

At today's Mass, we are using the External Solemnity of the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary.

This feast was implemented universally by Pope Pius V following the 1571 defeat of the Ottoman Turks at the Battle of Lepanto.

Regarding this battle, the Muslim forces were working their way toward the western Mediterranean. They had a superior fleet, numbering nearly 300 warships, with 40,000 sailors, slaves, and oarsmen, as well as 34,000 soldiers.

Pope Pius V attempted to form a coalition of Christian forces, however this was difficult to do because not everyone saw this as a threat.

Even 500 or so years ago, politicians were not always known for their clear thinking.

The pope did succeed in forming an alliance, the Holy League, consisting of ships from Spain, Naples, Sicily, and Sardinia; Venice, Genoa, Savoy, among others. Their fleet consisted of just over 200 warships, with 40,000 sailors and oarsmen, and 57,000 soldiers and mercenaries.

Although the Turks had more ships, the Christians did have superior firepower and more soldiers and infantry.

In the end, the Ottoman forces lost 210 ships - over 2/3 of their fleet - with 15,000 casualties and 7,500 captured. The Holy League lost 50 ships - only 1/4 of the fleet - suffering 7,500 casualties, and freeing 12,000 slaves.

Prior to the battle, Pope Pius V - not putting all of his trust in implements of war - requested all Christians to pray the Rosary for the victory of the western forces.

On the afternoon of that day, the Holy Father was in conference ... he stopped the speaker, went to the window, and looked up to heaven for the space of three minutes. Coming back to his visitors, the Pope said: "This is not the time for business. Let us return thanks to God for victory."

Two weeks later, the reports of the victory reached Rome by ordinary means. And it turned out that the Pope's vision occurred at the same time that the battle turned in favor of the Christian forces.

A few years after the establishment of the feast of Our Lady of Victory, the next pope changed the name to Our Lady of the Rosary. 150 years later, it was extended to the entire Church and moved to the first Sunday of October, and 200 years after that was moved back to October 7 ... but with the privilege to move it to the first Sunday of October as an external Solemnity.

Presently, we find ourselves in battles scattered across the globe. Some politicians are trying to form coalitions, others see benefits in the attempts to restore the Sultanate and the Caliphate.

Despite all the bluster and noise on the television and the internet, the solution lies in prayer, as well as relying on the powerful intercession of Our Lady.

I admonish and encourage you to approach the Blessed Mother with your needs, and with confidence so that you might realize how great is her love for all Christians ... and to realize the privilege God has bestowed on Her as Our Lady Help of Christians ... Mother of God ... Queen of Apostles ... and Mediatrix of Grace.

Our Lady of the Rosary, pray for us.