

# Feast of Mary, Help of Christians

*Feast Day May 24*



The Marian title, Mary, Help of Christians, is closely associated with the Church triumphing over her enemies through the protection and intercession of the Blessed Mother during the Medieval era, especially in the victory of the Christian naval forces over the Ottoman Turks at the Battle of Lepanto.

In the 19th century, Pope Pius VII named May 24, the date of his triumphal return to Rome after being imprisoned by Napoleon, as the feast of Mary, Help of Christians in gratitude to Our Lady for his safe return.

The prayer below to Mary, Help of Christians was composed by St. John Bosco, founder of the Salesian Order. St John Bosco had a special devotion to Mary under this title because of a prophetic vision in which he saw the Church being saved from the attack of her enemies through her devotion to Mary, under her title Help of Christians (*Sancta Maria Auxilium Christianorum*), and the Holy Eucharist.

## **Prayer to Mary, Help of Christians by St. John Bosco**

**Most Holy Virgin Mary, Help of Christians,  
how sweet it is to come to your feet  
imploring your perpetual help.**

**If earthly mothers cease not to remember their children,  
how can you, the most loving of all mothers forget me?**

**Grant then to me, I implore you,  
your perpetual help in all my necessities,  
in every sorrow, and especially in all my temptations.**

**I ask for your unceasing help for all who are now suffering.**

**Help the weak, cure the sick, convert sinners.**

**Grant through your intercessions many vocations to the religious life.**

**Obtain for us, O Mary, Help of Christians,  
that having invoked you on earth we may love and eternally thank you in heaven. Amen.**

# Celebrating the Feast of Mary, Help of Christians in Australia....

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The feast day to Mary Help of Christians has been celebrated in Australia since 1844. The infant church in Australia had a special reason for turning to Mary. The infant church in Australia had a special reason for turning to Mary. No priests were sent to the colony in its early days and Mass was not allowed except for one brief year until 1820. It was largely the Rosary in those early days that kept the faith alive.

Catholic Australia remained faithful to Mary and was the first nation to choose her under the title Help of Christians, as principal Patroness. St Mary's Cathedral was dedicated in her honour by the Irish pioneer priest, Fr John Therry, who arrived in Sydney in 1820 and assumed responsibility for the planning and initial construction of the Cathedral. When Australia became the first country to have Mary Help of Christians as Patroness, it became the first country to have a mother-cathedral under the same title. In fact, the altar at St. Mary's, with its statue of Mary Help of Christians, was erected as a memorial to Fr. Therry's name.

Traditionally, the Church has focussed on two aspects of Our Lady's help on this feast day. Firstly, upon the role of Our Lady's intercession in the fight against sin the life of a believer. Secondly, Our Lady is one who assists Christians as a community, through her intercession, in fighting against anti-Christian forces.

In the Opening Prayer for Our Lady Help of Christians, the Church prays that through Our Lady's intercession God will "**grant wisdom to our leaders and integrity to our citizens**", so that "**under her protection Australia may be granted harmony, justice and peace**".

Therefore, on such an occasion as this, Our Lady's feast day, we thank our heavenly Father for Mary, our protector, who gives us the perfect model of love, understanding and compassion.

## **Mary Help of Christians patroness of Australia and of the Military Ordinariate**

**Almighty God, deepen in our hearts  
our love of Mary Help of Christians.**

**Through her prayers and under her protection,  
may the light of Christ shine over our land.**

**May Australia be granted harmony, justice and peace.**

**Grant wisdom to our leaders and integrity to our citizens.**

**Bless especially the men and women  
of the Australian Defence Force and their families.**

**We ask this through Christ Our Lord. Amen.**

**Mary Help of Christians, pray for us.**

