

Our Mother of Perpetual Help

Legend: The Apostle Luke painted an image of Mary and Jesus

431: The Council of Ephesus gathered at the Basilica of Mary and decreed that Mary is the Theotokos (Mother of God) because of the hypostatic union of her son since Jesus is both God and man.

600s: The theology of Icons is first codified by the Eastern Orthodox in the 7th century. This was most likely in response to the iconoclasts who opposed the veneration of images.

Hodegitria Icon: Mary points the way to Jesus.

Theotokos Icon: Mary is shown with Jesus as the mother of God.

Mary of the Passion Icon: Our Mother of Perpetual Help.

1499 Legend: There was a merchant from Crete who stole the picture and brought it to Rome. On his death bed, he wanted friends to put it in a place that the image could be venerated. Mary is attributed for saying she wanted her image in a church between Mary Major and St. John Lateran. Miracles were attributed to this image and most likely is the reason for the title, Our Mother of Perpetual Help.

March 27, 1499: The image was taken to St. Mathew's church in Rome which fit Mary's request. This church was run by an Augustinian community. Parchment telling the legend was put by the image that year.

1517: Reformation began on Oct. 31 by an Augustinian priest, Martin Luther.

1518: Guidebook to city of Rome by Friar Mariana de Firenze included this image as a place to visit.

1715: Fr. Concezio Carocci preached a sermon about the image at St. Mathews on Aug. 31 which he used the story found on the parchment. His sermons of various Marian sites were published in 1729. This was a guide for pilgrims as they went to visit the Most Renowned Pictures of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Rome.

1732: The Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer began.

1783: Fr. Francis de Paulo a Redemptorists purchased San Giuliano ai Monti on the Esquiline in Rome.

1790s: An Augustinian, Br. Orsetti lived at St. Mathews and was familiar with the story of the image.

1797: Pope Pius VI on Feb. 17 signed a document limiting Papal States and rights forced by the French dictator, Napoleon Bonaparte

1798: French general Massena who was the military governor of Rome called for 30 churches to be destroyed on June 3 and St. Mathew was one of them.

The French destroyed the church in 1798 and the Augustinians moved to Saint Eusebius Monastery. Redemptorists also lost their property in Rome as well.

1819: 20 years later the Jesuits took over the church and Augustinians took the image to the church of St. Mary in Posterula. They took the Icon to their chapel since an image of Mary was already in the church.

1840s Br. Augustine Orsetti tended to the Masses in the Chapel at Posterula. Michael Marchi was trained by Br. Orsetti as an altar server who told him the story about the Icon and its history with their community.

1853: Fr. Rudolph Von Smetana vicar General was asked by Pius IX to found a house in Rome. Fr. Edward Douglas a Redemptorist had extensive holdings in the West Indies as inheritance and was asked to purchase a place in Rome.

1854: Fr. Douglas purchased Villa Caserta estate of Duke Michael-Angelo Gaetano by Via Merulana. This became the general headquarters for the Redemptorists. Fr. Douglas also paid for the building of the church of St. Alphonsus. This property included the location of St. Mathew's Church. This history of the miraculous image being located on this property was of interest to the community. Michael Marchi became a Redemptorist and made it known where the image was located since, he had been an altar server at the chapel of Posterula.

1863: Fr Francis Blosi preached a sermon on Feb 7, about Our Mother of Perpetual Help from the book of 1729. This prompted the Redemptorists to begin the process of restoring the image to public veneration and the location of where the veneration had taken place.

1865: Fr Mauron who was Superior General and Fr. Marchi had an audience with Pius IV on Dec. 11 to make known the history of the Icon and request that it be moved to the church of St. Alphonsus. He granted their request but the Redemptorists had to replace the image for the Augustinians with another image.

1866: the icon underwent restoration by the Polish painter Leopold Nowotny. On April 26, the image was enshrined at St. Alphonsus Church in Rome.

1867: Coronation of the image took place at a ceremony on June 23.

1870: A duplicate of the icon was enthroned at St. Michael Parish on Dec. 8. This was #163 of copies made that were sent out to various places in the world.

1871: The Archconfraternity was begun for Our Mother of Perpetual Help.

1871: Oct. 8-10 Chicago fire and St. Michael's Church was burned down.

"In 1990, the icon was taken down from its altar for new photography and image restoration commissioned by the General Government of Redemptorists. The Redemptorist Order entered into contract with the Technical Department at the Vatican Museum to restore the icon and prevent further fungal damage to the icon. The restoration process involved X-ray, infra-red scanning, technical analysis of the paint and ultra-violet testing along with a Carbon-14-test which placed the icon between the year 1325-1480. Artistic analysis of the icon revealed that the facial structure of the icon was altered due to previous overpainting, resulting in a combination of "oriental and occidental" features of the image"