

day to accommodate everyone who wanted to honor Mary, and in New York, the service was even broadcast over the radio.

### WHAT THE PICTURE MEANS

#### GREEK INITIALS FOR "MOTHER OF GOD".

**Star on Our Lady's Veil:** she is the Star of the Sea who brought the light of Christ to the darkened world—the star that leads us to the safe port of Heaven.

**Greek Initial for St. Michael** The Archangel—He is depicted holding the lance and gall-sop of Christ's Passion.

**Mary's Mouth** is small for silent recollection. She speaks little.

**Red Tunic** the color worn by virgins at the time of Christ.

**Dark Blue Mantle** the color worn by mothers in Palestine. Mary is both Virgin and Mother.

**Christ's Hands** turned palms down into His Mother's indicate that the Graces of Redemption are in her keeping.



**The Entire Background** is golden, symbolic of Heaven where Jesus and Mary are now enthroned. The gold also shines through their clothing showing the heavenly joy they can bring to tired human hearts.

**Golden Crown** placed on original picture by order of the Holy See 1867. It is a token of the many miracles by our Lady under this title.

**Greek Initials** for St. Gabriel the Archangel. He holds the Cross and Nails.

**Mary's Eyes** are large for all our troubles. They are turned toward us always.

**Greek Initials for:**  
**"Jesus Christ"**

**Mary's Left Hand** supporting Christ possessively, she is His Mother. It is a comforting hand for everyone who calls

**Foot with Falling Sandal** symbolizes Christ's Divine nature, barely clinging to the earth. His human nature is symbolized in the other foot to which the sandal is more firmly bound. Christ has two natures—human and Divine in One Divine Person.

THE CHARMS OF THE PORTRAIT ARE MANY, FROM THE NAIVETE OF THE ARTIST, WHO WISHED TO MAKE CERTAIN THE IDENTITY OF EACH SUBJECT WAS KNOWN, TO THE SANDAL THAT DANGLES FROM THE FOOT OF THE CHILD. THE EXPRESSION OF THE CHILD JESUS IS HAUNTING AS HE GRIPS THE HAND OF HIS MOTHER WHILE GAZING SIDWARD AT THE INSTRUMENTS OF TORTURE HELD BY THE ANGELS. ABOVE ALL, THE EXPRESSION OF THE MADONNA EVOKES A SADNESS ON THE PART OF THE VIEWER. WITH HER HEAD GENTLY TOUCHING THAT OF HER SON, AND WHILE SURROUNDED WITH THE INSTRUMENTS OF HER SON'S SUFFERINGS, SHE SEEMS TO GAZE PLAINTIVELY—AS THOUGH SEEKING COMPASSION FROM THOSE WHO LOOK UPON HER.

Devotion to this wonder-working icon spread rapidly to the United States. In 1870 when the Redemptorists were asked to establish a mission church in Roxbury (near Boston, Ma.) they dedicated their small church to the Mother of Perpetual Help. They received from Rome the first copy of the portrait, which had been touched to the original. This Church was raised to the honor of a "Papal Basilica" by Pope Pius XII.

\*(excerpted from: [www.marys-touch.com](http://www.marys-touch.com))

## Our Mother of Perpetual Help

Feast Day: June 27



*Mother of Perpetual Help, you have been blessed and favored by God.  
You became not only the Mother of the Redeemer,  
but the Mother of the redeemed as well.  
We come to you today as your loving children.  
Watch over us and take care of us.*

*As you held the child Jesus in your loving arms, so take us in your arms.  
Be a mother ready at every moment to help us.  
For God who is mighty has done great things for you,  
and his mercy is from age to age on those who love him.*

*Our greatest fear is that in time of temptation, we may fail to call out to you, and become lost children.*

*Intercede for us, dear Mother, in obtaining pardon for our sins, love for Jesus, final perseverance, and the grace always to call upon you,*

## ***Our Mother of Perpetual Help***

\*The origin of the Our Lady (Mother) of Perpetual Help Icon is uncertain, although many have thought that it was painted by St. Luke and venerated in Constantinople until that Holy City fell in 1453. The Byzantine style and Greek lettering are consistent with an icon of Eastern origin.

