

MACIEJ SADOWSKI, C.SS.R.

REDEMPTORISTS AS PROMOTERS OF THE DEVOTION TO OUR MOTHER OF PERPETUAL HELP

1. – *The restoration of Marian devotion in the sign of Perpetual Help*; 2. – *The geography of the spread of the copies of the Roman icon*; 3. – *Methods of spreading the devotion*; 4. – *Forms and characteristic expressions of the cult*; *Conclusion*.

The nineteenth century is often called the “Age of Mary” in the history of religious culture. It was a period of an extremely vivid growth of Marian piety. Suffice it to mention the proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary by Blessed Pius IX, the message of the Miraculous Medal of St Catharine Labouré and the Marian apparitions in Lourdes, La Salette, Knock and Gietrzwałd, as well as numerous rallies and mass Marian processions, the spread of the May service and the dedication of the month of October to the Holy Rosary by Leo XIII.¹ During those times, one of the most important examples and expressions of special devotion to the Blessed Virgin was also the rediscovery of the miraculous icon of Our Mother of Perpetual Help and the spread of the cult of this icon throughout the world. This article aims at outlining the role of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer in renewing and promoting the icon and devotion to Our Mother of Perpetual Help. The motive of this scientific reflection is the 150th anniversary of the solemn renewal of the public cult of the miraculous icon in 1866 and the papal crowning of the icon in 1867. The sources of the reflection are numerous essays as well as records found in the archives and libraries in Rome, Vienna and Kraków.²

¹ A. HORTELANO, *La Virgen y el mundo moderno*, Madrid 1954, 9.

² I have used the works of outstanding scholars investigating the cult of the icon of Our Mother of Perpetual Help, including E. BRESCIANI, *La Madonna del Perpetuo Soccorso. Istoria dell'antica e prodigiosa Imagine*, Roma 1877; C.M.

1. – *The restoration of Marian devotion in the sign of Perpetual Help*

According to the reliable record of the Redemptorist Superior General Fr Nicholas Mauron (1818–1893), Blessed Pius IX, entrusting the icon of Our Mother of Perpetual Help to the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, uttered the meaningful words, “Make her known throughout the world!”³ These words became an unwritten imperative for generations of the Redemptorists as well as numerous religious and laymen to spread the veneration of Mary in the sign of Perpetual Help. After the icon, which showed traces of turbulent history and which was forgotten for several decades, had been thoroughly renovated by the Polish artist living in Rome, Leopold Nowotny,⁴ it was solemnly

HENZE, *Ausführliche Geschichte des Muttergottesbildes von der Immerwährenden Hilfe*, Rom–Hagenau 1939; D. BUCKLEY, *The Miraculous Picture of the Mother of Perpetual Succour*, Cork 1948; F. KLAR, *Vor Frue af den stedsevarende Hjælp. Et nådebilledes sejrsgang gennem verden i hunderede år 1866–1966*, København 1967; E. BUSCHI, *Santa Maria del Perpetuo Soccorso. Vicende storiche – diffusione nel mondo – devozioni e florilegio di grazie*, Veroli 1968; A. GARCÍA PAZ, *Santa María del Perpetuo Socorro*, vol. 1: *Historia e interpretacion del Icono*, Madrid 1988; F. FERRERO, *Nuestra Señora del Perpetuo Socorro. Proceso histórico de una devoción mariana*, Madrid 1966; ID., *Santa Maria del Perpetuo Socorro. Un icono de la Santa Madre de Dios, Virgen de la Pasión*, Madrid 1994.

³ According to Fr Mauron the pope was to say, *FateLa conoscere al mondo intero*. Pius IX also issued a rescript confirming his wish to entrust the icon of Our Mother of Perpetual Help to the Redemptorists, “Il Cardinal Prefetto di Propaganda chiamerà il Superiore della Comunità di S. Maria in Posterula, e gli dirà essere Nostra Volontà, che la Imagine di Maria S[antissi]ma, di cui tratta la suplica, torni fra S. Giovanni e S. Maria Maggiore; con obbligo però del P. Superiore de’ Liguorini di sostituire altro quadro decente” (*Beata Virgo Maria de Perpetuo Succursu id est de antiqua ejus et prodigiosa Imagine in Ecclesia S. Alphonsi de Urbe cultui reddita item de Archisodalitate B. Mariae Virginis de Perpetuo Succursu et S. Alphonsi M. de Ligorio canonice ibidem erecta editio altera*, Typographia a Pace, Rome 1897, 32-33.)

