



**Pope St. Pius V**

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1504–1572 • Italy

Pope St. Pius V was the 225th pope. He was born to a noble but poor family and was called Michele Ghislieri. When he grew up he became a Dominican priest. At that point in history, the Church was under attack from both inside and out. Princes and monarchs were converting to the new Protestant religions and separating their countries from the Roman Catholic Church. The Muslims from the Ottoman Empire in the east were fighting for control of the Mediterranean and did not allow Christians to practice their Faith freely. But the Church was suffering even more from within. The clergy and religious were not following the rules of the Church. They were too attached to wealth, vice, and power.

Michele was dismayed at all the terrible things happening to the Church. He refused to live in luxury but would fast, stay up late in prayer, and make journeys on foot without his cloak. When the pope died, the cardinals elected Michele pope, and he took the name Pius V. With tears in his eyes, Michele had begged not to be pope. He knew how hard it would be to defend the Church. But he accepted God's will and immediately set to work reforming the Church from within. He banished luxury from the papal court, sat at the bedside of the dying, gave the Church's money to the poor, and kissed beggars' feet.

Then he sought to defend the Church from without. He supported the Catholics persecuted in Protestant countries. He also formed the Holy League, a naval fleet to combat the forces of the Ottoman Empire. Soon, a great battle would be fought by the Holy League called the Battle of Lepanto. The outcome of the battle would decide whether Europe would remain Christian or be taken over by the Ottoman Empire. Pius V urged the faithful to offer Rosaries to Our Lady of Victory for the success of the fleet. On the day of the battle, Pius V was working hard with his cardinals. Suddenly, he ran to the window and gazed out into the sky.

"A truce to business," he cried. "Our great task at present is to thank God for the victory which He has just given the Christian army." The outnumbered Christian forces had defeated the Ottomans in Greece, and Pius V miraculously knew of their victory on the same day many miles away in Rome. In thanksgiving, he instituted the first Sunday of October as the feast of the Rosary. For the rest of his life, Pius V sought to defend the Church and safeguard her teaching of the Gospel of Christ until he died a holy death. Pope St. Pius V, please protect the Church from within and without!