Our Lady of Perpetual Help Devotions

THE MIRACULOUS PICTURE ITS HISTORY

By REV. JOHN BYRNE, C. SS. R.,

In a former article, February 23, by the Rev. Clarence Seidel, C. SS. R., we saw how by express command of the Mother of Perpetual Help her miraculous image was solemnly installed in the Church of St. Matthew, Rome, on the Wednesday of Holy Week, March 27, 1499.

In 1517 Pope Leo X raised this church to cardinalitial rank, a dignity first conferred on it by Pope St. Symmachus in 449; and we may well believe that the action of Pope Leo in thus honoring St. Matthew's was due at least in part to the prestige accruing to it from the wonder-working picture. As early as 1579, over the door of the church were inscribed in Latin the words To the Virgin Mary, Mother of God and of Perpetual Help; and in the sanctuary were many votive offerings proclaiming the extraordinary favors obtained through her intercession.

Famous For Miracles

We have the concordant testimony of eight different writers from 1600 to 1715 that the image was famous for its miracles. One of these writers, His Eminence Francis Cardinal Nerli, who presided over St. Matthew's Church for thirty-two years, 1673-1705, speaks of the picture in his epitaph, composed in 1687, as "widely effulgent for the glory of its miracles." His Eminence was in such an excellent position to know all about the image that his testimony alone would be sufficient, but when it is supported, as it is, by seven authorities, all scholarly men, the argument to prove that the picture of the Mother of Perpetual Help was very miraculous becomes certain beyond cavil or quibble. But alas! after three centuries of glory the image passed into a period of obscurity and oblivion.

On June 3, 1798, during the French occupation of Rome, St. Matthew's Church and the adjoining monastery of the Irish Augustinian friars were razed to the ground; and the archives, doubtless containing documents relating to the picture were destroyed or lost. This explains why we know little in detail of the many miracles wrought through its agency in the early days.

The Augustinians, finding refuge in the neighboring monastery of St. Eusebius, took with them their beloved image. In the troubled years that followed, most of the Irish monks returned to their native land. The remaining members of the community, among whom were several Italians, betook themselves, in 1819, to the monastery of Santa Maria in Posterula, where they kept the picture above the high altar in their private chapel. There it remained until 1866, but as the result of being thus hidden from public veneration it fell deeper and deeper into oblivion among the Romans. Not only the laity but even the religious themselves forgot its glorious past, as the old members of the community passed away. Gradually the image began to be called "Our Lady of Posterula," as if it were only a copy of the painting venerated under that title in the adjoining church. Thus for sixty-eight years the miraculous picture was eclipsed, but in the designs of God this obscurity was but the prelude to world-wide renown, even as the darkness of Calvary was but the forerunner of the incomparable splendor of the Resurrection on Easter morn. A providential chain of circumstances, apparently insignificant, paved the way for the restoration of the picture of the Mother of Perpetual Help to public veneration in every corner of the globe.

About 1845 there went to Santa Maria in Posterula from the monastery of St. Augustine in the Via della Scroffa, a venerable lay brother Augustine Orsetti, who as a young religious in St. Matthew's monastery, had witnessed the glory which the image enjoyed. Soon afterward he made the acquaintance of Michael Marchi, an altar boy in the Church of Santa Maria in Posterula. The old man, now totally blind, often said to the lad:

"Michael, the picture of Our Lady that is in our chapel is the one that came from St. Matthew's. That is certain, certain. Do you understand? Ah, it was a truly miraculous picture!"

Although the boy did not understand at the time the full significance of the words, they remained fixed in his memory. In 1853, when Michael was twenty-four years old, Bro. Augustine died at the age of eighty-six.

That very year the Redemptorist Father, Edward Douglas, a noble and wealthy Scotchman, went to Rome to seek a site for the mother-house of his institute. He finally chose the Villa Caserta, on the Esquiline Hill, the property acquired embracing the former site of St. Matthew's Church. Here, in 1857, Michael Marchi made his religious profession as a Redemptorist. As to the condition of the picture of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in those days, he later testified as follows:

"I can say of this venerable effigy of the Madonna of St. Matthew's, called Perpetual Help, that from my infancy until I entered the Congregation I always saw it over an altar of an inside chapel in the College of the Rev. Augustinian Fathers of the Irish Province, under the name of ST. MARY IN POSTERULA . . . devoid of honor, devoid of all ornamentation, and, as it were, utterly abandoned: without even a lighted candle, and for the most part covered with dust; there I served Mass many times, and many times looked up wonderingly and admiringly at the Picture."

