

- Last Sunday I spoke of the personal battle we must all wage with sin, and of the lengths to which Our Lord expects us to go when fighting against sin. Remember what our Lord said about sin in the Gospel of Mark?
- “If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off . . . . And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off . . . . And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out.”
- Our Lord is telling us here that we must do whatever it takes to rid ourselves of sin. He’s urging us to be willing to make sacrifices rather than compromise with sin in any way.
- You see, when it comes to sin, the stakes are high because the consequences of sin are so destructive. Sin not only offends God, but it alienates us from God and makes it harder for us to love and live a holy life.
- Our sins hurt other people, and they jeopardize our salvation. In the worst case, our sins can lead us to hell. So we must never compromise with sin, but rather battle it with all our might.
- This we do by taking responsibility for our sins, owning up to our faults and failings, and making every effort to turn away from our sins. This personal battle with sin is fought by fasting, prayer, and the Sacraments, while also trusting in God’s grace and mercy.
- Remember: there will be no excuses for us on Judgment Day!
- Yet this battle against sin is not simply a personal battle. While we must all fight to rid our own lives of sin, we must also realize that there’s a larger battle for souls going on all around us – a battle that has been going on since the dawn of man, a battle between good and evil.
- We are living in a time when this battle for souls is becoming all the more hostile and out in the open – even within our Church!
- We see this battle in our politics, in our media, in our entertainment. It’s a battle in which man is not simply tempted to sin, but rather in which the very nature and understanding of man is called into question.
- On one side we have the historical teachings of the Church and traditional Christianity, which understands man as having an inherent dignity, a dignity derived from the fact that we are created in the image and likeness of God.
- Included in this understanding of man’s dignity is the understanding that the act by which man is brought forth into the world, the marital act, is itself sacred.
- On the other side – a side most often represented by liberal politicians, the media, and the entertainment industry - is the understanding that man has no inherent value, and therefore can be used indiscriminately or collectively to achieve and wield power.
- These same people see the marital act as simply a form of recreation, as an act that can be used and twisted into any form by any one, as long as those involved mutually consent.
- The denial of man’s inherent dignity has given rise in our society to evils such as abortion, same-sex marriage, contraception, and euthanasia – all part of what St. John Paul II called the “culture of death.”
- And if we ever hope to win this battle, which is truly a battle against evil, then we must turn to Our Lady, for it is She who crushes the head of the ancient serpent.
- Very beautifully, on this 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of October – which is known as Respect Life Sunday – we celebrate today a very beautiful feast of Our Lady: The Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary, which was originally known as the Feast of Our Lady of Victory.

- I'm sure many of you are familiar with the origins of this feast day and the Battle of Lepanto. In the autumn of 1571, the very fate of Christendom was hanging in the balance as marauding Muslim Turks were poised to overtake Europe.
- These Muslim invaders had been advancing from the East for several years, and at this point in history they controlled most of Northern Africa and the Middle East, slaughtering even women and children in their quest for power and control.
- While much of Europe didn't fully appreciate the threat of the Muslims, Pope Pius V did, and in response he quickly formed the Holy League, bringing together the various papal states, the Knights of Malta, Venice, Genoa, Spain, Naples and Sicily in order to counter the Muslim threat at Lepanto in modern day Greece.
- The Catholics, led by the famous Don Juan, were seriously outnumbered. But Don Juan had the blessing of the pope; the help of Jesuit, Dominican and Franciscan chaplains who accompanied the fleet; the prayers of the faithful; and rosaries for each of his 40,000 oarsmen.
- On the morning of October 7, 1571, the battle of Lepanto began. And throughout the day, in the church of St. Mary Major in Rome, Pope Pius V prayed the Holy Rosary with the Christian faithful for the Holy League, imploring our Lady for victory over the marauding Muslims.
- By early afternoon the battle was over. With a loss of only 7500 men, the Catholics – against all odds – emerged victorious and October 7<sup>th</sup> became known as the feast day of Our Lady of Victory, and later the feast of Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary.
- And as we consider the enormous battle that we face today against the Culture of Death, a foe whose supporters can even be found within the leadership ranks of the Church, we must learn from the story of Lepanto to put our trust in Our Lady and in her Rosary.
- It's by turning to the Blessed Virgin Mary by means of the Holy Rosary that we will win back our Church and withstand the forces of the culture of death in our society. In fact, Our Lady shared with St. Dominic the following 15 promises she makes to those who pray the Rosary regularly. She said:
  - *Whoever shall faithfully serve me by the recitation of the rosary, shall receive signal graces.*
  - *I promise my special protection and the greatest graces to all those who shall recite the rosary.*
  - *The rosary shall be a powerful armor against hell, it will destroy vice, decrease sin, and defeat heresies.*
  - *It will cause virtue and good works to flourish; it will obtain for souls the abundant mercy of God; it will withdraw the heart of men from the love of the world and its vanities, and will lift them to the desire of eternal things. Oh, that souls would sanctify themselves by this means.*
  - *The soul who recommends itself to me by the recitation of the rosary, shall not perish.*
  - *Whoever shall recite the rosary devoutly, applying himself to the consideration of its sacred mysteries shall never be conquered by misfortune. God will not chastise him in His justice, he shall not die by an unprovided death; if he be just he shall remain in the grace of God, and become worthy of eternal life.*
  - *Whoever shall have a true devotion for the rosary shall not die without the sacraments of the Church.*
  - *Those who are faithful to recite the rosary shall have during their life and at their death the light of God and the plenitude of His graces; at the moment of death they shall participate in the merits of the saints in paradise.*
  - *I shall deliver from purgatory those who have been devoted to the rosary.*
  - *The faithful children of the rosary shall merit a high degree of glory in heaven.*
  - *You shall obtain all you ask of me by the recitation of the rosary.*
  - *All those who propagate the holy rosary shall be aided by me in their necessities.*
  - *I have obtained from my Divine Son that all the advocates of the rosary shall have for intercessors the entire celestial court during their life and at the hour of death.*
  - *All who recite the rosary are my son, and brothers of my only son Jesus Christ.*
  - *Devotion to my rosary is a great sign of predestination.*

- Let's all turn to Our Lady with greater fervor and always stay close to her in prayer through the Holy Rosary. Let's trust that with the aid of the Virgin Mary, that battle for our culture and for the souls of each of us can be won.