

Our Lady of the Rosary (Our Lady of Victory)

The 7th of October commemorates the Blessed Mother's intercession in one of the most decisive battles in Christian history, when the Rosary saved the Christian world.

When Mary revealed the Rosary to Saint Dominic, she promised her protection to those who prayed it regularly. The Rosary was not truly appreciated as a spiritual weapon, however, until 1571, when Suleiman the Magnificent controlled the Mediterranean, the Red Sea, and the Persian Gulf, and was well on his way to making Europe an Islamic State. As author and theologian Michael Novak has written, "Muslim fleets were raiding Christian cities with every more daring, carrying off men as prisoners for their galley slaves and boys and girls for their harems, burning churches and looting treasures. There was no unified Christian fleet to oppose them. All Italy was in danger of occupation."

Pope Pius V urged Catholics to pray the Rosary and entreat Mary to protect Catholic lands. He managed to get Spain, Venice and various Italian states to stop squabbling long enough to unite against the Ottoman menace, and he placed this Holy League under Mary's protection. Led by Don John of Austria (1547-1578), League ships met in the Bay of Lepanto off the west coast of Greece. On the morning of 7 October 1571, the Christian soldiers knelt before a crucifix and prayed the Rosary. Although they were vastly outnumbered – 30,000 Christians to 75,000 Turks – the Holy League emerged victorious and credited Mary, Queen of the Rosary. Pius V declared the anniversary of the battle, the feast of Our Lady of Victory. Since 1960 it has been known as the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary.

The Genius of our Lady of the Rosary:

Michael Novak considers Lepanto "a story of wit and courage and victory against all odds." As always, Mary heard the prayers of the faithful and interceded to assure success.

Reflection:

"Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus."

1 Thessalonians 5.16-18