

## The Solemnity of Our Lady of Perpetual Help

### Patroness of the Diocese of Wilcannia-Forbes

Her annual Diocesan feast is celebrated on 27th June.

The holy icon that bears this name has been in Rome since at least 1499, but is probably older than that. In 1865, Pius IX entrusted the care of the holy icon to the Redemptorist Congregation of Priests. Through their missionary work around the world, the holy icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Help became popular. The original icon is permanently displayed in the Church of St Alphonsus Ligouri in Rome, which is a church still staffed and kept by the Redemptorists.

In 1950, Pope Pius XII accepted the request of Bishop Fox, the Bishop of Wilcannia-Forbes at the time, and declared the Blessed Virgin Mary, under the title of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, as Patroness of the Diocese. Today, a replica of the holy icon is in most churches in our Diocese. Many families also have a copy of the icon in their homes. The parish church in Warren has a magnificent mosaic of the full figure of Our Lady of Perpetual Help. In the Forbes church there is an authentic icon on the left wall.

When we read the holy icon, it shows four holy figures on a gold background: the Virgin Mother of God, the Christ Child and the Archangels Michael and Gabriel. Mary is shown looking away from her Son to ourselves, ready to help us in time of need. Mary, by her hand, is showing her Son to us, directing us to Jesus the Word who liberates us through his suffering and death. Mary is the faithful disciple, ever open to the Word of God in her life. A legendary interpretation is that Jesus, safe in his mother's arms, loses his sandal as he trembles before the symbols of his Passion.

On one side is the Archangel Michael holding a spear and a hyssop stick with a sponge on it. On the other, the Archangel Gabriel holds the Cross, which is in a form often depicted in the Eastern Churches. The lettering, which is a form of Greek, identifies each person in the icon.

The feast of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in our diocese is June 27. It has the ranking of a Solemnity, the highest rank of feast days.

## Collect

O God, who in each pilgrim Church throughout the world  
make visible the one, holy catholic and apostolic Church,  
graciously grant that your faithful of the Church of Wilcannia-Forbes,  
in celebrating the Patronage of our Mother of Perpetual Help,  
and gathered as one through the Gospel and the Eucharist,  
may worthily be a sign and instrument  
of the Presence in the world of Christ our Lord.  
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God,  
forever and ever. Amen.

## First Reading

(From the Lectionary II, Reading 5, p. 1362)

From the book of Proverbs (8: 22-31)

From everlasting I was firmly set,  
from the beginning, before earth came into being.  
The deep was not, when I was born,  
there were no springs to gush with water.  
Before the mountains were settled, before the hills, I came to birth;  
before he made the earth, the countryside, or the first grains of the world's  
dust.  
When he fixed the heavens firm, I was there,  
when he drew a ring on the surface of the deep,  
when he thickened the clouds above,  
when he fixed fast the springs of the deep,  
when he assigned the sea its boundaries - and the waters will not invade  
the shore -  
when he laid down the foundations of the earth,  
I was by his side,  
a master craftsman,  
delighting him day after day,  
ever at play in his presence,  
at play everywhere in his world,  
delighting to be with the sons of men.  
The word of the Lord

**Responsorial Psalm I Sam 2: 1, 4- 8**

(Lectionary II following Reading 7, p. 1364-1365)

R. My heart rejoices in the Lord, my Saviour.

My heart exults in the Lord,  
I find my strength in my God;  
my mouth laughs at my enemies  
as I rejoice in your saving help. R.

The bows of the mighty are broken,  
but the weak are clothed with strength.  
Those with plenty must labour for bread,  
but the hungry need work no more.  
The childless wife has children now  
but the fruitful wife bears no more. R.

It is the Lord who gives life and death,  
he brings men to the grave and back;  
it is the Lord who gives poverty and riches.  
He brings men low and raises them on high. R.

He lifts up the lowly from the dust,  
from the dung heap he raises the poor  
to set him in the company of princes,  
to give him a glorious throne. R.

**Second Reading**

(Lectionary II Reading 1, p. 1370)

From the Acts of the Apostles (1:12-14)

After Jesus had ascended into heaven, the apostles went back to Jerusalem, a short distance away, no more than a Sabbath walk; and when they reached the city they went to the upper room where they were staying; there were Peter and John, James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James, son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Jude, son of James. All these joined in continuous prayer, together with some women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.

The word of the Lord.

## Acclamation

(Lectionary II, prior to the 7th Gospel, p. 1363)

Alleluia! Alleluia!

Blessed is the Virgin Mary who kept the word of God  
and pondered it in her heart.

Alleluia!

## Gospel

(Lectionary II, no 12, p. 1385)

From the holy Gospel according to John (19: 25- 27)

Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleopas, and Mary of Magdala. Seeing his mother and the disciple he loved standing near her, Jesus said to his mother, 'Woman, this is your son'. Then to the disciple he said, 'This is your mother.' And from that moment the disciple made a place for her in his home.

The Gospel of the Lord.

## Prayers of the Faithful

Father, we now present our prayers to you for all our needs:

1. For our Church of Wilcannia-Forbes: that devotion to our Patron, Our Lady of Perpetual Help, will inspire us to be faithful to the Gospel of her Son. Lord hear us.
2. For the people of the western area of New South Wales: that they may turn to the Lord, in times of difficulty and like Mary, learn to be patient and trusting, even in difficult times. Lord, hear us.
3. For those who struggle with sickness of body or spirit, for families that are struggling to stay together, and for those who cannot find employment: that through the care and protection of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, they will not lose hope. Lord, hear us.
4. For those who have died, especially past Bishops, Priests, Brothers, Sisters and parishioners that they will receive mercy and forgiveness for their sins and the promise of eternal life won for us by the Son of Mary, Our Lady of Perpetual Help. Lord, hear us.

Through the intercession of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, we ask you Father to pour your Spirit upon Bishop Columba, all the clergy and people of the Diocese of Wilcannia-Forbes so that we may all grow in the same faith that made Mary, our Mother joyful in doing your loving will, we ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.