

## **Novena of Prayer to Our Lady of Perpetual Help (18-26 June 2020)**

### **Prayer to Our Lady of Unfailing Help**

*(Novena Prayer of St Alphonsus)*

Dear Mother, the Lord looked on you in your humility, and chose you to be the mother of His Son; and now all ages call you blessed. God has worked marvels for you. You witnessed the death of your Son on the cross, and your continuing faith has brought you to witness His victory over death, filling your heart with joy and praise.

By the example of your life, you showed that God's mercy is on those who fear Him. You sang of the justice of the one who casts the mighty from their thrones and raises the lowly; you told of the promise made to Abraham, Sarah, and all their descendants forever. You are now with the saints, singing the praises of God, and praying for us, who need your prayers.

Pray with us to the Lord, and as our prayers arise before Him like incense, He will hear us and answer us, according to His promise.

*Here make the intention for your Novena. Let us all offer it especially asking Our Lady's intercession for an end to the current Pandemic throughout the world, and the differing forms of suffering that it is causing.*

### **Rosary prayers and Prayer to Jesus the Divine Physician**

*As is practical, offer a Rosary, or part of it for these intentions. If nothing else is possible, offer the Our Father, three Hail Marys and the Glory Be, followed by the Prayer to Jesus the Divine Physician.*

Lord Jesus Christ, our Divine Physician, we ask you, by the prayers of your Holy Mother, Our Lady of Perpetual Help, to guard and protect us from Coronavirus COVID-19 and all illness. For all who have died, have mercy; for all now ill, bring healing and the knowledge of your presence. For those searching for a remedy, give wisdom; for medical caregivers, strengthen and shield them. For those who are afraid and alone, grant peace. May your precious blood be our defence and salvation. By your grace turn the evil of disease into moments of consolation and hope. May we always fear the contagion of sin more than any illness. We abandon ourselves to your infinite mercy. Amen.

***Below is information about the Image of Our Lady of Perpetual Help***

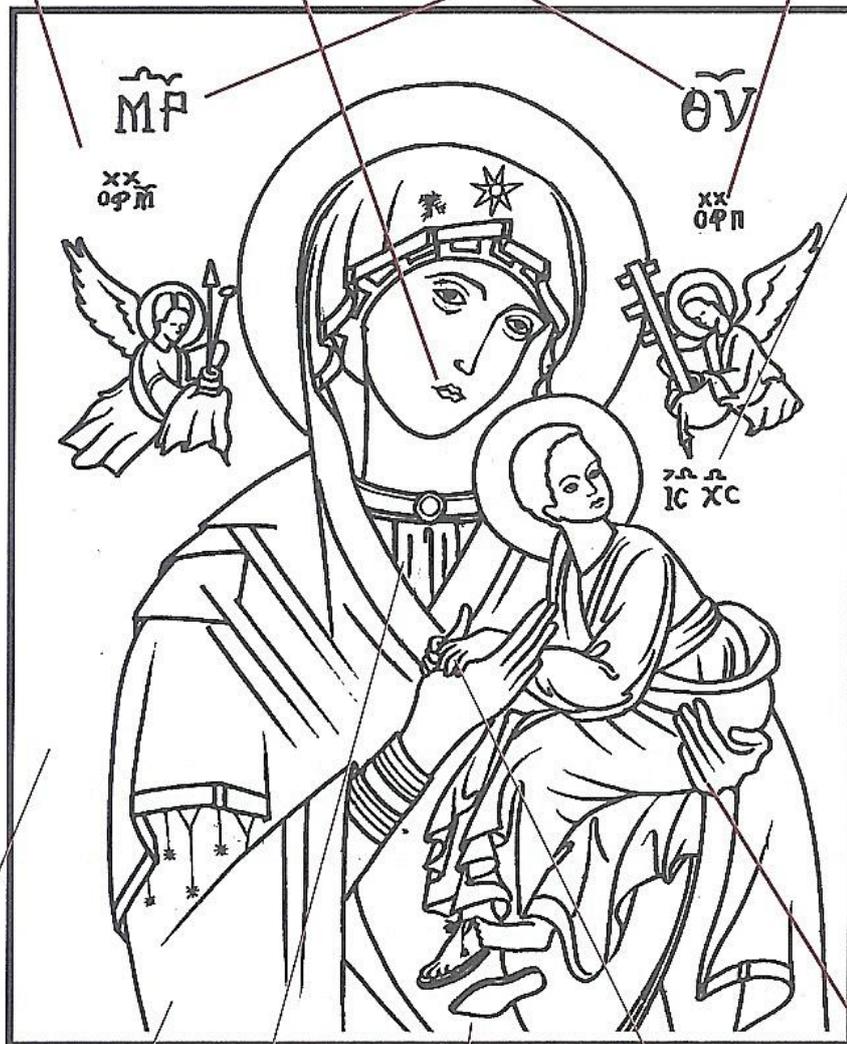
Greek initials for Archangel Michael, who holds the lance and the sponge. 'Michael' means 'who is like God?'

Greek initials for Archangel Gabriel, who holds the cross of Christ. 'Gabriel' means 'God is strong.'

Mary's mouth is small, symbolising her few recorded words and the depth of her contemplation.

Greek initials for Mother of God.

Greek initials for Jesus Christ.



Gold background symbolises heaven.

Red tunic, the colour worn by virgins at the time of Christ.

The Christ-child clings trustingly to his mother.

The mother's supporting hand.

The colour blue, worn by mothers in Palestine.

The falling sandal indicating his alarm at the thought of his Passion and death.

An 'icon' is a Christian picture that tells a story or teaches a truth. Traditionally, icons have been associated with the Eastern Church, but have played a part in the Western Church also. The icon of Our Lady of Unfailing Help is an icon that tells of the Passion and Death of Jesus, and of the suffering of Mary his Mother.

The original picture of Our Lady of Unfailing Help was painted on the island of Crete over five-hundred years ago. The picture was stolen by a merchant in 1498 and brought by him from Crete to Rome the following year. It is recorded in the history of the picture that the merchant fell seriously ill and fearing death he asked a friend to place the picture in a church where it could be once again seen by the faithful. The merchant died, but his friend held on to the picture and it was placed by his wife in their house. After a series of visions of Our Lady, the friend was finally convinced to part with the picture and place it in accordance with Our Lady's request in the Church of St Matthew in Rome. The Church of St Matthew was destroyed in 1798, but the picture was kept safe by the Augustinian friars. Only when a new church was built on the site of the old St Matthew's could Our Lady's request be fulfilled once again. The new church was the Redemptorist church of St Alphonsus, the obvious place for the picture, so near its former home. And so, the Pope requested that the picture should be moved to the Redemptorist church.

On April 26<sup>th</sup> 1866, the picture of Our Lady of Unfailing Help was solemnly installed in this new church of St Alphonsus in Rome. The first copy of the picture to leave Rome came to Bishop Eton, the Redemptorist church in Liverpool. Since then, copies of the picture have been taken to the four corners of the world.

In June 1867, Pope Pius IX approved the coronation of the icon by Vatican chapter, and thus thousands of copies made from the original since this date show Our Lady wearing a crown.

The Church of St Alphonsus in Rome is the titular church of Cardinal Vincent, so the original icon is currently under the care of our own bishop.