

# The Blessing of Twelve Icons by Pope Francis on 18 May 2016

(Vatican City, may 18, 2016) – On 18 May, twelve Redemptorists were present in the special enclosure of the Papal Audience held at St Peter’s Square, Rome. The principal aim of requesting this exceptional presence was to ensure a blessing of Pope Francis on 12 specially prepared icons of Our Mother of Perpetual Help.

The twelve Redemptorists included the Superior General Michael Brehl, some members of the General Council Community, the Icon Jubilee Commission and the International Shrine of Our Mother of Perpetual Help.

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Since only two were permitted to be in the first row of the special enclosure, the Superior General assigned Fr Juventius Andrade, (President of the Icon Jubilee Commission) and Fr Arturo Martinez (the Rector of the International Shrine). Pope Francis was briefly apprised of the close of our Jubilee Year of the Icon of Love as well as the reason for the blessing of the twelve icons. He personally blessed the icon that was presented to him by Fathers Juventius and Arturo. Later, he also blessed the other eleven icons that were placed in a significant position near the podium.



These icons were ‘written’ by Brother Richard Maidwell CSsR of the South Africa Province; Sister Maria Slepchenko OSsR, a Redemptoristine Ukrainian nun in the Bielsko-Biała community; and the remaining ten were prepared by Fr Eugeniusz Karpel CSsR of the Warsaw Province and his school.

## The Role of the Icons in the Third Phase of the Jubilee Year

The Icon Jubilee Commission had proposed a Three Phase Celebration of the Jubilee. **The First Phase**

**(preparatory)** was already celebrated from January 2015 – December 2015 with the theme of “Strengthening and nurturing our love for the Mother of God”. This was done through the formation of committees, contact persons, dissemination of resources, holding of Congresses, etc.

We are nearing the end of the **Second Phase (celebratory)** “Our Mother of Perpetual Help – Icon of Love”. It concludes with the Feast of Our Mother of Perpetual Help on 27 June 2016.

The Shrine in Rome has prepared an elaborate celebration that is preceded with a 9 day Novena. Liturgies will be held each day in several international languages, and even in different Liturgical Rites. This program will be shortly published in SCALA News. Several Provinces are sending delegates and accompanying pilgrim groups to Rome. Many Units have also planned elaborate celebrations in various shrines and churches across the world.

The main public feast-day celebration in Rome will be held on 26 June 2016 since it is the Sunday nearest to the feast. The Liturgy will be celebrated in the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore since a huge number of persons are expected. This will be followed by a procession on the streets around the Quarter where our Shrine is situated. On arrival at our Shrine, the Superior General Michael Brehl will commission these icons to the five Conferences in the Congregation.



**The Third Phase (missionary)** commences immediately after the Feast on 27 June 2016. The theme for this Phase is ‘A renewal of the mission and the mandate to “Make her known”’.

These icons that have been blessed by Pope Francis and commissioned by the Superior General will go to every Conference. Each Conference, and the units in the Conference will ensure that the icon goes in Visitation to the various communities and shrines so that they have the experience of Mary visiting her pilgrim people. The challenge would be to invigorate our mission, especially through the Icon as an instrument of evangelization. It would be the expression and renewal of our commitment to the original mandate of Pius IX to “make her known.”

Juventius Andrade

