

SVCCVRRE NOS

(Come to our HELP)



In the Vatican Basilica of Saint Peter's, set in the wall over the altar of the Gregorian Chapel, framed within precious coloured marble, and surrounded by magnificent gilt-bronze angels, above the tomb of St Leo, is one of the most venerated ancient images of the Virgin Mary: "**Madonna del Soccorso**" or "**Madonna di San Leone**" (*Our Lady of Help*).

The image is 66 cm high and 55 cm wide, with an arched top. It represents the Virgin Mary as a young woman, with a gentle grace, her large blue eyes turned outward, almost as if to comfort the beholder, she supports the blessing Christ Child.

On 1st May, Pope Francis made his way to the chapel to pray the Rosary and inaugurate a '**Marathon of Prayer**' for the end of the pandemic. Each day of May, the Holy Rosary will be prayed from 30 different Marian shrines throughout the world, for the healing of the world wounded by the pandemic.

This image is particularly significant for Pope Francis. In 2013, during the Year of Faith, the icon underwent a new restoration. Since then, the image of the Virgin Mary presents on the gilded hem of the tunic, that covers the breast, a sort of **decorated blue oval brooch**, recently remade, originally set into a small hole in the painting itself. The ornament is engraved with the words: **SVCCVRRE NOS** ('Help us'), and below, **FRANCISCVS PP** ('Pope Francis').

Shortly after his election, on March 13th 2013, the Pope entrusted his Petrine ministry to *Our Lady of Help*, who since then bears close to her heart the name of Pope Francis, and his invocation "Come to our Help".

We have all been wounded and tried by this pandemic, we are all in need of help, and we all have the same Mother. During this month, pray the Rosary, at home with your children, as you walk or travel, in our Church, during the day or at night when you cannot sleep, pray for an end to this pandemic, and for the healing which comes from Christ's blessing.

In manus.

Father Ivano