passion. The anguish He feels is shown by the loss of one of His sandals. Nevertheless, the icon also conveys the triumph of Christ over sin and death, symbolized by the golden background (a sign of the glory of the resurrection) and the manner in which the angels hold the instruments, *i.e.* like trophies gathered up from Calvary on Easter morning.

• In a very beautiful way, the Child Jesus grasps the hand of the Blessed Mother. He seeks comfort from His mother, as He sees the instruments of His passion.

• In iconography, Mary here is represented as the Hodigitria, the one who guides us to the Redeemer. She also is our Help, who intercedes on our behalf with her Son. The star painted on Mary's veil, centred on her forehead, highlights her role in the plan of salvation as both the Mother of God and our Mother.

Graces of the Miraculous Image

• The holy image of Our Lady of Perpetual Help was returned to public veneration on the 26th of April 1866. On that day a solemn procession was held, carrying the icon from the Basilica of St. Mary Major to the Church of St. Alphonsus in Rome:

• On one of the streets along the route of the procession, there lived a seriously ill 4 year old boy who had suffered with a gastric infection and brain haemorrhages for 20 days. He was near death. When the icon passed in front of his house, his mother presented him to the Virgin, exclaiming with tears: "O merciful Mother, heal my son or take him with you to Paradise!" Her prayer was not in vain; that same day the child got better and a few days later was completely cured.

• In another house there was an 8 year old girl who had suffered from paralysis of the legs for 4 years. When the icon passed her house, her mother also asked the Virgin to heal her daughter. At that very moment the girl recovered partial use of her legs. Afterwards, her mother took her to the Church of St. Alphonsus and presented her to Our Lady with great confidence: "O Mother, finish now what you have begun!" To the wonder of those present, her daughter stood up and began to walk on her own.

