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The Story of
Perpetual Help



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*Mother of Perpetual Help
Pray for Us.*

The Story of
Perpetual Help

BY THE
REV. CLARENCE A. SEIDEL, C.S.S.R.



BASED UPON THE AUTHENTIC WORK
"MATER DE PERPETUO SUCCURSU"

OF THE
REV. CLEMENT M. HENZE, C.S.S.R.
ROME, ITALY

Nihil obstat.

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The Story of Perpetual Help

Our Lady's Most Popular Picture

"Not only art Thou prompt to help
The dwellers of the Roman lands,
But e'en the world at large, where stands
Thy picture beautiful."

THUS sings the poet when he recalls the world-wide conquest of our Lady's most popular picture, the miraculous picture of Perpetual Help. And true, indeed, is his song; for the sun shines on no land where our Lady's picture is not enshrined. Perpetual Help smiles on the icy snows of Siberia, children venerate it on the burning sands of Africa, the almond eye of Japan looks lovingly upon it and says, "It is beautiful." The Americas, both North and South, count it as their most precious heritage. France, England, Ireland, Germany, Italy—in fact, all Europe joins in the melodious harmony of praise to our Mother of Perpetual Help.

Numerous confraternities, totalling some 5,000,000 members, have been established throughout the world and are associated with the Archconfraternity in Rome.

Schools and churches have been dedicated to the Mother of Perpetual Help. Thousands of churches and chapels have a Perpetual Help shrine. France alone has enshrined the picture in some 12,000 churches and chapels.

All the rooms (85) occupied by the Zouave soldiers, more commonly known as the Papal Guard, have the picture hanging on the walls.

Many books, pamphlets, periodicals, magazines have been published in its honor. To count the number of pictures, medals, statues of Perpetual Help that have been sent all over the globe were impossible. One might form some faint idea of this wonderful distribution, were he to imagine the sky as a mirror and each star a reflection of a picture on earth.

The popularity of the picture may also be gleaned from the examples of several holy Pontiffs. Pius IX had the picture in his private chapel; he was the first to have his name inscribed in the records of the Archconfraternity; and was always delighted when people brought him pictures of Perpetual Help to be blessed. When the Catholics of Zhitomir, Russia, asked him for a copy of the most popular picture of our Lady in Rome, he sent them the picture of Perpetual Help. Leo XIII kept the picture constantly on his desk. Pius X sent this picture as a gift to the Empress Taitou of Abyssinia; and annexed an indulgence of 100 days to the recitation of the aspiration: "Mother of Perpetual Help, pray for us." Benedict XV placed the picture above his throne, and had it struck on the medal commemorating the Jubilee Year of 1916. Pius XI, now gloriously reigning, decreed the picture to be the official seal of the Pontifical Mission for Russia.

Following the examples of the Holy Pontiffs, Catholics everywhere have enshrined the picture both in their hearts and their homes. They need our Lady's protection; they know the picture is miraculous; they find in it an appeal to the heart which is ever seeking love, strength, and consolation in the warfare of life; and they draw trust and confidence from its very title, Perpetual Help. These are some of the reasons why the miraculous picture of our Lady has become her most popular picture throughout the Catholic world.

The Apostolic Masterpiece and Perpetual Help

PARENT traits are often found in the offspring. This fact enables us to trace the origin of Perpetual Help down the centuries to Apostolic times, to the time when St. Luke the Evangelist painted his masterpiece, the Hodegetria. This painting of our Lady, sad to relate, was destroyed on May 30, 1453 by the ruthless soldiers of Mohammed II. History happily preserves for us a description of the painting.

The Virgin Mother is painted standing, but only the upper half of her body is visible; large eyes; elegantly arched eyebrows; long, straight nose; small mouth; long tapering fingers. Her garments are neat and modest: a tunic reaches to the neck, a mantle covers the head, a finely woven coiffure catches up the hair. She holds the Infant Jesus, whose entire figure is seen, in her left hand, while her right lays on her breast. The Infant looks straight out from the picture; He holds a scroll in His left hand; He lifts His right hand as if to teach or to bless. He wears a tunic bound with a cincture, and over this a large mantle or cloak.

In the above description we can see a resemblance to Perpetual Help. There are differences, however, that make Perpetual Help more attractive, artistic, and instructive. To illustrate: Our Lady's head inclines sweetly towards her Son, a feature that lends to Mary's posture an appearance far more tender and compassionate. To the royal majesty of her countenance is added a most profound sorrow, an effect produced by her half-closed eyes indicative of shedding tears.

Greater differences appear in the portrayal of the Divine Child. The position of His body is so proper to our picture that it is found in no other. The Child turns His head outward where He is seriously and attentively contemplating some object. His body is so artfully bent towards His Mother's breast, that these two holy Persons appear as if contained in the outlines of one figure. Both His hands are joined in His Mother's right. His legs are crossed, and the right foot, starting out suddenly from under His garment, strikes the left with such a shock that the left sandal is loosened, and is about to fall.

These were changes, to be sure, but changes that brought perfection and beauty and love; changes that eclipsed the splendor that was. St. Luke's Hodegetria has passed away; it was but the bud, ours the blossom; the dawn, ours the sunset; the mother, ours the daughter—but the daughter of whom the poet sings:

“O daughter fairer far than thy fair mother.”

The Picture Described

THE original picture of Perpetual Help is painted in water-color, after the Byzantine style, on a piece of hard, enduring nut-wood, twenty-one inches long and seventeen wide.

The chief character in the picture is the Blessed Virgin Mary, represented as the Mother of God, the Theotokos of Ephesus. This we learn from the Greek letters that appear above her shoulders. Over her right shoulder appear the letters "MR", abbreviated from "Meter", meaning *Mother*; over her left shoulder appear the letters "Th U", abbreviated from "Theou", meaning *of God*. Putting both together we have "Mother of God". She is painted in half-figure, in a standing posture, holding the Child gracefully though securely in her left arm. Her face is oval, complexion olive, eyes brown, arched over by big brown eye-brows, finely drawn lips, small mouth, fingers slender and tapering. She is portrayed as the ideal type of Oriental beauty. She wears a red tunic, covered by a bluish-purple mantle, bordered with gold and neatly lined with green. A white-streaked coiffure of green holds back her hair. On her forehead appear an eight pointed, well-defined star, and highly ornamental cross. The bejeweled crowns were not in the original picture; but added only after many years.

Opposite the Christ Child's head appear the Greek letters, "IS ChS", abbreviated from "Iesous Christos", meaning *Jesus Christ*. He looks outward to contemplate some frightening object. His tiny well-formed hands clutch in a help-imploring grasp the extended right hand of His Mother. In the sudden twist of His body the legs are crossed, and the sandal falls but is caught by a tiny strap. His features resemble somewhat those of His Mother: full round face, curved eye-brows, eyes quick and alert, long nose, small mouth, high forehead, and thick, curly hair. He wears a long green tunic, girded with a carmine sash. A yellowish-brown cloak hangs over the shoulder.

The character to the left of the picture is the Archangel

Michael; the one to the right is the Archangel Gabriel. This we know from the abbreviations of their names, namely, "O AR M", "O Archaggelos Michael", and "O AR G", "O Archaggelos Gabriel". The Archangels are attired in violet tunics. Michael's mantle and head veil are green, while Gabriel's are violet. Gabriel carries an ancient Greek cross, with four nails. Michael holds the lance, the sponge-tipped reed, and the "vessel full of vinegar".

Real Meaning

EVERY picture has a meaning. The real meaning of the picture of Perpetual Help is contained in the following poem, originally written in Greek, which appears on some ancient pictures.

"Gabriel, who first proclaimed: 'Hail, full of grace'
Now comes with Calv'ry's cross and cruel nails;
Heaven's God, a mortal Child, first glimpses Death!
And choking fright His human heart assails."

A study of the picture and of this poem gives us a clear idea of what the artist tried to portray. Two Archangels (only Gabriel is mentioned in the poem) drop down from Heaven carrying the instruments of Christ's future Passion and Death. At sight of these instruments "Heaven's God", now "a mortal Child", with all humanity's frailties and emotions, "first glimpses Death and choking fright His human heart assails." He trembles and grows afraid. He turns at once to His Mother, clutches her hand with both His own, as if to make doubly sure of her protection, and implores her help; for every mother to every child is perpetual help; she can help it, for so it believes, in any and every emergency; and somehow she always does. Thus we see the artist sought to impress upon us the thought that our Divine Savior, even as a Child, was fully acquainted with His future Passion and Death; and that He found strength to endure it in His Mother's presence.

St. Alphonsus has written words that aptly described the picture's significance: "The prophet Isaias says of our Lord

that He was 'a man of sorrows, acquainted with infirmity', because this Man was created on purpose to suffer, and from His infancy began to endure the greatest sorrows any man ever suffered. He did not pass a moment of His life without sorrow and anguish; for even from a child He was afflicted by the foresight of all the sufferings and ignominy that He would have to endure during His life, and especially at His death, when He was to close that life immersed in a tempest of sorrow and opprobrium. Even from the womb of Mary, Jesus Christ accepted obediently the sacrifices which His Father desired Him to make. So that even from the womb of Mary He foresaw the scourges and presented to them His flesh; He foresaw the thorns and presented to them His head; He foresaw the blows and presented to them His cheeks; He foresaw the nails and presented to them His hands and His feet; He foresaw the cross and offered His life. Hence it is true that even from His earliest infancy our Blessed Redeemer, every moment of His life, suffered a continual martyrdom; and He offered it every moment for us to His Eternal Father."

Mary, too, was well aware of Her Child's future sufferings from the prophetic words of the aged Simeon: "Behold this child is set for the fall, and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted; and thy own soul a sword shall pierce."

There is also a similarity between our picture and what transpired in the Garden of Gethsemane. In the Garden Christ was afflicted almost to death when He beheld in vision the terrible tortures of His Passion and Death. "My soul," He said, "is sorrowful even unto death." The picture shows the Child trembling and affrighted at the thought of His future Passion and Death. In the Garden an angel appeared to comfort Christ when "His sweat became as drops of blood, trickling down upon the ground." In the picture angels bespeak courage and comfort. In the Garden Christ grew weary and sought consolation from His disciples; but He found them asleep. In the picture He turns to His Mother, but She seems

more concerned about Her adopted children than about Her Son. She looks at us and begs us not to wound Her Son by sin.

“And for Him thine eyes are pleading,
While to us they look and cry:
‘Sinners, spare my Child!
Your Savior seek not still to crucify’”.

Symbolic Meaning

BESIDES the real meaning of a picture, there is also the symbolical meaning. Symbolism, derived from the Greek, may be defined as the sign-language of art. It consists of colors, gestures, objects, and drapery. Perpetual Help is replete with symbolism.

The *gold background* signifies Heaven. St. John saw Heaven in a vision, and said: “The City itself was of pure gold.”

The various *colors* have the following meanings: white, purity and innocence; red, sacrifice; green, eternal hope; brown, humility; purple, royalty.

Mary’s *extended right arm* signifies Her powerful intercession. This thought comes from Holy Scripture. “Remember,” says Moses, “the Lord thy God brought thee out of Egypt with a stretched-out arm.” Her *open hand* shows the gesture of one pleading. “I stretched forth my hands to Thee; hear me speedily, O Lord,” cried David. It also indicates her willingness to help us. “She hath opened her hands to the needy.”

It was an ancient custom to portray Mary with large eyes and a small mouth to symbolize that she had “very large eyes in her soul for contemplation, but a very small mouth for talking.”

The *star* in Mary’s forehead recalls her title of “Star of the Sea” and reminds us of that beautiful hymn:

“Hail, foamy ocean’s Star,
Hail, heav’nly Queen!
Oh, be our guide
To endless joys serene.”

