 Reading time: 13 min.

Saint John Bosco nourished a profound devotion to Mary under the title of Help of Christians – *Auxilium Christianorum* – patroness and protectress of the Salesian work. He did not create this title. The feast had already been instituted by Pope Pius VII on 15 September 1815 (a month after his birth), but Don Bosco was convinced that it was an explicit request from Heaven. He confided this himself in 1862: *“Our Lady wants us to honour her under the title of Mary Help of Christians; the times are so sad that we need the Most Holy Virgin to help us preserve and defend the Christian faith”.*

It is a title that says a lot, as he himself explained: *“We must not expect help from Divine Providence while remaining idle. It will move when it has seen our generous efforts for love of it”.* And it is a title that is also indicative of its range. *“She is called Help of Christians, both against external enemies and against internal enemies.”*

It is a devotion born also from concrete experience. *“Do what you can: God will do what we cannot do. Trust everything to Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament and to Mary Help of Christians and you will see what miracles are.”*

Don Bosco teaches us that Mary’s help is without borders: neither of time – in life, in death and even after death – nor of person – just and sinners, individuals and peoples – nor of need – the soul, the body, faith, society. It is ultimately a maternal help; a mother never stops helping her children.

Don Bosco also indicated the spiritual dispositions for the novena to be effective:

“1. To have no hope in the virtue of men, faith in God.
2. The request must rest entirely on Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, source of grace, goodness, and blessing. It must rest on the power of Mary whom God wishes to glorify on earth in these times.
3. But in all things the condition of ‘thy will be done’ must be added, and if it is good for the soul of the one being prayed for.”

And to obtain graces more easily, Don Bosco advised approaching, during the Novena, at least once the Holy Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist and

making or promising an offering for the Salesian Missions.

This novena can be recited in preparation for the feast of Mary Help of Christians (24 May) or at any time of the year according to one's needs.

This year, 2026, the feast of Mary Help of Christians will be celebrated on 25 May, since the Solemnity of Pentecost falls on the 24th; consequently, the first day of the novena will be 16 May, instead of the 15th.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

OPENING PRAYER

(*to be recited every day*)

O Mary Help of Christians, Mother of the Church and my Mother, in these nine days of prayer I approach you with a humble and trusting heart. I know that your intercession is powerful with God, and that no one has ever turned to you in vain. I ask you to accompany me on this journey of prayer, to purify my intentions, to kindle in my heart a truer love for your Son Jesus. Teach me to pray as you prayed, to entrust myself as you entrusted yourself, to love as you loved. Be my guide and my hope. Amen.

Day 1

HELP FOR ALL CHRISTIANS

May the Most Holy and Divine Sacrament be praised and thanked at every moment!

Don Bosco: *“The most splendid proof that Mary is the help of Christians we find on Mount Calvary.”*

INVOCATION

O Mary Help of Christians, Mother of all Christians, in that supreme moment on Calvary Jesus, your Son, dying on the cross, gave you as Mother to all humanity in the words addressed to the disciple John: “Behold your mother”. Since then, throughout the centuries, Christians have experienced your powerful intercession: healings, conversions, extraordinary protections have marked the history of your devotion. You, who shared the sacrifice of your Son with an immaculate heart, are the infallible help of those who turn to you with faith. For this we invoke you as the powerful Help of all Christians.

INTERCESSION

O sweetest Mary Help of Christians, I turn to you with humility and filial trust, recognising my need for your help in every moment of my Christian life. I am weak, I often forget to live as a true child of God, and the weight of the days distances me from that living faith that should animate my every step. Intercede for me with your Son Jesus, so that he may grant me the grace to be an authentic Christian, capable of witnessing to the Gospel with words and deeds. Obtain for me fortitude in moments of discouragement, hope in difficulties, and a faith that is ever more alive and active. Help me never to tire of seeking God, to find my peace in Him. Amen.

Our Father…, Hail Mary…, Glory Be…, Hail Holy Queen…

Mary, Help of Christians, pray for us!

Day 2

HELP IN THE DEFENCE OF THE FAITH

May the Most Holy and Divine Sacrament be praised and thanked at every moment!

Don Bosco: *“Then the holy Pontiff, in gratitude to Mary, to whose patronage he attributed the glory of that day [victory at Lepanto], ordered that the aspiration: ‘Maria Auxilium Christianorum, ora pro nobis’, Mary help of Christians, pray for us, be added to the Litany of Loreto.”*

INVOCATION

O Mary Help of Christians, the history of the Christian faith bears the seal of your powerful protection. In 1571, while the Christian fleets were preparing to defend themselves against the Ottoman armada at Lepanto, Pope Saint Pius V asked all the faithful to pray the Holy Rosary. The extraordinary victory obtained on 7 October of that year was unanimously attributed to your intercession. An army inferior in number prevailed thanks to your prayer. The Pope then instituted the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary. You, who have defended the Christian faith in the most difficult moments, are the infallible guardian of the true faith.

