

# THE MIRACULOUS PICTURE OF THE MOTHER OF PERPETUAL SUCCOUR

*“Holy Mary, succour the miserable, help the fainthearted, cheer those that weep, pray for the people, be the advocate of the clergy.”*—Magn. Ant. B.V.M.

THE human mind is capable of sublime and beautiful conceptions. It is the faculty of Art to give expression to these through the medium of Poetry, Music or Painting. So, when Our Divine Lord ascended into Heaven, it was to be expected that His devout followers, who had seen and known Him on earth, would desire to keep vividly before their minds everything concerning Him. Thus, we may feel certain that not only His doctrine, but His gestures, the tone of His voice, the expression of His eyes, His personal appearance, were often lovingly recalled and made the subject of many a word-picture. We are, therefore, not surprised at finding early attempts to reproduce His likeness. In the catacombs and on the walls of the earliest Christian churches we have abundant evidence of the inherent trait of human nature to give outward expression - to its ideal, and so perpetuate in some tangible way the form and features of the being it loves.

We have proof of this in the case of Jesus. May we not believe that it has been the same with regard to His Blessed Mother? In fact, there is greater likelihood of having a more perfect description of her—the most Blessed among women—because, after the death of her Son, she remained twelve years upon earth, and so must have been seen and remembered by many. We know that God’s own Mother was the masterpiece of His creation. Is it conceivable then, that she was not an inspiration to those who had the privilege of beholding her, or that the nobler natures amongst them were not seized with an irresistible desire of leaving a picture of her? We are told that St. Luke was an artist, and he had the happiness of knowing Mary intimately. Would he have lost the opportunity of depicting her, and of handing down to future ages a true likeness of the Mother of God? We can scarcely conceive such a possibility. An Eastern tradition tells us that St. Luke painted Our Lady and the Divine Child, and that this picture so pleased His Blessed Mother that she wished her blessing to accompany it wherever it went. The tradition goes on to say that the Evangelist sent this painting to his friend, Theophilus. Years later, it came into the possession of Eudocia, wife of Theodosius II, who presented it to his sister, St. Pulcheria (†453). This holy virgin built in Constantinople three churches in honour of the Mother of God, and placed St. Luke’s painting in one of them, known as “Hodegium”—a Greek word signifying the “Quarter of the Guides”—hence the famous picture was titled HODEGETRIA. There is certain proof that this picture was held in the greatest honour, and the inhabitants of the ill-fated city in the many straits to which it was reduced frequently experienced Mary’s wonderful protection. For a thousand years it was the object of great veneration, until, at length, it fell into the hands of the Turks when they captured Constantinople in 1453. These barbarians destroyed the sacred icon, and thus was lost one of the - most precious treasures of the East.

Fortunately, copies of the Hodegetria are still preserved: that which is at Smolensk, in Russia, dates from the XIth century, and purports to be a copy of St. Luke’s, for over the right shoulder of the Madonna is painted the word “Hodegetria.” In several churches of the East there were pictures of Our Lady differing only very slightly from the original. When the Turks took the Island of Crete in 1669, the Venetians saved one of these pictures, which was venerated in the cathedral church of St. Titus. The following year, by order of the Venetian Republic, it was placed in the church Della Salute in Venice, where in 1922, this venerable image was crowned. This is interesting, since the picture - of the Mother of Perpetual Succour had been taken from Crete nearly two centuries earlier. In the Museum of Treves is a copy which experts assign to the XIIIth century. There is also one in the Vatican collection, and another in Poland, so that today there are extant several pictures somewhat like the prototype known as Hodegetria. With some slight changes, artists used this ancient type to depict Our Lady of Sorrows, and among these ancient paintings the most widely known is that now honoured in Rome under the title of Mother of Perpetual Succour.

There are some to whom this picture makes no appeal. Its style is, they say, archaic and rigid; in other words, it is antique and unemotional, lacking the more natural beauty of the later and more popular Madonnas of the Italian and Spanish schools. This may be true in some degree, but the picture has an attraction of its own which appeals to all who

understand its symbolism. The original picture, assigned by critics to the XIVth century, is painted on wood; it is a little more than twenty inches in length and sixteen in width. Our Lady's mantle is dark blue on a ground of gold, and, in turn, this dark blue makes a good ground for the gold of the quaint and rigid folds. The Virgin's tunic is red, while the veil beneath her mantle and concealing her hair is light green. Around the neck and wrists are simple ornaments. The tunic of The Divine Child is green, His sash bright red, and His mantle brown. Angels, holding the instruments of the Passion, are quite common in this kind of picture, which proves that they were all taken from the same original picture. The Angels' hands are covered with a veil, as are a priest's at Benediction; this has been done from the earliest ages of the Church to show reverence for what is handled.

Towards the close of the Middle Ages, the faithful had special devotion to the Passion of Christ and to the Sorrows of Mary. This was due, no doubt, to the Crusades (1095-1291), as well as to the influence of the sons of St. Francis of Assisi. To stimulate his devotion, the artist wished to portray the fulfilment of the prophecy of David: "*My sorrow is always before me.*" (Ps. xxxvii., 18.) He does this by representing the Infant Jesus in His Mother's arms, just waking from sleep. The Child sees before Him St. Michael holding the Reed, the Sponge, and the Spear. He is frightened at this apparition and quickly turns the other way. The sudden movement loosens His sandal, which is seen falling from His foot; but on this side He encounters another vision: St. Gabriel with the Cross and Nails, so that, whichever way the Child turns, *His Sorrow is always before Him*. Like other children when frightened, Jesus turns to His Mother and tightly clasps her right hand with His two little ones. She supports Him with her left, and draws Him nearer to her to assure Him of her protection.

These pictures, representing the Divine Child in the arms of His Blessed Mother, with Angels bearing the instruments of the Passion, were usually called "The Virgin of the Angels," or "The Virgin of the Passion." It was customary in Byzantine art to put the name of each figure in the abridged form. In the picture of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, M P are the first and last letters of the Greek word signifying—"Mother"; and O V the first and last letters of the Greek genitive meaning—"of God." The letters ICXC are the initial and final letters for two Greek words for Jesus Christ. Similarly, O AP M stands for the Archangel Michael, and O AP F for the Archangel Gabriel.

It will not be out of place to make some attempt at describing the meaning of this picture; the theme is sublime, being nothing less than the foreknowledge of God and the power of His Blessed Mother.

1. From the first moment of His life on earth, Jesus Christ knew all the sins of the world, and the death which He was to suffer for them. The royal prophet, David, says: "*My Sorrow is always before me,*" and in the book of Isaias we read: "*Despised and the most abject of men; a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with infirmity.*" (Is. liii., 3.) This foreknowledge of His sufferings is clearly brought out in the picture by the frightened attitude of the Divine Child at the vision of the instruments of His Passion.

2. The picture also reminds us that Mary was the Mother of Sorrows because, as a mother, she shared in the sufferings of her Son. St. Bernard, St. Alphonsus and others hold that, from her knowledge of the Scriptures, Mary knew all that was to befall her Son; certainly she understood the full meaning of Simeon's prophetic words: "*And thy own soul a sword shall pierce, that, out of many hearts, thoughts may be revealed.*" (Luke ii., 35.)

3. There is yet a deeper cause for the Child's fear at the sight of the Cross and Nails, the Reed and the Lance; it was the knowledge that, in spite of His laying down His life to atone for the sins of mankind, men would still go on sinning, "*Crucifying again to themselves the Son of God, and making Him a mockery.*" (Heb. vi., 6.) The picture seems to show that Our Lady shares in this knowledge, for her eyes are turned not towards her Son, but towards us. She is looking at us with eyes full of sadness, as if to say:

"Sinners, spare my Child; your Saviour

Seek not still to crucify."