⁴ Leopold Nowotny (1818–1870), a student of J. Overbeck, pursued painting in Vienna, Venice and Rome. His style referred to the works of the Italian painters of the 14th and 15th centuries. He painted only religious pictures, and his works were appreciated and enjoyed great popularity. He maintained close contacts with such Polish poets as C.K. Norwid and Z. Krasiński, and with the Redemptorists (A. MELBECHOWSKA-LUTY, *Leopold Nowotny (1818–1870)*, in: *Polski słownik biograficzny [Polish Bibliographical Dictionary]*, vol.

transferred to the Church of St Alphonsus on the Esquiline Hill on 26 April 1866.⁵ Over 50,000 Romans and pilgrims, who had stayed in the Eternal City on that day, responded to the special invitation, the so-called *invito sacro*, of Constantino Patrizi, Cardinal Vicar General of Rome (1798–1876).⁶

During the special triduum dedicated to Mary, pilgrims brought “numerous candles, flowers, silver votive offerings and other gifts. Even the sick and the disabled ordered to be carried through the stairs to the sanctuary. [...] the flow of believers lasted for the whole month of May.”⁷ On the evening of 5 May, the Church of St Alphonsus was visited by an unannounced and special pilgrim – Pius IX himself desired to pray before the miraculous picture. This great worshipper of Mary said the following words, which General Mauron wrote down providently, “O, how beautiful the Picture is! It is more beautiful than the copy that has been given to me.”⁸ Two weeks earlier the Redemptorist had given the Holy Father a faithful copy of the icon that was at first placed in his private apartment and then in the papal chapel in his palace.⁹

The crowning of the icon of Our Mother of Perpetual Help with the papal crowns on Sunday, 23 June 1987, completed the solemn restoration of the cult of the icon. At the wish of Pius IX, it was Bishop Ruggero Luigi Antici Mattei (1811–1883), Titular

23, pp. 397–398; cf. P. SEMENENKO, *Listy 1942–1945 [The Letters of 1942–1945]*, ed. T. Kaszuba, Rome 2001 [Studia Zmartwychwstańcze, VII], 21–22).

⁵ The results of the Polish painter’s works were evaluated positively, which was attested by an almost chronicler’s record of Fr Bresciani who had witnessed those events, “[Icona] fu egregiamente restaurata per mano di valente artista, senza punto menomante alterare il dipinto” (E. BRESCIANI, *La Madonna del Perpetuo Soccorso*, 40).

⁶ C.M. HENZE, *Mater de Perpetuo Succursu. Prodigiosae Iconis Marialis ita nuncupatae monographia*, Bonnae 1926, 63.

⁷ ID., *Das Gnadenbild der Mutter von der immerwährenden Hilfe*, Bonn 1933, 19.

⁸ “O quam formosa [Icona] est! Eam certe illi exemplari antepono, quod mihi nuper dono datum est!” (C.M. HENZE, *Mater de Perpetuo Succursu...*, 63; cf. E. BRESCIANI, *La Madonna del Perpetuo Soccorso...*, 54).

⁹ It was the second faithful copy. After the pope’s death the icon belonged to Archbishop Alfonso Carinci (1862–1963) (C.M. HENZE, *Ausführliche Geschichte des Muttergottesbildes von der immerwährenden Hilfe...*, 1939, 38).

Patriarch of Constantinople and then Cardinal, who put the crowns on Mary's and Jesus' heads. As the monastery chronicler noted scrupulously, the crowns on the heads of Jesus and Mary were made of gold and ornamented among other things with eight pearls, seven emeralds, thirteen garnets, two topazes and eight amethysts, coming from the votive offerings.¹⁰ After the Eucharist, while the singers were performing the ancient Ambrosian hymn *O gloriosa virginum* and the antiphon *Regina Coeli laetare*, Bishop Mettei put the blessed crowns on the icon, uttering the liturgical prayers of the day, which included the meaningful words, "As through our hands You are crowned on this earth, may we earn to be crowned by You in honour and praise of heaven".¹¹ The ceremony was ended with the loud signing of *Te Deum* and spontaneous shouts *Evviva Maria! Evviva la Madonna del Perpetuo Soccorso!*, and there were even fire salutes and fireworks. However, the presence of over 500 bishops and several thousand pilgrims from all over the world, who had come to the Eternal City to celebrate the 1800th anniversary of St Peter's martyrdom, was more important to the promotion of the Marian cult in the sign of Perpetual Help than the jewels and emotional raptures of the faithful. Many of them took replicas and chromolithographs of the Madonna to their countries.¹²

The next important event contributing to the spread of devotion to Our Mother of Perpetual Help was the First Vatican Council held in 1869–1870. The general house of the Redemptorists on the Esquiline Hill became the residence of Archbishop Victor August Dechamps of Mechelen (1810–1883), a Belgian Redemptorist and then Cardinal and Primate of Belgium. Dechamps, as a zealous propagator and defender of the dogma on papal infallibility, hosted many important Council Fathers in the Redemptorist monastery. Only in October 1869, the guests embraced the Bishops of Luxembourg, Granada, Westminster, Santo Domingo, Aachen, Paderborn, Cuenca, and Cardinals: Alessandro Barnabó (1801–1874) – prefect of the Congregation for

¹⁰ E. BRESCIANI, *La Madonna del Perpetuo Soccorso...*, 55–56.

¹¹ E. BUSCHI, *Santa Maria del Perpetuo Soccorso...*, 141.

