

## Introduction to Prayer Service:

Taken from the *Letter of Fr. General*

Today, April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2016, we celebrate the day, 150 years ago, when the Icon of Our Mother of Perpetual Help came to the Church of St. Alphonsus and was restored to public veneration. This is a day of great joy, hope and celebration for us. For 150 years, Our Mother of Perpetual Help has accompanied us in our mission and our ministry, drawing countless people into a deeper personal relationship with Jesus the Redeemer, and with the People of God. From St. Alphonsus Church on via Merulana this devotion has spread to every continent, and thousands upon thousands of Churches, parishes, chapels, communities.

...As Redemptorist Missionaries and those who share in this charism of '*copiosa redemptio*', we know that it is no accident that Our Mother of Perpetual Help came to us through this wonderful Icon. Long before 1866, Mary accompanied us in all our missions and apostolic works. Following in the footsteps of St. Alphonsus, love for Mary, the Mother of Mercy, has always been a hallmark of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer. It was only natural that she would desire to be honoured in our Church under this title of Perpetual Help, and that she would continue to accompany and further our mission across the world.

**Introduction:**      *Letter from Fr. General*

**Hymn:**              ***“Perpetual Help We Name You”***

*Tune: The Church's One Foundation*

*Lyrics by Fr. Matt Allman, C.Ss.R*

*(Presider incenses the Icon during the hymn)*

1. Perpetual Help we name you, O Mother, kind and true.  
All heav'nly grace flows through you to make creation new.  
Your Son made you our Mother and we to you now come.  
O lead us to our Father and may His will be done.
2. O First of all Disciples, O Servant now made Queen,  
You offer us our Savior, Our God enfleshed and seen.  
As you once humbly followed and gave your Son to all,  
So teach us how to love him and listen to his call.
3. Your eyes are set upon us, your ear is turned to hear,  
and as you hold Lord Jesus you teach us not to fear.  
You point us toward his glory by way of Calvary  
and tell again the story of how He set us free.
4. O Star who guides us forward, Our Lady of the way,

O Lead us ever homeward and guard us now we pray.  
As you bore God within you, may we in turn give birth  
To justice, love and mercy as God wills on the earth.

**Ant 1:** We honor you holy Mother of God. You are the glorious Virgin  
full of grace, our refuge and our hope.

Hear, O daughter and see, turn your ear,  
Forget your people and your father's house,  
So shall the king desire your beauty;  
For he is your lord, and you must worship him.  
All glorious is the king's daughter as she enters;  
Her raiment is threaded with spun gold.  
In embroidered apparel she is born in to the king;  
Behind her the virgins of her train are brought to you.

They are borne in with gladness and joy;  
They enter the palace of the king.  
The palace of your fathers your sons shall have;  
You shall make them princes through all the land.

Glory be to the Father and the Son and to the Holy Spirit...

**Ant 1:** We honor you holy Mother of God. You are the glorious Virgin  
full of grace, our refuge and our hope.

**Reflection #1:** "Mary as Missionary" by Fr. Michael Brehl, C.Ss.R.

For Alphonsus, all his prayer, writing, devotion and practice is essentially missionary. So, it is no wonder that he understands Mary as the first and greatest missionary who must accompany his Redemptorists on every mission. He believes that she has the power to attract the most hardened sinners to God and God's divine mercy. He compares her to Ruth, who gleans the fields of all the wheat that the harvesters have passed over. He believes that for Mary, no person can be overlooked - no matter how sinful, humble, poor, abandoned, uneducated or bitter.

In his understanding of Mary as the missionary disciple *par excellence*, Alphonsus prepares the way for a more mature Mariology. This Mariology finds an echo in the writings of Pope Francis, especially in *Evangelii Gaudium*. Under the title of Mother of Perpetual Help, Mary has accompanied Redemptorists in every continent in their Mission to proclaim the Gospel anew. She has proven to be the most effective missionary presence announcing copiosa redemptio for all, but especially for the abandoned poor.

*Period of Quiet Reflection*

**Ant. 2:** We share the fruit of life through you,  
O daughter blessed by the Lord.

Praise be the God and Father  
of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
who bestowed on us in Christ  
every spiritual blessing in the heavens.

God chose us in him  
before the world began  
to be holy and blameless in his sight.