4. The Archangels, holding the instruments of the Passion with veiled hands, teach us reverence for what is holy. The gold surrounding the figures of this picture is said to symbolise the heavenly Jerusalem of pure gold, as described by St. John in the Apocalypse, whence the angels descend to Jesus and Mary on earth. The gold, therefore, represents Paradise, purchased for us by the Precious Blood of Our Redeemer, and, Mary being the "*Gate of Heaven,*" it is through her that we can enter there.

The Most Rev. Father 'Murray, C.S.S.R. points out to religious that the Sponge, the Lance and the Cross may

remind them of their vows. The sponge, offered to Our Saviour on a reed, when He cried out, "I thirst," should bring home to religious that Poverty is accompanied by some privation. The lance, which transfixed the most pure Heart of Jesus, represents the necessity of mortification of the senses in order to preserve Chastity; while the cross teaches them that they must humble themselves like their Divine Master, Who became obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross.

5. The prominent position of Our Lady's right hand, expressing her protection and her power, is a very striking feature of the picture. The Divine Infant holds it in His tiny hands, and the Greeks see in this the perfect union of Mary's will with that of God. The saints tell us that Our Lord dispenses all His graces through the hands of His Blessed Mother. Whatever she asks of Him is granted, because He knows that she seeks only His interest and the salvation of souls purchased by His Blood. St. Bernard, speaking of Mary's power, says: "Thou willest and all is done." With what confidence, then, should we not pray to Our Lady of Perpetual Succour! Everything about her suggests confidence. She holds in her arms the God-man, "the Treasure of all treasures," and she knows the secrets of His Sacred Heart; her eyes are full of entreaty, and most reassuring of all is the name given by herself: "*Holy Mary of Perpetual Succour*." It is not merely a name, but a promise to help us whenever- we call upon her. Let the Infant Jesus be our model in this as in all else: He turns to her quickly in fear and trouble. He clings to her hand. So should we turn to her at the very first onset of temptation, and when the cross presses heavily upon us, if we cling to her we shall, without doubt, experience her protection and her power.

6. In her veil is a star; Mary is called "*the Morning Star*." The Church calls her the "*Star of the Sea*," and, commenting on this title, St. Thomas Aquinas explains that "as sailors are guided by a star to the harbour, so are Christians guided to heaven by Mary." When trying to instil into the hearts of sinners confidence in Mary's protection, St. Bonaventure placed before them a picture of a stormy sea into which sinners had fallen from the Ship of Divine Grace, while Our Lord, pointing to Mary, "the Star of the Sea," says: "O poor, lost sinner, despair not. Lift up your eyes and, behold this beautiful star; it will guide you into the harbour of salvation."

7. "*Son, behold thy Mother*," Our Lord says to us. Yes, if we look upon her as our Mother, she will be our secure refuge. We notice in this picture how her eyes are entreating us to have recourse to her in all our miseries; they are answering the prayer we so often make: "Turn, then, most gracious Advocate, thine eyes of mercy towards us." St. Alphonsus says: "*Mary is all eyes to pity and succour us in our miseries*." Competent critics affirm that in Byzantine art the large, open eyes and small mouth of Our Lady signify that she saw and pondered much in her heart, yet spoke little, but always wisely.

The practical lesson that the picture of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour teaches all—just and sinners alike—is this: *In the hour of need Mary is ever ready to help us.*

#### *The Story of the Miraculous Picture*

The picture now honoured in Rome under the title of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour is that which, during the XVth century, was venerated in Crete as the miraculous image of the Mother of God. The story of its coming to the Eternal City is full of interest. Between the years 1903-1922 three new manuscripts bearing on our subject were found in the Vatican Library. They refer to a tablet - which was affixed to the wall near the miraculous picture in the Church of St. Matthew in Rome, and throw new light on the earlier history of this picture. These documents are given in full by the Rev. C. Henze, C.S.S.R., in his book, "*Mater de Perpetuo Succursu*," published at Bonn in 1926. On the tablet was recorded the history of the picture up to 1499, and from it we learn the following account:

A merchant of Crete took from one of the churches of the island this miraculous picture of the Blessed Virgin, and, concealing it amongst his belongings; he embarked on a sailing vessel. No sooner was the ship out of harbour than a dreadful storm arose, and raged so fiercely that the sailors were in imminent danger of shipwreck. Then, though they did not know that the picture was on board, -they besought God and His Blessed Mother to save them. Their prayer was heard, and the ship reached the desired haven in safety.

A year later, the merchant went, with the picture, to Rome, where he fell ill, and, seeing that his end was near, besought his friend, a Roman, in whose house he was, to carry out his last request. 'When his friend had given his word to this effect, the dying merchant told him about the picture, which he had taken from a certain church, where it

had worked many miracles. He explained to him where he would find it, and concluded with these words:

“I entreat, you, since my approaching death prevents my taking it to the place where I should wish it to be, put it in some church which you think will be worthy of it.” After the merchant’s death, the Roman found the picture and took it home. He yielded to his wife’s persuasion not to part with so beautiful a painting, so he placed it in his bedroom, where it remained nearly a year. The Blessed Virgin appeared to him and told him not to leave her picture in his room, but to remove it to a more honourable place. He paid no attention either to this or to a second apparition of Our Lady telling him the same thing. Then, a third time, Our Lady made known her wish to the Roman, adding that if he did not take the picture to a church he would die miserably. This so frightened the man that in the morning, having told the story of the visions to his wife, he begged her to allow him to present the picture to some church. His wife refused, saying that she was astonished at her husband’s request; that there were no Christians, no matter how wicked, who had not a picture of the Virgin or of Christ crucified in their homes, and that this was not the only one of its kind. He again let his wife have her way. Whereupon Our Lady appeared to him once more and said: “Behold, several times I have warned thee and used threats to force thee to take me from this place, and thou hast not heeded me; now, thou thyself shall depart, first, that I may find a more honourable abode.” Then the Roman fell suddenly sick, and, in a short time, passed away.

The Blessed Virgin worked new wonders to secure the fulfilment of her wishes. In a vision to the six-year-old daughter of the dead man, she said: “Go to thy mother and grandfather and say to them: ‘*Holy Mary of Perpetual Succour* bids you take her from your house, otherwise you will both die suddenly.’” The child’s mother was frightened when she heard this threat; and, because she herself had a similar vision, she realised that she had been the cause of her husband’s death. One of her neighbours, seeing her weeping because she had disobeyed the wishes of the Mother of God, told her that she was foolish to believe such things. She said that the Mother of God is in heaven, and does not mind what is done with painted pictures here. She added: “If you put the picture into the fire it will burn, like any other piece of wood; but, if you are so frightened, give it to me.” That same evening the woman had reason to regret her profanity, for, on returning to her home, she was suddenly attacked by a strange disease, but, having repented, was immediately cured.

The Blessed Virgin, in a second apparition to the little girl, told her to tell her mother to put the picture between the churches of St. Mary Major and St. John Lateran, in the church dedicated to St. Matthew the Apostle. The widow, struck by the prodigies she had witnessed, yielded at last to Our Lady’s wishes, and took the picture to the Augustinian Friars in charge of St. Matthew’s Church in the Via Merulana. It happened to be Wednesday in Holy Week, the day on which a special indulgence could be gained by visiting this church, so great crowds of people witnessed the taking of the sacred image to the place chosen by the Mother of God herself to be her new Shrine. Confidence in this Madonna was immediately inspired, because, on the same day, a man whose right arm was paralysed was instantaneously cured by touching the holy picture. This remarkable record, given on the above-mentioned tablet, concludes with these words: “This Picture of the most glorious Virgin was placed in this Church of St. Matthew the Apostle on the 27th March, 1499, in the seventh year of the pontificate of our Father and Lord in Christ, Pope Alexander VI.”