¹² C.M. HENZE, *Mater de Perpetuo Succursu...*, 65.

the Propagation of the Faith, Jean Baptiste Pitra (1812–1889) – director of the Vatican Library and Archives, Carlo Sacconi (1808–1889) – Prefect of the Congregation of Ceremonies and organiser of the American Seminary, as well as the superiors general of the Jesuits, Carmelites, Passionists and White Fathers.¹³ These hierarchs visited the Church of St Alphonsus – the Pope proclaimed Alphonsus a Doctor of the Church during the Council. They took with them (to their dioceses and congregations) faithful copies of the miraculous icon, which they had received from the Redemptorists. Thus one copy of the icon was solemnly transferred to the Cathedral in Mainz on 21 August 1871 by the famous Bishop Wilhelm Emmanuel von Ketteler (1811–1877), a great social activist and promoter of the Catholic social teaching.¹⁴

2. – *The geography of the spread of the copies of the Roman icon*

The Redemptorists, thoughtful custodians of the miraculous icon and the first apostles of Perpetual Help, concerned with the papal call to promote the picture that had been entrusted to them, ensured right away that faithful copies of the icon was sent to different ends of the earth. The first “faithful copies” were made by the Swiss painter Jakob Wüger (1829–1892) in his Roman workshop.¹⁵ In the general archives of the Redemptorists there is a document showing a peculiar geography of the spread of the icon in 1866–1876, containing the words “the first four hundred faithful copies of the icon in its original size, intended for public veneration.”¹⁶ According to the archival list, most of the Roman cop-

¹³ “Il Giornale di Roma,” 19 July 1866.

¹⁴ F. FERRERO, *Santa Maria del Perpetuo Socorro...*, 196.

¹⁵ Jakob Wüger (1829–1892) was born to a Calvinist family. He studied painting in Munich and Dresden, specialising in portraits as well as historical and religious themes. In 1862, he settled in Italy, firstly in Florence, and after a year in Rome, where influenced by the Redemptorists he had met there, he confessed the Catholic creed in the chapel of the general house on the Esquiline Hill. In 1870, he entered the Benedictine Abbey of Beuron. He died while working on the frescos in the chapel of St Martin in the Abbey of Monte Cassino in 1893 (<http://www.alt-steckborn.ch/gabriel.html> access on: 21.04.2015).

¹⁶ AGHR, call number Ps VI, 1–10: *Imagines B.[eatae] V.[erginae] Mariae*

ies were sent to the countries where the Redemptorist communities were very big and vibrant. During the first decade of the spread of the devotion to Our Mother of Perpetual Help, the acknowledged leader was German-speaking countries: they received as many as 250 icons.

Every Roman copy had a “certificate” of reliability containing the exact date and serial number as well as the Redemptorist General’s signature and seal.¹⁷ The first copy was taken to Bishop Eton near Liverpool, England, and placed above the altar in the oratory of the monastery of St Alphonsus.¹⁸ Besides these faithful copies painted on wood there were less expensive and more accessible lithographic paper pictures. Their number amounted to 120,000 in the year 1876.¹⁹

The Roman General Archives of the Redemptorists holds records of the copies of the miraculous icon scrupulously written by Brother Carl Juan Baptista Sinsa (1838-1884) and his successors. Thanks to their work a specific dynamics of the spread of the picture of Our Mother of Perpetual Help can be observed. The process reached its apogee in the first two decades of the 20th century.²⁰

de Perpetuo Succursu, ex miraculis claro Archetypo in Ecclesia S. [ancti] Alphonsi de Urbe venerato fideliter expressae, et in varias Orbis partes tranmissae, libros 1–10 (1866–1963).

¹⁷ From the middle of 1866, after the coronation of the icon of Our Mother of Perpetual Help, the certificate read, “Nicolaus Mauron, Congregationis Sanctissimi Redemptoris Superior Generalis et Rector Maior. Fidem fascimus atque testamur, hanc Imaginem B. V. Mariae fideliter expressam esse ex ipsomet veteri ac miraculis claro Archetypo, sub titulo de Perpetuo Succursu, olim un Ecclesia S. Mathaei in Merulana de Urbe, nunc in alia S. Alphonsi M. de Ligorio in Exquilinis venerato et a Rmo. Capitulo Vaticano corona aurea insignito. In quorum fidem ... Romae, ex Collegio nostro ad SS. Redemptorem et in honorem s. Alphonsi, die ... mensis ... anni 18 ... Num.[erus]” (AGHR, call number Ps. VI, 2.3).

¹⁸ C.M. HENZE, *Mater de Perpetuo Succursu...*, 71; cf. D. BUCKLEY, *The Miraculous Picture of the Mother of Perpetual Succour...*, 95–96.

¹⁹ The Roman statistics concerning the spread of the cult include a note written in September 1876, “120 000 cartelline della Madonna sulla carta vellina” (P. MEERSCHAUT, *De Imaginibus B.M.V. de Perpetuo Succursu*, in “Analecta CSsR” 31 (1959) 87–90).

²⁰ The so-called “faithful” copies of the icon of Our Mother of Perpetual Help in the years: 913 (1866–1883), 1,001 (1884–1897), 3,189 (1898–1921), 2,639 (1922–1963), (AGHR, call number Ps. VI, 1–10).

