

St. George Catholic Church



Our Mother of Perpetual Help

Explanation of the Symbolism in the Icon

Our Lady of Perpetual Help, also known as Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, is a title given to the Blessed Virgin Mary by Pope Pius IX, associated with a celebrated Byzantine icon of the same name dating from the 15th century. This icon has been in Rome since 1499, and is currently in the church of Sant'Alfonso di Liguori all'Esquilino. The image has become very popular among Roman Catholics in particular, and has been very much copied and reproduced.



(1) Meaning of Our Lady of Perpetual Help- Greek initial for Mother of God.

(6) Star on our Lady's veil means she is the star of the sea who brought the light Jesus into this world.

(12) Golden crown placed on the original picture as a token of many miracles wrought by our lady invoked under the title of perpetual help.

(5) Mary's eyes are larger, for in all our troubles, they are turned towards us always.

(4) Mary's mouth is small for silent recollection. She speaks little.

(2) Greek initial for St. Michael, the archangel.

(3) Greek initial for St. Gabriel, the archangel.

(13) Greek initials for Jesus Christ.

(7) Red tunic is the color worn by virgins at the time of Christ (AD33)

(8) Christ's hands turned palms down into his mother's indicate that the grace of redemption is in her keeping.

(10) Dark blue mantle – the color worn by mothers in Palestine means Mary is both virgin and mother of Christ.

(9) Mary's left hand supports Christ possessively. That means she is his mother. It's a comforting hand for everyone who calls on her.

(11) The entire background is gold representing the heaven.

(14) Foot with falling sandal represents Christ's divine nature, barely clinging to earth. The human nature is symbolized in the other foot to which the sandal is more firmly bound. This simply means that Christ has two natures, Human and Divine.

History of the Icon

The earliest documented history of the Our Lady of Perpetual Help icon is sometime in the year 1495. People in Crete venerated Our Lady because numerous prayer requests had been granted to those who were devoted to her. There has been speculation on how a merchant from the island was able to acquire the icon. Regardless of how he had been able to do so, he brought the painting to Rome and fell ill soon after. His dying request to a Roman friend was to have the painting hung in a church as soon as possible. The merchant's friend didn't fulfill his promise until the Virgin appeared in his dream. She instructed him to carry out the last will of his deceased friend. She appeared to him in two subsequent dreams to persuade him to do so. The Virgin also emerged in his young daughter's dream, telling her that the Blessed Mother wants to be placed in a church to be shown for veneration. The image was enshrined at the Church of **St. Matthew the Apostle** in Rome on March 27, 1499. Faithful devotees flocked to the church for the next 300 years.

When French troops invaded Rome in 1798, they destroyed about 30 churches including the Church of St. Matthew. The Augustinian priests in charge of the church were able to hide the image. The painting was first placed in the Church of St. Eusebius and was transferred later to the Church of St. Mary of Posterula. It stayed there for almost 40 years but mostly neglected.

While the **Redemptorists** were building a church in Rome in 1853, they discovered that the site of the new church was close to the Church of St. Mary Posterula, where the painting of Our Lady of Perpetual Help used to be. A young priest, who had been a former altar boy at St. Mary of Posterula, remembered the painting's history and its location. The Redemptorists appealed to Pope Pius IX for the image to be returned to the Blessed Virgin's chosen site.

On December 11, 1865, Fr. Mauron obtained an audience with Pope Pius IX and laid the matter before him. After hearing the story, the Pope was convinced that it was God's Will that the icon again be given public veneration in the location specified by the Blessed Virgin. According to tradition, this was when Pope Pius IX told the Redemptorist Superior General: "Make her known throughout the world!" The painting was relocated to the **Church of St. Alphonsus** on April 26, 1866.

In February 1950, St. George mission was assigned to the Redemptorist Fathers. They started the Novena to Our Mother of Perpetual Help at our parish, and this devotion has continued to the present day.

Opening Hymn (optional)

Immaculate Mary

Immaculate Mary, your praises we sing.
You reign now in Heaven with Jesus our King.

Ave, Ave, Ave, Maria! Ave, Ave, Ave, Maria!

In Heaven the blessed your glory proclaim;
On earth we your children invoke your sweet name.

Ave, Ave, Ave, Maria! Ave, Ave, Ave, Maria!

We pray for our Mother, the Church upon earth,
And bless, Holy Mary, the land of our birth.

Ave, Ave, Ave, Maria! Ave, Ave, Ave, Maria!



Novena to Our Mother of Perpetual Help



Leader: Let us kneel as we gather together to honor our Mother and our Perpetual Help. We recall how she helped others. Her whole life was a lesson in love.