The crowds which flocked daily to this favoured church on the Esquiline Hill could read how Mary herself had chosen this sanctuary for her Shrine, and had given herself the title of: “*Holy Mary of Perpetual Succour*.” We do not know by what name this picture was known in Crete, but in Rome it received the title of the “Miraculous Picture of the Mother of Perpetual Succour.” Over the door of the church, Cardinal Azzolini, in 1579, had engraved these words: “DEIPARAE VIRGINI MARIAE SUCCURSUS PERPETUI”—i.e., to the Virgin Mother of God, Mary of Perpetual Succour.

For three centuries, 1499-1798, St. Matthew’s was a recognised place of pilgrimage; and because of the fame of its Treasure it was given a cardinalitial title by Leo X. Of the twenty Cardinals who derived their title from this church may be noted the celebrated Cardinal Nerli, who died in 1708. This devout client of Mary, wishing to leave on record his gratitude for her gracious patronage, and desiring that his tomb should speak forth her praises, composed for himself the following epitaph: “In this church of St. Matthew, under the protection of the most Blessed Virgin, widely renowned by the glory of her miracles, Francis Nerli, Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church, has placed his sepulchre.”

Well might this great prelate speak of the Shrine of the Mother of Perpetual Succour as “widely renowned,” for many historians had already borne witness to the wonders granted at this Shrine through her powerful intercession. In 1600 Panziroli wrote: “In the Church of St. Matthew is a picture of the Blessed Virgin, which, from the number of miracles wrought and the countless graces received, well merits to be regarded as miraculous.” A few years later Lupando, speaking of the Madonna, says: “It is a picture of Mary that miracles have made famous.” Totti Martinelli and Piazza call it “Valde Miraculosa”—the very Miraculous Image. Ever since the time when these historians attested to the innumerable favours, both spiritual and temporal, granted through the intercession of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, this picture has been known as MIRACULOUS.

We have seen that the picture was entrusted to the Augustinians. It is interesting to note that their Irish confreres had charge of it for many years. Owing to the Cromwellian persecution, the Friars were driven from Ireland and sought refuge in Rome. As the Community at St. Matthew’s was small at the time, Alexander VII, in 1658, gave these exiled Augustinians charge of Our Lady’s Shrine. They retained this privilege only for three years, for on the restoration of the Stuarts to the throne, they returned to Ireland. One of the Irish friars, Bro. Donatus (Donogh), remained at St. Matthew’s until his death in 1700, and thus kept the bond of union between Ireland and the picture almost unbroken from 1661 to 1739, when, at the request of Clement XII, the Irish Friars returned once more to guard the Shrine. They were in possession of St. Matthew’s up to 1798, when the church was completely destroyed by the French army of invasion.

During this time, so turbulent for Holy Church, Napoleon’s general, Berthier, sent the aged Pontiff, Pius VI, to Valence as a prisoner, and proclaimed a Roman Republic. A few months later, under pretext of strategical necessity, orders were given for the destruction of many churches in the city, amongst which was St. Matthew’s. The Irish Friars were forced to leave their priory and church, but they carried the picture with them. The Celestines, in the neighbouring monastery of St. Eusebius, gave them hospitality for twenty years. Finally, the Augustinians were given, near St. Peter’s, in Posterula, another church, called Sancta Maria. As there was already in this church a Madonna under the title of Our Lady of Grace, the image of the Mother of Perpetual Succour was placed in the private oratory of the Friars. Naturally, this put an end to all public devotion, for the faithful never saw the picture, and, after a few years, it was almost forgotten. Then came the time when there was left in the Community only one Friar who remembered the glories of the former Shrine at St. Matthew’s. This was Brother Augustine Orsetti. He had a great devotion to the Mother of Perpetual Succour, and often spoke about Our Lady’s wonderful Shrine. Among his hearers was Michael Marchi, a boy who used to serve Mass at the Friary. Many a time, Brother Augustine, pointing to the image of the Mother of Perpetual Succour, would say: “Remember. Michael, this is the famous picture of St. Matthew’s. Don’t forget! Do you understand? It was a miraculous picture.” The good Brother did not live to see the restoration of Mary’s Shrine, but his words made so deep an impression on the boy’s mind that, years later, he was able to make known all that he had heard.

In 1854, Pius IX expressed the wish that the Superior-General of the Redemptorists should reside in the Eternal City. When the Fathers came to Rome to look for a suitable site for a monastery, they found for sale in the Via Merulana an extensive piece of land on which formerly stood the old Augustinian monastery. Through the generosity of Father Douglas; C.S.S.R., who was the only son of a noble Scotch family, this property was purchased; and not far from the ruins of St. Matthew’s was built the present monastery and Church of St. Alphonsus. Michael Marchi was one of the first postulants accepted at St. Alphonsus’. He must have seen some of the ruins of the old Augustinian church, and passed over the very spot where the miraculous picture had been enshrined. Yet it was only years after, when Michael Marchi was a Redemptorist Father, that an incident arose which brought back to his mind all that old Brother Augustine had told him.

One day a Father found in the library some documents relative to the miraculous image of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, much venerated at St. Matthew’s Church. When he mentioned his discovery to the Fathers, to the surprise of all, Father Marchi, C.S.S.R., told them that he had often seen this picture in the Oratory of Sancta Maria, in Posterula, and he related all that he had heard from Brother Augustine. At this time Father Francis Blosi, was preaching in the Gesu a course of sermons on the famous sanctuaries of the Mother of God. On Saturday, February 7th, 1863, the subject of his discourse was the picture of the Mother of Perpetual Succour. After having told the people Our Lady’s

wish that her picture should be publicly venerated in the church situated between St. Mary Major and St. John Lateran, he concluded his sermon with these words: "Would that one of you here knew where this holy picture is today! Who can tell but that the honour of finding this Treasure has been reserved for our generation? Happy will those be who are instrumental in bringing about its restoration!" The Fathers of St. Alphonsus' were deeply impressed by Father Blosi's words; it was quite clear that the Queen of the Angels wished her picture to be placed between two great Basilicas of Rome. It was evident that the Redemptorist Church was destined to be Our Lady's new sanctuary, but nearly three years passed before Most Reverend Father Mauron, Superior-General of the Redemptorists, had the opportunity of petitioning Pope Pius IX to allow the miraculous Madonna to be restored to the place of her own choice in the Via Merulana. The Holy Father, who, as a little boy, had been taken to St. Matthew's Church to see the picture, willingly granted the request, and there and then wrote as follows:

December 11th, 1865.

The Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda will make known to the Superior of the Community of Sancta Maria in Posterula that it is Our wish that the Image of Mary Most Holy, of which there is mention in this petition, is to return to its place, between St. John's and St. Mary Major, with the obligation on the Superior of the Redemptorists to substitute in its place a suitable picture.

Pius P.P. IX.

On January 19th, 1866, two Redemptorists.—Fathers Marchi and Bresciani—received the miraculous picture from the Augustinian Prior at Sancta Maria in Posterula.

The joy of the Community on its arrival at the monastery may be easily imagined. As the Fathers gazed at the picture for the first time, one and all noticed in it the very instruments of the Passion—the Cross, the Reed, and Lance—which St. Alphonsus had chosen for the arms of his Congregation.

