**THE POWER OF THE ROSARY Part 1 of 4**

As everyone knows, Michelangelo painted the frescos in the Sistine Chapel. He finished the painting of “The Last Judgment” around 1541 while preparations were being made for one of the greatest councils of the Church: The Council of Trent in 1545. This Council was to launch the counter-Reformation against Martin Luther and his denial of certain doctrines.

Michelangelo was an ardent son of the Church. He incorporated in the painting all those doctrines being challenged by the Protestant “Reformers”. One of these doctrines which the reformers denied was honor and devotion to Mary, the Mother of God so the artist put Mary at the right hand of Her Son. Just beneath Her, he painted a huge rosary hanging down over the ramparts of Heaven on which two souls are climbing up into Heaven.

Just 30 years later in 1571, the Muslim Turks under Selim the Sot, invaded Europe. Selim was the son of one of the greatest rulers of the Ottoman Empire, Suleiman the Magnificent. Suleiman had built a powerful army and navy, one of the greatest ever in the Empire. His son, Selim had inherited his father’s position in 1566 and he became overconfident with power and decided to invade Europe. This battle is known as “The Battle of Lepanto”.

On the throne of Peter at this time happened to be a crusading Pope, St. Pius V. He called for a crusade against the Turks. Only a handful responded: Don Juan of Austria, the Spaniards, the Venetians and the small Papal fleet. They were no match for the vast Turkish fleet which outnumbered them three to one! St. Pius V was a Dominican and Dominicans have a great devotion to the rosary so he called for a rosary crusade in Europe to help the Christian forces. On October 7, 1571, the Christian forces under Don Juan and Andrea Doria met the Turks off the coast of Greece, the Gulf of Lepanto, and miraculously defeated them! Andrea Doria had kept a copy of the "miraculous" image of [Our Lady of Guadalupe](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Our_Lady_of_Guadalupe,_Extremadura) given to him by King [Philip II of Spain](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philip_II_of_Spain) in his ship's state room. Don Juan confessed that the victory was won not by fighting arms but by praying arms and especially the praying arms of Our Queen and Mother. This Turkish defeat stopped Ottomans' expansion into the Mediterranean, thus maintaining western dominance, and confidence grew in the west that Turks, previously unstoppable, could be beaten.

In thanksgiving for this victory, the Feast of the Most Holy Rosary was established on October 7th. Also, to honor this great Dominican pope, St Pius V, all succeeding Popes wear the white cassock of the Dominicans.

This story of Lepanto gives Catholic Christians a true understanding of the word: Crusade. When the enemy is about to crush belief in the existence of the true God from nations, Catholics are called to rally the troops and to pray and sometimes to physically fight. If we must fight for just causes, we must be confident that God is going to give the victory in order to maintain the freedom of being able to place Him first in our lives. May we not be ashamed to fight for the Truth when the enemy launches the first hostile attacks against God and His Church. May we be confident and bold in our fight for God and may we trust that Mary will help Her children in this fight.

In the last apparition of Our Lady of Fatima, October 13th, 1917, Our Lady appeared as the Queen of the Holy Rosary. In one hand she held the rosary and in the other the brown scapular. Once she told St. Dominic that the rosary and the scapular would one day save the world. Could that day be today?

Let us, during these trying times in the Church and in the world, pick up those rosaries and wear our scapulars. Let us too have a rosary crusade and send our many prayers and petitions to Our Lady of the Rosary for Her help for this nation and the world. We need help against our many enemies both physical and spiritual. Satan is seeking to destroy many souls throughout the world. She can help us defeat the enemy. She is the one who will crush the head of the serpent and lead us back to God.

Our Lady of the Rosary, pray for us!