The *cross* on her forehead bespeaks the life-long sufferings of Mary at the thought of Her Child's future Passion and Death.

The *joining of hands* seems to signify the perfect conformity of Mary's will with Her Son's, and that together with Him, she participated in the work of the Redemption.

The *under-crossing of the Child's right leg* seems to recall the story of Ephraim and Manasses. When Joseph, the son of the Patriarch Jacob, placed his own two sons, Ephraim and Manasses, before him to be blessed, Jacob crossed his hands, putting "his right on Ephraim, the younger brother, and his left on Manasses, who was the elder." This signified that Manasses, though the first born and entitled to Jacob's inheritance, was rejected, and Ephraim became the heir. When we reflect that Manasses represents the Jewish nation and Ephraim the Gentile nations, we can easily understand that by this crossing of his hands Jacob typified the rejection of the Jewish people and the acceptance of the Gentile people by God.

The *falling sandal* seems to be a warning to the sinner not to sin again, lest like the sandal he fall away from God, and be lost.

The *uncovered heel* hints at the continual presence of Satan. "Thou shalt lie in wait for his heel." The Evil Spirit is ever lying in wait for us to lead us into sin. But if we pray to Jesus and Mary, we shall not be conquered by him.

The Child's *sash* or girdle signifies chastity. "Let your loins be girt." If we would preserve this delicate virtue, we must bind ourselves in chains of prayer and penance.

The *crowns* remind us of our heavenly reward. "I have fought a good fight," cries St. Paul, "I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. As to the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice, which the Lord, the just Judge, will render me in that day."

The *lily-like design* of the hanging ornaments on Mary's sleeve recall to mind the words of Cornelius a Lapide: "As the lily is a remedy against serpents and venomous things, so

is the invocation of Mary a specific remedy by which we may overcome all temptations, and especially those against purity, as all find who put it into practice."

Finally the *veiled hands* of the angels inculcate reverence for holy things.

When we discover such an amount of meaning in this picture of Perpetual Help, we naturally think of the words of Gregory the Great: "What a writing is to those who read, that a picture is to the unlettered who behold it."

Sister Pictures

THERE are many pictures dispersed throughout the world which at first sight appear to be Perpetual Help pictures. But a close and careful examination of these pictures shows them to be merely copies or reproductions of the original painting of Perpetual Help. Perpetual Help was their inspiration. Like all masterpieces, so Perpetual Help was copied over and over again; artists trying to reproduce its beauty and charm: all of them failed. This was due to the fact that they tried to improve on the work of a master; they tried to gild a lily.

Date of Picture

TO determine the exact date of the picture of Perpetual Help is impossible, for no records exist to give us information. The only date we have concerning its early existence is found in an authentic statement that the picture "was placed in St. Matthew's church in 1499." But the picture was venerated on the Isle of Crete years before that. Some who have studied the picture, its theme, its art, its probable master-artist, claim for the picture a date as early as the Thirteenth century. Suffice it to say, that it breathes the spirit of the glorious Middle Ages, the ages of faith.

Birthplace of the Picture

THE birthplace of the picture of Perpetual Help was the once famous Isle of Crete. The Isle that received the faith from the great Apostle of the Gentiles, St. Paul. On this lonely Isle in the heart of the Mediterranean Sea the picture was conceived and immortalized in colors. And there it would have remained even unto this day, perhaps, had our Lady not become displeased with the Cretans on account of their long, open and obstinate rebellion against Christ's Vicar on earth, the Pope of Rome. But even as of old there went forth from the plains of Judea the Christ to dwell in all the tabernacles of the world, so too there went forth from the Isle of Crete the picture of Perpetual Help to be enshrined in countless churches, homes and hearts.

The Artist

THE name of the artist who wrought such a miracle in colors as Perpetual Help, has been lost to posterity. Perhaps his humility restrained him from painting his name on the picture, as many did at that time, wishing only that our Lady be known and loved and revered throughout the world. Some have suggested the name of Andreas Rico de Candia as the artist; but proofs are lacking. All we really know about the artist, we glean from his work itself. He must have been an original thinker to conceive the beautiful theme of Perpetual Help; he must have been an expert at his art, as we see from his skillful painting. One authority says: "There is a detail in your picture which is quite remarkable and which, in default of other proofs, would, because of its extreme difficulty, stamp it as the work of a master. This detail is the foreshortening of the sole of the Infant's foot: a piece of work so highly successful that it evidences a profound knowledge of foreshortening, one of the most difficult tasks to perform in painting." Finally he must have been a very pious man, an artist of whom we may say: "This holy genius prayed while he painted, and painted while he prayed." Whoever

he may have been, may our Lady bless him; and may she inspire others to paint, not on canvas or wood, but on the fibres of the human heart her holy picture of Perpetual Help, and the soul-saving lessons it teaches.

The Historical Tablet of Perpetual Help

FOR three centuries (1499-1798) there hung before the miraculous picture of the Mother of Perpetual Help in St. Matthew's Church the following account of the picture's early history:—

“How the Picture of the Virgin Mary was brought to this church of St. Matthew, the Apostle

“A certain merchant who was a native of Crete stole this picture of the Virgin, which had wrought many miracles in a church of that island. With the picture concealed among his wares, he boarded a ship and set out to sea. But soon a great storm arose, and all the sailors began to despair of their safety, Though they knew nothing of the picture on board, they prayed most fervently to God and the Virgin to be saved from the impending danger. And as it was God's will, they reached the port which they sought.

“A year later, the merchant came to Rome, bringing the picture along with him. There he was laid low by a malignant disease. Immediately he summoned to his bedside a Roman friend of his with whom he was well acquainted; he asked his friend to care for him in his present illness, promising at the same time to return the favor, should God see fit to restore his health. The Roman received the merchant into his house, and did all in his power to relieve his every want. But the disease continued to grow more violent. Seeing that his last day was approaching, the sick man called his friend and, with tears in his eyes, besought him to grant his one last request. The Roman promised that he would refuse him nothing. Having obtained this assurance the merchant divulged the entire story of the picture; how he had stolen it from a church where

it had wrought many miracles; and that it was to be found among his effects. 'Because of this I beg of you,' he said, 'when death which is so near shall have deprived me of the power of taking the picture where I would—I beg of you to put it in some church where, you think, there is a place more appropriate for such a picture.'

"After the merchant's death, the picture was found among his belongings. But the wife of the dead man's friend prevailed upon her husband by her entreaties not to take the picture out of the house. Instead she placed it in her bedroom, and kept it there for nine months.

"The Blessed Virgin, however, counselled the Roman in a vision not to keep the picture, but to put it in some more honorable place. He neglected to do so. A certain period of time having elapsed, the Virgin returned and advised him as before, saying, that he should not keep the picture in his house. But this apparition he likewise disregarded. Wherefore the Virgin admonished him again, adding, that if he did not take the picture to some church he would die a miserable death. Whereupon the Roman began to fear. Next morning he related this whole occurrence to his wife, and begged her to donate the picture to some church. In reply his wife declared that she was astonished at his saying such silly things. 'Why', she said, 'I am not an infidel but a Christian; and besides, we are not the only ones who keep a picture like this in their house: in fact, she said, 'no Christian is of so evil a life as not to have a picture of the Virgin, or of Christ Crucified, or some other picture of this kind in his house.' With this the Roman submitted to his wife.

"The Virgin again appeared to the Roman and said: 'Behold, several times have I warned you, and even tried to frighten you with threats, so that you might remove me from this place; but you would not heed me. It is now necessary, therefore, that you depart first, so that I may thereafter find a more suitable abode'. At that moment the Roman was delivered up to a horrible disease, and died.

"The Virgin then appeared in a vision to the Roman's six-

year old daughter, saying: 'Go and admonish your mother and grandfather, saying to them: "*Holy Mary of Perpetual Help* commands you to take her out of your house, otherwise you shall all die at once."' The girl recounted the apparition to her mother, and her mother hearing it began to tremble, for she, too, had had a similar vision: and realizing that she had been the cause of her husband's death, she began to weep. At the same time she firmly resolved to remove the picture from her house. But a neighbor of hers, seeing her weeping inquired after the reason. She told her all about her husband's visions, and how he, because she had opposed him, had disregarded them, and as a result died. She confessed therefore that she was lamenting and weeping because she had been the cause of her husband's death. To this her neighbor replied, saying: 'You are mistaken. Why it is foolish to believe such things. The Virgin Mary is in heaven and does not care what we do with her painted pictures here below. Why, if you were to put it into the fire, the fire would burn it up just like any other piece of wood. And if you are so timid, give it to me.' In a similar strain she continued to heap insulting slurs upon the picture. When this neighbor returned home that evening, she was stricken with a miraculously-sent infection. But on making a solemn promise to the picture she was cured.

"Finally, the Blessed Virgin appeared a second time to the above-mentioned little girl, commanding her to tell her mother to place her picture between St. Mary Major's and St. John Lateran's in a certain church dedicated to St. Matthew, the Apostle. The mother did as she was told, and sent for the Augustinian Friars who were then in charge of that church. In the presence of the clergy and all the people, they removed the picture to St. Matthew's Church, where, on that same day, this miracle — the first to happen — occurred: A man who was so paralyzed in both his right arm and side that he could scarcely move, by humbly recommending himself to God and the Virgin, and promising a votive offering, was instantly cured.

“In this manner the picture of the most Blessed Virgin was enshrined in the above-mentioned church of St. Matthew, the Apostle, on the 27th of March, 1499, in the pontificate of Our most holy Father and Lord in Christ, of our Lord Pope Alexander VI, in the seventh year of his pontificate.”

The Historical Tablet Explained

THE name of the church in Crete where this picture was enshrined and from which it was stolen by the unnamed merchant is unfortunately not given in the historical account; hence we do not know its name.

What motive led the merchant to steal the picture, we do not know either; it might have been greed or fear. Fear lest the picture be desecrated by the Turks, for which there does not seem to be sufficient evidence. Or greed, hoping to sell the picture to some church in Rome for a considerable sum. “Those were the times,” writes Carucci, “when occurred in Christendom what was called the hunt for relics. A Christian city that did not possess a relic of some Saint seemed unworthy of the name. Not seldom were relics stolen, and in stealing them, they did not refrain from using means that were both violent and deceptive.” Another reason for believing that the merchant stole the picture is the fact that he made no mention of the picture being on board when the ship was in danger. “He feared,” says the Rev. B. D’Orazio, C.S.S.R., “lest his fellow-voyagers would consider the storm a punishment for his crime, and would cast him, like Jonas of old, into the raging sea.”

The exact date the picture came to Rome, we do not know. But we do know that it came at a most critical period of her history, that period commonly designated as the Renaissance or the rebirth of letters, when men misguided in their sanguine zeal and over-respect for the past, sought to overthrow Christianity’s grand culture and bring back the wanton days of Paganism. In Pagan times, they said, the arts flourished, learning was esteemed, letters were honored and sung.

So they hastened back to the art that was Rome and the culture that was Greece. In their wild enthusiasm to drink at the fountainheads of art and culture, they overlooked the poison that lurked in their limpid waters. They drank, and drank deep, and felt refreshed from their drinking. But alas! only too late did they discover their mistake. Conquered by their own folly they lay, like the slain upon the battlefield, victims to vice and sin. Christ they had forgotten; His Teaching they had spurned. Instead of worshipping the One, True, Holy God, they worshipped pagan poets and pagan philosophers. Like the widow bewailing the glory that was once Jerusalem's, Rome, Christian Rome, looked on and wept; and tears, great scalding tears, were wrung from her eyes as she watched, impotent, the blood-stained hands of Immorality pluck the heart of virtue from the sheep of Christ. Then it was that She "who alone is the destroyer of all heresies in the entire world" appeared upon the scene. Hearts were gladdened and faces smiled; prayers, joyous, grateful prayers sounded from every lip, for She had come, She who was their strength, their life, their hope, in fine, their Mother of Perpetual Help. She would help them and She did. The evil She uprooted, the vice She put to flight, the sin She blotted out,—ah who can tell? Who can tell the souls She saved, the faith She excited, the hearts She quickened into glowing life? And as She did then, She still does today wherever Her beautiful name of Perpetual Help is invoked.