All: Mother of Perpetual Help today we face so many difficulties. Your picture tells us so much about you. It reminds us to reach out and help those in need. Help us understand that our lives belong to others as much as they belong to us. Mary, model of Christian love, we know we cannot heal every ill or solve every problem, but with God's grace, we intend to do what we can. May we be true witnesses to the world that love for one another really matters. May our daily actions proclaim how fully our lives are modeled after yours, Mother of Perpetual Help.

Leader: Mary, you were a woman of steadfast faith. Your faith in Jesus never wavered. Model of all believers, pray to the Holy Spirit for us. Help us not only to accept all your Son teaches us, but to put that teaching into practice.

All: Mother of Perpetual Help as a child, Jesus ran to you for comfort and reassurance. You did not see him as only a frail child. Moved by the Holy Spirit, you accepted Jesus as the Son of the Most High, the long-awaited Messiah. Following your example of faith, help us recognize Jesus in those we meet, especially the poor and the lonely, the sick and the elderly. Keep us always mindful, dear Mother, that whatever we do to the least of our brothers and sisters, we do to your loving Son. May

All: Mary, woman of faith, you pondered and treasured the meaning of God's words and actions in your life. You generously responded to his Word in faith. As we listen to God's Word, help us be attentive to his message. May the Holy Spirit enlighten our understanding and give us the courage to put these words into practice.

Leader: Let us present our petitions: Grant wisdom and guidance to our Holy Father, Pope N., our Bishop N., our priests, and all the leaders of our nation, state, and community.

All: May your mother intercede for us, Lord.

Leader: Grant peace and unity throughout the world, especially in our homes and families.

All: May your mother intercede for us, Lord.

Leader: Grant that young people respond generously to the call of the Holy Spirit in deepening their faith and choosing their vocation in life.

All: May your mother intercede for us, Lord.

Leader: Grant us continued health of mind and body, and help the sick, especially . . . to regain their health according to your Holy will.

All: May your mother intercede for us, Lord

Leader: Grant eternal rest to all our deceased, especially . . . and to the souls of all the faithful departed.

All: May your mother intercede for us, Lord.

Leader: Let us pause now to silently present our own personal petitions to Our Mother.

All: May your mother intercede for us, Lord.

All: Mary, humble handmaid of the Lord, we need your example today to discover God's will in our lives. You always gave God the first place in your life. Just as you pondered his Word in your heart, help each of us to seek his plan in all that we do. Give us the conviction that nothing is more important than doing the will of our heavenly Father. May we spend each moment in loving and pleasing him. Help us follow your example in proclaiming, I am the servant of the Lord, I will what God wills, when he wills it, as he wills it, because he wills it.

Leader: Mother of Perpetual Help, your picture reminds us that we are to carry our cross as Jesus did. With courage, he endured injustice, abandonment and betrayal, pain and suffering, even a criminal's death.

All: Mary, we turn to you as our model in suffering and courage. You shared in your Son's suffering and death. Now you share in his Resurrection. We, too, share in the cross of Christ, and someday, like you, we will share fully in his Resurrection. Help us be patient in our suffering, and to trust in the loving care of our Father in heaven. May those suffering sickness in mind or body experience your Son's healing power. Help us follow his example, and through him, with him, and in him, commend ourselves to the care of our heavenly Father.

Leader: Let us ask Mary to watch over all families.

All: Mother of Perpetual Help, bless our families with your tender, motherly love. May the sacrament of Marriage bring husbands and wives ever closer together that they may always be faithful, and love each other as Christ loves us. Help all mothers and fathers love and cherish the children God has entrusted to them. May they always be models of a truly Christian life. Help all children, that they may love and respect their parents. Inspire all people to value Christian marriage and family life. Give us a sense of responsibility that we may do our part in making our homes havens of love and peace. Mary, our model, help every family grow daily in genuine love for God and neighbor so that justice and peace may flourish everywhere in the human family.

Leader: Let us renew our Act of Consecration.

All: United with the members of the Confraternity of Our Mother of Perpetual Help, here and throughout the world, we consecrate ourselves to your service and promise to frequently receive the sacraments. We beg you to obtain for us the grace to imitate your great servant, Saint Alphonsus, in his love for you and your Son.

Leader: From the first moment of her existence, the Holy Spirit filled Mary with his love. By his power, she became the Virgin-Mother of God. Through the same Holy Spirit, she became the perfect wife, the perfect mother. Let us imitate her generosity, her openness to the Holy Spirit, and say,

All: Come, Holy Spirit. Fill our hearts with your joy and your peace, with your power and your love, with your constant Presence within us.