In the name of the Holy Father, Cardinal Patrizzi proclaimed to the people of Rome that the sacred picture of the Mother of Perpetual Succour was to be restored for public veneration in the Church of St. Alphonsus. He announced that on April 26th, Feast of Our Lady of Good Counsel, there would be a public procession of the miraculous image, followed by solemn triduum. It is a remarkable coincidence that the Holy See chose for this notable celebration at St. Alphonsus' the very feast for which the great Doctor of the Church had such an extraordinary devotion.

In the course of the four centuries of its existence the picture had become faded, worm-eaten, and damaged by the nails which had been used to attach to it the ornaments and crowns. The Polish artist, Novodny, very skilfully restored those parts which needed attention, at the same time leaving as much as possible of the picture in its original condition.

At length the day of the enthronement arrived. The miraculous picture of the Mother of Perpetual Succour was carried in solemn procession through the streets of Rome, and placed in its present position over the high altar in the Church of St. Alphonsus. During the triduum which followed, at least fifty thousand people went to pay their homage to the Madonna. As the Mother of God was pleased to show her power and goodness when taking possession, in 1499, of her first sanctuary in the Eternal City, so on this occasion, also, her coming to her new abode was marked by signal favours.

A poor mother, whose little boy of four was suffering from gastric fever, cried out as the sacred picture passed:

"O Good Mother, either cure my boy or take him to thee in paradise." The child was immediately cured. Another woman prayed likewise, with great faith, for the restoration to health of her eight-year-old daughter, and this child also was restored to health.

To testify his gratitude to Pius IX, the Most Rev. Father Mauron, C.S.S.R., presented him with his first copy of the picture, which his Holiness placed in his private oratory. When he heard of the wonderful favours granted at Mary's new Shrine, he remarked: "Ah, then, she will not refuse to succour the poor Pope," and, on May 5th, he visited the Shrine, and knelt and prayed before it, as he did in the days of his childhood. Ascending the steps to examine it more closely, his Holiness was heard to exclaim: "Oh, how beautiful it is!" On June 23rd, 1867, the Latin Patriarch of Constantinople, after having sung Pontifical High Mass and intoned the "Te Deum," placed two gold crowns, studded with pearls and other precious stones, one on the head of the Divine Infant and the other on that of His Mother. This

ceremony of crowning venerable images of the Madonna has been the practice of the Church from the early ages, and the honour was decreed to the picture of the Mother of Perpetual Succour by the Canons of St. Peter's Chapter in recognition of the many miracles wrought through her intercession. This coronation having taken place on the Sunday preceding the feast of the birth of St. John the Baptist, the Feast of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour was kept on the Sunday before June 24. Then Pius X. set, as date for the feast, June 27. Later, by virtue of the Rescript of Benedict XV. (November 3, 1916), the feast was assigned to the Sunday before the 24th of June for Redemptorist churches. For other churches the feast remains June 27.

The Divine Office for the feast speaks of the remarkable spread of devotion to Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, and notes that, within the space of a few years after the picture was recovered from its place of obscurity and restored to public veneration, devotion to Our Lady under this title spread throughout the entire Christian world. In 1862 the picture was practically unknown; today, pictures of the Mother of Perpetual Succour are to be seen in every land. Up to 1929, five thousand two hundred copies, hand-painted on wood, which have touched the original, have been sent to all parts of the world: West Indies, Africa, Canada, North and South America, New Zealand, Australia, India and China. A copy of the picture is held in great veneration in the Cathedral Church of Osaka, in Central Japan. Aloysius Cannavo, Bishop of Crete, whence the original picture came, asked for copies for his churches in the island.

The Holy See, in 1871, approved of the Confraternity of the Mother of Perpetual Succour in the Church of St. Alphonsus. Five years later, to encourage this devotion, Pius IX raised this association to the rank of an Archconfraternity, under the title of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour and St. Alphonsus. His Holiness was the first member, and so widely has this Archconfraternity spread that, up to 1930, over one thousand four hundred Confraternities have been affiliated to it. The rapid growth of devotion to the Mother of Perpetual Succour may be accounted for by the innumerable favours that have been wrought through her intercession. Wherever this devotion has been practised the faithful have at once felt her sweet and powerful influence. Many copies sent from Rome have originated famous Shrines, and have been to Mary's clients the instruments of countless graces, both spiritual and temporal. Even the smaller pictures and medals have often been the means of conversion, of wonderful cures, and other temporal blessings. Besides copies of this Madonna, several thousands of coloured pictures are sent every year to all parts of the world from the place of the original picture in Rome. These pictures are the correct ones, both in design and colour.

#### *The Spread of the Devotion in the British Isles and Australasia*

In February, 1866, Father Lammens, C.S.S.R., came from Rome to stay for a short time at Bishop Eton, the Redemptorist monastery at Liverpool. He told the Community about the picture, which had just been given to the guardianship of the Congregation. Father Hall, C.S.S.R., one of the Fathers there at the time, happened to be dangerously ill, and the Community decided to make a novena in honour of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour for his recovery. The nine days passed, and the patient's condition becoming more and more serious, it was thought that death was at hand. However, on the tenth day, as the Angelus bell was ringing, a change came over him instantaneously, and he said: "I feel as if a new life had been infused into my body." All pain at once left him, and he knelt to thank Our Blessed Lady for his wonderful cure. He was able to dress and go to the church to say Holy Mass. In the archives of the monastery, dated March 2nd, 1866, we read: "To-day, the house of Bishop Eton was filled with joy and gratitude at the miraculous cure of Rev. Father Hall, through the intercession of the Madonna of Perpetual Succour." This is the first cure attributed to the Mother of Perpetual Succour which is recorded in England. In gratitude for this favour, Rev. Father Vaughan, C.S.S.R., then Rector of Bishop Eton, sent with a thanksgiving offering to Rome a request for an authentic copy of the miraculous picture. Most Rev. Father Mauron, C.S.S.R., was so struck by Father Hall's sudden recovery that he sent the second copy of the picture to Liverpool. Thus, to England, "Our Lady's Dowry," belongs the unique privilege of possessing the FIRST COPY to leave Rome. As soon as the picture reached Bishop Eton, in June, 1866, it was placed over the Tabernacle in the Community oratory, and a solemn triduum was kept. This picture is carried every year in the May procession at Bishop Eton. The Apostolic labours of the Fathers were so blessed after the arrival of the picture that they got another copy for their church; it was unveiled with great solemnity on June 13th, 1869. Thus, the Church of Our Lady of the Annunciation at Bishop Eton, Liverpool, was, in England, the first public Shrine to Our Lady of Perpetual Succour. The numbers who came from far and near to pray before it, and the many

ex-votos presented by the faithful, are sufficient proof of the love and confidence of the people of these parts. The picture, which is now in the church at Bishop Eton, was blessed by Leo XIII, and enshrined on October 12th, 1879, Feast of Our Lady's Maternity. Ten years later was erected the present magnificent gold triptych, designed by Mr. Bentley.

There are authentic copies of this Madonna in the Cathedral churches of Leeds and Middlesborough, these two dioceses having Our Lady of Perpetual Succour as their chief patroness. The Most Rev. Dr. Lacy, Bishop of Middlesborough, wrote, in 1883: "A special blessing seems to have descended on this diocese since the church was dedicated to her, and, more particularly, since the picture was exposed' in the Lady Chapel. Some of the most abandoned sinners have had the grace of conversion, and some have changed into saints. The tone of Catholicity is much improved in the town; the faith of the people has completely revived. . . . The change I attribute to Our Lady of Perpetual Succour." In accordance with the wishes of Bishop Lacy, every church and chapel of the diocese of Middlesborough has today a picture of this Madonna.

