

24 May

# **The Blessed VIRGIN MARY**

## **Help of Christians**

Principal Patroness of the  
Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of  
Christians and the Salesian Family

### *Solemnity*

When this solemnity coincides with a Sunday of Paschal Time or the solemnity of Pentecost, the celebration is transferred to the first free day following (cf *Roman Missal, General norms for the liturgical year and the Calendar*, nn. 5, 60).

For the pastoral good of the faithful, when the solemnity falls on a weekday, its celebration may be transferred to the following Sunday, provided the latter be a Sunday in Ordinary Time. In this case the formulary may be used at all Masses in which the people take part (cf *ibid.*, nn. 58, 59).

In the complicated network of human events, Christian peoples have frequently experienced in the course of history the practical help of the Virgin Mary, especially in moments of particular difficulty for the life of the Church. Thus has been added a further title to the Mother of God: "Help of Christians". The date chosen for the feast was 24 May, the day on which Pope Pius VII returned to Rome after his miraculous liberation from prison in 1814.

Saint John Bosco saw in the invocation "Help of Christians" a wonderful summation of the mystery of the Blessed Virgin in the Church's plan of salvation; indeed he was prompted to write: "The experience of eighteen centuries demonstrates in a most vivid way that Mary continues most effectively from heaven her maternal and helping mission in the Church which she began on earth" (*Maraviglie della Madre di Dio*, 1868, p. 45).

Faithful to the spirit and mission of Don Bosco, the Salesian Family willingly accepts the guidance and support of the Virgin's motherly presence, and is thus helped to work more generously for the Lord and bear witness to God's love for the young.

The Second Vatican Council recognized that Mary, by her maternal charity, cares for the brethren of her Son who still journey on earth surrounded by dangers and difficulties, until they are led into their heavenly home. Therefore the Blessed Virgin is invoked in the Church under the titles of Advocate, Helper, Benefactress and Mediatrix (*Lumen Gentium* 62).

To celebrate the death and resurrection of Christ and venerate the glorious and ever-virgin Mary (*Roman canon*) imply therefore: — listening as she did to the word of God, making it bear fruit and proclaiming it with zeal; — understanding and invoking Mary as an example of prayer and pastoral charity; — recognizing her as teacher and guide; — and having recourse to her with childlike trust.

As the principal Patroness of the Salesian Family and Teacher of wisdom, she helps the members to love as Don Bosco loved; as the model of pastoral charity, she shines like a star in our work of evangelization and human advancement.

The liturgical formulary is in the first place an act of thanksgiving for the work of God the Father

(*cf. Resp. psalm*) who, in his wonderful plan of salvation (*II Coll.*), sent his Son born of a woman (*II Reading*). The Virgin Mary, constituted mother and help of Christians (*I Coll.*), is the great sign, and the woman clothed with the sun (*I Reading*).

In this sense the texts are also a joyful song of praise to the Virgin Mary, because: — as the humble servant of the Lord and model of every virtue, she corresponded fully with God's loving plan, cooperating by faith, obedience and ardent love in the work of Christ the saviour (*Pref.*); — united now with her Son in glory, she maintains her mission to the Church which continues in time its way to the heavenly Jerusalem amidst conflicts and perils (*Pref.*).

It is on the basis of these certainties that, in celebrating the memorial of the mystery of Christ born of the Virgin Mary (*After comm.*), who vanquished death (*Sol. bless.*) and rose as the first fruit of the new creation (*After comm.*), the holy assembly adopts like Mary an attitude of complete availability to God's plan (*cf. Gospel and Comm. ant.*). For this reason it prays, invoking the gift of the Holy Spirit who descended on the apostles gathered around the Virgin Mary in the cenacle (*Sol. bless.*), so as to: advance in faith, hope and love (*Offertory*); — overcome every trial with patience and love (*I Coll.*); — be ever more conformed to Christ (*Offertory*); — collaborate with faith and courage for the coming of the Kingdom (*After comm.*); — come to the Father in newness of life (*After comm.*); — and share even now in the victory of Christ (*I Coll.*).

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Cf Jud 13, 23.25

**O Virgin Mary,  
the most high God has blessed you beyond  
all women on earth; he has so exalted your  
name that your praises will never fade from  
human hearts (T.P. Alleluia).**

*The Gloria is said.*

OPENING PRAYER

**Lord our God,  
you chose the Virgin Mary  
to be the mother and help of Christians;  
by her prayers give to the Church  
the strength of your Spirit  
so that with patience and love  
its members may overcome every trial  
and share even now in the victory of Christ, your Son.**

**He lives and reigns with you, in the  
unity of the Holy Spirit, one God for ever  
and ever.**

*Or, for the religious Community:*

**All powerful and merciful God,  
in your wonderful plan of salvation.**

**you have given us Mary  
to be the mother and help of Christians;  
grant that your Church  
may pursue with faith and courage  
its commitment throughout the centuries  
for the growth of your Kingdom.**

