

# Our Mother of Perpetual Help

Who do we turn to for help most of our lives? Our mothers, of course, until the Good Lord calls them home.

Mary's greatest title, the one that tells us she is ready to help us at every moment, is Mother. She is the Mother of God—for Jesus is truly God and truly man—and Our Mother as well, for Jesus gave her to us on the cross. The Blessed Virgin Mary is Our Mother offering her perpetual help.

The famous image of Our Mother of Perpetual Help is prayed before by millions of people, especially at Tuesday night novenas, which are held in thousands of churches, very popular devotions which originated in the United States.

Countless miracles have taken place before the original painting, as well as before thousands of duplicates sent all over the world by the Redemptorist Fathers in Rome.



The original, which has a recorded history going back to the 1400's, has been honored in St. Alphonsus Church in Rome for the past 145 years, since 1866.

Pope Pius IX prayed before it as a little boy and as pope he bestowed several honors on the image including fixing the feast of Our Mother of Perpetual Help (now celebrated everywhere on June 27).

From 1499, for 300 years, this image of Our Mother of Perpetual Help hung in St. Matthew's Church in Rome and many cures and requests were granted to the people who came to pray there. After the destruction of that church by Massena under Napoleon Bonaparte, the rescued painting was placed in two successive churches until the Redemptorists built St. Alphonsus on the site next to where St. Matthew's once stood.

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*O Mother of Perpetual Help, we call upon your most powerful name ... [which] is confidence and power.*

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On the day of Our Mother of Perpetual Help's triumphal return to the grounds of her original site in Rome on April 26, 1866, two cures took place—one the healing of a boy with meningitis and the other the cure of a girl with a paralyzed leg.

In the 1870's, devotion to this miraculous image of Our Mother of Perpetual Help spread to the United States, which takes credit for beginning the Tuesday night devotions to her in St. Alphonsus Church in St. Louis.

The prayers of this novena, which are very beautiful, have spread worldwide and are recited at weekly novenas to Our Mother of Perpetual Help. It is almost impossible to find a city without at least one church or more with Our Mother of Perpetual Help devotions on Tuesday evenings for a half hour.

Let's look at some of the beautiful words in this novena.

"Most holy and Immaculate Virgin and our Mother Mary, you are our Perpetual Help, our refuge and our hope. We come to you today. We thank God for all the graces you have obtained for us. Mother of Perpetual Help, we love you. To show our love we promise to serve you always and to do all in our power to lead others to you."

"O Mother of Perpetual Help, we call upon your most powerful name. You are the safeguard of the living and the salvation of the dying. Your name will always be on our lips, especially in time of temptation, and at the hour of our death. Your name is confidence and power."

"O Mother of Perpetual Help, with the greatest confidence we kneel before you. We implore your help in the problems of our daily life. Trials and sorrows often depress us; reverses of fortune and painful privations bring misery into our lives; everywhere we meet the cross. Have pity on us, compassionate Mother. Take care of our needs, free us from our sufferings or if it be the will of God that we should suffer still longer, grant that we may endure all with love and patience. These graces we ask, trusting not in our merits but in your love and patience. These graces we ask, trusting not in our merits but in your love and power, O Mother of Perpetual Help."

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*O Mother of Perpetual Help ... take care of our needs, free us from our sufferings or if it be the will of God that we should suffer still longer, grant that we may endure all with love and patience.*

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In one of the concluding prayers, we pray:

"O Mother of Perpetual Help, you are both rich and generous. You distribute all the gifts that God grants us. You are the hope of sinners. Come, then, dear Mother, for we turn to you. In your hands is salvation and we are in your hands. We are your children. Take care of us, dear Mother."

And she does!

Let's look at the image itself! Our Mother of Perpetual Help is holding the child Jesus, who is looking over His shoulder at St. Gabriel holding the cross and nails. The other archangel is St. Michael holding the lance and spear with the vessel of gall and vinegar of Christ's Passion on the cross. All the letters are in Greek. The initials ICXC by the Child Jesus identify Him as Jesus Christ, while the initials by Our Mother identify her as Mother of God.

A sandal dangles from the foot of the Child Jesus as He grips the hand of His Mother and gazes sideways at the instruments of torture, the cross and nails.

Mary's head gently touches that of her Son, just as she gently touches all of us who turn to Our Mother of Perpetual Help.