Leader: Receive the Holy Spirit. May he be with you to strengthen you, above you to protect you, before you to lead you, behind you to encourage you, within you to possess you totally. Through the prayers of our holy patron, Saint Alphonsus, through the intercession of Our Mother of Perpetual Help, through the merits of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, present in the Most Blessed Sacrament of the altar, may the blessing of almighty God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, descend upon you and remain forever.

All: Amen.

Closing Hymn

(optional)

Hail Holy Queen

Hail, Holy Queen enthroned above, O Maria.
Hail, Queen of mercy and of love, O Maria.

Chorus:

Triumph, all ye cherubim, Sing with us, ye seraphim,
Heaven and earth resound the hymn:
Salve, salve, salve Regina!

Our life, our sweetness, here below, O Maria!
Our hope in sorrow and in woe, O Maria!

Chorus

To thee we cry, poor sons of Eve, O Maria!
To thee we sigh, we mourn, we grieve, O Maria!

Chorus

Turn then most gracious Advocate, O Maria!
Toward us thine eyes compassionate, O Maria!

Chorus

The cause of joy to men below, O Maria!
The spring through which all graces flow, O Maria!
Angels, all your praises bring, Earth and heaven, with us sing,

Litany to Our Mother of Perpetual Help

Lord, have mercy on us.
Christ, have mercy on us.
Lord, have mercy on us.
Christ, hear us.
Christ, graciously hear us.
God the Father of heaven, have mercy on us.
God the Son, Redeemer of the world, have mercy on us.
God the Holy Ghost, have mercy on us.
Holy Trinity, one God, have mercy on us.

Holy Mary, pray for us.
Holy Mother of God, pray for us.
Holy Virgin, conceived without sin, pray for us.
Our Lady of Perpetual Help, pray for us.

We sinners call to thee, *O Mary, ever help us.*
That we may love God with our whole hearts, *O Mary ever help us.*
That we may be comfortable in all things to thy Divine Son, *O Mary ever help us.*
That we may have a tender and heartfelt devotion to thee, most holy Virgin, *O Mary ever help us.*
That we may hate with all our strength sin; the only evil, *O Mary ever help us.*
That we may frequently remember our last end, *O Mary ever help us.*
That we may often and; worthily receive the Most Holy Sacrament, *O Mary ever help us.*
That we may avoid with all our strength proximate occasions of sin, *O Mary ever help us.*
That we may not neglect prayer a single day of our lives, *O Mary ever help us.*
That we may have recourse to prayer in the hour of temptation, *O Mary ever help us.*
That we may generously forgive our enemies, and wish well to all men, *O Mary ever help us.*
That we may not defer our conversion from day to day, *O Mary ever help us.*
That we may zealously labor to overcome our bad habits, *O Mary ever help us.*
That we may live and die in the grace of God, *O Mary ever help us.*

In all concerns of soul and body; in sickness and pain, *O Mary ever help us.*
In struggles against the inclinations of corrupt nature, *O Mary ever help us.*

In assaults of evil spirits, *O Mary ever help us.*
In temptations against the holy virtue of purity, *O Mary ever help us.*
In all danger of sinning, *O Mary ever help us.*

When we have reached the end of our earthly course, *O Mary ever help us.*
When lying on our death-bed, and the thought of our approaching dissolution shall fill us with fear and horror, *O Mary ever help us.*
When in the hour of final separation from all, evil spirits shall try to drive us to despair. *O Mary ever help us.*
When the priest of the Lord shall give us the last absolution and blessing, *O Mary ever help us.*
When our relatives and friends surround our bed, weeping and praying for us, *O Mary ever help us.*
When our eyes grow dim and our hearts cease to beat, *O Mary ever help us.*
When we breathe forth our spirit into the hands of our Creator, *O Mary ever help us.*
When our poor soul appears before our Divine Judge, *O Mary ever help us.*
When the terrible judgment is about to be passed, *O Mary ever help us.*
When suffering in the flames of Purgatory, and longing for the vision of God. *O Mary ever help us.*

Lamb of God, Who takes away the sins of the world: Spare us, O Lord.
Lamb of God, Who takes away the sins of the world: Graciously hear us, O Lord.
Lamb of God, Who takes away the sins of the world: Have mercy on us.

V. Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God.

R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

LET US PRAY:

O God, Who hast willed that the Mother of Thy only-begotten Son should be the perpetual help of Christians on earth, grant us the grace to call on her with confidence in all our necessities of soul and body, so that, saved through her protection and assistance, we may be brought to the everlasting vision of Thy Glory in heaven: through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.