Many copies were placed above the main altarpieces of the Redemptorist churches and monasteries that were being constructed then. Our Mother of Perpetual Help was made their Patroness. For it should be stressed that the turn of the 19th and the 20th centuries was a period of a special growth of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer as far as the number of its members and geographical expansion of the Redemptorist missionaries are concerned.²¹ By 1966, 128 Redemptorist churches dedicated to Our Mother of Perpetual Help were built in the world, most of them in Brazil and the USA – 13 churches in each country.²²

The first church in honour of Our Mother of Perpetual Help was the oratory of the monastery in Argentan in Normandy consecrated as early as in 1867.²³ The construction of the churches in Bochum, Ilchester and Roosendaal began the next year.²⁴ The most known first foundations that became right away local centres of the devotion to Our Mother of Perpetual Help include: Perth (1869), Boston (1871), Paris (1874), Granada (1879), New York (1887), Montevideo and Vienna (1889), Madrid (1892), Valparaiso (1903). A little church dedicated to Our Mother of Perpetual Help, located at the Rhône Glacier in the Swiss Alps at a height of 1,761 metres, was blessed in 1932.²⁵

²¹ “The provinces began growing and working normally. And devotion to Our Mother of Perpetual Help became an indicator of the life of the members of the Congregation and the apostolic work of the Redemptorists. [...] These events brought about stabilization and strengthening of the spiritual life of the Redemptorists” (J. OPITZ, *Historia i duchowość alfonzjańska [Alphonsian History and Spirituality]*, tr. by S. Stańczyk, Kraków 1987, 124–125).

²² F. KLAR, *For Frue af den stedsevarende Hjælp. Et nådebilledes sejrsgang gennem verden i hundrede år 1866–1966*, København 1967, 145–146.

²³ [J. B. LORTHOIT], *Mémorial Alphonsien*, Tourconig 1929, 615; cf. BOLAND, 19.

²⁴ H. SCHÄFER, *De Moeder van Altijddurenden Bijstand*, Nijmegen 1941, 64–65.

²⁵ C.M. HENZE, *Mater de Perpetuo Succursu...*, 70–73; cf. J.F. BYRNE, *The Redemptorist Centenaries*, Philadelphia 1932, 401–403; M.J. CURLEY, *The Provincial Story*, New York 1963, 163–165; in “Maria-Immerhilf” 6 (1932) 78.

3. – *Methods of spreading the devotion*

The Redemptorists, following the papal order “Make her known throughout the world,” did not limit their activities to building monasteries and churches dedicated to Our Mother of Perpetual Help. Wanting Mary not only to be known in this sign but also to be loved by people, they included the icon, its theology and meaningful symbolism in the charismatic ministry in the Church. This picture of Mary accompanied almost every missionary team conducting missions and retreats. Mary’s icon was placed in all of the cases of itinerary missionaries going to the antipodes, Far East or Siberia. The Redemptorists called Mary “Madonna Misionaria” in Latin America.²⁶ In 1886, during a mission, led in the prison on the island of Talca in Chile, the French Redemptorist Father Eugene Hengbart addressed ca. 300 prisoners, saying, “The one who does not believe in the sacrament of confession, should recite *Ave Maria* three times before the picture of Our Mother of Perpetual Help.” Then he wrote down that ca. 250 prisoners went to confession on that day.²⁷

The devotion to Our Mother of Perpetual Help has been extremely popular in Haiti. The inhabitants of the capital Port-au-Prince ascribed the rapid disappearance of a smallpox epidemic in February 1882, which killed ca. 4,000 people, to the intercession of Our Mother of Perpetual Help. The epidemic ceased after Archbishop Alexis Jean Marie Guilloux (1819–1885) had carried a copy of the miraculous icon in a solemn procession along the streets and entrusted the inhabitants to Mary. This procession was invented by the French priest of the Metropolitan Cathedral, Fr François Marie Kersuzan (1848–1935), who became Auxiliary of Port-au-Prince one year later, and as the first hierarch in the world he placed the picture of Our Mother of Perpetual Help in his bishop’s coat of arms.²⁸ During his bishop’s ministry he

²⁶ E. BUSCHI, *Santa Maria del Perpetuo Soccorso...*, 347–351.

²⁷ “La Sainte Famille” 24 (1898) 216.

²⁸ The image of Our Mother of Perpetual Help was also placed in the coats of arms of the Redemptorist bishops: in 1886 – Bishop Wilhelm Anton Wulfingh (1839–1906) and in 1911 – Cardinal Willem Marinus van Rossum (1854–1932), the future prefect of the Congregation for the Propagation of the

spread the cult of the icon. After Kersuzana's death, an act of extreme significance took place in the square between the cathedral and the Presidential Palace on 8 December 1942. In the presence of the Apostolic Nuncio, the Bishops' Conference, representatives of the government and Parliament of Haiti as well as ca. 200,000 Haitians, President Louis Élie Lescot (1883–1974) proclaimed Our Mother of Perpetual Help the official Patroness of Haiti.²⁹

During the so-called Siberian mission in 1908, the icon of Our Mother of Perpetual Help, taken by some Polish missionaries, reached the descendents of Polish prisoners sent to Omsk, Chelyabinsk, Tobolsk, and even to Groznyy and Baku in Transcaucasia.³⁰ Teofilus Matulionis, Auxiliary Bishop of Mohilev, Belarus (1873–1962), who had spent many years in the Soviet gulags, gave a moving testimony during the Eucharist celebrated before the icon of the Mother of Perpetual Help in Rome on 6 April 1934. He said that he owed his rescue from the inhuman labour camp to the intercession of Mary in the title of Perpetual Help.³¹ The Redemptorists from the German and French provinces promoted the Marian devotion successfully in Japan and Vietnam as well as in the Korean Peninsula.³² The photo, which was spread in Catholic media in the 1950s, showing a couple of anonymous Koreans fleeing the country amid the turmoil of civil war was touching. They carried their humble possessions and a framed copy of the icon of Our Mother of Perpetual Help.³³ In the antipodes Edmund John Gleeson (1869–1956), an Irish missionary and Bishop of Maitland, proclaimed Our Mother of Perpetual Help the main Patroness of his Australian diocese in 1934, and the next year he blessed a chapel dedicated to Mary in the cathedral.³⁴

Faith (cf. C.M. HENZE, *Mater de Perpetuo Succursu...*, 51).