It may seem strange to some that Heaven should have intervened with so many apparitions (seven in all) just for the sake of a painted picture; and they might even smile at its seeming absurdity. But we would caution them against too hasty a judgment. God's ways are not our ways. When we act we know not the future; God does. He knows perfectly well the outcome of His deed. With His all-seeing eye He looked down the years; He saw the inestimable blessings, the numberless graces, the strength of soul, the patience, the hope, the inspiration this picture of Perpetual Help was to bring into the World; He saw sinners turned from sin and unbe-

lievers embracing the Faith; He saw the healing of wounds, the flight of human ills. He saw virtue lauded, purity practiced, authority respected; and last of all, but most of all, He saw, and was pleased with the sight, the spark that was to consume the world with love for its God and the Mother of that God. All this He saw, and more. And how true the vision!

Indeed men may have thought those apparitions strange, but there was one who by reason of his superior intellect thought otherwise. Satan saw clearly what glory and honor would accrue to God from the public exposition of such a picture, and so he left no means untried in his eager attempt to prevent its veneration. Had the storm at sea sunk the ship with the picture, he would have triumphed; had the Roman's wife remained firm in her will not to part with the picture; and had that malicious woman succeeded in casting it into the flames, he would have triumphed again, and his triumph would have been complete. But he was fighting the Queen of Heaven who was destined to crush his head; he calculated not his foe; he forgot that she was "as strong as an army in battle-array," and he lost. Three centuries later in 1798, when the French destroyed St. Matthew's Church in Rome, he thought he had won at last. Its shrine demolished, the Picture was forgotten. But scarce half a century passed when Perpetual Help arose from her sepulchre and mounted once more her throne atop the hills of Rome, and there She still remains, true to her title, true to her office of Perpetual Help.

The Title of Perpetual Help

GREAT names come from heaven, the name of Jesus came on angel lips. "Thou shalt call his name Jesus," said the angel to the Virgin, "he shall be great—and God shall give him a throne—and he shall reign forever." The name of Perpetual Help was also heaven-sent; it fell not from angel lips, however, but from Mary's very own. To her little messenger she revealed it: "Holy Mary of Perpetual Help." And, but

for her modesty, she might have added: it shall be great—and God shall give it a throne—and it shall reign forever. How true is all this. Perpetual Help is surely great; it ranks high among the world's great Madonnas; God gave it a throne on one of Rome's eternal hills, the Esquiline; and there is no doubt that it shall reign there forever. Yes, from Mary's own lips the title of Perpetual Help was first heard on earth. How often it has been uttered since! A beautiful title it is, and one we never tire repeating. Perpetual Help—what a name it is! It is power in battle, and glory in gain; the echo of goodness, the melody of love, the song in the lonely night; it is faith, it is hope, it is that the world holds dear; it is purity to virgins, holiness to priests, patience to mothers, kindness to fathers; a spur to the young on the way of perfection, the balm of old age in the winter of life; it is cheer, it is bliss, it is heaven itself—for Perpetual Help is Mary, and she, we sing, is the "cause of our joy."

Mary chose that title herself. Such a statement naturally arouses our curiosity, and, like inquisitive children seeking to know a mother's heart, we innocently ask the reason why. The answer, we believe, is to be found in the picture itself. There we see Mary portrayed as a loving Mother—and all mothers are perpetual help to their children. But the only way Mary can perpetually help her children is by her constant intercession—that is symbolized by her outstretched arm. And, then, the reason why God wills to be dependent, so to speak, on Mary's intercession for the distribution of His graces, is to be sought in her joint sufferings with her Son, Jesus. To find proof of these assertions, let us examine the picture.

If we look at our picture, we shall see that Mary is vividly represented there as a loving Mother; and at once, as we said above, the thought flashes across our minds that every mother to every child is perpetual help. Every child, by some inexplicable instinct implanted in its very nature, seeks help in all emergencies from its mother. Should a child desire anything, it runs to mother. Should a child stub its toe or bruise its finger, it runs to mother. Its mother may not be a doctor,

yet the child feels certain its mother can help it, and, somehow or other she usually does.

If then Mary is our Mother, she, like all mothers, must wish to be her children's perpetual help. But Mary, we all know is our Mother. For did she not give birth to Jesus, Who, because He assumed our human nature, is rightly called our Brother,—“The firstborn among many brethren,” as St. Paul calls Him. And if Jesus is our Brother, Mary must also be our Mother. Again, did not Jesus decree from the throne of His bleeding cross that Mary was to be the Mother of all men! To her He said: “Behold thy son.” And turning to St. John who stood there as the representative of all mankind, He addressed those immortal words, “Son, behold thy Mother.”

How fitting was it that God should confer upon Mary the dignity and office of universal motherhood on the blood-stained stones of Calvary. For it was there especially that by the voluntary oblation she made of her own sufferings for man's salvation, she merited this exalted honor. But God did not rest with this: He would honor Mary more. So He decreed, out of the goodness of His Heart, that, as a reward for her sufferings, she should become “the dispenser of all the gifts which God grants to men.” Hence, Pius X wrote: “Because of Mary's share with the sorrows of Christ, and the union of her will with His, she has most justly merited to become the dispenser of all the gifts which Jesus purchased by His sufferings and death.” Pope Benedict XV also declares “that all the graces which we receive from the treasury of the Redemption come to us through the ministering Hands of our Sorrowful Mother.”

It is evident, therefore, that if we wish to attain Heaven, we must have constant recourse to the Mother of God, ceaselessly begging her to help us by her all-powerful intercession. Like children, we must run to her for perpetual help.

But I hear you say, we cannot run to Mary as a child runs to its mother; Mary is no longer upon earth. And you are right. Mary does not now, indeed, live among men. That is

precisely why she has given us her picture. In her picture we see clearly reflected what she is doing for us in Heaven. See how we are reminded of her continual intercession with God for us by her outstretched arm and open hand—the gesture of one pleading. Indeed she would be untrue to her title did she not help us perpetually by her intercession. If for a moment she failed to intercede for us how could we call her our Perpetual Help! Remark further how Jesus, in putting His hands into Mary's, seems thereby to be giving her absolute control over them, so that she can do with them, that is, with their omnipotent power, whatever she wishes; moreover, He seems by this same act, to be imparting to her, or better; emptying His hands of, all His graces so that she may distribute them to men according as she sees fit! And we seem to hear her say: "My bounty is as boundless as the sea, My love as deep; the more I give to thee, the more I have, for both are infinite." Besides, by seeking help from His Mother, Jesus teaches us to go to Mary for strength and fortitude. And from the fact that our Lady is looking out at us, instead of at her Son, we ought to understand that she is thinking of us uninterruptedly and of how she can come to our assistance. Like all good mothers, she dearly loves her children, and cannot cease from providing for them in their necessities. She will never rest until she sees them all in Heaven; and even there her happiness will greatly consist in seeing her children happy; and her children in turn, will rejoice to give her their love. Their Perpetual Help on earth, she will be forever in Heaven their Perpetual Delight!

The First Shrine of Perpetual Help

THE location of most of Mary's famous shrines has been chosen by the Mother of God herself. So it was with Lourdes and Guadalupe. And so it was with Perpetual Help. "Tell your mother," she said to her little six-year old messenger, "to place my picture between St. Mary Major's and St.

John Lateran's, in a church dedicated to St. Matthew the Apostle."

Why our Lady employed such cumbersome phraseology in designating the church in which she wished to be honored, may at first sight strike one as very strange. Why did she not simply say: "In St. Matthew's church," instead of adding those seemingly unnecessary words: "Between St. Mary Major's and St. John Lateran's"? Undoubtedly the people living at the time thought those words wasted and meaningless: they could see no reason for them. That is not seldom the case with man; very often he thinks God's ways are foolish and to no purpose. But if he could only look into the future, how often would he change his mind. So it was with Perpetual Help. Strange indeed at the time of their utterance, these words became wisdom with the years. Today we can understand clearly why they were spoken: when St. Matthew's church should be but a mass of ruins they were to serve as a star pointing out to all the very spot on which Mary had willed her picture to be enshrined in the long ago. And as a matter of historical fact, it was precisely by means of this star that Perpetual Help was brought forth from its sixty-eight years of oblivion and exposed once more "between St. Mary Major's and St. John Lateran's"; not in "St. Matthew's church", for that had long since perished, but in the church built upon its very ruins, known today as the church of San Alfonso.

The first church in which Perpetual Help was enshrined was very small and unattractive in appearance. We sometimes wonder why our Lady chose such a humble home amidst such unpretentious surroundings, when in the city of Rome itself there were so many splendid basilicas and gorgeous shrines she could have had for the asking. Our wonder grows when we consider how poorly populated this locality was, and how undeveloped its barren and stubborn soil. But in all this we can clearly discern another characteristic of Mary's, her love for nature. It was this love which led her even in our own days to enshrine herself in the rocks of Lourdes, and

to appear several times on mountain tops, as at La Salette, Pontmain, and Guadalupe. In choosing this secluded spot atop the Esquiline, she teaches us again by her example to cherish and practice that beautiful virtue for which all generations shall call her blessed, humility. She who might have reigned beneath a golden dome is quite content to dwell in this her humble home. Insignificant too was Bethlehem, that town where Christ was born; but Bethlehem today is great, because Christ made it so. The lonely Esquiline, the site of Mary's first shrine, sat a solitary thing in days of yore; today its glory shines around the world; and Mary has made it so.

This first shrine of Perpetual Help attracted pilgrims from far and near. Princes and peasants; Saints and sinners; rich and poor came for help. History records such names as King James III of England, Queen Casimiria of Poland, St. Clement Hofbauer, possibly St. Alphonsus Liguori, and thousands of others.

Around the shrine hung many votive lights and other tokens of gratitude to her who was true to her title of Mother of Perpetual Help.

The Silence of the Sepulchre

STRENGTH in weakness, joy in sorrow, light in darkness—that and more was Perpetual Help for three hundred years (1499-1798) to the faithful of Rome. The glory of the Esquiline it was, and one of the city's brightest jewels. Such splendor had never been seen before. But all that splendor was to pass, even as the splendor of the sun must go when the shades of night come sweeping on. Already clouds—dark, ominous, forbidding clouds—were gathering in the sky, and up from the East shot fingers of lightning, as it were, tracing a message of warning to all who had eyes to see. Already the sound of horses' hoofs, the blare of trumpets, the cries of frenzied troops came rattling and rumbling over the hills to Rome. War was up and abroad, wearing his martial cloak. Out for plunder, he naturally and most wisely turned

towards the Papal States—towards Rome, the home of ancient treasures—treasures of a thousand years.

Drunk with the wine of new-won victory, Napoleon Bonaparte was already exacting of Rome more than Rome could pay. But even this was not enough. What Napoleon wanted was not taxes: he wanted Rome itself—Rome the eternal. Taxation was slow, too slow—the tool of tardy rulers perhaps, but to men of ambition, men who could brook no delays to their plans, it was worse than death. A new scheme therefore must be set on foot. "We will sow discontent among the Romans; they will clamor for peace; the Pope will not be able to give it, but Napoleon will. Ah, that's the thing." And so it was done.

