



**A Short Novena to  
Our Mother of Perpetual Help**



## **What is a Novena?**

From the Latin word “novem,” which means nine, the novena is an ancient Christian devotional practice of praying and meditating for nine consecutive days. Novenas may also be undertaken for nine consecutive hours, weeks, or months. Perpetual novenas are prayed on an ongoing basis daily, weekly, monthly, and even annually. Novenas are usually undertaken for the sake of a particular cause or intention and may consist of public or private prayer.

The number nine recalls the nine months Jesus spent in the womb of Mary, his death on the Cross at the ninth hour, the nine days the disciples spent in prayer awaiting the coming of the Holy Spirit in the Upper Room at Pentecost.

## **Who is Our Mother of Perpetual Help?**

The Novena to Our Mother of Perpetual Help was originally published in Spain in 1866 under the approval of Pope Pius IX. The image of the icon presented in this booklet dates to before 1499, but legend has it that the image was painted by the Apostle Luke, a Greek physician, artist, and Gospel writer whom the Eastern Church honors as the first writer of icons. There are four images of Mary attributed to him by tradition.

The icon of Our Mother of Perpetual Help (originally Succor), is displayed in the Church of St. Alphonsus in Rome and is entrusted to the care of the Redemptorists. When the image was adopted by the West, its name was changed from Succor to Perpetual Help.

The story goes that Jesus was given a vision of the manner of his own death when the Archangels Michael and Gabriel revealed to him the lance, sponge, nails, and cross. The frightened Jesus ran to his Mother in such haste that his sandal broke, and we see it dangling from his right foot.

Our Mother of Perpetual Help accompanies us throughout our lives, giving us comfort and assurance in times of need. Her eyes are always upon us, and she directs us always to her Son, our Lord, Jesus Christ. Her feast day is June 27<sup>th</sup>, and novenas in anticipation of this feast should begin on June 18<sup>th</sup>.



# **A Short Novena to Our Mother of Perpetual Help**

## ***1. Prayer for Each Day***

(looking at her image)

O Mary, Mother of Jesus and our Mother of Perpetual Help, during these nine days I am going to look to you to discover in your icon the outstanding symbols, the important lessons, the mysterious nuances that your inspired artist wanted to depict in your picture. I am not only going to learn about them in these pages but also try to learn, O admirable teacher, what you want to teach me about your Son and about our God, father and mother of all love.

Help me to faithfully follow your Son, Jesus Christ. Awaken in my understanding and in my heart the faith, hope, and love with which you want me to behold you and invoke you so that I live with unlimited confidence in your perpetual help. Amen. (Hail Mary...)

## ***2. Meditation for Each Day***

(read the text that corresponds to each day)

## ***3. Final Prayer***

(composed by Pope St. John Paul II)

O Virgin of Perpetual Help, great sign of our hope, Holy Mother of the Redeemer, we invoke your name. Help your people who desire to be renewed. Give us joy as we walk toward the future in conscious and active solidarity with the poorest of our brothers and sisters, announcing to them in a new and courageous way the Gospel of your Son, the beginning and the end of all human relationships that aspire to live a true, just, and lasting peace. As does the Child Jesus, whom we admire in this venerable icon, so we also want to hold your right hand. You have both the power and the goodness to help us in every need and circumstance of life. This moment is yours. Come then, and help us. Be for us our refuge and our hope. Amen.



## **The First Day**

### *Contemplating the Archangel Gabriel*

Mother of Perpetual Help, the Archangel Gabriel of the Annunciation appears in your icon carrying a cross and nails. He reminds us of Nazareth; it was he who descended to one of the fifty humble homes of the village. There he met you and announced the Incarnation, that the Son of God, by act of the Holy Spirit, would make himself our brother by becoming in your womb one with us in our human nature.

In Nazareth you raised Jesus in an atmosphere of simplicity and work. You, Mother, took Jesus' hands in yours to teach him to pray; you taught him the Psalms and the prayers of your people.

Dearest Mother, servant of the Lord and simple housewife, teach us to love our homes and fill them with joy and understanding. Help us to build a society that is both just and fraternal, where there is bread and work for all.

## **The Second Day**

### *Contemplating the Archangel Michael*

On your right at the level of your shoulders we see the Archangel Michael, leader of the celestial armies and zealous defender of the Lord's glory. He reminds us that only God is Lord of the Universe and that his Kingdom is a kingdom of justice, love, and peace.