He predestined us  
to be his adopted sons through Jesus Christ,  
such was his will and pleasure,  
that all might praise the glorious favor  
he has bestowed on us his beloved.

In him and through his blood, we have been redeemed,  
and our sins forgiven,  
so immeasurably generous is God's favor to us.

God has given us the wisdom  
to understand fully the mystery,  
the plan he was pleased to decree in Christ.

A plan to be carried out  
in Christ, in the fullness of time,  
to bring all thing into one in him  
in the heavens and on the earth.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit...

**Ant. 2:** We share the fruit of life through you,  
O daughter blessed by the Lord.

**Reflection #2:** *Missionaries of Mary and Jesus by Fr. Philip Dabney*

There is an ancient Russian icon of that speaks of the mission of the early Church. Jesus is at the top of the icon, carried by angels into glory. Mary stands on earth and in the center of the scene, still and silent, with her hands extended in prayer. Two angels clothed in white form a protective wall that separates her from the activity of the rest of the icon. Beyond the angels are the apostles: full of movement, hands waving, feet moving, bodies are in activity, disciples on the move to go forth and preach the gospel. They represent the evangelizing Church. They are the missionaries bringing Christ into the world. Mary on the other hand stands firmly and quietly in the center of the activity. From her flows a steady stream of prayer, which is the life-blood the Church needs for fidelity to the mission of salvation. The icon clearly reveals that Mary is God's gift to the Church. She is both a model for prayer and one who always prays for us.

You could say, this icon of the Ascension also reflects the work of the Redemptorists as disciples of St. Alphonsus “bringing Christ into the world,” by preaching the good news to the most abandoned. And at the center of their missionary activity they bear the icon of Our Mother of Perpetual Help as a means of adequately responding to many peoples’ thirst for God. They believe that Our Mother of Perpetual Help’s quiet maternal warmth is the easiest and the most non-threatening road back to the spirituality people are seeking. In this modern spiritual wasteland she is a spring of fresh water that offers healing and liberation, filling them with life and peace. In this flattened landscape that tries to shut out all vestiges of heaven, she is the "gate of heaven" that opens us to God. Her only calling is to fill us with Jesus. She points to Jesus, never to herself.

By giving us the Icon of Our Mother of Perpetual Help, Pope Pius IX entrusted us with devotion to Mary, the first to be redeemed. With the help of this icon, Redemptorists remind themselves and those to whom they are sent that redemption consists in the close, tender, passionate relationship with Jesus Christ.

### *Period of Quiet Reflection*

#### **Magnificat by Taize:** *(sung three times)*

The image shows two staves of musical notation for the Magnificat by Taize. The first staff is in G major (one sharp) and common time (C). The melody is written on a treble clef. Above the notes are solfège syllables: Sol, Do, Re, Sol, Si m, Do, Re, Sol. Below the notes are the lyrics: Ma-gni-fi-cat, ma-gni-fi-cat, ma-gni-fi-cat a-ni-ma-me-a Do-mi-num. The second staff is also in G major and common time, with a bass clef. Above the notes are solfège syllables: Sol, Do, Re, Sol, Si m, Do, Re, Sol. Below the notes are the lyrics: Ma-gni-fi-cat, ma-gni-fi-cat, ma-gni-fi-cat a-ni-ma-me-a.

#### **Intercessions:**

**Presider:** O Mother of Perpetual Help, we give thanks to God for the gift of your icon to our Congregation and for the countless ways you have helped us to bring Christ into the world. **All:** *Help us to embrace our call to be zealous missionaries sent to preach the gospel to the most abandoned.*

**Presider:** You marveled as your Son grew in wisdom, knowledge and grace. **All:** *Teach us to welcome the Word of God in our lives and be bearers of the Good News to all people.*

**Presider:** You suffered at the wounds your Son endured for our salvation. **All:** *Help us to bind up the brokenhearted and to give hope to the downtrodden. May we share their burdens with compassion and fulfill the law of love.*

**Presider:** You experienced the power of your Son’s resurrection.

**All:** *May we persevere all the days of our life and be embraced by Him in heaven.*

**Presider:** Mother of Mercy! **All:** *May all who are face with trials feel your motherly love.*

**Presider:** Mother of the most miserable! **All:** *Lighten the hardships of all those who burdened in the world, especially the refugees, and deepen their sense of hope.*