Recalled Old Account

One day in 1862 the Archivist of the Redemptorist community at Villa Caserta told the Fathers that he had recently discovered in an old tome an account of a church called St. Matthew's, which, formerly located near their own home, possessed a miraculous picture under the title of "Mother of Perpetual Help. "However," he added, "no one knows what became of this picture." As soon as Father Marchi, then a member of the community, heard the title of the image mentioned, he recalled old Brother Augustine and his account of the famous Madonna once venerated in St. Matthew's under the title of "Mother of Perpetual Help." Joyfully he exclaimed: "That picture is still in existence. I know where it is, and I have often seen it." Then he repeated Bro. Augustine's statements about the image in the monastery of SANTA MARIA IN POSTERULA. The Fathers felt that it would be most fitting that it should be restored to public cult in their own church, which stood so near the site of old St. Matthew's; but as yet they had not heard of the Blessed Mother's wish to be venerated on the Esquiline, between St. Mary Major's and St. John Lateran's. However, she herself saw to it that this information should be communicated to them.

Toward the end of 1862 the Rev. Francis Blosi, S. J., began in the Church of the Gesu', Rome, a series of weekly sermons on the various images of the Blessed Virgin that were venerated in the Eternal City. The opening words of his discourse on February 7, 1863, were as follows:

"To-day I intend to speak to you about a picture of the Blessed Virgin which at one time was famous for its miracles, but which for the past seventy years has given no sign of its existence. In my opinion, it is lying neglected in some private dwelling deprived of the public homage which multitudes of the faithful rendered it in former ages."

He then gave the history of the picture based on a sermon delivered by the Rev. Conceptius Carocci, S. J., in 1729. After relating the Holy Virgin's express command to have her image placed in a church between the two great basilicas, Father Blosi continued:

"God grant that in this vast congregation there may be some one who knows where the picture is, and who will make known to the party that is keeping it in obscurity the explicit wish of the Mother of God, so that it may again be exposed publicly in some church between the Esquiline and the Caelian Hills."

Although none of his hearers could give the desired information, the words of the preacher reached the ears of the Redemptorists, who knew from Father Marchi where the picture was hidden. However, it was from Father Blosi's sermon that they learned for the first time Our Blessed Lady's command regarding the place where her image was to be venerated; and their church of St. Alphonsus was located where she had designated, between the Basilicas of St. Mary Major and St. John Lateran.

The Superior General and Rector Major of the Redemptorists, the Most Rev. Nicholas Mauron, devoted nearly three years to prayer and reflection before taking any steps toward obtaining possession of the miraculous picture. Finally, on December 11, 1865, he presented himself to the Sovereign Pontiff, Pius IX, and briefly narrated the history of the image. Then he petitioned His Holiness to give orders that it should be restored to public veneration in St. Alphonsus' Church, as the place pointed out by the Blessed Virgin herself. When the Holy Father asked Father Mauron for written testimony of statements he had made, he submitted a document drawn up by Father Marchi. The Supreme Pontiff at once wrote out an order to the superior of the community of SANTA MARIA IN POSTERULA to give the image to the Redemptorists, at the same time obliging the latter to substitute for it another appropriate picture.

Restored To Veneration

On January 19, 1866, Fathers Marchi and Bresciani brought from the Augustinian monastery to the Redemptorist church the original picture of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, which some time later was replaced by a faithful copy. After its faded colors had been retouched by Novodny, a Polish artist, the glorious painting was restored to public veneration, April 26, in the Church of St. Alphonsus. On this occasion, it was borne in solemn procession through the neighboring streets, the houses along the way being decorated in festal array.

"While the sacred picture was being carried through the streets and by-ways of Rome, it was not wanting in those signs and wonders, which of old distinguished it on the occasion on its first translation to St. Matthew's. In one of the streets along which the solemn procession passed, a boy four years old, suffering from gastric fever and meningitis, was carried to the window by his mother, who in anguish of soul cried out: 'O, Mother of God, either cure my boy or take him with you to Paradise!' Mary heard the mother's prayer, and in a few days the little boy was completely cured, and was able to go with his mother to the Virgin's altar and there offer a candle in thanksgiving for his recovery."