But before Bonaparte could fully realize his plan, he was called to Egypt. His place was filled by Marshal Berthier. He was told to carry out his general's plans. In accordance with these plans a popular insurrection was instigated in Rome. The Papal Troops tried to stem the tide of revolt. In the fray—this was not, however, anticipated—General Duphot, an attache of the French embassy, was mortally wounded and died. A splendid cause this for war! What more did Berthier want? Here was his chance clear cut as a finished diamond. Man and horse, they dashed down upon the city. Opposition? Practically none. With no trouble he hoisted his country's flag. With a boldness born of hatred, he defiantly proclaimed on the 10th of February, 1798, the "Free Roman Republic." Pius VI, then white with the snows of two and eighty years, he drove into dreary exile at Valence, France. There, within six weeks, the harsh treatment he received sent him down to his grave. His last words—only a Saint could utter them!—were these: "May my successor, whoever he may be, forgive the French as sincerely as I do." Poor old man—his words were but the echo of his Master's: "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."

Berthier was succeeded by Massena. Massena thought as his predecessor: Religion was too strong in Rome. Something must be done. But they did not tell the people that: they

told them a different story. They told them that it was necessary, in fact, vital, strategically speaking, to demolish several of the city's churches if Rome was to endure. So with a wave of his hand he ordered the complete destruction of more than thirty churches. One of these—sad to relate—was Mary's shrine on the heights of the Esquiline, old St. Matthew's. Rock by rock the church fell, and faded from view. A thing of ruins that passers-by might point to and say—"That was once the famous shrine of our Mother of Perpetual Help." Innocent children might inquire of their mothers where they had taken the "miraculous picture." And in reply mothers would only look, significantly, towards the heap of ruins; and the children seemed to understand. Some idea of the destruction wrought may be gained from these words of Pius VII: "St. Matthew's church was so utterly uprooted from its very foundations that not only was its worship discontinued but not the slightest vestige of it could be found." As days wore on less and less was spoken of the picture. Indeed few there were but believed it buried in the ruins. But was it?

At the first sound of the approaching trouble the Augustinian Fathers loving their picture dearly had rushed to its protection. "They may destroy the church," it seems they thought, "but never Perpetual Help." So for the first time in three hundred years they took the picture down from its lofty throne and removed it to the private oratory in the church of St. Mary in Posterula. It was not enshrined over the high altar, because there was already there the miraculous picture of Our Lady of Grace.

For sixty-seven years the picture of Perpetual Help remained hidden and unknown in this little oratory. Only one aged priest, Reverend Augustine Orsetti, remembered its early history, and he often spoke of it to his little altar boy, Michael Marchi, who later on became a Redemptorist missionary. To him we are indebted for the scant knowledge we have of the picture during these years of oblivion. Under oath Father Marchi testified:

“Concerning this venerable Image, known as Perpetual Help, I can say that from childhood days up to the moment I entered the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, I always saw it over the altar of the private chapel in the monastery of St. Mary in Posterula under the care of the Augustinian Fathers. Without honor, without ornamentation of any sort, it was, so to speak, utterly abandoned. It was covered with dust and not so much as a candle burned before it. I had often served Mass there, and had often looked up wonderingly and admiringly at the Picture.” Little did he dream as he knelt on those altar steps that one day he was to be the principal cause in restoring that inspiring picture to the veneration of the world. Little did he imagine that he was the one appointed by Divine Providence to rend the great silence of sixty-seven years, that held Perpetual Help in oblivion and trumpet back to the world the glories of a picture that was. And lastly, little did he fancy that, like a knight of old, he would become to his Lady Love the restorer of a lost throne—the throne of the Mother of Perpetual Help.

The Resurrection

“**G**OD,” says St. Alphonsus, “was pleased that Mary should in all things resemble Jesus.” How singularly true is this saying of a Saint, we can readily see in the following apt comparison between our Saviour’s Burial and Resurrection and the Rediscovery of our Lady’s miraculous picture of Perpetual Help.

Christ, we know, willingly submitted to the ignominy of the grave. Perpetual Help freely suffered the humiliation of a long and neglected sepulchre. Christ lay in the tomb until “an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and rolled back the stone.” Perpetual Help remained in hiding until her servants came to roll away the stones of silence. Christ rose glorious and immortal, to reign forever in the kingdom of heaven. Perpetual Help came forth to sit enthroned eternally on the heights of the Esquiline. Lastly, Christ by His

Resurrection brightened the world with beams of joy. Perpetual Help by her reappearance reenkindled in the breasts of sinners the hope of final salvation.

Thus far for the likeness—the prologue as it were. Now let us pull aside the curtain and witness the drama itself.

It happened in 1862. The Redemptorists of San Alfonso's at Rome were enjoying the noon-day recreation. Conversation happy and friendly was passing from lip to lip, covering missions, retreats, and recent conversions. Then, of a sudden—so suddenly, in fact, that his words went by almost unnoticed—one of the Fathers the Reverend Edward Schwindenhammer, mentioned in an offhand sort of way that he had discovered in an old, dusty tomb a statement to the effect that on the very spot now occupied by San Alfonso's, there formerly stood the ancient church of St. Matthew, the Apostle; moreover, he declared, it was in this same church that the storied Madonna of Perpetual Help was enshrined for three centuries and that here it wrought many miracles. "However," he concluded somewhat sorrowfully, "no one knows what became of this picture of Perpetual Help."

"Perpetual Help"—those words struck hard on the ears of the Reverend Michael Marchi, one of the missionaries sitting in the circle. "Perpetual Help"—that made him think; he sat back in his chair, his cheeks waxed ruddy; his eyes, well, they seemed to be looking down the dim, dreamy vistas of the past. And they were: they were visioning a little chapel; they were gazing upon an aged priest offering the Sacrifice of the Mass; they were contemplating a little boy, a very little boy, kneeling silently on the altar steps. That little boy was Michael himself; and that aged priest was Augustine Orsetti, an Augustinian Friar. Memories—a host of memories came breaking through the barricaded years, crowding the courts of his mind. "I know where that picture is," he said with a start. "I have often seen it myself in the convent chapel of St. Mary in Posterula." Attention showed clear in every eye: here was something important, they instinctively felt. Father Marchi went on to recount how the aged Augustinian

used to point his trembling hand at that picture over the altar, saying: "That picture in days gone by was held in high veneration in St. Matthew's church; and in its honor a solemn festival was celebrated every year." All this to the youthful Marchi meant next to nothing; he saw nothing strange, nothing exciting about it all. This unconcern, apparently, did not escape the searching eye of the aged priest. He spoke to him therefore more plainly. "Understand me now, Michael; this Madonna is the one that was so long venerated in old St. Matthew's." And to make his meaning more impressive, "Mind now," he continued, "don't forget what I am telling you. What I say is true, perfectly true." Then to convince himself that Michael had grasped his meaning he questioned him directly; "Michael, my boy, do you understand me?" Michael must have replied that he did, for the aged priest concluded in a pensive, reflective strain: "It was a miraculous picture."

Poor old man! We wonder if he thought that some day perhaps that picture would again be restored to public veneration; we wonder if, as he uttered those significant words, he believed they would span the years, like a bridge binding the past with the present, carrying to millions of Mary's clients a message of happiness, of peace, of salvation. High, indeed, was his commission; a prophet he was, all unconscious of his prophecy. The prophecy's fulfillment, the day of the picture's restoration to public cult was not granted him to behold. He was wanted in Heaven where pictures are no longer necessary, but where the Realities are beholden.

Happy for us that Augustine had spoken. Happy for us that he had spoken of Perpetual Help. Happy for us that he had spoken to Michael Marchi, or else—and how we shudder to say it—we would never have possessed Perpetual Help.

The first stone of silence had been removed; and with its removal there came an unsuspected echo to Redemptorist ears. They knew that St. Matthew's church—its ruins could still be seen in 1855 when they purchased the property—had

stood exactly where now rose aloft the imposing Gothic structure that was the church of San Alfonso. They knew, that St. Matthew's had once sheltered the miraculous picture of Perpetual Help. They knew, finally, that that picture was still in existence at St. Mary in Posterula. But they did not know that it was our Lady's express will to be enshrined between St. Mary Major's and St. John Lateran's, which spot at that time was occupied by San Alfonso's. That information—that heavenly command—was to come to them through a sermon, which the learned Jesuit, Father Francis Blosi, delivered on February 7, 1863. Blosi's was the laudable custom of preaching every Saturday on one of Mary's Miraculous Madonnas. The Saturday in question, he selected for his topic: "The Miraculous Picture of Perpetual Help." His opening words were as follows:

"Today, my brethren, I come to speak to you about a picture of our Lady, which in days gone by was very famous for its miracles but which has given no signs of its existence for now seventy (*sic*) years.

"Would to heaven that there were someone among my many hearers, who knows where this Holy Picture lies neglected; let him tell whoever may have it in his keeping, that Mary desires that it should be publicly exposed for the veneration of the faithful in that church which is situated between the Caelian and the Esquiline Hills!"

And somewhat prophetically he thus concluded:

"Who knows but that the honor of finding this picture has been reserved for our own days. Who knows what blessings may come upon the world from a revival of devotion to Mary under her chosen title of Perpetual Help."

The secret was out; a hidden truth had been revealed; everybody was speaking of the Madonna's wish to be enshrined between St. Mary Major's and St. John Lateran's. Nor did they need to inquire what church occupied that exalted and prominent position, for all could see it was San Alfonso's.

San Alfonso's had been built in 1855, when at the special

request of Pius IX the Redemptorists transferred their Central House to the Eternal City. "Something more than chance," writes the Rev. H. Castle, C.S.S.R., "seems to have led the Fathers to this part of Rome." And he asks: "Had not our Lady of Perpetual Help herself led the sons of St. Alphonsus to this spot in order that she might take possession of the church built by them hard by her ancient sanctuary?" In purchasing that property little did the Redemptorists dream, that they had come into possession of a field wherein was hidden "a pearl of great price"—the shrine of Perpetual Help. Happy indeed were these sons of St. Alphonsus when they unearthed this pearl of surpassing splendor, its dazzling lustre struck them with a certain awe and wonderment. Its brilliance lit up the past, clarified the present, illumined the future. The past in that they now realized how Divine Providence has carefully directed them to this promised land; the present, in that it made clear the ways they were going; the future, in that it gave sure token of ultimate success and final victory in their Redemptoristic work. It all simply meant Heaven's approbation, and the thought was overpowering. It was all so unusual, so unheard of, so strangely wonderful; it seemed almost a fairy tale that one is wont to tell at sleeping hours. But it only "seemed" so, for never was tale or story more true, more worthy of firm belief. Like an oft-recurring refrain there kept ringing in Redemptorist ears: Perpetual Help wishes San Alfonso's as her shrine.

With such information at their disposal, we should expect to hear of the Redemptorists hastening at once to reclaim the buried Treasure; but such was not the case. The Most Rev. Nicholas Mauron, their highest Superior, was a prudent and cautious man. He was unwilling to act in an affair of such moment as this until he had found positive internal conviction that such was the will of God and of His Blessed Mother. What? Had he not been told that such was Their holy will? Yes, but only by man. He sought stronger proof; he wanted Heaven's evidence. So he prayed

and prayed hard for enlightenment and assurance. And his prayer was answered—but not until three years had passed away—years that were trying in suspense, years that were full of thought and reflection, years spent in constant quest for all manner of guidance. But with the passing of the years, there passed, too, all his anxiety, all his fear of mistake, all his worry for the future. Clear as a beacon light on a frosty night there stood revealed in his calm mind Mary's holy will to be enshrined in San Alfonso's.

