

Our Lady of the Rosary

Oct 7th

The month of October is dedicated to the Holy Rosary. If you're wondering why, it's important to note that Catholics celebrate the memorial of Our Lady of the Rosary on October 7th. We'll discuss why we celebrate this feast on this day, but first, it's important to understand what the rosary is.

A HISTORY OF THE ROSARY



While many credit St. Dominic, founder of the Dominican Order, with the invention of the rosary, there are earlier variations of the prayer. In early Christian tradition, monks would pray the Our Father 150 times using a string of beads. The laity adopted and adapted this practice, usually saying 50 Our Fathers instead of 150.

The Hail Mary prayer, which was constructed over the course of a thousand years, is the rosary's main prayer. In the late 6th century, Pope St. Gregory the Great asked the people to pray an earlier version of the Hail Mary on the 4th Sunday of Advent. The laity applied the same form of repetition to this prayer as they did to the Our Father. When the final version of the Hail Mary was approved at the Council of Trent in 1568, this form was used in the rosary.

During his time in France, St. Dominic encountered the Albigensians – a group of people who rejected the Incarnation and the sacraments. He received a vision from the Blessed Mother, asking that the rosary be said to combat the heresy. Thus, St. Dominic preached the use of the rosary we know today. Because of his devotion, this form is often referred to as the “Dominican rosary.”

In 1917, the Blessed Mother appeared to three children in Fatima, Portugal. In one of the apparitions, she introduced the Fatima Prayer and asked that it be added to the end of each decade.

The rosary has been referred to as a powerful weapon against the devil, one of the most cherished Catholic prayers, and *the* prayer of the saints. It is a prayer that inspires us physically, mentally, and spiritually. Physically, because we focus our hands and voices on the prayers. Mentally, because we meditate on the mysteries of Christ and the truths revealed by Him. Spiritually, because we grow in holiness when we say the rosary piously.

BATTLE OF LEPANTO

The 16th century was a difficult time for the Catholic Church. The religious upheaval promulgated by the Protestant Reformation weakened the Church significantly. The Ottoman Empire, which was the seat of Islamic power, saw the perfect opportunity to conquer the Mediterranean. Perhaps the only person concerned about this threat was Pope St. Pius V. He assembled a fleet of Christian territories including Spain, the Papal States, and Venice. Together, they were known as The Holy League, commanded by Juan D'Austria, one of Spain's best military minds. After the Ottomans laid siege to Cyprus, a Venetian territory, The Holy League decided to strike. Outnumbered, but not outgunned, the Catholic armada met the Turks in battle on the morning of October 7th. Both sides suffered heavy losses, but The Holy League emerged victorious. The turning point of the battle occurred when 12,000 Christian slaves, who had been forced to row the Turks' ships, revolted against their captors. The Turks suffered a great defeat and though the Ottoman Empire survived beyond the Battle of Lepanto, it marked a huge victory for the Christian resistance to Muslim conquest.

OUR LADY OF VICTORY

They say wars are not won on the battlefield. This could not be more true for the Battle of Lepanto. After assembling The Holy League, Pope St. Pius V ordered Rome's churches to be opened day and night for prayer. He petitioned the faithful to pray the rosary and ask for the Blessed Mother's intercession. When word of victory reached the pope, he credited it to the Blessed Mother and declared October 7th the Feast of Our Lady of Victory. The name was later changed to Our Lady of the Rosary.

Some refer to the Battle of Lepanto as the Day Our Lady Saved Christendom. Indeed, it is because of the rosary that she interceded. Pope Pius IX said, "Among all the devotions approved by the Church none has been so favored by so many miracles as the devotion of the Most Holy Rosary."

HOW TO CELEBRATE THE MONTH OF THE HOLY ROSARY

Now is the perfect time to commit to saying the rosary daily. Here are some other ideas:

- ❖ Make rosaries with your children and have them blessed.
- ❖ Invite a Pilgrim Virgin statue into your home. More information on this can be found in the Catholic Week.
- ❖ Attend Mass on October 7th, the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary, and on October 13th, the day of Mary's final visit to Fatima.
- ❖ Share this devotion with others!