

THE MIRACULOUS ICON OF OUR MOTHER OF PERPETUAL HELP

The image of Our Mother of Perpetual Help was venerated centuries ago in Crete, and from there sailed to Rome. Who created it or when, we don't know. A private family held the image until the Blessed Mother appeared to the little girl of the household and told her she wished her picture to be placed in a church "between my beloved Church of St. Mary Major and that of my beloved son, St. John [Lateran]."



On March 27, 1499, the picture was exposed for veneration in St. Matthew Church, midway between Sts. Mary Major and John Lateran, where it remained for three centuries. In 1798 war destroyed the church, but the icon was preserved by Augustinian monks, who took it with them to their new monastery in another part of the city.

The Redemptorists came to Rome in 1855 and built the Church of St. Alphonsus Liguori on the site where St. Matthew Church had been.

They petitioned Pope Pius IX to return the icon to its former home, and the pope agreed, commanding the Redemptorists to "make her known throughout the world." On April 26, 1866, the miraculous icon was carried in solemn procession to the Church of St. Alphonsus, where it has remained ever since.

THE MEANING OF THE ICON

In the Eastern world, religious art is seen as an extension of God's presence in creation. Icons are much more than beautiful images: they're meant to help us connect directly with God. And each element of an icon has a specific meaning.

As you contemplate the icon, its beauty and meaning will slowly unfold before you.

- Mary's eyes, filled with compassion and love, are directed toward us.
- Our Lady is clothed in the colors of virgins (red) and of mothers (blue). These are also royal colors.
- Jesus, depicted as a young boy, wears the colors of a king.
- The star on Mary's veil reminds us that she is the dawn announcing the coming of Christ.
- Our Lady's hands hold her Son securely, and her right hand directs our gaze to Him.
- The Christ Child grasps His mother's hand as though He is frightened by what He sees.
- In His hurry to reach His mother, Jesus has almost lost one of His sandals. He became human, like us, in all things but sin.
- On Our Lady's left and right we see the reasons for Jesus' fear. On the right is the Archangel Gabriel, holding a cross and four nails. On the left is the Archangel Michael, holding a lance, a pole with a sponge, and a vessel of vinegar. This vision of the instruments of the crucifixion has driven the Child to His mother's protective embrace.
- Yet Mary's gaze is fixed on us, her children on earth. She is our source of constant comfort and hope.

A PRAYER TO OUR MOTHER OF PERPETUAL HELP

Most holy Virgin Immaculate, our perpetual help, my Mother Mary: you are the mother of my Lord; the queen of the universe; the advocate, the hope, and the refuge of sinners. I, who am in great need of your Son's grace, have recourse this day to you.

I am most grateful for the many graces you have bestowed upon me in the past. I place in you my prayers for my eternal salvation. Accept me as your child and shelter me under your mantle, you who are the mother of mercy.

From you I ask for a true love of your Son, Jesus Christ. Through you, I hope to die a holy death. My dear Mother, by the love you bear to Almighty God, I pray that you assist me always, but most of all at the last moment of my life.

Mary, conceived without sin, continue to be my Mother of Perpetual Help. Amen.



The Redemptorists

Entrusted since 1866 with the miraculous icon of Our Mother of Perpetual Help

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WHAT IS A NOVENA?



A Novena is a traditional Catholic prayer that continues for nine days and is intended to ask for a particular favor or blessing—or to give thanks for blessings received. The Novena to Our Mother of Perpetual Help is prayed weekly around the world. To make the Novena, pray the three prayers in this pamphlet (each followed by three Hail Marys) for nine consecutive days.

FIRST NOVENA PRAYER

Behold at your feet, O Mother of Perpetual Help, a wretched sinner who has recourse to you and confides in you. O Mother of Mercy, have pity on me. I hear you called by all the refuge and the hope of sinners. Be then my refuge and my hope. Assist me, for the love of Jesus Christ. Stretch forth your hand to a miserable fallen creature who recommends himself to you and who devotes himself to your service forever.

I bless and thank Almighty God, Who in His mercy has given me this confidence in you, which I hold to be a pledge of my eternal salvation. It is true, dearest Mother, that in the past I have miserably fallen into sin because I had not recourse to you. I know that with your help I shall conquer. I know too that you will assist me if I recommend myself to you, but I fear, dear Mother, that in time of danger I may neglect to call on you and thus lose my soul.

This grace, then, I ask of you, and this I beg with all the fervor of my soul, that in all the attacks of hell I may ever have recourse to you. O Mary, help me! O Mother of Perpetual Help, never suffer me to lose my God. Amen.

Pray three Hail Marys.

SECOND NOVENA PRAYER

O Mother of Perpetual Help, grant that I may ever invoke your most powerful name, which is the safeguard of the living and the salvation of the dying. O purest Mary! O sweetest Mary! Let your name henceforth be ever on my lips. Delay not, O Blessed Lady, to help me whenever I call on you, for in all my temptations, in all my needs, I shall never cease to call on you, ever repeating your sacred name, Mary! Mary!

O what consolation, what sweetness, what confidence, what emotion fills my soul when I utter your sacred name or even only think of you. I thank the Lord for having given you, for my good, so sweet, so powerful, so lovely a name. But I will not be content with merely uttering your name. Let my love for you prompt me ever to hail you, Mother of Perpetual Help.

Pray three Hail Marys.

THIRD NOVENA PRAYER

O Mother of Perpetual Help, you are the dispenser of all the gifts which God grants to us miserable sinners, and for this end He has made you so powerful, so rich, and so bountiful in order that you may help us in our misery.

You are the advocate of the most wretched and abandoned sinners who have recourse to you. Come to my aid, dearest Mother, for I recommend myself to you. In your hands I place my eternal salvation and to you I entrust my soul. Count me among your most devoted servants; take me under your protection, and it is enough for me. For if you protect me, dear Mother, I fear nothing: not from my sins because you will obtain for me the pardon of them, nor from the devils because you are more powerful than all hell together, nor even from Jesus, my Judge, because by one prayer from you, He will be appeased.

But one thing I fear—that in the hour of temptation I may through negligence fail to have recourse to you and thus perish miserably. Obtain for me, therefore, the pardon of my sins, love for Jesus, final perseverance, and the grace to have recourse to you, O Mother of Perpetual Help.

Pray three Hail Marys.