A Redemptorist Father, after many years of experience on the missions, has left on record: "The success of many missions in England has been ascribed by the Fathers to the special graces obtained through the intercession of the Mother of Perpetual Succour. Often when the missions did not promise well, either on account of the great coldness and indifference of the people, or on account of the deep depravity of the cities and towns in which they were given, no sooner was devotion to Our Lady of Perpetual Succour recommended, and her picture placed in the church, than at once big spiritual favours were granted; the negligent began to attend; hard hearts were softened; occasions of sin were given up; enemies were reconciled—in a word, the work which seemed doomed to failure was crowned with success.

In London, in 1886, a Lady Chapel containing a shrine to the Mother of Perpetual Succour was added to St. Mary's Church, Clapham. This Gothic work, of which Mr. J. Bentley was architect, is considered a gem of ecclesiastical art. The chapel was opened with solemn rites on December 19th by the Provincial, Very Rev. Father MacDonald, C.S.S.R.

The golden jubilee of the arrival of the picture in England was kept in 1916. Never before did the church at Bishop Eton hold such numbers as attended the triduum, and so great was the crowd on the last day that the closing sermon was preached in the grounds. The soldiers carried the picture in procession, a sight rendered more touching by the fact that the country was then in the throes of the Great War, 1914-1918. Those who witnessed the beginning of devotion to Our Lady of Perpetual Succour in Liverpool could little dream that in such a short time it would spread so rapidly throughout the British Isles.

Rev. Father Coffin, C.S.S.R. (afterwards Bishop of Southwark), set out for Scotland in May, 1866, in company with Rev. Father Vaughan, C.S.S.R., uncle of the late Cardinal Vaughan, and founder in 1882 of the first Redemptorist house in Australia. The object of their visit to Scotland was to find a suitable site for a monastery there. It was no easy task, but the Fathers entrusted their mission to Our Lady of Perpetual Succour. Their confidence in her intercession was great, for Father Vaughan had witnessed Father Hall's cure, and ever afterwards remained a devoted client of the Mother of Perpetual Succour. (Father Vaughan died at Bishop Eton in 1908, and was buried in the vault beneath the Lady Chapel.)

Arrived in Scotland, the Fathers first visited Glasgow, then Edinburgh, and, finally, found for sale in Perth a very favourable site in Kinnoull Hill. They redoubled their prayers to their heavenly Guide, and, with her assistance, within nine days purchased from the Earl of Kinnoull one of the most delightful spots in Perthshire. While the building was in progress they found that there was no water supply, so the Fathers once more had recourse to the Mother of Perpetual Succour, and in a few days a spring was discovered in the grounds. The archives of the monastery record: "Our beloved Patroness gave us, on the 20th October, 1867, a fountain of spring water," which ever after was known as Our Lady's Well. Today it is seen flowing beneath a rockery, which forms a suitable grotto for a statue of Our Lady of Lourdes. Many cures have taken place through the intercession of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour for people who have used the water of this well.

The monastery church, one of the first to be dedicated to Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, was opened on the Feast of St. Joseph, 1869. As in St. Alphonsus' Church in Rome, the picture is placed over the high altar, and is the first shrine of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour in Scotland. When the Hierarchy was restored in England in 1854, repeated

applications were made to the Holy See to extend the same privilege to Scotland, but without avail. In establishing the Confraternity in Perth, 1877, it was hoped that this favour would be obtained, and it is a remarkable coincidence that within a short time of the inauguration of the Confraternity of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, Pope Leo XIII himself proposed the restoration of the Hierarchy to Scotland.

To Limerick belongs the privilege of having the first authentic copy of the picture of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour in Ireland. It was placed in Mount St. Alphonsus, the Redemptorist church, and solemnly unveiled on December 20th, 1867. A triduum followed, during which vast numbers prayed before the shrine. A three weeks' mission was then given to the men of the city, and, speaking of its wonderful results, Dr. Butler, the Bishop, said: "This is a miracle wrought by Our Lady of Perpetual Succour; surely a far greater miracle than the curing of a blind boy or the healing of a cripple." Time has shown that lasting good was achieved by this mission, for the Men's Confraternity of the Holy Family, then established by Rev. Father Bridgett, C.S.S.R., is in a most flourishing condition today. Soon after the erection of the shrine in Limerick, a man who had been twenty-five years absent from his religious duties asked to go to Confession.

He said that he had come out of curiosity to see the new picture, of which he had heard so much, and that, when before it, he felt that he ought to kneel down and say a Hail Mary. Something then urged him to make his peace with God, because he was feeling far from happy about the state of his soul. After his confession he said to the priest:

"Father, I give you full liberty to make known what happened to me. There must be many Catholics who have remained as long away from the Sacraments as I have, and if they only knew how Our Lady of Perpetual Succour could help them they would at once ask her to do so."

The shrine at Mount St. Alphonsus became the nucleus of a devotion to the Mother of Perpetual Succour which spread throughout the length and breadth of Ireland. "There is scarcely an Irish home to-day, in town or in the country," writes Father Coyle, C.S.S.R., "where the sweet picture is not known and loved. It is in the farmer's house, in the labourer's cottage, in the humble cabin of the very poor. . . . It is exposed for the veneration of the people in hundreds of our Irish churches, convents, and monasteries, in our Catholic colleges and schools." In Ireland, as elsewhere, the rapid spread of devotion to Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, and its great popularity, are mainly due to the noteworthy fact that not only is the ancient, original picture miraculous, but it has been proved over and over again that copies of it have been the means of obtaining extraordinary miracles and favours. In the beautiful chapel of the Redemptorists, Drumcondra, was placed Dublin's first authentic picture; it has become a centre of devotion to the Mother of Perpetual Succour. The rich offerings that adorn the shrine testify to the gratitude of Mary's clients for the many favours received through her intercession. In Clonard, Belfast, Our Lady's Confraternity is so flourishing that about three thousand five hundred women walked in the great jubilee processions of 1926; and today there are four thousand five hundred women who attend the monthly meetings held in the Redemptorist church.

Let us now see how the miraculous picture of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour came to be known, loved and revered in Australasia. The year 1882 will ever be remembered with gratitude to God and Our Lady by the sons of St. Alphonsus living under the Southern Cross. Three Redemptorist Fathers, with two Brothers, left London on board H.M.S. Sorata on the 9th of February of that year. Rev. Edmund Vaughan, of whom we have already spoken, was appointed Superior of the little band setting out to extend the Congregation to the great land of Australia. At Plymouth the party was joined by the Most Rev. Dr. Murray, Bishop of Maitland, and Father O'Farrell. On arriving in Australia they took up residence at Singleton, where Dr. Murray put them for a time in charge of the parish. At Singleton the first picture of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour to be brought to Australia was exposed for public veneration by Father Vaughan, who placed under the maternal care of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour the great work entrusted to him. Time has shown that Our Blessed Lady has protected and helped in countless ways the Australian branch of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer. In the year 1887 the Fathers gave up parish work at Singleton and opened a purely mission house at Waratah (now called Mayfield), a suburb of Newcastle. In 1893 a foundation was begun at Ballarat, in Victoria, and, later, a church was built there which was dedicated to Our Lady under the title of Perpetual Succour. Within a few years five other Redemptorist houses were opened in Australasia: Perth, in W.A.; Wellington, in New Zealand; Galong and Pennant Hills, in New South Wales; and Brisbane, in Queensland. From all these houses devotion to Our Lady of Perpetual Succour has spread abroad so that her picture is well known and loved under the