"In a similar manner Our Lady obtained the cure of a little girl who had been a cripple for several years."

During the solemn triduum which followed, April 27-29, great crowds came from all parts of Rome to pray before the picture. On May 5 Pope Pius IX paid a visit to it, exclaiming: "How beautiful it is." He also ordered a copy to be placed in his private oratory.

There is a beautiful old custom of adorning with precious crowns those images of the Blessed Virgin which are especially distinguished for miracles, for antiquity, and for the extraordinary cult rendered to them. As all these conditions were verified in the picture of the Mother of Perpetual Help, it was solemnly crowned, June 23, 1867, by the Dean of the Vatican Chapter, Roger Aloysius Antici-Mattei. In memory of this event the Church designated as the Feast of the Mother of Perpetual Help the Sunday immediately preceding the Feast of St. John the Baptist, June 24.

On the day after the crowning, the image of Our Blessed Lady was once more borne in triumph along the city's highways and its narrow side streets. This procession eclipsed in pomp and slendor even that which had taken place a year previous. At the solemn close of the demonstration St. Alphonsus' Church and the adjoining convent were illuminated with different chains of lights, fireworks and varied hues rained down from the sky, and the sacred name of Mary appeared written in letters of flame high up in the heavens, at the sight of which there arose from the immense multitude the soul-stirring cry: "Long live Mary. Long live the Mother of Perpetual Help."

The restoration of the miraculous image to public veneration, in 1866, was the beginning of a world-wide triumph, so that today it is found in every quarter of the globe, bringing to her devout clients surcease of sorrow and the firm hope of a blessed immortality.

FIVE TO RECEIVE MERCY HABITS

Five young women will receive the habit of the Sisters of Mercy at a ceremony Saturday morning of this week at 9 o'clock in St. John the Evangelist Church, Humboldt Street at which His Excellency, Bishop O'Hern will preside.

The postulants who are to be received are: Miss Marie Fitzgerald, Rochester; Miss Ruth Reichart, Rochester; Miss Edwina Butler, Elmira; Miss Anna Flood, Corning; and Miss Antoinette Riccardo, Hornell.

The Junior Cook

By MOLLY GAVIN

Here is a recipe for a salad that is very pretty and easily made. I know that once you have made it you will be just as enthusiastic about it as I am!

Spring Salad

Put a lettuce leaf on a small plate. Then slice beets very thinly and put them in a circle on the lettuce. Then slice onion and also make a circle. Cut green pepper into thin rings and place them also in a circle. The color scheme will be a dark red, white and green. Garnish with mayonnaise dressing.

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Author-Lawyer

Helen Walker Homan, of Cleveland, O., author, columnist and former editor, one of whose books was a recent selection of the Catholic Book Club. Mrs. Homan is a graduate of the University of New York Law School and a member of the bar of the State of New York.

NAME OUR LADY OF LUJAN

Buenos Aires—The Blessed Virgin, under the title of Our Lady of Lujan, will be patroness of the thirty-second International Eucharistic Congress to be held at Buenos Aires, October 10-14, 1934. This decision was reached at a meeting of the Executive Committee held at the archiepiscopal residence.

Sodaltalk

Recording Activities of Rochester Parish Sodalities Union

Union meeting Monday night turned out to be a surprise party and such a surprise! The delegates were holding an informal reception in the Columbus lobby until the time for meeting when Father Fox, Director of the Rochester Union, came in, accompanied by Father Francis P. LeBuffe, S.J., Business Manager of "America" and eastern representative of the Central Office of the Sodality.

Father LeBuffe spoke on the convention and the coming summer school. He described the Summer School of Catholic Action which has been held in St. Louis these past two summers and outlined the plan of having three summer schools this year in various parts of the country instead of one only in St. Louis. This was done in order to accommodate more people, or as Father LeBuffe said, "If the mountain would not come to Mohamet, Mohamet would go to the mountain." We shall, of course, be most interested in the New York Summer School. The course is extended over a period of six days, five recitations a day. The actual expenses of the Summer School are $10.00 tuition fee and from $11.00 to $15.00 for board and lodging. If you happen to be the proud possessor of that amount of money plus the railroad fare, don't miss it, because the Summer School of Catholic Action is one of those things that you can never forget.