**We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ your Son, who lives and  
reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.**

*1st Reading: Rev 12,1.3a.7-12a.17 2nd Reading: Gal 4,4-  
7 Gospel: Jn 2,1-11*

PRAYER OVER THE GIFTS

**Accept, Father, the prayers and offerings  
your people make to you  
on this solemnity of the Virgin Mary Help of Christians;  
through her intercession grant that we may advance  
in faith, hope and love,  
so as to be ever more conformed to Christ our Lord  
who gave himself for the life of the world.  
He lives and reigns for ever and ever.**

PREFACE

*Mary, mother of a pilgrim people*

**Y. The Lord be with you g. And also with  
you.**

**Y. Lift up your hearts.  
g. We lift them up to the Lord.**

**Y. Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. g. It is right to give  
him thanks and praise.**

**Father, all-powerful and ever-living God, we do well always and  
everywhert to give you thanks through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

**We praise you, we bless you, we glorify you on the solemnity of the  
Virgin Mary, Help of Christians.**

**She, your humble servant and model of every virtue,  
corresponded fully with your loving plan, by cooperating in  
obedience of faith and burning love in the work of Christ  
our saviour.**

**United with him in glory,  
she continues her mission to the Church:  
with motherly concern she helps and assists her children  
in their struggles and dangers,  
as they make their way to the heavenly Jerusalem.**

**For this gift of your goodness  
heaven and earth unite in exultation to sing a  
new song:**

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,  
heaven and earth are full of your glory.  
Hosannah in the highest.  
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.  
Hosannah in the highest.**

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Lk 1,48.38

**All generations will call me blessed,  
because God has looked upon his lowly handmaid.  
I am the handmaid of the Lord:  
let what you have said be done to me (T.P. Alleluia).**

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

**Father, you have fed us with the bread of heaven, Jesus  
Christ, born of the Virgin Mary and risen as the first fruits  
of the new creation; grant that we may come to you in  
newness of life and work together for the coming of your  
Kingdom.**

**We make our prayer through Christ our Lord.**

## **MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS (1)**

**It was God's will that the Mother of his Soil should be full of grace. Let us pray  
that he may make his Church and all people of good will sharers in this  
treasure.**

*Defend your Church, O Lord.*

1. For the Church throughout the world: that sustained by the Spirit, the  
Consoler, she may conform her life to the Gospel she proclaims, we pray to the  
Lord.

2. For peace among peoples: that every kind of division may be overcome and that, with due respect for different cultures, the essential values of the human family may be fostered, we pray to the Lord.

3. For the Salesian Family: that it may, renew each day its devotion to Mary Help of Christians, and so find ever new strength to continue its mission in the Church and society, we pray to the Lord.

4. For those who dedicate themselves to the service of the aged, the suffering, and those on the fringe of society; that, following Mary's example, they may be the sign of Christ's loving care for his brothers and sisters, we pray to the Lord.

5. For parents: that, with the Holy Family of Nazareth before their eyes, they may wisely raise their children, so that they may grow up in an environment of human and Christian development, we pray to the Lord.

6. For all of us gathered here to celebrate this feast: that like the Virgin Mary we may be resolute in faith, strong in hope, and attentive in charity, we pray to the Lord.

7. *Other intentions.*

**God our Father, you have associated the Virgin Mary with the work of Christ your Son; through her intercession hear the prayers of your children who, in docility to your Spirit, bear daily witness to their own fidelity to the Gospel. We ask this through Christ our Lord.**

## **MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS (2)**

**My brothers and sisters, let us make our prayer to God our Father, who in his immense goodness, willed that Mary should cooperate in the saving mission of his Son.**

*Lord, hear our prayer.*

1. For the Church, God's people in pilgrimage: that she may always find in Mary an objective model in life and a sedulous help in her own mission, we pray to the Lord.

2. For the Pope and our bishops: that in their ministry of proclaiming the Gospel, they may entrust themselves to Mary, the shining star of Gospel enlightenment, we pray to the Lord.

3. For those responsible for the government of nations: that in the fulfilment of their mission they may look to Mary who made herself readily available to God's will for the salvation of the world, we pray to the Lord.

4. For the Salesian Family: that its members may live and work in today's Church in the spirit of the beatitudes, we pray to the Lord.

5. For young people, and especially those living in anxiety and confusion:

that they may find in Mary a mother solicitous for the good of her children, and entrust themselves to her as the source of hope, communion and peace, we pray to the Lord.

6. For us gathered together on this solemnity of the Help of Christians: that we may always experience her motherly presence, the pledge of peace, happiness, and perfect conformity to God's will, we pray to the Lord.

7. *Other intentions.*

**God, our merciful Father, hear our prayers, and through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Help of Christians, grant that we may progress in faith, hope and charity, so as to live each day according to your will. We ask this through Christ our Lord.**