

# Q: Why is October referred to as the Month of the Rosary?

A: The short answer is this: October is dedicated as the Month of the Rosary because we celebrate the memorial of Our Lady of the Rosary each year on October 7.

To understand this feast, we need to go back in time. In the 16th century, the Islamic Ottoman Empire presented a serious military threat to western Europe and sent a fleet of ships to attack Christian defenses in southern Europe. Pope Pius V recognized the grave danger and organized a fleet called the Holy League to confront the navy of the Ottoman Turks.

On October 7, 1571, the two navies engaged in a pivotal battle that would determine who controlled maritime traffic in the Mediterranean, Adriatic and Aegean seas. The fate of western Europe depended upon the success of Christians in this navy battle, which involved more than 400 warships (it was the largest naval battle in Western history for centuries).

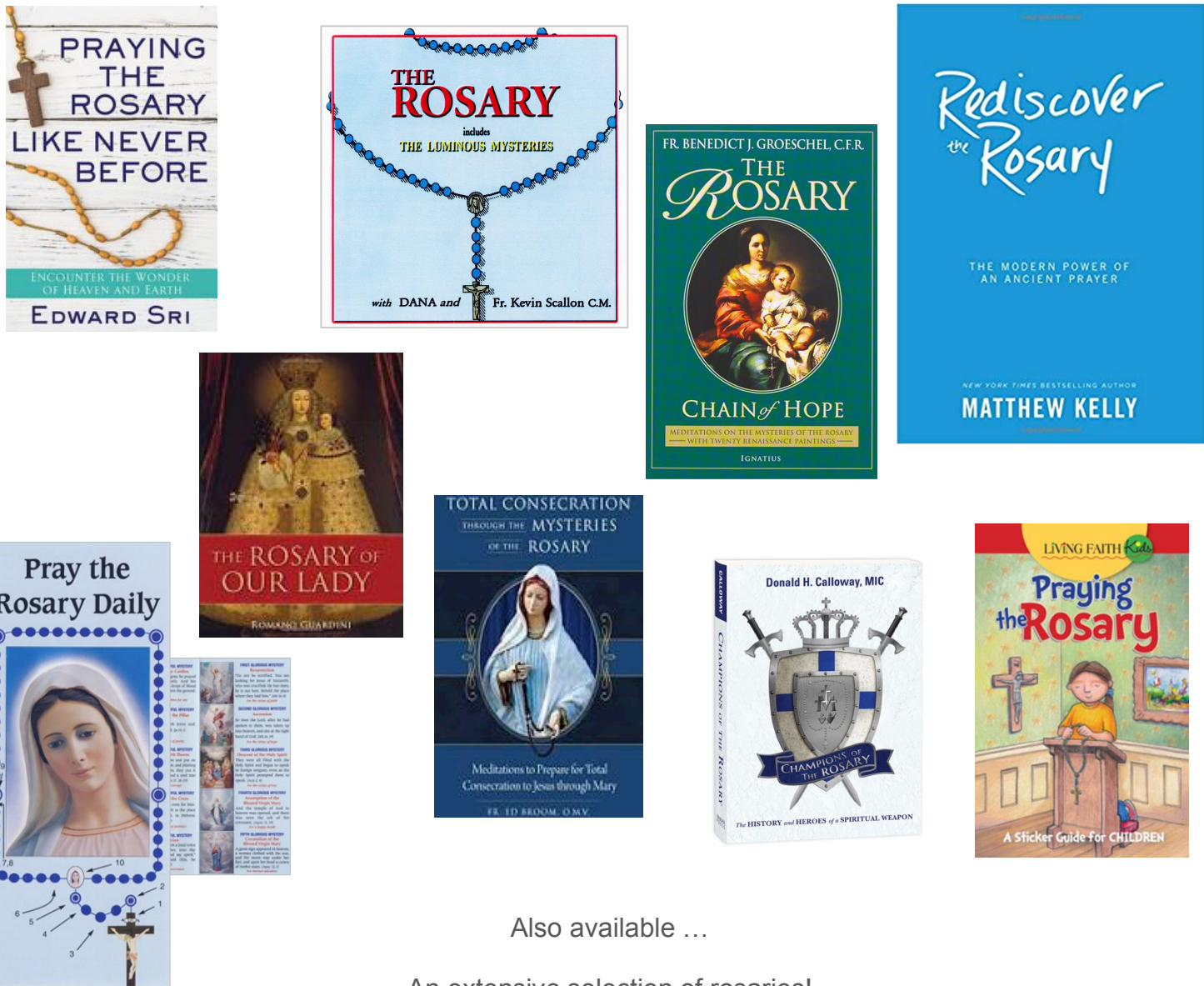
Pius V knew he needed more than just military strength to defend Christian Europe, so he asked that all the faithful pray the rosary, requesting the intercession of the Blessed Mother. At the end of the Battle of Lepanto, the Holy League was victorious and the maritime expansion of the Ottoman Empire was permanently prevented.

The next year, Pius V established a feast on October 7 in honor of the Blessed Mother, originally called Our Lady of Victory. After a few centuries, the name was changed to Our Lady of the Rosary to more clearly recognize that prayer was the greatest power at work that day on the seas.

In 1571, the rosary was still a relatively new prayer form for the universal church. Pope Pius V had issued a decree formally establishing devotion to the rosary in the papal bull *Consueverunt Romani Pontifices* just two years before the Battle of Lepanto. The Holy Father’s universal promulgation recognized the growing devotion to the Blessed Mother throughout Europe, as well as the increased prayer of the rosary in various locations. Devotion to the rosary was especially promoted in the 13th century by St. Dominic and in the 16th century by St. Peter Canisius (who, according to tradition, added the final verse to the Hail Mary, in which we pray, “Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death” — printed officially in the Catechism of the Council of Trent in 1566; the first two verses of the Hail Mary are adapted from Luke 1:28 and 1:42).

-written by Bishop Daniel Mueggenborg

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