The Archangel holds a sponge and a lance in the folds of his green mantle. With the sponge the lips of your dying Son were moistened as his mouth and throat burned with thirst. With the lance his side was pierced and from it flowed water and blood. But your Son did not die a failure; on the third day his Heavenly Father raised him up. From then on the lance, the sponge, and the cross have become the symbols of Jesus' victory over sin and death. What were signs of disgrace are now symbols of triumph.

O Mother of Perpetual Help, give us faith in the power of your Son and in the purifying and restoring power of his sacred blood. He gave his life for everyone because his strength was anchored in love.



## **The Third Day**

### *Contemplating the Letters on the Icon*

On both sides of your haloed head we see some large letters. They are the initials that mean “Mother of God.” And next to the head of your Divine Son there are some initials that mean “Jesus Christ.”

Because you are the Mother of the Son of God made man, Jesus Christ, you are also our Perpetual Help, our certain, tireless intercessor; you are the powerful means to obtain what we ask you. You are the Mother of God; that is your unique, incomparable title.

There are many mothers with illustrious sons, even as there are innumerable women of great influence in the areas of power, the arts, and the sciences. But you are the one that we praise, venerate, and rejoice in above all other creatures. As God continues to show us his mercy through you generation after generation, we call you “Blessed.”

Holy Mary, “blessed among all women,” pray for us.

## **The Fourth Day**

### *Contemplating the Left Hand of Mary*

The instruments of the Passion (lance, sponge, nails, cross) are in the hands of the Angels. In your left hand you hold the Child Jesus. In this icon Nazareth and Calvary, the infancy and the redemptive death of Jesus, are united.

As you presented your Son in the Temple, Simeon told you that a sword would pierce your soul. And from that moment, Mary, not a day passed without your thinking of the meaning of those words. You cherished the baby talk of Jesus, his first faltering steps, and later on his independence. But you always saw in him the shadow of a sword hanging over his head, a sword that deeply saddened you.

Mother of Perpetual Help, you are holding Jesus against your heart. Sustain us in our weakness as we look to the future and perhaps see it darkened by sickness and pain. We trust in your protection, because your very title of Perpetual Help is an invitation to confidence and hope.



## **The Fifth Day**

### *Contemplating 'Hand in Hand'*

With your left hand you hold the Child Jesus. With your right you take the hands of the Child, while your long, slender fingers point to his face. One day in Cana you said, "Do what he tells you." You point to Jesus, all good and all powerful. Through your image you remind us that you are only the one that points out the road, the guide, the Virgin of our Way.

Our Heavenly Father said at the moment of the Transfiguration, "This is my beloved Son; listen to him." Mary, you are the sign that allows us to identify the loving and comforting presence of Jesus. Where he is, you are, inseparable. You tell us, Mary, Mother and first disciple of Jesus, that to be a Christian consists of following your Son and that you will take us by the hand to Him.

Thank you, Mother, for lighting our way to our Father's house. Strengthen our faith and enliven our hope when we tire on life's journey.

## **The Sixth Day**

### *Contemplating the Child in Your Arms*

Well do we see him. He is no longer a baby but has lived a few years.

We go back to think about Nazareth and its ordinary and peaceful home life. You dedicated yourself to your domestic chores: the kitchen and the oven, providing water and fire-wood, taking Jesus by the hand to the village well. What a nice place to meet friends, talk awhile, comment on the village news. Meanwhile the children played, among them Jesus. With Joseph and Jesus you formed a simple family in a humble town of Israel.

Good Mother, enlighten us to recognize the presence of Our Heavenly Father, even in the fatigue of our daily life. He never lets go of our hand, even when our faith seems to falter or we are overcome by difficulties. Strengthen us so that, full of confidence, we can ask him, as Jesus taught us, for our daily bread and not to let us fall into temptation and despair.



## **The Seventh Day**

### *Contemplating the Star*

On your head, gracious Mother, we see a star. It reminds us of the star that guided the Wise Men of the Orient to Bethlehem to worship the Infant Jesus. You are like that Star of Bethlehem; you guide us to Jesus and point out where we can find him – in his Word, in the Eucharist, in the silence of prayer, and in our brothers and sisters, especially the poor and abandoned.

