

Homily Outline for the Novena to the Immaculate Conception
“Our Lady of the Rosary”

Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception

December 5, 2021

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- I. The theme for our sixth day of our Novena for the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary is Our Lady of the Rosary.
 - A. Since you are here partaking of a Novena honoring our Blessed Mother, I will presume that you are familiar with the Rosary.
 - B. My objective, therefore, is not necessarily to teach you anything new about the Rosary, but to help take you deeper in your devotion to the Mother of God and her Son, Jesus.
 - C. We will not be looking simply at the Rosary as a form of devotional prayer, but specifically at the title, Our Lady of the Rosary.
- II. The Memorial of Our Lady of the Rosary traces its history back 450 years ago when Pope St. Pius V honored the Blessed Mother with the title Our Lady of Victory in thanksgiving for the naval victory at Lepanto on October 7, 1571.
 - A. In 1573, Pope Gregory XIII changed the name of the feast to Feast of the Holy Rosary, to be celebrated on the first Sunday of October.
 - B. In 1913, Pope Pius X changed the date to October 7th, as part of his effort to restore the focus on the Sunday celebration of the liturgy.
 - C. In 1960, under Pope John XXIII, it is listed under the title, Feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary of the Rosary.
 - D. Under the 1969 liturgical reforms of Pope Paul VI, Our Lady of the Rosary is prescribed as an Obligatory Memorial on October 7th.¹
 - E. It is important to remember that this Memorial of Our Lady of the Rosary has its roots in a military victory to save Christianity.

1. The Battle of Lepanto was a naval engagement that took place on October 7, 1571, when a fleet of the Holy League, a coalition of Catholic states (comprising Spain and most of Italy), organized by Pope Pius V, turned back the invading fleet of the Ottoman Empire in the Gulf of Patras off the western coast of Greece.
 2. The victory of the Holy League marked the turning-point of Ottoman military expansion into the Mediterranean, although the Ottoman wars in Europe would continue for another century.²
 3. In fact, the last stained-glass window on the north wall of our Cathedral depicts the victory of the Christian armies over the invading Turkish forces at the Battle of Vienna in 1683. In our window, King John III Sobieski, King of Poland, is shown kneeling on the battlefield giving thanks to God for the victory he led with the armies of the Christian nations of Europe over the Turks after the siege of Vienna. On September 12, 1683, Sobieski, leading a much smaller army, defeated the Turks at Kahlenberg, effectively ending Turkish expansion into Europe. The Battle of Vienna is often seen as a turning point in history, after which “the Ottoman Turks ceased to be a menace to the Christian world.”³
- F. While the Ottoman Empire is no longer around threatening to invade Europe, we should not be so naïve to think that we can sit back and rest safely.
1. The Islamist terrorist attacks on American soil on September 11, 2001, just twenty years ago, are a sobering reminder that Islamist extremists still consider us to be the enemy.
 2. The defeat and surrender of our coalition forces in Afghanistan earlier this year should also serve as a wake-up call to Americans.
 3. While prayer was a major component of the Christian armies’ victories at the Battle of Lepanto and the Battle of Vienna, it should come as no surprise that the increasingly secular culture of the West is increasingly vulnerable to attack as people turn their backs on God.
 4. St. Pius V attributed the victory at Lepanto to the intercession of the Blessed Mother, since a grave threat to the Faith soon came to an end when Rome and the Christian world invoked her patronage through the Rosary.
 5. So, too, we must invoke the intercession of the Blessed Mother through the Rosary in the battles we face today, both in the worldly battles for religious freedom and an end to the scourge of abortion, as well as the spiritual battles that confront us through the daily temptations put before us by the Evil One.

III. Today's Readings

- A. In the Gospel passage ([Lk 1:26-38](#)) of the Annunciation that we just heard, the angel Gabriel greets Mary as "full of grace" and exhorts her not to be afraid because she had "found favor with God."
- B. So it should come as no surprise that, after Our Lord's Ascension into Heaven, as we heard in the first reading from the Acts of Apostles ([Acts 1:12-14](#)), the Apostles "devoted themselves with one accord to prayer, together with . . . Mary the mother of Jesus."
- C. We, too, should devote ourselves to prayer, together with Mary, the Mother of Jesus, to whom we turn in the powerful prayer of the Rosary, for it is through the Rosary and our meditation on the mysteries of each decade, that Mary leads us closer to her Son, Jesus.

IV. May God give us this grace. Amen.

¹ [Roten S.M., Johann. "Our Lady of the Rosary, Origins", International Marian Research Institute, University of Dayton.](#)

² William Stevens, *History of Sea Power* (1920), [p. 83](#).

³ Walter Leitsch, ["1683: The Siege of Vienna"](#), *History Today*, 33:7 (July 1983).