Southern Cross. It is exposed in many a church, and brings peace and joy to many a home. In Sydney alone there are no less than three remarkable shrines of Our Lady under her title of Perpetual Succour: Holy Cross Church at Bondi Junction has one, the Immaculate Conception Church at Dulwich Hill has another, and the Church of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour at Erskineville a third. Other Orders, too, besides the Redemptorists, have done much to spread devotion to the miraculous picture. The Christian Brothers, for instance, have a copy of this picture in all their houses and schools, and they daily invoke Our Lady with the prayer: "Mother of Perpetual Succour, pray for us, thy children." Another excellent teaching Order, the Marist Brothers, have a shrine to Our Lady of Perpetual Succour at their Novitiate house at Mittagong, N.S.W., and thus the young men trained there proceed to the various Marist schools of the Commonwealth, imbued with this devotion and zealous for its spread among the boys under their charge. Similar instances of zeal for devotion to Our Lady, invoked under the same title, might be cited from several other Orders in Australia. In fine, in testimony of the success of the work, which less than half a century ago was entrusted to Our Lady's perpetual care, it is a pleasing fact to record that so many young men have been called to the Redemptorist life, both as priests and lay-brothers, that, on the 8th April, 1927, the Sacred Congregation of Religious erected the New Zealand and Australian Redemptorist houses into a separate Province of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

#### *Some of the Favours Received*

The shrines of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour throughout the world have become such channels of mercy and perpetual help that the picture is known as "Effigies semper miraculose," the, ever-miraculous Madonna. From the almost innumerable examples of the wonderful favours received through Mary's intercession, only a few can be given in these pages.

One of the first cures obtained soon after the shrine was erected in Liverpool was that of a little boy of six, who could not walk without crutches. The doctors declared that to prevent his death it would be necessary to amputate the right foot. The child's mother, in her distress, appealed to Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, and her boy was restored to perfect health. The little silver crutch, to be seen near the Lady Altar at Bishop Eton, is a token of thanksgiving from the grateful mother.

"During a mission at Aigburth, near Liverpool," writes a Redemptorist Father, "we did our utmost to instil devotion to, and confidence in, the Mother of Perpetual Succour. A sailor, who had been away from the Sacraments for a long time, asked Our Lady of Perpetual Succour to help him to make a good confession. He waited with others outside my confessional until a few minutes before midnight, when I was obliged to tell them that I would hear them first next day. The sailor, as I afterwards learnt, went away very sad because his ship was to set sail next morning, and he therefore knew that it would be impossible for him to get to confession. Early next day I was asked to call at a house where resided a careless Catholic, but, when I went to the address given, I learnt that the man had removed to a house near the Garston docks. I asked a sailor who saluted me if he could direct me to a certain street. On the way he told me of his disappointment in not being able to get to confession the previous evening. As his ship was due to sail within an hour, I offered to hear his confession on the spot. He readily agreed, and made his confession as we walked up and down the dockyard. As I was about to give him Absolution, though there were many people about, the poor fellow fell on his knees in the mud. I felt certain that Our Lady of Perpetual Succour had sent me a roundabout way that morning solely to help this sailor. My conviction was afterwards strengthened when I learnt that the ship on which my sailor friend had embarked was lost with all on board."

In 1928 another sailor, who himself was living close to the Garston docks, happened to pick up the pamphlet on Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, and read about the above conversion. He had been away himself many years from the Church, and felt he should kneel and say a prayer to the Mother of God. This he did, and afterwards he was moved by an irresistible grace to go to the Catholic Church, some distance away, and asked to see the priest. The sailor made his peace with God and went to Holy Communion the next morning, just before embarking on his ship for another voyage. He told the priest that it was Our Lady of Perpetual Succour who had helped him to come to confession after being away so long, and that he could tell others about his conversion.

The following, found in the archives of Bishop Eton, is an example of a cure which took place on the ninth day of a

novena to Our Lady of Perpetual Succour: A boy, suffering from a painful internal disease, grew better, and forty-six years later walked in the procession during the golden jubilee celebrations at Bishop Eton. He tells the story himself in the following announcement in a local paper:

Sir,—I think that the time is most opportune to bear personal testimony to the efficacy of prayer to Our Lady of Perpetual Succour in interceding on one's behalf to the Sacred Heart of her beloved Son. Some decades ago, I was suffering from diabetes, and was given up as incurable by the late Dr. Crawford of this city, who told my mother to call in a priest to prepare me for the end, which he could not avert, and I received the Last Sacraments of Holy Church. My good mother, being a strong believer in the efficacy of prayer, visited the Fathers at Bishop Eton and induced them to make a novena on my behalf. On the commencement of the novena I began to feel better, and on its termination I was cured. In acknowledgment and thanksgiving to God and His Blessed Mother for my recovery, my mother presented two silver candlesticks (with a suitable inscription recording the above facts), which stood on the Lady Altar at Bishop Eton for many years. Yours, etc.,

J. McG.

Liverpool, July 3rd, 1916.

But if the Blessed Virgin is so ready to cure bodily diseases, she is still more the Mother of Perpetual Help when there is question of curing the soul. A widow in the south of Ireland had a son whose careless life gave her much anxiety for many years.

She made several novenas to the Blessed Virgin to obtain his return to his religious duties, but her prayers had not been granted. One day she came into a church where there was an altar to the Mother of Perpetual Succour; she told the sacristan that she was going to spend all she had to buy candles to burn before Our Lady's image. For a long time this poor mother knelt beseeching Mary to bring about the conversion of her wayward boy. As soon as she returned home she noticed a change in him. What was her joy when he said to her: "Mother, you will be glad to know that I have made up my mind to go to my duties." "Ah, thanks be to God and His Blessed Mother!" the widow exclaimed. That very day he went to confession and took the pledge. His repentance was real, and ever after he led an edifying life.

The following cure was granted to the Right Rev. Richard Lacy, who gives an account of it to a Redemptorist Father in the following letter:

Collegia Inglese, Roma.

March 21, 1884.

My dear Father Livius,— After having sent off to the printer my little preface, my next step was to go on the 18th to the shrine of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour on the Esquiline, and offer up the Holy Sacrifice for a very special intention. Our Lady heard my prayer, and vouchsafed to grant me a miraculous cure of an internal ailment, which for the last nine years has caused me much trouble and suffering, and been a sad drawback to me in my work. The cure was instantaneous and complete. At first I could hardly believe it. I felt confused at the thought of a miracle being wrought on me. It has, however, proved to be no imagination, but a reality. For the honour of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour I think this ought to be made known, although if I were to be guided by my own natural instincts, I should prefer my name not to appear. I wish you would get as many prayers of thanksgiving as possible for this extraordinary proof of Our Lady's loving heart. .

Yours faithfully in Christ,

+ RICHARD, Bishop of Middlesborough.

It is interesting to note that this Bishop lived till 1929. He was a most devoted client of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour.

Sometimes, either to test our confidence or because Our Lady loves us to persevere in prayer, she does not answer our requests at once, but grants, after a second or third novena, what she seemed to refuse at first. In 1894 a poor man, living outside Liverpool, had been suffering for nineteen years from a dangerous internal disease, due to gas-

poisoning. As the years went by he became worse, until at length he could no longer retain any food, and the doctors considered his case helpless. He was advised by one of the members of Our Lady's Confraternity to make a novena to the Mother of Perpetual Succour. He made three novenas, and took with confidence one of the tissue prints of the Mother of Perpetual Succour on the third, sixth, and ninth days. This man's faith and perseverance were rewarded: at the end of the third novena he was cured instantaneously. He was so well that he was able to resume work and even to do overtime, thanks to Our Lady of Perpetual Succour.

Another example, which shows that perseverance in prayer to the Mother of Perpetual Succour will surely win in the end, is that of a lady in London, who in 1899 completely lost the sight of one eye. The oculist declared that it would be necessary to remove the eye in order to save the sight of the other. She made not only one, but several, novenas to Our Lady of Perpetual Succour; her prayers, however, remained unanswered. One Sunday evening she went to Benediction at St. Mary's, Clapham. The priest in his sermon spoke about confidence and perseverance in prayer; so, afterwards, she prayed with fervour to the Blessed Virgin to restore her sight. No sooner had she made her petition than she was cured. At first she thought that it was an illusion; but, covering up the good eye with her hand, to her great joy she could see the sacristan lighting up the candles for Benediction.

