

87th Annual Our Lady of Perpetual Help Pilgrimage
Sisters Saint Basil the Great
Mount Macrina in Uniontown Pennsylvania

Welcome to the 87th Annual Pilgrimage in honor of Our Lady of Perpetual Help at Mount Saint Macrina in Uniontown Pennsylvania. We also welcome our virtual pilgrims who for the first time are able to attend through the internet with live stream.

We thank Sister Susan Sisko, the Basilian Sisters, their associates, volunteers, staff, and workers who have again made this pilgrimage possible. It takes a full year to prepare for the pilgrimage. As we met, we selected the theme of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Protectress as our theme for this pilgrimage. The reason was obvious. We need protection from the pandemic, struggles in our country and church, and the floods and winds of the past month. We continue to need our Lady's help.

With each pilgrimage we come with our needs and we pray to Our Lady of Perpetual Help to intercede with her son to grant what we need. We have the larger mosaic icon in the shrine, and we have the Icon of Perpetual Help which is carried in the processions during the pilgrimage.

The original Icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Icon was painted or written in the Byzantine style on the island of Crete. Iconographers do not sign their icons, but it is in the style of the 13th century. Some believe it is much older. It was transferred to the Rome by a merchant in 1499. It was later transferred to the Church of San Mateo where it was kept for three centuries.

Our processional Icon was presented by Pope Pius the Eleventh to Bishop Takach in 1935 to be used in pilgrimages to Our Lady of Perpetual Help. The gift followed the plan of Pope Pius the Ninth who spread the devotion to the Icon to the whole world with the efforts of the Redemptorists Order. The original icon had been restored and moved the Church of Saint Alphonsus Liguori located in Rome. From the first procession, the icon and later copies icon have assisted with prayers which have resulted in miracles, healings, and consolations around the world. Many have occurred during the pilgrimages to Mount Saint Macrina.

Look at the icon as it passes in procession or in the shrine. In the story of the icon, the child Jesus leaps into Mary's arms for protection. His sandal barely hangs on as he is held at the heart of the Mother of God. Above the Mother of God and the infant Jesus, the Archangels Michael and Gabriel circle above similar to shiny ornaments which parents hang above a child's crib today. However, normally we would not hang ornament which the Archangel Michael with lances and sponges and Gabriel with a three bar cross and nails. Maybe the Adams family would, but as with Jesus it would scare a little child. The items are the symbols of the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

The story of the icon holds the plan of salvation from the birth of Jesus to his Crucifixion. Our Lady's hand points to Jesus as a way of telling us this is the path to our salvation. She guides our prayers to her Son would can grant whatever is good for us.

As with each pilgrimage, we ask for what we need. We offer special prayers Our Lady of Perpetual Help to protect us this year from the continuing Pandemic. We pray that our nation and church be healed from division and unrest. And, we pray each of us to be healed and protected in the coming year.