

Solemnity of Our Lady, Help of Christians - May 24 2023

Acknowledgment of Land, Seas, Skies and Waterways

We acknowledge the First Nations peoples as the first inhabitants of the nation and the traditional custodians of the lands where we live, learn and work. We pay our respect to the Elders past, present, and emerging, for they hold the memories, the traditions, the culture and hopes of First Nations peoples across the nation. We acknowledge the deep spiritual attachment and relationship of First Nations peoples to this country and commit ourselves to the ongoing journey of Reconciliation.

Context - Our Lady, Help of Christians

Just as mothers are known by many various names, so too is Mary, Mother of God. The title Our Lady, Help of Christians originated in the sixteenth century when Catholics were called to pray for Mary's intercession against the Ottoman Empire. In victory, Pope Pius V acknowledged Mary as Our Lady, Help of Christians. The feast itself was instituted in thanksgiving for Pope Pius VII's release from imprisonment at the hands of Napoleon Bonaparte in 1815 and in 1844, the Australian Bishops asked the Pope to declare Mary, under the title of Our Lady, Help of Christians, as patroness of Australia. Mary held a crucial place in the emerging nation of Australia as it was the Rosary that sustained the Catholic community in its early years until mass could be regularly celebrated from 1820. Australia was the first nation to choose Our Lady, Help of Christians as its patron and there are many parishes and schools throughout Australia that also share her patronage.



Mary, Help of Christians (2016). Painting by Alan Pomeroy. Installed in the ANZAC Memorial Chapel, Duntroon, Canberra, Australia.

Scripture: John 19:25-27

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to John

²⁵Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, "Woman, here is your son." ²⁷Then he said to the disciple, "Here is your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Reflection by Kirby Will Project Officer Identity and Outreach.

One can only imagine the sorrow Mary must have felt at this time as she watched her son suffer as he drew closer to the end of his journey in this world. The words of Jesus in this scripture are quite profound as they outline the role of Mary in the Kingdom. Even though Jesus is speaking directly to John, his words ring true for all of us. Mary is our mother and Jesus gave us to her from the cross. It is in loving Mary and having a relationship with her that our love and relationship with Jesus is amplified; loving people that love those who we love does not detract from our relationship with them, it enhances it and enables us to know them better.

I once heard Archbishop Christopher Prowse say that Mary is the moon. The moon reflects the light of the sun, or in this case, Son. This is particularly pertinent for the beginnings of the Catholic Church in Australia; without regular masses, the Rosary and devotion to Mary was a way that the faith was nurtured and maintained; the relationships of the early Australians with Jesus were amplified through Mary.

As Patroness of Australia, Mary is recognised as having a special place in our hearts and she is instrumental in helping strengthen our relationship with Jesus.

Prayer: Prayer to Mary Help of Christians

This prayer is from the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference Entrusting Australia to Mary Help of Christians Resource, 2020.

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.
Our Lady Help of Christians, pray for us.

Call to Action:

- pray the Rosary together as a family.
- watch Andrew Chinn's [Morning Prayer Episode 28: Our Lady Help of Christians](#) from the 2 minute mark.
- pray a morning or evening prayer from [The Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary](#).
- Crown Mary with flowers in this [craft](#).
- find out more about [Marian Apparitions](#). You might even like to watch the film *Fatima* about the Our Lady of Fatima apparition.