In Glasgow, on April 26, 1916, the fiftieth anniversary of the restoration of the picture to Rome, took place the instantaneous cure of a little boy of four, who, owing to hip disease, was unable to walk. His parents consulted several doctors, but they could give no hope of a perfect recovery. After the family had recourse to Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, the boy suddenly jumped up and ran to his father. The mother, in alarm, cried out to her husband: "Lift him, lift him!" But there was no need to support the child; he was perfectly cured.

During a retreat given at Widnes, in the autumn of 1918, the priest was asked to see an old man, whom no one could persuade to go to the Sacraments. If spoken to about it, he would reply that those who went to Holy Communion were no better than he was. The priest, having been warned about the old man's dispositions, chatted with him about his health and past experiences. This pleased the old man, for he was one of the veterans of the Crimean war, and had, he said, done his duty as a soldier, and killed many a man in his life. "Father," he added, "I suppose I shall want patching up before I die, but not now." The priest thought it advisable not to speak to him about Confession that day; but, when leaving him, he slipped into his hand a medal of the Blessed Virgin. The next day the priest visited him again, but, before doing so, knelt in the chapel before the picture of the Mother of Perpetual Succour and said the "Memorare" to obtain the old man's conversion. In his conversation with the old soldier, the Father ventured to tell him that he could easily "patch him up." On hearing this, the old man, who was in bed, turned his face to the wall and refused to speak. The priest then said that he had brought with him a gentle instrument to put him right. The sick man, curious to know what it was, looked around, and the Father showed him his mission cross. The priest asked him if he knew the "Hail Mary" or the "Hail, Holy Queen." The old man answered that he had always liked the "Hail, Holy Queen," and so the priest persuaded him to say it to Our Lady of Perpetual Succour. No sooner had he recited it than Mary turned her eyes of mercy towards him. He made his confession, while tears of contrition poured down his cheeks. For the glory of God and the honour of His Blessed Mother, the old man asked that the story of his conversion should be made known, and he gave the priest permission to tell the following facts: At the age of seven he had gone to England from Ireland; there he became a drummer boy, and later a soldier. Though he never denied his Faith, he did not live up to it; and, what was most pressing upon his conscience, was the thought that, though he was eighty-eight years of age, he had never received the Sacraments. The next day the old soldier made his first Holy Communion, and it was for him a day of real joy. During the four months that the old man still lived he received Holy Communion frequently, and those who attended him said that they had never heard anyone pray so well.

Even the mere fact of having a picture of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour in the home is a guarantee of our Heavenly Mother's protection, as is shown by the following: During a mission in Manchester in 1920, one of the Fathers noticed in a house which he was visiting a picture of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour. He asked if the people were attending the mission, and was told by an elderly woman that no Catholics were living there. "Well, what is that picture doing here?" inquired the priest. "Oh!" exclaimed the woman, somewhat surprised, "that belongs to my mother, who is very ill upstairs." The priest asked to see her, and found that the old woman was a lapsed Catholic, who had not been near a church since she left school. The priest spoke to her kindly, and she received grace to make

her confession with true repentance. Within a few days she died, after having received the Last Sacraments. How wonderful is Mary's charity, when her picture placed in a home will be the means of bringing about such a deathbed conversion!

During the mission given by the Redemptorists at Inishbofin, County Galway, in 1920, a public novena was made to the Mother of Perpetual Succour. The fishermen of this island were reduced to great poverty, as for two years no fish could be caught. How Mary came to the aid of these poor fishermen, the following letter from the parish priest gives ample testimony:

"Inishbofin, June 27, 1920.

"My dear Father T.,— "The people were delighted with the mission, and, wonderful to say, the fish immediately came in shore, and thirty boats were loaded off the lighthouse in the waters outside the barrier, where a 'take' was never made before so convenient for the crews. I saw a boat set sail for Clifden today with 1200 dozen lobsters. Prosperity, the people say, follows a mission, and, doubtless, temporal necessities are relieved after the spiritual ones. This is a clear proof of it.—Yours sincerely, J.N., Adm."

A Sister at the convent, Ferry-road, Edinburgh, wrote to one of the Fathers at Bishop Eton in April, 1926: "About a year ago I wrote asking for prayers for our dear Mother Superior, who was threatened with a serious operation. Thanks to Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, the operation was averted, and she returned home quite well. At present she is in Ireland, making a visitation, as she was made Provincial last December."

In January, 1927, inquiries were made about this cure, and the following answer was received from Edinburgh, February 7, 1927: "About two years ago Rev. Mother was very ill, and when the doctor examined her he found she had a growth which was thought to be a cancerous tumour; he said that an operation was absolutely necessary. We began a novena to Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, and sent an offering to Rome to have Masses said at the shrine. The last day of the novena the Rev. Mother was taken to a nursing home to be operated on; when the doctor there examined her, they found the growth had disappeared, so Mother Provincial returned home quite well without any operation. We all attributed the cure to Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, and have placed her picture in our chapel, in thanksgiving."

The Redemptorist Fathers working in South Africa have many experiences of Our Lady's powerful protection. A Sister of the Holy Cross, in a convent in South Africa, suffered severe pain from stomach trouble for eleven years. Her sufferings became all the more acute because of blood-poisoning, which affected her whole system, and caused running wounds for six years. The doctors considered her incurable. Father M. Hayes, C.S.S.R., during his visit to the convent at Aliwal North in 1922, suggested making a novena to Our Lady of Perpetual Succour. The Community united their prayers with those of the sick Sister, and during the nine days Father Hayes was allowed to say Mass in the convent infirmary. On the eighth day of the novena, when the Sacred Host was uplifted at the Consecration, the patient experienced great joy, and felt certain that she was cured. After Mass she got up, feeling quite well. For eleven years she had been unable to take any substantial food, but from the first day of her cure she was able to take the meals served in the Community. When the doctor saw the sudden change that had taken place, he said: "Well, Sister, this is certainly a most wonderful cure, and, as you say, a miracle; only prayer could have done this for you."

Many other examples of Our Lady's protection and power could be cited, but these few will serve to prove that no one ever had recourse to Our Lady of Perpetual Succour and was left forsaken.

#### *Devotion of Sovereign Pontiffs to Our Lady of Perpetual Succour*

The greatest proof for the popularity of this picture can be deduced from the examples of the Sovereign Pontiffs themselves. They, as the official teachers and instructors of the Faith, may well serve as models for our imitation.

The Very Reverend Father Nicholas Mauron asserts of Pius IX.: "He venerated this sacred image with such a special devotion that he wished to have it in his private oratory; that he condescended to be the first to have his name inscribed in the Archconfraternity, just then (March 31, 1876) established; and that he was always extremely delighted, whenever any of those countless pictures, now dispersed throughout the world, were brought to him to be

blessed.” When this same Pontiff was asked by the Catholic inhabitants of the Russian city of Zitomir to send them one of the most popularly venerated pictures in Rome, he selected a copy of our miraculous picture.

Of Leo XIII, Father Matthias Raus wrote on July 22, 1903: “He venerated the Blessed Virgin Mary of Perpetual Succour with an extraordinary piety. He wished the picture to be kept constantly on his writing-desk, so that he might never lose sight of it.” On May 3, 1902, he presented the Missionaries of the Assumption, who were about to set out for Bulgaria, with a precious ornamented tablet portraying the Mother of Perpetual Succour, and also a standard having a similar design.

