

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today is the 102nd Anniversary of the Miracle of the Sun in Fatima, Portugal. On this day, outside the little hamlet of Fatima, our Lady appeared to three children for the sixth time, and gave a *great miracle* so everyone would know that she really was there. The sun “danced” in the sky for about 80,000 people to see. People witnessed the miracle not just in Fatima, but also for miles around. It made it into the newspapers – even the atheistic papers. People thought it was the end of the world (wouldn’t you, if you saw the sun flying towards you?!), and so many repented of their sins and cried out asking mercy of God. Other miracles happened, as well, including the lame walking, the blind seeing, and all of the very wet ground drying up. While there was a lot Our Lady said as part of her messages in Fatima, at the heart of the message was to *pray the Rosary daily*.

In this month of October, we remember the Holy Rosary in a special way. In the thirteenth century, Our Lady appeared to St. Dominic (founder of the Dominican Order), and gave him the Rosary in the modern form (for a great book on the history of the Rosary, read *Champions of the Rosary* by Fr. Donald Calloway, MIC). With the Rosary, his preaching took on new power. Prior to this, he made no headway against the Albigensian Heresy (which said that physical creation was evil). After receiving the Rosary and using it in his preaching, he was able to bring people back to the true faith.

In 1571, Europe was on the brink of collapse. Invading forces from the Ottoman Empire thoroughly outmanned and outgunned Christian Europe. A great sea battle took place on October 7th which truly decided the fate of Europe, and, had the result been different, would have led to a very different world than what we have today. Pope St. Pius V asked all of the faithful to pray the Rosary for success. Despite harrowing odds, Christian Europe won the day – a fact attributed by St. Pius to Our Lady of the Holy Rosary (in honor of this fact, he established the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary).

While the popularity of the Rosary has waxed and waned over the centuries since Our Lady gave it to St. Dominic, the power behind it remains the same. Through prayer, wars are stopped, the laws of nature are suspended!

While to some, the Rosary may only seem an endless repetition of “Hail Marys,” the prayer actually draws us deep into the mystery of God. The focus of the prayer are the mysteries of the Rosary – various points on which to meditate in the lives of Jesus and Mary. Mary, as a gentle loving mother, takes us by the hand and walks with us through these mysteries, teaching us about Jesus, and helping us to get to know Him more. At the heart of the Rosary is relationship! We are in relationship with Mary, and she draws us into relationship with her Son, Jesus.

I think this is why the Rosary is so powerful: not because we have found the magic formula to “twist God’s arm,” as it were, but because through the Rosary, we recognize more and more how we are beloved children of a beloved Father. The prayer that God can’t resist is the prayer that is from His beloved son or daughter who asks Him in complete confidence. Through walking with Our Lady in the Holy Rosary, we grow in confidence that God is our provident Father and we His beloved children!

I strongly encourage you (especially since Our Lady has asked this of us!) to pray the Rosary daily. If you have never prayed the Rosary before, get a good instruction (some pamphlets at the main entrance of the Church, get an app, or look online), and maybe start by praying a decade (10 Hail Marys meditating on a single mystery of the Rosary) a day. This can help you get used to the rhythm of the Rosary, and it will only take a couple minutes. As you get a sense of the overall structure, expand your Rosary, maybe doing two or three decades at a time, until you can do a five-decade Rosary.

Our Lady has promised so much to us by praying the Rosary. I hope that this October – the month of the Rosary – will invigorate or reinvigorate you with the desire and resolve to pray the Rosary.