

October 7th is the Memorial of Our Lady of the Rosary which dates to the 16th century when the naval fleet of the Ottoman Empire threatened peace in the Mediterranean Sea. Ships from several Italian cities including the Vatican's own naval forces joined together as a Holy League. Although the Ottoman naval forces greatly outnumbered the Holy League, the Pope sought to employ every non-combatant to pray for victory. Churches in Rome were open around the clock so people could pray the Rosary. With success on October 7, 1571, Pope Pius V honored Mary as Our Lady of Victory. His "successor, Gregory XIII would change the name of this day to the feast of the Holy Rosary."ⁱ Although the 7th, is the official date of the memorial, the entire month of October is ripe for praying the Rosary and asking for God's intercession in the tribulations of today.

The Rosary is comprised of 4 basic prayers that all have their roots in Scripture.

- The first prayer of the Rosary is the Apostle's Creed. Just as the Apostles asked Jesus how to pray, they were asked in their role to teach others how to pray. Through the creed the Apostles taught about Christ's victory over death and the forgiveness of sins.
- The Lord's Prayer is the second prayer of the Rosary. We pray for the forgiveness of our sins and the Lord tasks us with forgiving those who trespass against us. As the Pope asked the faithful to pray for a naval victory, he was also sowing seeds of reconciliation to let go of any animosity against the naval forces of the Ottoman Empire.
- The Hail Mary is the third prayer of the Rosary. The Angel's greeting to Mary at the Annunciation begins the prayer. "Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee" (Luke 1:28). Elizabeth's greeting to Mary at the Visitation, continues the prayer. "Blessed art thou amongst women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus" (Luke 1:42). Mary was at the foot of the cross praying for her son as he was crucified. We ask Mary, Mother of the Church, to pray for us in our current struggles and also at the end of our lives. "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death." In a naval battle with casualties on both sides, prayers rang out from the churches of Rome for a swift end to the battle and the preservation of the eternal souls of those unfortunate sailors who sacrificed their lives in battle.
- The 4th prayer, the Glory Be, acknowledges the Trinity and the eternal nature of God. God is the Father of all humanity and the Father of mercies. As we invoke the Trinity, we can not help but recognize how we are all part of the human family. Although we may have heated exchanges at time, God's desire is that we be united in eternity. There was peace in the very beginning as God created the world in seven days. And in a world without end, in eternity, the peace of God will reign again as he vanquishes all enemies and turns every weapon into an instrument of peace.

Pope Pius V interpreted victory as the favor of God helping to sew peace. We continue to pray the Rosary for the world is always in need of God's grace to live in greater harmony with one another. In a world still struggling to cope with the pandemic, we continue to pray the Rosary one day at a time.

At Pope Francis has taught us: "O Virgin Mary, turn your merciful eyes to us in this pandemic of coronavirus, and comfort those who are lost and weeping for their dearly departed, sometimes buried in a way that hurts the soul... Mother of God and our Mother, implore for us from God, Father of mercy, that this hard trial ends and that a horizon of hope and peace returns."ⁱⁱ

ⁱ wordonfire.org/resources/blog/our-lady-of-the-rosary-and-the-battle-of-lepanto/1220/

ⁱⁱ catholicnewsagency.com/news/pope-francis-asks-mary-to-intercede-for-end-to-terrible-pandemic-during-rosary-with-worlds-shrines-36828

Also consulted: franciscanmedia.org/our-lady-of-the-rosary/