Without further delay he hastened to the Vatican. There he was granted a private audience with that most saintly Pontiff, Pius IX. In utter simplicity and child-like candor, he related the captivating story of Perpetual Help. The Pope was wrapt in attention. He listened with a sunny smile upon his lips, and a joy that sparkled in his eyes. Perpetual Help—that name conjured up forgotten memories of his own childhood days. As a little boy, he recalled how his mother took him one day to old St. Matthew's to see the wondrous Picture of Perpetual Help. At sight of it, his heart, like clouds before the setting sun, caught fire with love for Mary; and the ensuing years served only to fan its flame into a mighty conflagration. "From the days of my boyhood," he himself assures us, "I have always loved this most gracious Mother of all mankind with my soul's deepest affection, and have ever striven to honor her with filial piety and trustful reverence." No wonder he was so anxious to define her Immaculate Conception; no wonder he was now again anxious to add to her glory by restoring to public veneration her holy picture of Perpetual Help. The measure of his joy may in some way be imagined from the fact, that upon hearing of Mary's express will to be in San Alfonso's church, he forthwith dispensed with the usual exacting formalities of such transactions, and seizing pen and paper hurriedly wrote the following:

"December 11, 1865. The Cardinal Prefect of the Propaganda shall send for the Superior of the little community of St. Mary in Posterula and shall tell him that it is Our wish

that the picture of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary be re-enshrined between St. Mary Major's and St. John Lateran's, with the obligation on the part of the Superior of the Redemptorists to replace it by some other suitable picture.
Pius, PP.IX."

Upon Father Mauron's return to his expectant community that evening, he appeared more like an angel bringing glad tidings of great joy, than a man merely announcing the Papal approbation for the Picture's restoration.

His announcement sent happiness smiling through the delighted community. It is quite unnecessary for us to say that the conversation that night centered solely around the picture's return to San Alfonso's. Much of the time, it may well be imagined, was spent in suggesting motives that may have inspired our Lady of Perpetual Help to bestow her picture on the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer. By that bestowal she openly espoused the cause of the sons of St. Alphonsus, giving as her dowry her own picture of Perpetual Help. By that act she placed in Redemptorist hands the future lot of her holy picture as well as the devotion to herself under the special title of Perpetual Help. By it she approved the missionary activities and apostolic labors of the Congregation. By it, finally, she manifested towards that same Congregation her deep mother-love and affection, and rewarded in a most striking way its holy Founder, St. Alphonsus Liguori, who had written so beautifully and tenderly about our Blessed Lady, had never let an opportunity go by when he could preach her glories, and had always striven to enkindle in the hearts of the faithful love and devotion to the Queen of Heaven.

Another strange incident: in 1732 Alphonsus and his first companions assembled at Scala, Italy, to make a three-day retreat in preparation for the inauguration of the Institute. During the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament this extraordinary apparition took place: in the Sacred Host the Cross was seen surrounded by the Instruments of the Passion, the Lance, Sponge, and Nails. This apparition was witnessed

by Alphonsus and his companions and the entire congregation for a period of three days. Feeling that it was the will of God, Alphonsus chose this apparition for the official seal of the Congregation. And now one hundred and fifty years later is given to the Redemptorists a picture that shows forth those same Instruments of the Passion: Cross, Lance, Sponge, and Nails! "That picture was given us," wrote the Most Rev. Patrick Murray, C.S.S.R., "to teach us again what the Sacred Host of Scala taught Alphonsus and his companions and what the Congregation's coat of arms or the official seal, still teaches us, that both our own salvation and the salvation of others is wrought through the Cross of Christ."

Reenthronement

THE night of oblivion was over; its darkening shadows had concealed the picture for 67 years. Years they were, during which Perpetual Help, that picture whose glory once bridged a triplet of centuries, was not spoken of nor even thought of; it lay like a thing of death, unhonored and unsung. Now however those years, those idle years, were gone; for the day of liberation from captive silence had dawned in the east. And even as of old two disciples could be seen running in haste to the Master's grave to see whether or not He be risen, so now, on the morning of January 19, 1866, two Redemptorist Fathers, clad in modest black, could be seen going with lusty step towards the Augustinian church of St. Mary in Posterula. From their countenances one gleaned that they were bent on some very important mission; they appeared like adventurers seeking some fabulous treasure; and they were. Rev. Frs. Michael Marchi and Ernest Bresciani had been sent out as legates by their Congregation to treat with the Augustinian Fathers of St. Mary's concerning the restoration of the miraculous picture of Perpetual Help to its ancient throne on the Esquiline.

Upon presenting the Pope's official approbation of their mission they were welcomed with brotherly affection and

listened to with intensest interest. It was all so thrilling, this story of Perpetual Help, and to think that never before had they known of our Lady's express will to be enshrined in that church which was situated "between St. Mary Major's and St. John Lateran's," and that church, it was most obvious, was San Alfonso's. Little did the superior of the Augustinians realize during those years that he was the possessor of a treasure more valuable than richest gold or brightest pearls. Without delay he conducted our Lady's envoys to the little oratory where exactly as Fr. Marchi had described it some time before, they found hanging above an impoverished altar the beautiful picture of Perpetual Help. No explorer ever beheld with greater delight the land of his quest; no Israelite ever looked more fondly upon the Promised Land, than did these two Redemptorists upon the loving Madonna of Perpetual Help.

With a sense of mingled reverence and awe they proceeded to take down the picture. It was a little dusty, but that was all. Its well preserved condition after almost 400 years, was most surprising. Of course some of the colors had faded, but none of the Madonna's soft and sweet expression or the Child's frightened look had disappeared with the years. Man had done far more damage than time. He had, it pains us to say it, driven several nails into a cross-beam, used for reinforcement, which protruded through the front of the picture. Save for these little injuries which could easily be repaired the picture was in excellent condition.

The two Redemptorists, happier than words can tell, with their treasure under their arms turned their steps homeward. Before leaving, they had promised—as the Pope had ordered—to give in return another picture of the Augustinians' own choosing. What a joy it was when the superior declared that he preferred none other than a copy of the picture of Perpetual Help. His request was granted, and as soon as a copy could be made it was sent to him.

In the possession of their adopted Madonna the Redemp-

torists of San Alfonso's were indeed happy. They could do naught now but await the day of the picture's reenthronement. That day, the 26th of April, 1866, dawned with heaven's greatest glory; the sun shone bright in its dome of blue; the breezes gently wafted from the sea spread health and life throughout the city; and even the feathered folk were chanting their most tuneful lays in honor of their celestial Queen. Nature and man had joined hands in their endeavor to make the day of reenthronement one long to be remembered. The streets along which the procession was to pass were cheerfully festooned for the august occasion. Homes were decorated with buntings and streamers of every hue and flowers hung from the windows. The procession began at three o'clock in the afternoon. Starting from the Redemptorist monastery next to San Alfonso's, it wound its way through several of the city's streets and terminated at the church itself. Redemptorists, Franciscans, Carmelites, Canons of St. Peter's, and secular priests from the neighboring parishes headed the procession. As they marched they chanted psalms and sang hymns in honor of the Mother of God. Several bishops preceded deacons in dalmatics who were the bearers of a most gorgeously ornamented canopy shielding the coveted picture of Perpetual Help. Flower-girls scattered flowers along the way. Next came the superiors of various religious orders, followed by large numbers of the faithful reciting the Rosary. Last came the celebrated "foreign Carabinieri" decked in all their regimental splendor, with their military band playing martial airs in tribute to their Heavenly Queen's triumph.

Two miracles occurred during the procession. A little four-year old boy was suddenly cured of a serious fever accompanied by meningitis. An eight-year old girl was cured of paralysis of the leg.

The procession over, the picture was carried into San Alfonso's church, which had been beautifully decorated with flowers and streamers of all colors. And as hearts beat with heavenly joy and lips whispered pious prayers for help, the

sacred picture was raised above the main altar, there to be where the Mother of God willed it to be. A solemn high Mass concluded the ceremonies of reenthronement.

The Crowning of the Picture

THE following year, 1867, the picture of Perpetual Help was solemnly crowned. In accordance with this ancient custom, only those pictures of our Lady may be crowned that have received the approbation of the Church for public veneration; that have been venerated for many years; and that have been famous for their miraculous power. Since these three conditions were present in the case of the picture of Perpetual Help, the Holy Father, Pope Pius IX, set the 23rd of June, 1867, for the official crowning of the picture. A triduum was preached in preparation for the great event, and all were asked to "implore Mary's protection upon Rome and the universal Church."

San Alfonso's was especially decorated for the auspicious occasion; outside, streamers of rainbow colors floated in the breeze; inside, flowers and banners and candles hailed the coronation of Heaven's Queen. The church was crowded with pious clients of Mary's, as it had never been before; not a few had to remain outside. At the end of the Solemn Pontifical High Mass, the Celebrant, the Right Rev. R. Aloysius Antici-Mattei, later Cardinal, intoned the "Regina Coeli, Laetare!" (O Queen of Heaven, rejoice!), and at that moment the beautiful golden crowns studded with various jewels were placed upon the heads of the Child Jesus and His Blessed Mother.

As the picture was elevated to its throne above the high altar, the entire congregation broke out in the strains of that magnificent hymn of praise and thanksgiving, the "Te Deum." After the ceremony fireworks were discharged, bombs exploded, and cannons roared forth their fiery salvos to the countryside—all attesting to the jubilant spirits of the citizens of Rome, who might well rejoice since their

city had been chosen as the home of the Mother of Perpetual Help.

These never-to-be-forgotten celebrations came to a most sensational end when a pen of flame traced the name, "Mary," in the evening sky. With one shout the people cried out: "Long live Mary! Long live the Mother of Perpetual Help!"

The Archconfraternity of Perpetual Help

FROM the earliest times numbers of the faithful have banded themselves together in little groups for the purpose of performing some definite pious or charitable work. These little groups or associations, when they are established and guided by competent ecclesiastical authority, are called "confraternities." One of these is our own Archconfraternity of Perpetual Help.

To Ireland, the Isle of Saints and Scholars, belongs the glory of being the first to establish a confraternity of Perpetual Help. There in the year of 1868 the citizens of Limerick met and formed the confraternity that was to become so helpful and powerful an agent in spreading the devotion to the Mother of Perpetual Help. So successful has been the work of this confraternity that "there is scarcely an Irish home today in town or country where the sweet picture is not known or loved."

Confraternities soon sprang up in Belgium, France, and Italy. The confraternity was established at Rome on May 23, 1871. The name of St. Alphonsus was added that he who was such a great devotee of Our Lady might become the inspiration and guide to all lovers of Perpetual Help. Five years later these various confraternities became so numerous and popular, that it was decided to erect them into an Archconfraternity; this meant, that they would all be united and participate in certain greater privileges, indulgences, and prayers. Over 5,000,000 now belong to this Archconfraternity of the Mother of Perpetual Help and St.

Alphonsus. To become a member nothing else is required than to have one's name inscribed on the official register. While no obligations are imposed, yet members are counselled to have constant recourse to the Mother of Perpetual Help in all their spiritual and temporal needs; and to strive to imitate her virtues, especially her purity and humility. In order to help the members carry out these recommendations, they are counselled to wear or carry about with them a medal or picture of Perpetual Help and St. Alphonsus; to place the picture of Perpetual Help in their homes; to recite morning and evening three "Hail Mary's" in honor of the Blessed Virgin and a "Glory be to the Father" in honor of St. Alphonsus; to renew every month their act of consecration to the Mother of Perpetual Help and St. Alphonsus; to celebrate our Lady's various feasts by attendance at Mass and the reception of Holy Communion; and finally, to take part in all devotions, especially novenas, held in her honor. In return for this devotion, they receive many plenary indulgences, participate in all the prayers, good works, and mortifications of the members of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, and are remembered in a Solemn High Mass that is offered for them, whether living or dead, every year on the feast of the Mother of Perpetual Help.

This Archconfraternity is, in the words of St. Alphonsus, "An Ark of Safety, wherein Christians in the midst of the world find a sure refuge from the storms of temptation and that deluge of sin which threatens to sweep all before it."

