

The Gospel Unfolded in the Celebration of the Feast of Our Mother of Perpetual Help **Feast Day: June 27**

This weekend, we are going to celebrate the feast of our patroness here in our parish, Our Lady of Perpetual Help (also known as St. Mary's). The actual feast of Our Lady of Perpetual Help is on 27th of June.

The Redemptorist Fathers were entrusted to the icon of the OLPH, so I asked a priest friend from the Redemptorist Fathers, Fr. Aaron Meszaros, C.Ss.R to say something about the icon. Fr. Aaron did a mission talks here in our parish last year in regards to the ICON of OLPH.

The icon of Our Mother of Perpetual Help, like all icons, tells a story. Many of us have been formed in the traditional story of this icon, of a child who has fled to his mother because of the frightening sight of the angels who bear the instruments of the passion. This story, which has its own value, is not the story of which I speak. The story that the icon tells is the story of the Gospel itself. Within the icon, as our eyes move from child to mother to angels and beyond, the incarnation and passion of Christ Jesus is unfolded.

As Bro. Dan Korn, C.Ss.R., a prominent Marian scholar points out, the celebration of the feast of Our Mother of Perpetual Help, allows us to unpack the scriptural messages present within the icon. As we celebrate the feast, we first read from the prophet Isaiah. It is Isaiah who opens for us the image of incarnation. Isaiah writes "Ask a sign from the Lord your God... the young woman, pregnant and about to bear a son, shall name him Emmanuel" (Is. 7:11,14). As we view the icon, it is Mary who, "by the gesture of her hands... presents to us the Child, the Word of God," the Word made flesh.

And in the Gospel of John, which we read on this feast, the paschal mystery is further reflected upon: "Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple there whom he loved, he said to his mother, 'Woman, behold, your son.' Then he said to the disciple, 'Behold, your mother'" (Jn. 19:25-27). Within this image, this Gospel comes to life through the angels who hold the instruments of passion, which include the cross, the nails and the lance. Bro. Korn notes, these "images draw our attention to the passion of Jesus."

These are but two themes within scriptures brought about thru the feast and the icon. Needless to say, the icon of Our Mother of Perpetual Help is a tool, an instrument of evangelization. It should not be hard to imagine Mary would have it no other way. From the moment Mary spoke forth her "yes," she became a primary figure in the story of salvation history. Her "yes" made her an instrument of evangelization, an instrument of the Gospel, of the good news.

Bro. Korn suggests that it is a good practice to read Scripture as we pray with the icon and gaze upon the icon of Our Mother of Perpetual Help. In doing so, we will come to sit in the mystery of incarnation and passion of Christ. And even more so, we will understand our own call to, as Mary herself did, to proclaim the Gospel in our daily lives.