²⁹ A. GARCÍA PAZ, *Santa María del Perpetuo Socorro...*, vol. 2, pp. 108–109.

³⁰ "Analecta CSsR" 1 (1922) 202–203; cf. J. PALEWSKI, *Wspomnienia z misyi OO. Redemptorystów na Syberii r. 1908* [*Recollections from the Missions of the Redemptorist Fathers in Siberia in 1908*], *Mościska* 1909, 36–39; E. NOCUŃ, *Volksmissionen der polnischen Redemptoristen in Sibirien im Jahr 1908*, *SHCSR* 56 (2008) 161–178.

³¹ C.M. HENZE, *Ausführliche Geschichte des Muttergottesbildes...*, 52.

³² A. TUYÈN, *Tìm hiểu kigh. Kingh Mùng*, Saigon 1952.

³³ F. KLAR, *Vor Frue af den stedsevarende Hjælp...*, 87.

³⁴ C.M. HENZE, *Ausführliche Geschichte des Muttergottesbildes...*, 53.

The devotion to Our Lady of Perpetual Help has crossed territorial borders, languages and cultures as well as religious rites. Her great worshipper was the Chaldean Patriarch of Baghdad and Mosul, Yūsuf Emmanuel II Thomas (1900–1947), who published the first history of the icon in Arabic in 1938 and dedicated to Our Mother of Perpetual Help a church in Dawassa near Mosul in 1944. The icon was also known in the Maronite communities in Syria and Lebanon, where in Jbeil (formerly Byblos) a church and hospital dedicated to the Madonna were constructed. In the Melkite Church the devotion was spread by two religious congregations: the Missionaries of St Paul founded in Lebanon in 1903 and the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Perpetual Help founded in 1936.³⁵ In Sri Lanka the Redemptorists of the Syro-Malabar Rite promoted the devotion among the Tamil people.³⁶ Mary under the title of Our Mother of Perpetual Help was especially venerated by the Greek Catholic believers in Ukraine and Slovakia as well as in the Ukrainian diaspora in Canada. The Redemptorist monasteries of this rite became centres promoting this devotion,³⁷ which was easy considering the fact that the Passion type of icon, known as *Strastnaja* in the East, was common in the local iconography.³⁸

Only few people know the fact that Pope Pius XI proclaimed Our Mother of Perpetual Help the Patroness of the relief-mission for children starving in Bolshevik Russia in 1922. A special logo of this initiative, presenting a picture of the Madonna and inscriptions in Russian: “Roman Pope for Russian children!” and “Salvation of the world, save Russia!” was made. Several

³⁵ A. GARCÍA Paz, *Santa María del Perpetuo Socorro*, vol. 2, p. 191.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 59. Similarly, the icon of Our Mother of Perpetual Help was very popular with believers in Singapore and Malaysia, where annual processions with her picture organised on her liturgical feast are extremely popular forms of the devotion (cf. K.J. O'BRIEN, *Redemptorists in Singapore–Malaysia*, Singapore 1985, 148–149).

³⁷ In Michalovce the Slovakian Redemptorists of the Eastern Rite placed a meaningful inscription in Old Church Slavonic on the icon of Our Mother of Perpetual Help, “We are happy, O Mary, that You are Our Perpetual Help. Intercede for us day and night!” (“*Analecta CSsR*” 9 (1931) 300).

³⁸ E. BUSCHI, *Santa Maria del Perpetuo Soccorso...*, 324; cf. K. ONASCH, A. M. SCHNIEPER, *Ikonen. Faszination und Wirklichkeit*, München 2007, 161–167.

thousands of such pictures were printed but they were confiscated on the Soviet border by the customs officers.³⁹ The icon of Our Mother of Perpetual Help was also a sign in the service to ecumenism. In May 1902, Pope Leon XIII sent some Assumptionist missionaries on an ecumenical mission to Bulgaria, entrusting them with a copy of the Roman icon. In 1908, Saint Pius X offered a copy of the Madonna to the Empress of Ethiopian Empire, Taytu Betul (1851–1918).⁴⁰ Moreover, in the Congress on Mariology held in Fribourg, Switzerland, in 1902, one of the proposals of the theologians was to recognise Our Mother of Perpetual Help the Patroness of the ecumenical movement, as the One connecting the Christian East and West.⁴¹

4. – *Forms and characteristic expressions of the cult*

Every idea needs some form to express and manifest itself. Various liturgical formulas, lay and religious confraternities as well as vast publishing and numismatic activities have played an essential role in propagating the devotion to Our Mother of Perpetual Help. The development of the cult depended strictly on the approval of the ecclesiastical authorities. Consequently, efforts were taken to include a feast of Our Mother of Perpetual Help in the liturgical calendar. The efforts proved to be successful in 1876 when the Congregation of Rites established such a feast on Sunday before the Birth of St John the Baptist. It was celebrated on that day until 1914.⁴² At present, it falls on 27

³⁹ “Римский Папа для русских детей” (E. BUSCHI, *Santa Maria del Perpetuo Soccorso...*, 332).

