



Focus on Religious Freedom

"The Rosary is a magnificent and universal prayer for the needs of the Church, the nations, and the world." Pope John XXIII

What Happens When Entire Nations Pray for Religious Freedom? It's Happened Before - It Can Happen Again

"Our Christian faith is based, not on abstract speculation, but on historical events.... The Church's feasts are acts of thanksgiving for actions of God that have affected the course of human existence," wrote Fr. George Rutler, Pastor of Church of St. Michael in NYC. ⁽¹⁾

Anticipating the Muslim threat to take over the Mediterranean Sea and be in a position to conquer European Christian nations, in 1569, Pope Pius V urged the Christian faithful to pray the Rosary and seek the intercession of the Blessed Mother to defeat the Muslim aggression. ⁽²⁾ He "understood the tremendous importance of resisting the aggressive expansion of the Muslim Turks better than any of his contemporaries appear to have. He understood that the real battle being fought was spiritual; a clash of creeds was at hand, and the stakes were the very existence of the Christian West," wrote G.K. Chesterton in his poem "*Lepanto*." ⁽³⁾

On October 7, we celebrate the improbable victory of Christian naval vessels over those of the Ottoman Muslims who outnumbered the Christians by two to one and whose ships were manned by 15,000 Christian galley slaves. The Battle of Lepanto on October 7, 1571, was the greatest naval engagement known until World War I. ⁽⁴⁾

Pope Pius V interpreted the event as the movement of Providence in favor of the Church and European civilization. He asserted that the triumph properly belonged to the Mother of God and that her intercession had moved the "Holy League" of Christian vessels to victory. He added a new feast day to the Liturgical Calendar - October 7 would henceforth be the feast of Our Lady of Victory. His successor, Pope Gregory XIII would change the name of this day to the feast of the Holy Rosary. ⁽⁵⁾

Let us pray: *We pray for the intercession of Our Lady of Victory, Patroness of the United States. Blessed Mother Mary, we place our country in your care, remembering your intercession in the Battle of Lepanto. Teach us to imitate Jesus, as you did, and always to follow Him with your courage so that religious liberty, His gift to all mankind, may be preserved throughout the land. Amen*