While we may not know the exact origins of Our Mother of Perpetual Help, we do know the next part of the story—from the original picture itself. A parchment attached to the painting tells the story of how it got to Rome.

According to this record, a merchant from the island of Crete heard stories of many miracles that occurred around a fabulous painting on the island. Wanting this power for himself, he stole the painting and packed it away with his other wares. His travels led him, and the stolen picture, to Rome, where he suddenly fell ill. As he lay dying, he told the whole story of the stolen picture to his friend, a Roman, who was caring for him during his illness. His last request was that the Roman take the picture and have it placed in a church where it would help many people.

The Roman's wife, however, put the picture in her bedroom. Mary made her opinion of this situation known by appearing to the Roman in a series of visions. Each time, she asked him to stop hoarding the picture and start sharing it with others. And each time, the Roman ignored her. After being rejected by the adults, Mary visited their six-year-old daughter. The daughter announced that Mary had commanded that the picture be placed in a church between St. Mary Major and St. John Lateran—a church called St. Matthew's. At last, the Roman obeyed, and the picture was placed in the care of the Augustinians on March 27, 1499.

It's hard to understand why Mary would choose such a place to be honored. St. Matthew's was a small church in a barren place far from the center of the city. Yet the rich and the poor, the powerful and the lowly alike, traveled the rough stone path to the church to seek comfort from Our Mother of Perpetual Help—and to learn from her humility.

One man, however, was not impressed. In 1798, Napoleon's general ordered the destruction of thirty churches when the French invaded Rome. St. Matthew's was one of them. After the soldiers left, those who loved Mary searched the ruins but could find no trace of the picture. There seemed to be no doubt that their beloved picture had perished with the church.

Almost half a century later and miles away, an altar boy named Michael Marchi listened to a sacristan's tales of the past. The sacristan, named Augustine Orsetti, pointed to a picture of Mary in the chapel and said, "See

that picture, Michael? It is very old—very old. It used to hang in St. Matthew's Church, where many people came to pray to the Mother of God." The painting, he said, had been rescued at the last minute, hidden from the marauding general in a humble cart, and transported secretly to this chapel. "Remember that," the sacristan told him. Michael Marchi remembered.

Years later, Father Michael Marchi, by then a Redemptorist, was in Rome. In 1853, Pope Pius IX commanded the Redemptorists to establish their world headquarters in Rome.

After much searching and prayer, the Redemptorists bought a huge estate. When they inspected their new property, they found a house, barns, stables, gardens—and the ruins of an old church. Inquiring into the history of the church, the Redemptorists learned that its name was St. Matthew's, and that it once had housed a miraculous painting, a painting that had been lost.

Even as they ruefully shook their heads at the loss of such a treasure, Father Michael stunned his associates by telling them that not only did the picture still exist, but he knew where it was.

After three years of prayer, the Redemptorists decided to ask that the picture be brought back to Rome. When they told Pope Pius IX that it was Mary's own wish that she be enshrined between St. Mary Major and St. John Lateran—where the Church of St. Alphonsus now stood—the Pope immediately commanded the return of the painting. Flowers and banners greeted Our Mother of Perpetual Help on April 26, 1886, and miracles attended her procession—including the cure of a four-year-old boy suffering from a brain illness. After 75 years, Our Mother of Perpetual Help had finally returned home.

But Pius IX didn't give the picture to the Redemptorists as a gift. He gave it to them as a mission. He told them, "Make Our Mother of Perpetual Help known throughout the world." The Redemptorists embraced this command wholeheartedly by distributing reproductions of her picture and talking about her in missions and homilies around the world.

Their efforts yielded impressive results. By the turn of the century, 1.8 million Spaniards belonged to the Archconfraternity of Our Mother of Perpetual Help, ten thousand shrines and altars were dedicated to her in France, and devotions in her honor were observed in several thousand churches all over America. These services, or novenas, of Our Mother of Perpetual Help drew thousands of people. Churches in St. Louis, New Orleans, Detroit, Chicago, and Boston had to hold eight or ten services a