INTERCESSION

O Mary, powerful Help and defence of the Christian faith, intercede for me, who every day face the invisible battles of the spiritual life. Faith today is put to the test

by so many contradictory voices: by doubts, indifference, and confusion; by a world that often considers it superfluous or useless. I ask for your maternal intercession, so that you may obtain for me from the Lord a firm faith, which does not waver in the face of difficulties nor fade in daily indifference. Protect me from relativism and spiritual lukewarmness. Defend also my poor faith, so that it may remain alive, luminous, and capable of guiding my every choice. Make me a courageous witness of the Gospel. Amen.

Our Father…, Hail Mary…, Glory Be…, Hail Holy Queen…

Mary, Help of Christians, pray for us!

Day 3

HELP IN THE DEFENCE OF THE CHURCH

May the Most Holy and Divine Sacrament be praised and thanked at every moment!

Don Bosco: *“The wonderful way in which Pius VII was freed from his imprisonment is the great event that gave rise to the institution of the feast of Mary help of Christians.”*

INVOCATION

O Mary Help of Christians, the Church has known moments of great persecution, but you have never abandoned her. Napoleon Bonaparte had Pope Pius VII imprisoned in 1809, seeking to bend the Church to temporal power. In those dark years, the faithful entrusted themselves insistently to your intercession. On 24 May 1814, the

Pontiff returned free to Rome, amidst the exultation of the Christian people, and for this reason he officially instituted the liturgical feast of “Mary Help of Christians” on this very day, wishing to thank you for your mediation.

INTERCESSION

O Mary, who freed the Vicar of Christ from imprisonment and supported the Church in her most difficult moments, look with mercy upon your Church in this time. She faces old and new trials: internal divisions, external misunderstandings, the struggle to proclaim the Gospel in a world that is distancing itself from God. Intercede so that the pope, the bishops, and the priests may be men of God, strong and faithful. Obtain the grace of unity, holiness, and prophetic courage for the whole Church. Protect her from visible and invisible persecutions. And also help me, a simple member of the People of God, to love the Church, to serve her with loyalty, and never to be a cause of scandal to my brothers and sisters. Amen.

Our Father…, Hail Mary…, Glory Be…, Hail Holy Queen…

Mary, Help of Christians, pray for us!

Day 4

HELP IN THE DEFENCE OF YOUTH

The Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Turin

May the Most Holy and Divine Sacrament be praised and thanked at every moment!

Don Bosco: *“Let it always be said and preached that Mary Help of Christians has obtained and will always obtain special graces, even extraordinary and miraculous ones, for those who contribute to giving a Christian education to youth in danger through works, counsel, and good example or simply through prayer.”*

INVOCATION

O Mary Help of Christians, mother and educator of youth, Saint John Bosco chose you as patroness and guide of his mission among the poor and abandoned young people of Turin. Guided by a supernatural vision and by your maternal inspiration, he wanted to build a basilica in your honour in the Valdocco district. On 9 June 1868, the temple was consecrated and, since then, countless young people from all over the world have come to your feet to find comfort, light, and strength for life. A year later, he also founded the Association of Mary Help of Christians, which spread your devotion throughout the world. You who accompanied every apostolic dream of Don Bosco, are the tireless mother of every boy and girl in search of meaning and love. Youth has always been dear to your Immaculate Heart.

INTERCESSION

O Mary Help of Christians, mother of the young and hope of families, I entrust to you with all my heart the young people of our time: those who grow up without points of reference, who seek identity in the wrong places, who suffer in loneliness or abandonment. Intercede so that they may find in the Gospel and in your maternal presence the compass for their lives. I also entrust to you the young people who are close to me: those of my family, my environment, my community. Obtain for them the grace to grow in faith, in honesty and in authentic love. And grant that I may receive the wisdom and patience of Don Bosco in dealing with the young: that of educating with the heart, with reason and with religion. Amen.

Our Father…, Hail Mary…, Glory Be…, Hail Holy Queen…

Mary, Help of Christians, pray for us!

Day 5

HELP FOR SINNERS

May the Most Holy and Divine Sacrament be praised and thanked at every moment!