Perpetual Supplication

THE giant tree of the Archconfraternity of Perpetual Help, its roots gripping deep into the hearts of Rome, reaches forth its beneficent branches over the whole earth, yielding buds and blossoms and plentiful fruits of every form and hue. In Buenos Aires we find a House of the Handmaids of Perpetual Help; there a pious association for the protection of young girls; an institute for the safeguarding of

Christian marriage; and in Santiago the Society of Perpetual Supplication.

This society of Perpetual Supplication was founded in 1878 by the Rev. P. Merges, C.S.S.R. The purpose of the society was to have groups of individuals keeping constant vigil before the picture of Perpetual Help, and beseeching the Mother of God to send down her blessings upon the world. "Perpetual Supplication," wrote Pius X, "shall be made by the faithful in the presence of the sacred image; they shall be portioned off into little groups and shall remain constantly before the image, pouring out their prayers uninterruptedly." This society was inaugurated on Christmas Day, 1878, and ever since then groups of sixes and sevens, sometimes more, take their turns before the picture, reciting the Rosary and praying for the needs of the members of the Archconfraternity. When the society started there were 600 supplicants; five years later their number increased to 1,400. The society is strong today and has branches in several countries, outstanding among which is Spain where the number of supplicants is very great. In some countries Perpetual Supplication is made during the time of a mission, and great good is done.

Perpetual Adoration in honor of our Eucharistic Lord is prominent enough in this country; but the day may come when Perpetual Supplication to our Mother of Perpetual Help may also be made by vast numbers of the faithful.

Perpetual Help and Church Unity

WHAT a beautiful picture Christ must have presented when in the midst of His beloved Apostles, "lifting up His eyes to Heaven," He prayed thus to His heavenly Father: "And not for them (that is, the Apostles) only do I pray, but for them also who through their word shall believe in me; that they all may be one as Thou, Father, in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us." These words are a standing refutation of the oft-repeated falsehood, that

all religions are equally good; if they were, Christ would never have prayed that prayer. He knew full well that a house divided against itself cannot stand. The greatest mistake man ever made was to spell the word, "church", in the plural. There is only one church, not churches; one religion and that is the Roman Catholic Religion. All others are false, and contrary to the teaching of Christ Who taught that there should be but "one fold and one shepherd".

It is, therefore, with a deep sense of sorrow and sadness that we recall how these words of the Master's were openly disregarded, indeed deliberately despised, when in the eleventh century (1054) our Brothers of the East, under the leadership of that proud and haughty Michael Caerularius, broke asunder the bonds of unity, threw off the sweet yoke of Christ's own Church, and determined to go the way of their own choosing. Then it was that these dissatisfied sons of the Church—prodigal sons they were, leaving the wealth and riches of their Father's House for the satisfaction of personal pride and passion—chose no longer to obey Christ's Vicar on earth, the visible Head of the Church, the Pope of Rome. By that act of wilful disobedience they inaugurated what is known as the Greek Schismatic Church, or "Orthodox" Church. It is called "Schismatic" because it refuses obedience to the Divinely appointed successor of St. Peter, the Pope of Rome. Like another Holofernes cutting off Bethulia's water-supply, Caerularius shut off from the Greeks the only source of true and heavenly wisdom, an infallible Pope. That schism has grown and today it counts over 125,000,000 adherents. Those millions belong to Rome; they were begotten to the faith by Rome, they were fed and nourished by Rome, and by Rome they were constantly cared for and protected. Sons of Rome they are, and if sons of Rome, they are our brothers though they live separated from us. Why should they not come tripping home to their Father's House, where they will be received with open arms, and made to sit down at table where the Bread of Life will be broken to them?

Many overtures have been made to these prodigal sons to return; but only with little success. "Success in such an undertaking," declared Pope Leo XII, "is to be sought most of all in constant prayer and petition to the Divine Godhead." He further declared that the Mother of God will be the greatest means of bringing them back to their true Home. "Mary is to be prayed to," he wrote, "that the blessing of unity may be effected in the Christian Family."

Hope of reunion is based largely upon their devotion to the Mother of God. They did much to spread devotion to her, and have raised large and beautiful basilicas in her honor.

The picture of Perpetual Help is dear to them, and it may play a large part in leading them back to Rome. This picture serves as the frontispiece in the "Balcan", a magazine for the promotion of Church Unity; it appears on other magazines and pamphlets circulated among them; it hangs in the Pontifical Institute for Oriental Studies in Rome, where Asiatic and European students gather to study the question of Reunion; and it was given as the seal for the Relief Mission sent into Russia. This picture has been chosen because of its appeal to the Greeks; its style is Greek, its author was a product of Greek culture; Greek letters appear on it, and it seems to be an offspring of that picture, the Hodegetria, so long venerated in Constantinople. The Greeks feel therefore that the picture somewhat belongs to them. As a reward for their devotion to this Mother of Perpetual Help, may this good Mother bring them back to the source of spiritual life, which is Rome.

PERPETUAL HELP
The Coredemptrix and Mediatrix
of all Graces

PERPETUAL Help has conquered the world! That overwhelming assertion naturally leaps from our lips when we consider the picture's world-wide distribution and devo-

tion; and realizing that such a universal distribution and rapid rise of devotion could not have taken place save for the power of God, we are at once reminded of the Sacred Writer's inspired words: "This is the finger of God!" Unquestionably, in all this God had His own special designs and His own definite purpose; and although we are aware that "His ways are incomprehensible"—for, as St. Paul asks, "who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been His counsellor?" and although we hesitate to rush in where angels fear to tread, yet, inquisitive beings that we are, we cannot but try in our own childlike way to get a slight glimpse into God's great plan, and to discover, if possible, the purpose He had in spreading the picture of Perpetual Help throughout the world.

His primary purpose, we feel safe in asserting, was that His Blessed Mother should reign in the hearts of the faithful; for He comprehends most clearly that where Mary is, Jesus must also be; They cannot be separated any more than can be separated the light from the sun. It was this truth that forced from Blessed Grignon de Montfort his immortal words: "That the kingdom of Christ may come, let the kingdom of Mary come!" Or as St. Alphonsus used to say: "To Jesus through Mary; to the Redeemer through the Coredemptrix."

As a secondary purpose, however, we believe that God willed by this means to call the attention of the faithful to those two and most important prerogatives of His Blessed Mother, which of late have been extensively discussed by theologians throughout the world and which, we hope, may soon be raised to the dignity of defined dogmas of faith—namely, her prerogatives of *Coredemptrix*, and *Mediatrix of all graces*.

We shall endeavor to explain these prerogatives by our picture of Perpetual Help.

That Mary justly deserves the title of Coredemptrix, no one who gives the matter the least consideration will deny. By the use of this title we do not wish to be understood as

implying any absolute equality between Jesus and Mary, as if to assert that the Blessed Virgin was just as capable of effecting man's salvation as (was) her Divine Son, Jesus; or that she perfected the work done by Christ. By no means; for we comprehend clearly that only an Infinite Person, as was Christ, was capable of making adequate reparation for man's infinite offense against the Triune God; and we comprehend further that Christ's work was of and in itself wholly perfect, nay, superabundant, needing no addition from without. He redeemed man *de condigno*, as they say, that is, by a right founded in justice; but Mary, we claim, co-operated in man's redemption *de congruo*, that is, by a right founded not in justice but simply on the will of God, in as much as God willed and decreed that by her sufferings she would share in the work of redemption. Or to quote the words of Pius X: "Summoned by Christ to the work of human salvation she merited for us *de congruo*, what Christ merited for us *de condigno*."

An illustration may make this clear. Suppose a king had decided to free his slaves from bondage. If he willed, he could do so without further delay, for he possesses supreme power in his kingdom. But suppose he so loved his queen that he willed her also to participate in the glory of the slaves' liberation, and therefore decreed that upon her consent would depend their freedom. When therefore she consents, she can rightly be said to have taken an active part—though this part be subordinate and only secondary to that of the king's—in their deliverance; and if the king for his deed is called the "liberator," she, we think, may justly be called the "liberatrix." In such an affair everybody recognizes that had the king not willed to free his slaves, his queen's wish or will to do so would have been of no avail, for independent of the king she possesses no power whatever.

So it was with our redemption. Slaves to sin, God decreed to free us by His Son's sufferings and death—that would have been sufficient—but He willed to honor His Mother, so He decreed that upon her consent man's salvation should

depend. Since therefore she willingly consented, and thereby took an active—though subordinate and secondary part in man's redemption she, if Christ be called the "Redeemer," may rightly be called the "Coredeмпtrix."

Such procedure on the part of God seemed only natural and what we should expect, for, as St. Bernard says, "as one man (Adam) and one woman (Eve) co-operated in our ruin, so it was proper that another man and another woman should co-operate in our redemption, and these two were Jesus and Mary. Nor is there any doubt," he goes on to say, "that Jesus Christ alone was more than sufficient to redeem us; but it was more becoming that both sexes should co-operate in the reparation of an evil in causing which both had shared."

In view of the fact, therefore, that God willed that Mary should participate in man's redemption, it will be of service to state here in just what that participation consisted. It consisted, we find, first, in her *free consent* to Christ's Incarnation. Expressive of this free consent are the words addressed to the Virgin Mary by the great St. Bernard: "The price of our redemption is offered to you; we shall at once be freed if you consent. Say the word which earth, hell, and heaven are waiting for!"

In so far, therefore, that God had willed to place man's redemption in Mary's consent or refusal to the Incarnation, we can truly say that had Mary not consented, man would not have been redeemed.

Secondly, it consisted in her willing sacrifice of her own Son on Calvary. That means that she had to prepare, as far as in her lay, the Victim for the Sacrificial Altar. This she did by giving Him of her own flesh and blood, by nursing Him, and caring for Him to the very last. Let us substantiate this by the words of Pius X. He says: "It was not only the glory of the Mother of God 'to have presented the Only-Begotten Son of God who was to be born of human members' the material by which He was prepared as a Victim for the salvation of mankind, but hers also was the office

of tending and nourishing that Victim and at the appointed time of offering Him at the Altar."

And thirdly, Mary's participation consisted in the joint offering she made of her own sufferings with those of her Son, or, as Pius X so beautifully puts it: "From the communion of pain and will between Mary and Christ she well merited to become the *restorer of a lost world*," that is, the *Coredemptrix*.

Because of this threefold participation in man's redemption Mary has most justly been given the expressive title of *Coredemptrix*. Thus was she styled even in the first days of the Church by such great Saints as Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and Ephrem, as well as by the heretic, Tertullian. No modern theologian of repute denies her the coveted title. Wherefore the Holy Office in its decree of June 26, 1913, openly acclaimed the Mother of God as the "*Coredemptrix*"; and Benedict XV boldly declared that in view of her sacrifice of her Son in which sacrifice she herself suffered most bitterly, "it may rightly be said that Mary with Christ *redeemed* the human race."

That these three points, substantiated by the testimonies of Saints, and Popes, are aptly illustrated by the picture of Perpetual Help the following will leave undoubted.

In the picture we are reminded of her free consent to Christ's Incarnation by the presence of the Archangel Gabriel, for he it was who announced that she was chosen to be the Mother of God's only Begotten Son, Christ the Lord. And Mary "in the place of all human nature," as St. Thomas so profoundly remarks, "freely gave her consent, saying: 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it done to me according to Thy word.'"

In consenting to become the Mother of the Redeemer, Mary knew plainly from her readings and study of the Old Testament, that Her Son would be to her "a bundle of myrrh," that is, would cause her untold sorrow and suffering by His Bloody Death on Calvary's cruel Cross. Look at the picture for a moment; see how fully the Mother and

the Child realize the future Crucifixion. Yet, Mary was willing, and scorned not the pain. Almost too evident to mention is the portrayal of the Mother's "communion of pain" with her Son. The sorrow of her countenance, the tearful expression in her eyes, the little cross over her right eye indicating her mental agony; all forcibly point to "that never dissociated manner of life and labor of the Son and the Mother," as Pius X declared, "which permits the application to both the words of the Psalmist: 'My life is consumed in sorrow and my years in groans.'"

