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Roma, June 27, 2014

*“Jesus said to his mother, ‘Woman, here is your son.’  
Then he said to the disciple, ‘Here is your mother.’  
And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.”  
(John 19:26-27)*

Dear Confreres, Sisters, Associates and friends,

Greetings from Rome as we celebrate the Feast of Our Mother of Perpetual Help. Like the beloved disciple, we have welcomed Mary into our homes and into our hearts. We “relate to her as a mother with all the love and veneration [we] owe her as sons [and daughters].” (Cons. 32).

The Gospel passage above is taken from the Liturgy for this feast day. It is powerful and moving. From the Cross, as Jesus pours out his life for us, he speaks these words. As Pope Francis reminds us in *Evangelii Gaudium* (No. 285), “*these words of the dying Jesus are not chiefly the expression of his devotion and concern for his mother; rather, they are a revelatory formula which manifests the mystery of a special saving mission.*” Jesus gives his mother a mission – to be the maternal expression of God’s love and tenderness for all people.

Pope Francis calls Mary, Our Lady of Help (EG No. 288). Mary is not just a beautiful woman to be contemplated. She is not just a model disciple to be imitated. She is our *mother* to whom we go when we are in trouble. When we need help, she is always there to come to our aid. She is ‘*perpetual help*’ – always ready to pick us up in the same embrace we contemplate in her Icon. From the Cross, Jesus gave her this mission.

Like St. Alphonsus before him, Pope Francis recognizes that Mary is a missionary. She is a missionary of the revolutionary tenderness and love of God. She is the missionary who draws near to us and accompanies us throughout life.

With a few strips of cloth and a mountain of tenderness, she transformed that cave at Bethlehem into a home to welcome the Word made flesh. With friendly concern, she made sure that the wine did not run short at Cana – when the men didn’t even notice. With her own heart pierced by the sword of suffering and sadness, she stands beside all the suffering peoples of the world in their longing for justice. As a mother, she welcomes everyone to the table of her Son.

Pope Francis says that there is a “Marian style” to our mission of evangelization. St. Alphonsus believed the same truth. In Mary, our Perpetual Help, we see and believe in the

power of tenderness to transform our world and to change hearts. With her, we become missionaries of tenderness and care.

Oh, Mother of Perpetual Help, come with us on this mission. Bring joy, hope and tenderness to our sisters and brothers. Teach us not to be afraid, even when we recognize the signs of the passion and cross. With you, may we share the Joy of the Gospel with one and all.

May our celebration of the feast of Our Mother of Perpetual Help deepen our commitment to '*preach the Gospel ever anew*' as we give our lives for plentiful redemption.

Your brother in the Redeemer,

Michael Brehl, C.Ss.R.,  
Superior General