Don Bosco: *“Let us have recourse to Mary, who is the refuge of repentant sinners; she will lead us to the throne of mercy and will help us find grace with Jesus, her beloved son.”*

INVOCATION

O Mary Help of Christians, Refuge of sinners and Cause of our joy, in the Gospels your Son Jesus never distanced himself from those who were in sin. He sought the lost; He forgave the sinful woman; He welcomed the thief on the cross. You, His Mother, share His infinite mercy. From Lourdes to Fatima, from Guadalupe to Turin, wherever you have appeared you have called for conversion, penance, and prayer. Countless sinners, turning to you with humble trust, have received the grace of returning to God: confessions after decades of distance, hardened hearts that have opened to mercy, lives radically transformed by your intercession. You are the gate of heaven, open for those who have lost their way, the outstretched hand towards those who have fallen into the mud of sin.

INTERCESSION

O Mary, merciful mother of every sinner, I too recognise my spiritual poverty, my repeated falls, my infidelities to God. I am not ashamed to present myself to you like this, because I know that you do not reject anyone who approaches with

sincerity. Intercede for me, so that I may receive the grace of a true contrition for my sins, not just a superficial regret but an authentic sorrow that moves me to change my life. Obtain for me the gift of frequenting the Sacrament of Reconciliation with humility and constancy. Help me not to give in to despair after falling, but always to rise again, trusting in the mercy of your Son. Be yourself my strength against sin. Amen.

Our Father…, Hail Mary…, Glory Be…, Hail Holy Queen…

Mary, Help of Christians, pray for us!

Day 6

HELP IN DANGERS AND TEMPTATIONS

May the Most Holy and Divine Sacrament be praised and thanked at every moment!

Don Bosco: *“I will repeat to you that, for the purpose of this novena which is still ongoing, you should engrave these words in your heart: ‘Maria Auxilium Christianorum, ora pro me’: and that you recite them in every danger, in every temptation, in every need and always; and that you also ask Mary Help of Christians for the grace to be able to invoke her. And I promise you that the devil will go bankrupt. Do you know what it means that the devil will go bankrupt? It means that he will no longer have any power over you; he will no longer be able to make you commit any sin and will have to retreat.”*

INVOCATION

O Mary Help of Christians, tower of ivory and impregnable fortress against the forces of evil, Christian tradition has always invoked you as a powerful defence against the snares of the devil and the dangers of life. In the Apocalypse you are depicted as the woman clothed with the sun who crushes the ancient serpent: an image of your victory over evil that continues in history. How many people, in moments of physical or spiritual danger, have invoked you and been protected in a prodigious way! Sailors in storms, soldiers in battle, souls tempted in faith: all have experienced your powerful arm that rescues and saves. You know the traps of the enemy because you are the Immaculate Conception, she who has never yielded to sin, and you are the sure guide for those who walk in the dark.

INTERCESSION

O Mary Help of Christians, I need your protection in the spiritual dangers that threaten my Christian life every day. Temptations take a thousand forms: the pride that closes me in on myself, the lust that degrades my dignity and that of others, the avarice that makes me a slave to material goods, the laziness that separates me from God and from prayer. In these inner battles I often feel weak and unable to resist alone. Intercede for me, so that the Lord may grant me His strength and His grace to overcome temptations. Protect me also from the physical and moral dangers of the daily journey. Place your Mother’s mantle over me and hold me tightly by the hand, as a caring mother does with her child. Amen.

Our Father…, Hail Mary…, Glory Be…, Hail Holy Queen…

Mary, Help of Christians, pray for us!

Day 7

HELP IN ILLNESS

May the Most Holy and Divine Sacrament be praised and thanked at every moment!

Don Bosco: *“Engage Mary Help of Christians in your favour; and be persuaded that what surgeons cannot do, She will know how to do.”*

INVOCATION

O Mary Help of Christians, Health of the sick and comfort of the suffering, since the beginning, Marian devotion has seen in you the great mediatrix of spiritual and bodily healings. The sanctuaries dedicated to you have always been destinations for sick pilgrims, and the number of miracles and graces of healing obtained through your intercession is incalculable. Don Bosco himself obtained extraordinary graces of healing for many sick people through your intercession, so much so as to state: “Whoever has recourse to her does not perish”. The Gospel also testifies that Jesus, moved with compassion, never refused to heal those who approached him with faith. You, His Mother, bring to His merciful heart every human sorrow, every suffering body, every broken spirit.