Wherefore we can see how truthfully the Rev. C. Henze, C.S.S.R., has observed: "Hardly could a picture of our Lady be imagined that would better portray this idea of the Coredemptrix."

PERPETUAL HELP: MEDIATRIX OF ALL GRACES

Because of the important part Mary played in man's redemption, God was pleased to confer upon her, as a kind of reward, the exalted office and distinguished title of "*Mediatrice of all graces.*"

"From Calvary,
Dear Lady, thou shalt be
Love's arbiter for all eternity—."

When we say that Mary is the Mediatrix of all graces, we mean that she both obtains for us by her intercession and actually dispenses to us all the graces necessary for our salvation. Hence her office of mediation is twofold; first, she begs God to grant us graces; and second, she herself distributes them to us. Owing to this latter office she has been most appropriately styled the "Dispenser of grace."

"From Him the Grace: through her it stands
Adjusted, meted, and applied:
And ever, passing through her hands,
Enriched it seems, and beautified."

The historic proof—and it is irrefragable—that Christ listens to and grants His Mother's petitions is found in the

pages of Holy Writ where we read that at Mary's intercession Christ "changed water into wine," though His "time had not come"! In this Saints have discovered Christ's will to grant graces through Mary's intercession and they have never ceased to proclaim to the world this most consoling doctrine.

"Every good thing that we have from God," says St. Alphonsus, "we have received through the intercession of Mary." This intercession, asserts the learned Suarez, "is not only useful, but necessary." "This necessity," aptly explains Alphonsus, "is not absolute, but moral," that is, it "proceeds from the will of God itself" who has decreed in the present order of things "that all graces should pass through Mary's hands." And St. Bernard confirms this, declaring: "Such is God's will, that we should have all through Mary."

Mary's office as *Dispenser* of grace is clearly taught by sacred writers—all of them calling her "The Mother of Divine Grace."

"We are admonished by St. Alphonsus," so run the statutes of the Archconfraternity of Perpetual Help, that this is the order, wonderful and full of love, of Divine Providence, that no grace is given to man which does not pass through Mary's hands. For by her Divine Son, Jesus, she has been constituted the treasurer and the universal *Dispenser* of all graces, be they spiritual or temporal. Whence it follows that invocation to Mary must necessarily be made; and whosoever recommends himself with confidence and perseverance to this best of all mothers will most assuredly obtain whatever he asks."

This, in short, is the great doctrine of Mary's universal mediation. To St. Alphonsus, honored with the title of "Doctor of the Church," this doctrine appeared as "the heart of all true devotion to Mary" and he bent all his efforts to enkindle it in the hearts of his hearers. To his everlasting glory be it said that "he was the first to propose this doctrine in the form of a thesis and to vindicate it before his adversaries." Watchwords like these fall from his lips, and

unto death was he prepared to defend them: "Mary is omnipotent because by her prayers she obtains whatever she wills." "That it is most useful and holy to have recourse to the intercession of Mary can only be doubted by those who have no faith." Quoting the words of Richard of St. Laurence, he says: "Our salvation is in Mary's hands"; and he concludes, "he who is protected by Mary will be saved, he who is not, will be lost."

And to him who would object to his teaching with the words of St. Paul that "there is one Mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus, in Whom we have redemption through His Blood, the remission of sins," he replies that "Jesus Christ is our only Mediator of *justice*, and that He by His merits has obtained our reconciliation with God. But, on the other hand it is impious to assert that God is not pleased to grant graces at the intercession of His Saints, and more especially of Mary, His Mother, whom Jesus desires so much to be honored and loved by all." Therefore, he says, "there can be no doubt that by the merits of Jesus, Mary was made Mediatrix of our salvation; not indeed a Mediatrix of justice, but of grace and intercession; as St. Bonaventure expressly calls her, 'Mary, the most powerful Mediatrix of our Salvation.'" And St. Bernard agrees perfectly with St. Alphonsus: "There is no doubt that Jesus is the only Mediator of justice between men and God; that, by virtue of His own merits and promises, He will and can obtain us pardon and divine favors; but because men acknowledge and fear the Divine Majesty which is in Him as God, for this reason it was necessary to assign us another advocate to whom we might have recourse with less fear and more confidence, and this advocate is Mary, than whom we cannot find one more powerful with His Divine Majesty, or one more merciful towards ourselves."

The manner of Mary's intercession is thus explained by Blessed Raymond Jordano: "Mary, as our most loving Advocate, herself offers the prayers of her servants to God, and especially those that are placed in her hands; for as the Son

intercedes for us with the Father, so does she intercede with the Son, and does not cease to make intercession with Both for the great affair of our salvation, and to obtain for us the graces we ask." And Pope Leo XIII quoting the words of St. Bernadine of Sienna says: "Every grace that is sent to the world has a triple procession, for it is dispensed in the following order: "From God to Christ, from Christ to the Virgin, from the Virgin to us."

By far the greatest triumph for this Marian doctrine of universal mediation was scored in 1921, when Pope Benedict XV—that modern troubadour of Heaven's Queen—granted first to Belgium, and then to the Catholics of the whole world permission to celebrate, on May 31, a new feast in honor of the Mother of God under the especial title of "Mary, Mediatrix of all graces." And in the Divine Office of that day he bade us pray: "Lord Jesus, our Mediator with the Father, who hast deigned to appoint the Blessed Virgin Thy Mother to be our Mother and Mediatrix with Thee, graciously grant that whosoever comes to Thee asking favors may have the joy to obtain all things through her."

No longer then does any doubt exist regarding Mary's universal mediation, for the whole world now proclaims her "Mediatrix of all graces." And in no small degree do we believe that instrumental in spreading this devotion was our miraculous picture of Perpetual Help, for it tells us in language all can understand—the artist's language of color—that Mary is truly and really man's great Mediatrix of grace.

In the picture we see symbolized by Mary's extended right arm and open palm the gesture of one who is supplicating or interceding. "Mary is always in the Divine Presence, acting as our Advocate and interceding for us with God by her prayers," as we are taught by the Blessed Amadeus. And in the position of the Child's hands we think we see symbolized the emptying of His own hands of all their graces into Mary's hand so that she may dispense them "as

she pleases" (St. Bernard). This harmonizes with the teaching of Benedict XV who wrote: "All graces which the Author of every good gift deigns to bestow upon the poor children of Adam, are, in accordance with a gracious design of Divine Providence, dispensed *by the hands* of the most Blessed Virgin."

"Oh, ever help me, Mary Mother mine,
And ask thine Infant Jesus for the grace
That I do need! See, with a beaming face
He places both His little hands in thine;
As, while His eyes with tender mercy shine,
He gives all gifts and graces unto thee,
That with them, thou mayst aid and succor me."

In a more obvious way, however, Mary's mediation is taught by the picture's title of *Perpetual Help*. Chosen by herself, this title of Mary's was to draw thousands to put all their trust in her. Perpetual Help!—what does it mean? It means that she must be ready to help us at all times, under all circumstances, in every need; it means that she must help us not only at certain times, but perpetually, all our lives, and more especially at the hour of death; it means, too, and this is strengthening indeed, that she must be willing to help us even when we fall, yes, even when we are in sin; even then, if we pray to her, she must help us to regain the grace of God. "O Mary," cries William of Paris, "thou art obliged to help sinners in view of all the gifts, the graces, and high honors comprised in the dignity of Mother of God, which thou hast received."

But how, you may ask, can Mary help us *perpetually*?

She can do this in two ways: first, by asking God to give us the graces we need; and second, by dispensing them to us by her own hands. In these two ways we see revealed the nature of Mary's mediation, as explained above—namely, her intercession and her dispensation of grace. Hence the titles, Perpetual Help, and Mediatrix of all graces, are synonymous, interchangeable, identical. When therefore we beg Mary to be our Perpetual Help, we imply that we ex-

pect her to obtain for us some special favor by her all-powerful intercession, and to bestow that favor upon us with her own hands.

What a happy choice was this title of Perpetual Help! for it keeps constantly before our minds Mary's office of Mediatrix of all graces. "No other title," writes a client of Mary, "can be found in the Litany of Loretto, which so clearly exemplifies this truth of Mary's continual assistance and intercession, as this title of Perpetual Help. For the title of Mother of Divine Grace indicates in particular that she gave birth to Christ, the Author of Divine Grace, and its meaning would still be true even if she did not help us by her perpetual intercession and by her prayers procure for us each and every grace. So also the title of Help of Christians could be proved to be true even if this most Blessed Virgin were to assist Christians only at extraordinary times, and not to help us—as our title demands—in every circumstance of our life, so that we are obliged to confess to her all our affairs."

Another argument in favor of our contention that Mary's universal mediation is best expressed by the title of Perpetual Help is drawn from the fact that, on May 17, 1866, Pius IX richly indulgenced the oft-heard prayer: "O Mother of Perpetual Help, thou art the dispenser of all the graces which God grants to us miserable sinners."

Mindful of all this we are now in a position to answer the question proposed: what purpose did God have in view in spreading the picture of Perpetual Help throughout the world! We shall let the brilliant Fr. Henze reply: "It appears that it was in accordance with the dispositions of Divine Providence, that our Image with its title of Perpetual Help should have been so widely spread throughout the world and that, as a result, it should inspire the faithful everywhere to embrace and to put into practice the doctrine of Mary's universal mediation so as to obtain by their *perpetual recourse* to the Mother of God her perpetual help at all times, in all places, and in all their wants."

A Work of Christian Art

SINCE not every work of art, but only a work of *Christian* art may be placed within the hallowed walls of a Catholic church, we may justly ask: Is Perpetual Help a work of Christian art?

A work of Christian art must possess three qualities: it must be beautiful, worthy of its theme, and instructive. Perpetual Help possesses these three qualities.

Perpetual Help is beautiful: "How beautiful it is!" exclaims everyone who beholds the picture in Rome. Moreover it possesses both beauty of execution—how perfectly are the figures drawn, the colors blended, the expression vitalized—and beauty of detail—how complete the picture is, nothing wanting, nothing superfluous, everything in its proper place.

Perpetual Help is worthy of its theme. "Our Lady," writes George Bennigsen, art-critic, "is represented not as a human mother, but as the Mother of God, the Theotokos, the Queen of Heaven, the Intercessor." "She is not a mortal woman," says another critic, "but the divine conception of the Mother of God." We may say the same of the Child; He is more of heaven than of earth, the God-man, not an ordinary child. He is worthy to be called the Son of God.

Perpetual Help is instructive. It teaches some of the most weighty of Catholic truths: the redemption of mankind through the sufferings of Christ, the Son of God; the necessity of carrying our cross with resignation to God's Holy Will; the divine maternity of the Blessed Virgin; the necessity of Mary's intercession; the necessity of prayer and penance; love of God and His Blessed Mother; faith and humility. As from a throne Jesus and Mary speak to us constantly, warning, consoling, encouraging, correcting, inspiring us with thoughts that spell happiness here and hereafter.

A Sermon in Colors

IN the Middle Ages cathedrals were called "The Layman's Bible," because one could see depicted in their architecture, statuary, and painted windows all of the striking scenes and memorable events recorded in the Bible.

In the same way Perpetual Help may be said to be a "Sermon in Colors," teaching many salutary lessons of life.