⁴⁰ D. BUCKLEY, *The Miraculous Picture of the Mother of Perpetual Succour...*, 80.

⁴¹ *Cinquant’anni dalla prima esposizione dell’antica e prodigiosa immagine della Madonna del Perpetuo Soccorso nella Chiesa di Sant’Alfonso all’Esquilino*, Rome 1916, 86; cf. E. BUSCHI, *Santa Maria del Perpetuo Soccorso...*, 339.

⁴² On 18 May 1876, the Congregation of Rites issued a rescript confirming *Officium proprium cum Missa B.M.V. de Perpetuo Succursu sub ritu duplici II. classis. (Documenta authentica facultatum et gratiarum spiritualium quas Congregationi SS. Redemptoris S. Sedes concessit, Ratisbonae 1903, pp. 403–407, no. 275)*. The document of this congregation ordering the feast of Our Mother of Perpetual Help to be introduced in the liturgical calendar of the Diocese of Kraków was preserved in the Archives of the Metropolitan Curia in Kraków

June. Another sign of the growth of the importance of the icon was the decision of Benedict XV, who on the occasion of the golden jubilee of its coronation on 3 November 1916 allowed the intercession “Our Mother of Perpetual Help, pray for us!” to be included in the Litany of Loreto recited in the Redemptorist churches. The next year the same pope gave the privilege of a 300 day indulgence related to the pious reciting of the prayer *O Maria, Mater de Perpetuo Succursu*.⁴³

An extremely important form of propagating the devotion to Our Mother of Perpetual Help was the Pious Union of Our Mother of Perpetual Help and St Alphonsus de Liguori, established in Rome on 23 May 1871 by Cardinal Patrizi.⁴⁴ The idea of this association was born in Limerick, Ireland, in 1868. The next year similar confraternities were founded in Belgium in Roulers as well as in Vienna, Paris, Tournai, Pisa and Modena.⁴⁵ This confraternity, on virtue of the papal breve *Quod in maiorem*, was raised to the Archconfraternity of Our Mother of Perpetual Help and St. Alphonsus Liguori on 31 March 1876.⁴⁶ Its members were to promote honour for Mary in their circles (e.g. by wearing a special a medal of Our Mother of Perpetual Help and St Alphonsus, to participate in the services of the confraternity on the patron feasts and every second Sunday of the month, to pray *Hail Mary* three times every morning and evening, and above all, to live deep spiritual and sacramental lives.

Of similar character were the pious associations founded to honour Our Mother of Perpetual Help, for example the con-

(AKMK, The acts of Cardinal Albin Dunajewski, file: Official correspondence 1872–1895, vol. 2.1, c. 7: Cardinal D. Bartolini to Cardinal A. Dunajewski, Rome 6 May 1885).

⁴³ D. BUCKLEY, *The Miraculous Picture of the Mother of Perpetual Succour...*, 80.

⁴⁴ The official name of the association was “Pia Unio sub titulo et invocatione B.[eatae] Mariae Virginis de Perpetuo Succursu et S.[ancti] Alphonsi de Ligorio” (cf. breve *Quum sicuti relatam* Piusa IX of 10 March 1976, in: *Documenta authentica facultatum et gratiarum spiritualium...*, pp. 397–399, no. 272).

⁴⁵ C.M. HENZE, *Mater de Perpetuo Succursu...*, 83.

⁴⁶ Breve *Quod in maiorem* Piusa IX of 31 March 1876, in: *Documenta authentica facultatum et gratiarum spiritualium...*, pp. 399–401, no. 273).

fraternity *Súplica Perpetua* founded in Chile in 1878,⁴⁷ which was especially popular in Latin America and Spain, and the Guard of Honour for Our Mother of Perpetual Help (*Die Gebetswache bei der Mutter von der Immerwährenden Hilfe* or *La Supplique à Notre-Dame de Perpétuel Secours*),⁴⁸ initiated in 1926 by the Alsatian Redemptorist, Fr Albert Stocker (1893-1965).

A turning point in the growth of the devotion to Our Mother of Perpetual Help was the introduction of the Perpetual Novena service. This form of Marian piety was born in the United States, in the Redemptorist St Alphonsus “Rock” Church in Saint Louis, where Fr Andrew Brown (1886-1963) celebrated the first such a service on Tuesday, 11 July 1922 – since then it has been recited every week.⁴⁹ In 1928, Fr Henry Sutton (1892–1980) called it “Perpetual Novena” and earlier it had been known as “Novendialia.”⁵⁰ Soon it won the hearts of the congregation in St Louis and became very popular with people. By the year 1930, the Redemptorists introduced the Perpetual Novena in 30 churches in Saint Louis and Detroit. By the outbreak of World war II the new service was celebrated in 55 dioceses in the United States. Within the next 25 years it was recited in almost 2,000

⁴⁷ The founder of this confraternity was Fr Peter Merges (1832–1887), a Redemptorist missionary from Luxembourg. (M. RAUS, *Litterae Circulares*, Romae 1908, 283, 449; cf. C. M. HENZE, *Das Gnadenbild der Mutter von der immerwährenden Hilfe...*, 28–29; E. BUSCHI, *Santa Maria del Perpetuo Soccorso...*, 412–413).