INTERCESSION

O Mary Help of Christians, Health of the sick, I present to you all the illnesses I carry in body and spirit. Bring me before the throne of mercy of your Son, so that He may grant me healing, if it is in His will, and in any case, the strength to bear suffering with faith. I also entrust to you all the sick people I know: my family members, friends, those who suffer in loneliness in hospitals, those who have no one near them. Intercede so that doctors may have wisdom and humanity, so that family members may find the strength to assist their loved ones with love. Obtain for those who suffer the gift of discovering in pain a deeper dimension of existence, uniting their own suffering to that of Christ. Amen.

Our Father…, Hail Mary…, Glory Be…, Hail Holy Queen…

Mary, Help of Christians, pray for us!

Day 8

HELP IN DAILY SPIRITUAL AND MATERIAL NEEDS

May the Most Holy and Divine Sacrament be praised and thanked at every moment!

Don Bosco: *“My only support has always been recourse to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and to Mary Help of Christians.”*

INVOCATION

O Mary Help of Christians, attentive and provident mother in the small and great needs of your children, the history of devotion to you is studded with concrete and daily graces: families who have found work, debts paid in a miraculous way, domestic difficulties resolved, serenity rediscovered in the most difficult relationships. You personally experienced the poverty of Bethlehem, the flight into Egypt, the worries of a mother. You know from the inside the burden of daily life. As at Cana, where you were the first to notice the lack of wine and asked Jesus to intervene, so every day you notice the needs of your children even before they express them. You are the provident mother who never lets those who entrust themselves to you with the simplest faith lack what is necessary.

INTERCESSION

O Mary Help of Christians, mother of daily life, I present to you all my everyday needs: the spiritual ones, such as the grace to pray with constancy, to read the Word of God, to live the sacraments fruitfully; and the material ones, such as work, the economic health of my family, relationships between loved ones, the worries

that weigh upon my heart. Intercede so that I may learn to bring everything to God in prayer, without worrying uselessly, but trusting in his Providence. Help me to see in the small daily graces the sign of his concrete love. Make me grateful for every good received and generous in sharing with those most in need. Teach me to find God in the everyday and to sanctify every moment of the day. Amen.

Our Father…, Hail Mary…, Glory Be…, Hail Holy Queen…

Mary, Help of Christians, pray for us!

Day 9

HELP AT THE HOUR OF DEATH

May the Most Holy and Divine Sacrament be praised and thanked at every moment!

Don Bosco: *“Mary offers us her help in life, in death and after death.”*

INVOCATION

O Mary Help of Christians, gate of Heaven and hope of the dying, every Hail Mary closes with this supplication: “pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death”. Death is the most decisive passage of human existence, and Christian tradition has always asked for your presence in that supreme hour. Don Bosco, in his life, witnessed many holy deaths of young people entrusted to your protection. They died serene, with your name on their lips, certain of being welcomed by your Son. You, who were present at Jesus’ death on the cross with a pierced and faithful heart, are the mother who does not abandon her children at the moment of the

great passage. Your maternal hand guides souls towards eternal light, and your intercession can open the doors of divine mercy even at the last moment.

INTERCESSION

O Mary Help of Christians, gate of Heaven, I ask you for the most important grace of all: that of a good death. I do not know when or how my earthly life will end, but I know that that hour will come and that I want to find myself prepared. Intercede so that I may live every day in such a way as not to fear that passage: that I may sincerely convert, that I may forgive those who have wronged me, that I may ask forgiveness of those I have offended, that I may receive the sacraments with faith and devotion. In that hour, be close to me with your maternal presence. Bring my soul before the throne of mercy of your Son Jesus and, with your powerful intercession, intercede so that I may be welcomed into the eternal joy of Paradise. O Mary, Help of Christians, be my mother in life and in death. Amen.

Our Father…, Hail Mary…, Glory Be…, Hail Holy Queen…

Mary, Help of Christians, pray for us!

FINAL PRAYER OF THE NOVENA

O Mary Help of Christians, I have walked with you these nine days of prayer, presenting to you my needs, my fears, my hopes. I thank you for having listened to my voice with a mother’s heart. Bring my intentions before the throne of your Son Jesus and, according to his holy will, intercede, so that I may receive the graces I need for my salvation and for the good of those I love. Whatever God’s answer to my prayers may be, help me to accept it with faith and filial abandonment, certain that He knows what is best for me. O Mary, never cease to be my Help: today, tomorrow, and at the hour of my death. Amen.

Mary, Help of Christians, pray for us!

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

It is recommended to read Don Bosco's publication in honour of Mary Help of Christians, called *"Wonders of the Mother of God invoked under the title of Mary Help of Christians"*, https://www.donbosco.press/en/most-holy-virgin-mary/wonders-of-the-mother-of-god-invoked-under-the-title-of-mary-help-of-christians-1-12