Father LeBuffe also cautioned the delegates that while they may be wrapped up in all sorts of Sodality activity they should never lose sight of the fact that the foundation of the Sodality movement is the deepening of the spiritual life of the Sodalist with Catholic Action as the outcome of this spirituality.

News from SS. Peter and Paul's Sodality includes the annual Sodality Banquet, Tuesday evening. Father LeBuffe was guest of honor.

The Sodality is also planning the study of the "Missa Recitata" beginning Wednesday evening, April 26. This is a worthwhile piece of work, to say the least.

One interesting piece of news from SS. Peter and Paul's is the announcements of two marriages in the next two months.

The Blessed Sacrament Sodalists entertained their little friends, the orphans, Tuesday with a minstrel show. Jig-saws and lollypops added to the enjoyment of all. From experience I can say that the jig-saws will keep the "chilluns" busy for many an hour.

The Blessed Sacrament Glee Club is becoming quite famous. The members of the Glee Club have been invited to sing at the Corpus Christi Holy Name meeting on May 10.

The May program of the Sodality includes a Mothers 'and Daughters' Banquet on May 2. Mother will certainly have a wonderful time at the banquet.

Last Thursday the Sodality borrowed a leaf from the colleges and sororities and initiated the Sodalists-to-be of the eighth grade. This wild tale of adventure will appear in our next issue.

St. Boniface is getting right in line with a card party on May 10. Aces are high and card parties are quite the thing this May. Miss Dorothy Snider is chairman and extends an invitation to all to attend.

Holy Ghost Sodality has launched a splendid project for May. One night a week the family will gather around as they did in the good old days before the world went berserk and say the Rosary. The news gave me quite a thrill. Speaking of thrills and not altogether irrelevant to this matter, I received one of the greatest thrills and sources of wondering admiration one time when I saw once that some persons had pledged to say the Rosary every day of their lives.

I told you some time ago about the Quilting Party Holy Ghost Sodality is going to have. The latest bit of gossip is that the director of the Sodality is going to be present to tie the first knot.

Convention enthusiasm is reaching its peak in the Sodalists. Realizing that May 14 promises to be a big day for them they decided to make it a big day in the superlative degree. The Sodalists of Holy Ghost are coming 100 per cent. strong. The entire Sodality, 25 in number will be there. Not only will they be there but they are planning a dinner at noon at the home of Lucy Vogel, sister of the Prefect of the Sodality. The brothers are turning in too to help to make it a success. In fact in this case the brother is going to cook the potatoes "Let's give him a hand."

St. Francis Xavier's Catholic Literature Committee is working hard. The members collected magazines and papers for the patients at the Iola and are planning to do the same for St. Mary's.

Some of the members of the Sodality are paying monthly visits to the Iola. We encourage this good work, in fact, we suggest that a Hospital Visiting Committee might be formed in many Parish Sodalities.

The St. Francis Sodality has added another committee, that of the Eucharistic committee. We shall be expecting to hear from them soon.

The last bit of news is a "carry-over" from Easter. The Sodality filled a large dressed-up bushel basket as an Easter nest for the St. Joseph orphans. This was made possible by the mite boxes which the Sodalists filled during Lent.

St. Jerome's dance was huge success. The Sodalists even cleared some money after expenses were taken care of. That accounts for the fact that the Union treasury was swelled Monday night by their Union dues and their generous contribution to the convention fund.

A Mother's and Daughters' Banquet is being planned by this Sodality also. We know that it will be as enjoyable as their Fathers' and Daughters' Banquet. Let me tell you, the fathers and mothers of the East Rochester Sodalists must feel "real proud" of their daughters.

The Study Club of St. Jerome's is up to mischief but is very secretive about it.

This is the spirit! Not only will the St. Andrew's Sodalists be present at the convention but they are hiring a bus or street car to take them there. Taking your cue from this, bring on your Packards, Austins, scooters and skates, any method of locomotion but be sure to be present.

Here is the Sodality slogan, so generously suggested to me. Make it your own and pass it on.

"A SODALITY IN EVERY PARISH!