After the Resurrection of your Son, you accompanied the first disciples in vigilant prayer. Thus you were among the Apostles at Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit began the preaching of the Good News to the whole world. You accompanied the new Church in its first missionary steps.

Holy Mary, Star of Evangelization, help us to fulfill our mission as followers of your Son. Bless the efforts of all who proclaim the Good News.

## **The Eighth Day**

### *Contemplating the Colors of the Icon*

Your icon, Holy Mother, is made up of contrasts. The Child's sandal is falling, while his hands are tightly clutching yours. The instruments of the Passion are carried wrapped in a cloak, as if they were just collected after the Resurrection. The colors that the artist chose accentuate these contrasts: the blue, red, and green of the clothing, and the gold background.

The tunic you are wearing is red, and the cloak that covers it is blue. Did the artist want to remind us that you are a created person (red) but at the same time recall to us that the Holy Spirit covered you with His Presence and grace (blue)? On the other hand, the Child wears a green tunic, while his cloak and sash are in shades of red. Is this a sign that he is the Divine Life (green) that has taken on our humanity (red)?

The artist distinguishes five levels of depth in the icon: the first level: the hand that points to the Savior; then the Child – Jesus Christ; the third level is your own presence; further back are the Angels with



the instruments of the Passion; and, as a general background, the golden light. Since this icon is about Our Savior, it shows him in Nazareth, on Calvary, and in his glory.

Mary, teach me to live the contrasts of life, the birthing and dying that goes on each day, with optimism. Help me to understand more of the mystery of our salvation that passes through cross and pain to reach triumph and resurrection.

## **The Ninth Day**

### *Contemplating the Eyes of Mary*

We end this wonderful novena of discovering in your image the reason for your name. It is all present in your eyes. You are our Perpetual Help because of your eyes, those eyes that follow us from left to right, that see us from any point from which we seek you. They watch us as eyes filled with love and a desire to protect us. They follow us perpetually, whatever our situation, our detours, our absences, our returns.

You are our Perpetual Help because, as the icon shows us, your gesture of sustaining Jesus is eternal. You are forever at his side as our faithful intercessor. To be Perpetual Help is your mission, Mediatrix of God's inexhaustible grace, despite the immensity of our faults.

Grant us the favor of responding to your Perpetual Help by always coming to you in persevering prayer.

This booklet is brought to you by the Spiritual Life Board of  
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## **Roman Catholic Marian Feast Days**

*Jan. 1: Mary, Mother of God*

Feb. 11: Our Lady of Lourdes

*Mar. 25: Annunciation of the Lord*

May 13: Our Lady of Fatima

*May 31: Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary*

Monday after Pentecost: Mary, Mother of the Church

Nine days after Corpus Christi: Immaculate Heart of Mary

Jun. 27: Our Lady of Perpetual Help

July 16: Our Lady of Mount Carmel

Aug. 5: Dedication of Basilica of Saint Mary Major

*Aug. 15: Assumption of Mary*

Aug. 22: Queenship of Mary

*Sept. 8: Nativity of Mary*

Sept. 12: Most Holy Name of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Sept. 15: Our Lady of Sorrows

Oct. 7: Our Lady of the Rosary

Nov. 21: Presentation of Mary

Dec. 2: Our Lady of Guadalupe

*Dec. 8: Immaculate Conception of Mary*

## **Eastern Orthodox Marian Feasts**

Feb. 2: Purification of the Most Holy Theotokos

*Mar. 25: Annunciation of the Theotokos*

*Aug. 15: Dormition of the Mother of God*

*Sept. 8: Nativity of the Theotokos*

Oct. 1: Protection of Our Most Holy Lady Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary

*Nov. 21: Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple*

Dec. 9: Feast of the Conception of the Most Holy Theotokos

Dec. 26: Synaxis of the Theotokos

## **Oriental Orthodox Marian Feasts**

*Apr. 7: Annunciation Feast*

*Aug. 22: Assumption of St. Mary's Body*

In the Coptic Orthodox rite St. Mary is commemorated on the 21<sup>st</sup> of each Coptic month (usually the 30<sup>th</sup> or 31<sup>st</sup> of each Gregorian month)

**Mary is venerated in the Anglican Communion and Lutheranism, as well.**

*(N.B. Solemnities and feasts are italicized. Memorials are in regular face.)*

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