

Mary Help of Christians

Dear fathers and brothers, we are aware that there are numerous titles given to Mary, the mother of God. We know that many of these names from the Litany of Loreto which was published at Macerata in 1576 by Bernardino Cirillo archpriest of Loreto. This Litany of Loreto was approved by the Pope Clement 8 in 1601. Apart from this there was another title given in Bernardino's another litany as *Auxilium Christianorum* which we do not find in the Litany of Loreto. This feast of our Lady, Help of Christians was instituted by Pope Pius 7 and dedicated to it there is a feast day inscribed into the General Roman calendar on May 24. In Latin it is read as *sancta Maria Auxilium Christianorum*.

The devotion to "Mary Help of Christian" was an initiation of Saint John Chrysostom in 345. Don Bosco was an instrument who propagated this devotion to the whole world. There is a basilica of our lady help of Christians, Turin, founded by Saint John Bosco. The Marian feast has been celebrated by the order of Servites since the 17th century. The veneration to Mary became popular under this title especially in Rome, where the feast was particularly promoted by saint John Bosco and saint Vincent Pallotti. John Bosco was an ardent promoter of devotion to "Mary Help of Christians". He also built a huge basilica in her honour in 1868 and founded a religious congregation for women, under the title of, the daughters of Mary Help of Christians. Interpreting the painting he had commissioned for the basilica St. John Bosco referred to the way in which Popes have addressed Mary as both mother and help of the church. John Bosco chose this devotion because of its affinity to his devotion to the church the bearer of Christ.

Vatican 2 in the constitution of the church sections (61, 62), cites this title of Mary, placing it in the context of Mary's maternal role. In an utterly singular way she co-operated by her obedience, faith, hope and burning charity in the Saviour's work of restoring supernatural life to souls.

In the book *Mary: help in hard times*, written and compiled by Marianne Lorraine Trove, we find the following description on the back cover: "No matter what challenges we may face in life, Mary is always there to help us... let the prayers and real life stories of how others have experienced Mary's intercession open your heart to the care she can provide for you." There are many such real life stories of the past and of the present, which recount to us Mary's care and motherly assistance to her children.

Don Bosco is so well known to us for so many incredible things, that it's no surprise certain parts of his story fade into the background. One such chapter is when the deadly cholera pandemic swept through Europe. When the disease made its way to Turin the source was within the working district, very near to Don Bosco's oratory at Valdocco. Don Bosco took the advice of medical practitioners and immediately brought about changes around the place. This was possible only through the help of Mary. So my dear friends let us remain faithful to the practice of piety and continue to invoke Mary Help of Christian so that we may be protected and guided by her maternal care.

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