Rochester Diocesan Council of the National Council of Catholic Women

Office: 1020 Columbus Civic Center, 50 Chestnut Street

The Rochester Diocesan Council of the N. C. C. W. held its quarterly meeting of the Board of Directors in Ithaca on April 22. The meeting was opened with High Mass at the Immaculate Conception Church, with Rev. Owen D. Brill as celebrant.

The meetings throughout the day were open to all Catholic women. The principal business meeting of the day was held at the New Ithaca Hotel, presided over by Mrs. Louis A. Whalen, diocesan first vice-president. Representatives were present from Auburn, Corning, Elmira, Ithaca and Rochester deaneries. At the morning meeting particularly interesting reports were made by the chairman of the Committee on Public Affairs, Mrs. Wm. H. Rossenbach, and Mrs. Mark L. Sullivan, chairman of the Committee on Educational Questions.

Read Bishop's Letter

Mrs. R. Leo Sullivan, president of the Ithaca District Council, presided at the luncheon meeting held in the main dining room of the New Ithaca Hotel at one o'clock, at which 225 were present. Miss Margaret Reidy acted as toastmistress. After the singing of "America" by the assemblage, the invocation was given by Rev. John M. Sellinger. Greetings from the Diocesan President, Miss Cecilia M. Yawman, who was just returning from the South, were followed by a chorus by the Boys Glee Club, trained by Miss Laura Bryant, supervisor of music in the public schools of Ithaca, with Miss Mary Cline as accompanist. One of their number, Master Henry Carey, Jr., sang. The toastmistress read a letter from the Most Rev. John Francis O'Hern, regretting his inability to be present, and conveying the expression of his continued interest in the work of the N. C. C. W. Rev. William Byrne, Ph. D., of Ithaca, added inspiration to the meeting by his well chosen remarks. The feature of the luncheon was an address by Rev. John B. Delaunay, C. S. C., of Washington, D. C. Mrs. John F. Furey was song leader for the luncheon.

The luncheon closed with a group of songs by Lawrence Culligan, and benediction by Reverend George B. Fischer, C. S. C.

Other members of the clergy present in addition to those already mentioned were Very Rev. John A. Conway, V. F., Rev. William E. Cowen, D. D., Rev. A. Proulx, Rev. George M. Kalb, and the Rev. E. Joseph Esser.

At the meeting immediately following the luncheon, Mrs. Marguerite U. May made a report of the work of the committee on Family Education; Mrs. M. H. Keogh on the work of the committee for the National Catholic School of Social Service; Mrs. Emily O'Donnell on the progress of N. C. C. W. study clubs throughout the diocese; Miss Carolyn Ruth Doran on the work of the committee on Representation.

Extended reports on the activities of the societies in the various deaneries affiliated with the Rochester Diocesan Council were given by the deanery presidents, Mrs. Louis A. Whalen for Rochester, Mrs. William H. Meagher for Auburn, Mrs. Charles E. Githler for Corning, Mrs. James G. McCarthy for Elmira, Mrs. T. A. Kane for Geneva, and Mrs. R. Leo Sullivan for Ithaca.

The following Rochester women attended the meeting: Mrs. James J. Tighe, Mrs. Richard Kalb, Mrs. Elizabeth Dean, Mrs. Joseph Flannery, Miss Margaret Wickham, Mrs. Theresa Garnater, Miss Florence Mills, Miss Louise Meyers, Mrs. William H. Rossenbach, Mrs. John M. Foley, Mrs. E. J. Rooney, Miss Alice Kirk, Mrs. F. J. G. Connor, Mrs. M. H. Keogh, Miss Katherine Doerbecker, Miss Aloysia Yawman, Miss Magdalene Connor, Mrs. Louis A. Langie, Mrs. M. U. May, Mrs. Emily O'Donnell, Miss Cecilia M. Yawman, Mrs. Louis A. Whalen, and Miss Mollie Rigney of Bloomfield.

The next meeting of the Board of Directors will be held in Geneva in July, the date to be announced later.

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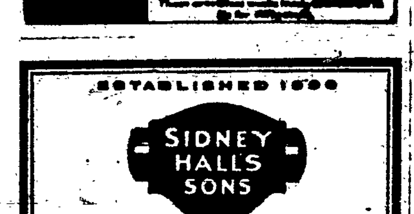

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