⁴⁸ A. STOCKER, *Die Gebetswache bei der Mutter von der immerwährenden Hilfe*, Colmar 1934, 4ff; cf. L. FRAŚ, *Straż Honorowa Matki Boskiej Nieustającej Pomocy [The Guard of Honour of Our Mother of Perpetual Help]*, Kraków 1936, 15–16.

⁴⁹ Fr Brown was the moderator of the Archconfraternity from 1916. Within the framework of his pastoral ministry he led monthly services of the Archconfraternity. He also organised solemn and popular with believers tridua before the liturgical feast of Our Mother of Perpetual Help. The tridua were changed to a nine-day novena. In 1922, the attendance in one of such novena services was ca. 37,000 people and a year later – 65,000. Fulfilling the wishes of the worshippers of the Madonna, Fr Brown decided to conduct similar services every week on Tuesday, “*Analecta CSsR*” 19 (1940–1947) 247.

⁵⁰ M. KOTYŃSKI, *Nieustającej Pomocy Matka Boża. II. Kult [Our Mother of Perpetual Help. II. Devotion]*, in: *Encyklopedia Katolicka [Catholic Encyclopaedia]*, Lublin 2009, vol. 13, c. 1233.

American and Canadian churches.⁵¹ In Europe the novena service was spread only after the war, thanks to the U.S. Army chaplains who began celebrating it in the churches in Belfast in 1943.⁵² The Perpetual Novena is most popular in the Philippines, in the national Shrine of Our Mother of Perpetual Help in Baclaran, where every Wednesday ca. 100,000 Filipinos participate in ten series of the novena. The first novena celebrated there in 1948 gathered only 70 people.⁵³ One cannot count all the churches and chapels around the world where the Perpetual Novena is prayed. It is certainly one of the most known and popular Marian services.

Since 1950, in Spain and Latin America a special form of the devotion to Our Mother of Perpetual Help – *Visita Domiciliaria* – has been practised. The icon of Our Mother of Perpetual Help placed in a little wooden chapel is carried from family to family grouped in communities of 30 households. The icon remains in one family for 24 hours and then is taken by another family. In the Iberian Peninsula and from Mexico to Chile, processions with the icons of Our Mother of Perpetual Help placed on special floats carried by several dozen men on their shoulders have assumed a special character.⁵⁴

Another characteristic form of Marian piety is the Akathist Hymn to Our Mother of Perpetual Help promoted by the Ukrainian Redemptorists of the Greek Catholic Rite, written by Fr Roman Bachtałowski (1897-1985). This Byzantine canticle, rooted in the fifth century, consists of 24 stanzas corresponding to the letters of the Greek alphabet. Twelve *kondakia* refer to the mystery of the Incarnation while the texts of the remaining 12 *oikoi* are the theological contemplation of *Theothokos* in the mystery

⁵¹ T.L. SKINNER, *The Redemptorists in the West*, St. Louis 1933, 379–386; cf. “Analecta CSsR” 19 (1940–1947) 245–252.

⁵² However, in the Old Continent it was celebrated in 1932, in the Church of St Peter in Birmingham, “Analecta CSsR” 23 (1951–1952) 202.

⁵³ The National Shrine of Our Mother of Perpetual Help in Baclaran is one of the most important places of the devotion in the Philippines (L. HECHANOVA, *The Baclaran Story*, Quezon City 1998, 20-21; cf. <http://www.baclaranovena.org>).

⁵⁴ A. GARCÍA PAZ, *Santa María del Perpetuo Socorro*, vol. 3, pp. 192–193; R. BOLAÑOS AGUILAR, *Crónica de los Misioneros Redentoristas en Honduras 1928–1998*, Tegucigalpa 1987, 166–168.

of Christ and the Church. For the first time this Akathist was published in Old Church Slavonic in Hołosk near Lwów in 1931, and in English – in London in 1934.⁵⁵

The Archconfraternity, associations, congregations and religious institutes along with the Redemptorists from their various provinces – all of these communities and institutions have also propagated the devotion to Our Mother of Perpetual help through their intensive publishing activities. The Roman icon has been reproduced in millions of copies as well as in books, albums and numismatic publications.

Furthermore, numerous periodicals, books and prayer books dedicated to Mary have played a special role in promoting the devotion of Our Mother of Perpetual Help. The most important ones with wide circulations embrace: ‘El Perpetuo Socorro; and “El Devoto de Nostra Señora del Perpetuo Socorro” in Spain, “La Sainte Famille” and “Le Perpétuel Secours” in France,⁵⁶ “Maria Immerhilf” and “Maria-Hilf. Monatsschrift für alle Verehrer der Mutter von der Immerwährenden Hilfe” in German speaking countries,⁵⁷ “Il Soccorso Perpetuo di Maria” in Italy, “Novena” in Great Britain, “Perpetual Help” in the USA while in Poland – “Chorągiew Maryi.”⁵⁸ The magnificent bibliography of the Redemptorists’ works by Fr Maurice de Meulemeester (1879-1961) says that by the end of 1939, 253 publications – from scientific monographs to prayer books – written in different languages were

⁵⁵ [Р. БАХТАЛОВСКИЙ], *Акафист до Божої Матери Неустанної Помочи*, Голоско 1931; *The Akáthistos Hymn to the Mother of God. The Most Ancient Song to Our Victorious Lady of Perpetual Succour*, tr. by A. Bartle, J. Christopher, London 1934.