Pius X., in 1908, sent this picture as a gift, artistically wrought in mosaic, to the Empress Taitou of Abyssinia. And on January 29, 1914, he granted an indulgence of 100 days, *toties quoties*, for the ejaculation: Mother (or Our Lady) of Perpetual Succour, pray for us.

Benedict XV. not only wished a duplicate of this picture placed above his throne, but also during the jubilee year of 1916, out of love for the Blessed Virgin of Perpetual Succour, ordered a special medal struck, bearing on one side our image, and on the other his own effigy.

Finally, Pius XI. wished the same venerable picture to serve as an ornament on a little book, published in 1922 by the Vatican Press, for the benefit of the starving children of Russia, and, likewise, that it be the seal of the “Pontifical Mission” appointed for Russia.

In view of these facts, we cannot but admit, with Father Henze, C.S.S.R., from whose book, “Mater de Perpetuo Suecursu,” written in Latin, and published in 1926, I have taken for the basis of this account, that “the picture of Perpetual Succour is now not only in each and every particular country, but throughout the world at large, the most popular of all Mary’s pictures.” No doubt, the chief reason of this is because of its miraculous power; for scarcely is there a shrine where its wonders are unknown. Then, too, we see a reason in its profound appeal to the human heart. The human heart seeks love; there it has it in Jesus and Mary. It begs strength in temptation; there it finds it in the sufferings of the Infant Saviour. It needs consolation in sorrow; there, too, it beholds a compassionating Mother. And, lastly, some of its glory must be ascribed to its beautiful title of Perpetual Succour. In these two words we find a shield of defence in every difficulty; a sword for every combat in life.

May those who read this short account of this miraculous picture of Mary be encouraged to have perpetual recourse to this good Mother, and may they resolve to salute her daily as their Queen, in the words of the Archangel Gabriel: “Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.” Happy will they be who are faithful each day to some devotion to the MOTHER OF PERPETUAL SUCCOUR; she will be their salvation in life and their hope in death.

#### APPENDIX.

##### *PRACTICAL DEVOTIONS.*

1. Daily Recourse to Her.—This is the best way to show devotion to the Mother of God. She is the Perpetual Succour of those who have perpetual recourse to her. St. Alphonsus says:

“Happy the action which is commenced and terminated with a Hail Mary.” Each morning and evening kneel and say the Hail Mary three times, adding this short prayer: “By thy pure and immaculate conception, O Mary, purify my body and sanctify my soul.” In all the difficulties of daily life, it is a good practice to invoke her, saying: “Holy Mary, succour me. Mother of Perpetual Succour, help me.”

2. A Thought in Temptation.—It is very easy to overcome temptation by imagining Our Lady looking at us as she does in the picture, and seeming to plead to us not to offend her Divine Son. The very name of Mary is sufficient to check a temptation.

3. Some Special Act on Saturdays.—It is the custom for devout clients of Mary to do some special act of charity, as giving an alms to the poor or doing some act of mortification in honour of the Mother of God.

4. Each Month to Renew One’s Act of Consecration. The following act could be said on the first Sunday of the month:

Most Holy Virgin Mary, who, to inspire me with the fullest confidence, hast been willing to take the sweet name of Mother of Perpetual Succour, I, N.N., acknowledge that my sins render me unworthy to be admitted among the

number of thy privileged children. Nevertheless, desirous of enjoying thy merciful favour, I cast myself at thy feet, and, humbly prostrate before thee, I consecrate to thee my understanding, that I may always think of the love which thou deservest: I consecrate to thee my tongue, that I may always make use of it to proclaim thy sublime prerogatives; I consecrate to thee my heart, in order that, after God, I may love thee above all things.

O my Sovereign Lady, deign to receive me among the number of thy favoured children; take me under thy protection, succour me in all my spiritual and temporal wants, but especially at the hour of my death.

5. Novena.—Any prayer to Our Lady said on nine consecutive days is a novena. One of the following prayers may be said with nine Hail Marys:

*Prayer In Spiritual Need.*

O Mother of Perpetual Succour, with the greatest confidence I come before thy sacred picture in order to invoke thine aid. Thou hast seen the wounds which Jesus hast been pleased to receive for our sake; thou hast seen the Blood of thy Son flowing for our salvation; thou knowest how much thy Son desires to apply to us the fruit of His Redemption. Behold, I cast myself at thy feet, and pray thee to obtain for my soul the grace I stand so much in need of. O' Mary, most loving of all mothers, obtain for me from the Heart of Jesus, the source of every good, this grace (mention it). O Mother of Perpetual Succour, thou desirest our salvation far more than we ourselves; thy Son hast given thee to us for our Mother; thou hast thyself chosen to be called Mother of Perpetual Succour. Show, then, that thou lovest me; show that thou art really my Mother; show that thou art justly called Mother of Perpetual Succour. I trust not in my merits, but in thy powerful intercession; I trust in thy goodness; I trust in thy motherly love. Mother of Perpetual Succour, for the love thou bearest to Jesus, thy Son and my Redeemer, for the love of thy great servant Alphonsus, for the love of my soul, obtain for me the grace I ask from thee.

Ant. Holy Mary, succour the miserable, help the fainthearted, cheer those that weep, pray for the people, be the advocate of the clergy, intercede for the devout female sex; let all feel thine aid who implore thy perpetual succour.

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

R. A helper in need and tribulation.

Let Us Pray

O Almighty and Merciful God, Who hast given us to venerate the picture of Thy most Blessed Mother, under the special title of Perpetual Succour, graciously grant that amidst all the changes of our journey through life we may be so defended by the continual protection of the same Immaculate, ever-Virgin Mary, that we may deserve to obtain the rewards of Thy eternal Redemption, who livest and reignest with God the Father, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, world without end. Amen.

*Prayer in Temporal Need.*

O Mother of Perpetual Succour, numerous clients continually surround thy holy picture; all imploring thy mercy. All bless thee as the assured Succour of the miserable; all feel the benefit of thy maternal protection. With confidence, then, do I present myself before thee in my misery. See, dear Mother, the many evils to which we are exposed; see how numerous are our wants. Trials and sorrows often depress us; reverses of fortune and privations, often grievous, bring misery into our homes; everywhere we meet the cross. Have pity, compassionate Mother, on us and on our families, and especially in this my necessity (mention it) from which I now suffer. Help me, O my Mother, in my distress; deliver me from my ills; or, if it be the will of God that I should endure them, make me suffer with love and patience. This grace I expect of thee with confidence, because thou art our Perpetual Succour. Amen.

*Prayer in Sickness*

O dear Mother of Perpetual Succour, behold how much I suffer from this my sickness. Together with the body, my soul is also afflicted. I have not even strength to say a prayer as I ought to do. Nothing is able to give me any relief. Even the visit and compassion of my best friends do not give me any comfort. Hence my courage begins to fail;

impatience and sadness oppress my soul. In this, my great distress, I put all my trust in thee, most tender of all mothers. ‘Thy compassionate heart will certainly have pity on me; yes, most merciful Mother, thou wilt not forget thy poor afflicted child. Obtain for me courage and strength to accept all these trials from the hand of God with patience and resignation. If it is for the good of my soul, grant that I may recover my former health; but if it is the will of God that I should suffer still longer, or that this sickness should lead me to a better life, I am perfectly resigned, for I am sure that thou, O my loving Mother, wilt obtain for me the grace to do whatever God demands from me. Amen.

6. Join Her Confraternity.—St. Alphonsus, speaking of confraternities erected in honour of the Mother of God, says:

“These associations are, as it were, so many arks of Noah, in which poor seculars find refuge from the deluge of the temptations and sins which inundate the world.”

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