The picture teaches first of all the love borne us by Jesus and Mary. That love They proved by suffering and sacrifice, the real test of love. "The whole life of Jesus was a cross and a martyrdom," writes the Author of the Imitation, "for our Lord Jesus Christ was not for one hour of His life (our Picture shows Him suffering from infancy) without the anguish of His Passion." Christ died for us. "Greater love than this no man hath than lay down His life for his friends." And St. Alphonsus says of our Blessed Mother: "Mothers generally love those children most, the preservation of whose lives has cost them the most suffering and anxiety; we are those children for whom Mary, in order to obtain for us the life of grace, was obliged to endure the bitter agony of herself offering her beloved Jesus to die an ignominious death, and had also all to see Him expire before her own eyes in the midst of the most cruel and unheard-of torments."

"If any man will come after me," said the Savior, "let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." Self-denial and mortification, basic principles in Christian teaching, are expressed in the Picture. "The instruments of the Passion shown in the picture admonish us," writes the Most Rev. Patrick Murray, C.S.S.R., "to be animated with a spirit of Christian mortification and self-denial, and to fulfill with all exactness the Commandments of God, and the duties of our state in life."

To Perpetual Help the "God of all comfort" seems to have intended that men should turn to seek from it the remedy for the manifold ills that beset them in all the walks

of life. When heavy-laden with care and anxiety, when crushed beneath the yoke of daily trial and trouble, when perplexed and weary with things as they are, when doubts disturb the mind, when questions that vex every man clamor for solution, such as, why do the good suffer and wicked prosper, why do the poor groan and rich rejoice, why am I who am trying to lead a good clean Christian life so afflicted with misfortune and tribulation, and meet with nothing but defeat in all my plans?—when these questions arise, turn to Perpetual Help; listen to her five words of consolation and peace of heart will be yours.

Perpetual Help's first word of consolation is this, that all sufferings come from God. "I am the Lord and there is none else; I form the light and create darkness, I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things." God allows suffering and pain for our own ultimate good. The picture shows us angels bringing down from Heaven the instruments of the Passion; angels bring from Heaven the instruments of our sufferings too. "The souls that are dearest to my Father," Christ once revealed to St. Teresa, "are those afflicted the most." And St. Alphonsus reminds us again that this earth is "a place of merit; and therefore a place of suffering."

Perpetual Help's second word of consolation is this: that we should not complain when things go wrong and misfortunes track our path. For did not Jesus and Mary endure trial and tribulation though they did no wrong? Souls pure and undefiled They were, yet who can measure the greatness of Their sufferings? We, poor sinners, should rejoice that we are able to atone for our many sins by bearing our cross with patience and resignation.

Perpetual Help's third word of consolation is this: that since Jesus and Mary suffered for love of us, should we not willingly accept the sufferings of life for love of Them? "Blessed are the poor in spirit; blessed are the clean of heart; blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," are the words of

the Master. Offer up your pangs of poverty, your mortification of the flesh, your persecution by the world for the love of Jesus and Mary; and this offering will lighten your burden and make it easier to bear.

Perpetual Help's fourth word of consolation is this: "In the cross is salvation." Recall the great sufferings of Jesus and Mary from the cradle to the grave, and try to realize that: "If Christ (and the Blessed Mother) ought to have suffered these things, and so enter into glory, ought not we through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God?" No cross, no crown; the heavier the cross, the brighter the crown.

Perpetual Help's fifth word of consolation is this: "Come to me in constant, truthful prayer and I will be your perpetual help." "Who ever prayed to her," asks Pope Innocent III, "and was not helped by her?" "This good Mother's compassion is so great," says St. Alphonsus, "and the love she bears us is such that does not even wait for our prayers; but as it is expressed in the Book of Wisdom, 'she preventeth them that covet her, so that she first showeth herself to them.'" And again he says: "Her love for us is so tender that in our wants she anticipates our prayers, and her mercy is more prompt to help us than we are to ask her aid." The example of the Christ Child turning to His Mother when frightened by the vision of His Passion and Death, should induce us to have recourse to our Mother in all the necessities of life and death. Her prayer for us to Jesus will be heard, even as it was at Cana.

Faith and humility, the very foundation stones of our spiritual edifice, are taught us by Perpetual Help. The star shining in Mary's forehead reminds us of faith; for even as the Wise Men from the East believed and followed the star which led them to the Savior in Bethlehem; so faith if we believe in Christ and His Church will lead us to our God in Heaven. Humility is taught us by the veiled hands of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel. By these hands they show their unworthiness so much as to touch the instruments of

Christ's Passion and Death. Humility it was that saved some of the angels for Heaven; pride precipitated the others into Hell;— those who would not adore their God in human form, as if it were beneath their high dignity. Humility is further taught by Christ Himself Who underwent the greatest of all humiliations, the humiliation of the cross.

To mothers and daughters Perpetual Help teaches modesty and decency of dress. To fathers and sons Perpetual Help teaches strength and courage in trying moments. To all Perpetual Help teaches the awfulness of sin. Sin, that greatest of evils that crucified a God, crushed the heart of His Mother, and robs us of eternal happiness. That falling sandal should caution sinners not to sin again, lest they fall entirely away from God into the dust of eternal death.

These are but a few of the lessons Perpetual Help brings home to the one who meditatively regards the picture. In moments of sorrow and distress and perplexing doubts turn to these twin hearts of Jesus and Mary and you will find "peace that surpasseth understanding."

Perpetual Help Wafers

BY Perpetual Help *wafers* we mean those tiny tissue-paper pictures of Perpetual Help which are given to the sick to be swallowed in time of sickness. They hope, by this exterior expression of their interior devotion, to obtain from the Mother of God, whom they invoke in trustful prayer, cessation of pain, if not a perfect cure of their malady.

Some individuals object to this practice, saying it is superstitious and harmful to the body.

Superstition means to attribute to some object a power it does not possess, as when the Jews attributed to the Golden Calf power to heal their ills. Catholics do not believe that these little tissue-paper prints of Perpetual Help possess any "hidden virtue or power"; if they did, they would be guilty of superstition, as the Council of Trent teaches. They sim-

ply believe that "the honor shown to them is referred to the prototypes they represent."

Nor is this practice harmful to the body. Surely no one will say that to swallow a tiny piece of tissue-paper, smaller in size than a postage stamp, will harm the body even of an invalid. Nor is the ink used to print the picture on the paper any more harmful than the smallest piece of artificially-colored candy. And who would object to eating such candy?

Moreover the practice has the approbation of the Church, which knows of this practice and does not condemn it. On the other hand, the Church has accepted miracles wrought by this means in the processes of canonization of various Saints: Sts. Francis Caracciolo and Antoninus, for instance. Finally, St. Alphonsus himself approved and taught this practice when he advocated the use of the Immaculate Conception leaflets or wafers common in his day.

*The Nine Wednesdays**

THE Nine Wednesdays is a special form of devotion to Our Mother of Perpetual Help. It consists in attending the public devotions held at some shrine of Our Mother of Perpetual Help on nine Wednesdays one following the other without a break, and in worthily receiving the Sacraments of Confession and Holy Communion at least once during that time. Those making the Nine Wednesdays are urged when possible, to attend Holy Mass and receive Holy Communion every Wednesday during the Novena,—if convenient, in their own parish-church. If it is impossible to receive Holy Communion on the Wednesdays of the Novena, it might be possible to receive on the Sundays.

MARVELS AND WONDERS

The Nine Wednesdays, as a special form of devotion to Our Mother of Perpetual Help, is fast sweeping the country.

*(Or whatever day of the week selected for the devotions).

Every Wednesday of the year, thousands are thronging around Our Mother's shrines, making their prayers to God through the loving hands of this Good Mother and obtaining help and aid in every need and trouble of life, in every want and distress of body or soul. Help to the poor, help to the unemployed, help to those in financial straits, help to those carrying the cross of sickness, help to parents concerned about their children, help to the young in the struggles and difficulties of life, help to those beset with temptations and waging a losing battle against sin, help to all in the temporal wants and in the spiritual needs of life—and that, too, in almost miracle-fashion—such is the answer Mary is giving to those of her devout clients who are proving their love these days in the Perpetual Novena Devotions of the Nine Wednesdays.

COME TO MARY

If you would have Mary prove herself your Perpetual Help, come to her in the devotions of the Nine Wednesdays—

- (1) place your petitions in the petition-box before her shrine;
- (2) attend the public Novena devotions faithfully for Nine Wednesdays;
- (3) receive the Sacraments of Confession and Holy Communion just as fervently and frequently as you can during the weeks of your Novena.

Do all this and Mary will not fail you; She will hear your prayers, grant your request, and make of you an apostle to go out and preach to others the love of Her Mother-Heart and the tender mercies of the Heart of Her Divine Son.

Prayers in Honor of Our Lady of Perpetual Help

1

(To be recited aloud by the entire congregation.) (Pause at the *.)

BEHOLD at thy feet, O Mother of Perpetual Help, * a wretched sinner who has recourse to thee and confides in thee. * O Mother of Mercy, have pity on me. * I hear thee

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 thy hand to a miserable, fallen creature * who recommends himself to thee, * and who devotes himself to thy service forever. * I bless and I thank Almighty God, * Who in His mercy has given me this confidence in thee, * 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 thee. * I know, however, that with thy help I shall conquer; * I know, too, that thou wilt assist me * if only I recommend myself to thee. * But I fear, dear Mother * that in time of danger * I may neglect to call on thee and thus lose my soul. * This grace, then, I ask of thee * and this I beg with all the fervor of my soul, * that in all the attacks of hell * I may ever have recourse to thee. * O Mary, help me; * O Mother of Perpetual Help, * never suffer me to lose my God. (One "Hail Mary.")

2

O Mother of Perpetual Help, * grant that I may ever invoke thy most powerful name, * which is the safeguard of the living and the salvation of the dying. * O Purest Mary, O Sweetest Mary, * let thy name henceforth be ever on my lips. * Delay not, O Blessed Lady, * to help me whenever I call on thee, * for, in all my needs, in all my temptations * I shall never cease to call on thee, * ever repeating thy sacred name Mary, Mary. * Oh, what consolation, what sweetness * what confidence fill my soul, * when I pronounce thy sacred name, * or even only think of thee. * I thank God for having given thee, for my good, * so sweet, so powerful, so lovely a name. * But I will not be content with merely pronouncing thy name; * let my love for thee prompt me ever to hail thee, * Mother of Perpetual Help. (One "Hail Mary.")

3

O Mother of Perpetual Help, * thou art the dispenser of all the goods * which God grants to us miserable sinners, *

and for this reason has He made thee * so powerful, so rich, and so bountiful, * in order that thou mayest help us in our misery. * Thou art the advocate of the most wretched and abandoned sinners * who have recourse to thee; * come, then, to my help, dearest Mother, * for I recommend myself to thee. * In thy hands I place my eternal salvation * and to thee do I entrust my soul. * Count me among thy most devoted servants, * take me under thy protection, and it is enough for me. * For, if thou protect me, dear Mother. * I fear nothing; * not from my sins, because thou wilt obtain for me the pardon of them; * nor from the devil, because thou art more powerful than all hell together; * nor even from Jesus, my Judge Himself, * because by one prayer from thee He will be appeased. * But one thing I fear, * that in the hour of temptation * I may neglect to call on thee and thus perish miserably. * Obtain for me, then, the pardon of my sins, * love for Jesus; * final perseverance, * and the grace ever to have recourse to thee, * O Mother of Perpetual Help. (One "Hail Mary.")

V— Thou hast been made for us, O Lady, a refuge.

R— A Helper in need and tribulation.

LET US PRAY

O Lord Jesus Christ, Who hast given us Thine own Mother Mary, whose glorious image we venerate, to be our Mother ever ready to come to our help; grant, we beseech Thee, that we unceasingly imploring her motherly help, may merit always to experience the fruit of Thy Redemption. Who livest and reignest world without end. Amen.

May the Mother of Perpetual Help be perpetual help to all those who condescend to read this humble work!