⁵⁶ In the French speaking countries the monthly “La Sainte Famille” was an official bulletin of the Archconfraternity of Our Mother of Perpetual Help and St Alphonsus, published firstly in Valence, and then in Fontainebleau before the foundation of the Archconfraternity, October 1873 (“La Sainte Famille” 26 (1900) 1–4).

⁵⁷ “Maria-Hilf” was an equivalent of the French periodical “La Sainte Famille” for the German speaking countries, first published in Münster in 1888. Like the French periodical he had a continuous pagination (“Maria-Hilf. Monatsschrift für alle Verehrer der Mutter von der Immerwährenden Hilfe” 13 (1901) 197–198).

⁵⁸ E. BUSCHI, *Santa Maria del Perpetuo Soccorso...*, 356–357.

published.⁵⁹ The total number of copies of books and brochures dedicated to the icon of Our Mother of Perpetual Help reached an imposing number of 2,756, 650 volumes only by 1926.⁶⁰

Conclusion

The universal phenomenon of the cult of the icon of Our Mother of Perpetual Help is such a vast, multi-dimensional and interdisciplinary issue that it cannot be fully explored in this humble paper. Yet, the above presented synthesis of events, expressions and blessed fruits of love of the One who helps perpetually, undoubtedly convinces us that the papal message and challenge of 1865 “Make her known throughout the world” has been fulfilled.

In the perspective of the presented facts and figures we can attempt to make a clear periodization of the cult in the discussed span of time: in 1866–1870 the forgotten icon was rediscovered triumphally for public veneration in the Eternal City, and then crowned by Blessed Pius IX; in 1870–1891 the cult spread rapidly outside Rome by the Fathers of Vaticanum I, through the confraternities, which received numerous indulgences and privileges, and by the introduction of the liturgical feast of Our Mother of Perpetual Help in the Church; in 1891–1916 the devotion was intensively spread through the apostleship of letters, millions of books and numismatic publications as well as a specific expansion of the devotion to the “Missionary Madonna” in the countries of the New World and Eastern Europe; 1916–1945 witnessed a dynamic growth of the Archconfraternity of Our Mother of Perpetual Help and St Alphonsus, which began with the great 50th anniversary of the devotion; after World War II, the cult of the icon was transferred to Asia, and an increasing popularity of the Perpetual Novena could be observed. However, of great significance is the fact that for all of these periods a common and constitutive element has been the involvement and missionary zeal of the Redemptorists who were ardent, although obviously not the only

⁵⁹ M. DE MEULEMEESTER, *Bibliographie générale des écrivains Rédemptoristes*, vol. 1–3, Louvain 1933–1939.

⁶⁰ C.M. HENZE, *Mater de Perpetuo Succursu...*, 75–76.

ones, apostles of the devotion to Our Mother of Perpetual Help. This was emphatically confirmed by Blessed Paul VI, who wrote to the sons of St Alphonsus in his letter of 1966 on the Centenary of the recovery of the veneration of the miraculous icon:

Our predecessor ordered Your Superior General to give a new impulse to the development of the devotion to Our Mother of Perpetual Help and to spread it throughout the world, and indeed, You have realised it faithfully so that the veneration of this icon has spread as good news in a completely unique way, thanks to Your concern and zeal, among all the nations.⁶¹

SUMMARY

This year marks the beginning of the 150th anniversary of the rediscovery of the icon of Our Mother of Perpetual Help, icon connecting the Eastern and Western traditions of the Church. The rediscovery was directly related to the Redemptorists whom Blessed Pius IX entrusted the image of Mary, asking them to “make her known throughout the world.” The article aims at presenting the circumstances of the events occurring 150 years ago, the Roman ceremony of the crowning of the icon in 1867 and the history of the promotion of the devotion to Our Mother of Perpetual Help through various forms of Marian piety and confraternities. The dynamism of the Redemptorist ministry made the icon of Our Mother of Perpetual Help one of the most widely spread and venerated Marian icons in the world.

⁶¹ Quoting after: E. BUSCHI, *Santa Maria del Perpetuo Soccorso...*, 333–336.

RESUMEN

Este año se cumplen 150 años del redescubrimiento del icono de la Virgen del Perpetuo Socorro, icono que une las tradiciones orientales y occidentales de la Iglesia. El redescubrimiento tuvo relación directa con los redentoristas a quienes el beato Papa Pío IX confió esta imagen de la Virgen en 1866, pidiéndoles “darla a conocer en todo el mundo”. El artículo presenta las circunstancias de los hechos que ocurrieron hace 150 años, la coronación canónica del icono en 1876 y la historia de la promoción de la devoción a la Virgen del Perpetuo Socorro con diversas formas de piedad mariana y de cofradías. El dinamismo apostólico de los redentoristas ha hecho que el icono de la Virgen del Perpetuo Socorro sea uno de los iconos marianos más difundidos y venerados en todo el mundo.