

OCTOBER 7 2025 FATHER PETER JAE CHOI

Open Doors is a non-denominational mission that supports persecuted Christians from around the world. According to the statistics from their website, more than 380 million Christians at the present moment are suffering high levels of persecution and discrimination for their faith. That's 14% of the Christians from around the world, 20% of Christians from Africa and 40% of Christians from Asia. Up until 10 years ago Catholics from the Northern region of Nigeria suffered great persecution from the self proclaimed jihadist militant group, Boko Haram. They killed over 300,000 children, and displaced 2.3 million people from their homes. As you can imagine, Christians lived in constant threat of violence and of their brutality. Then in 2015 Bishop Doeme, who is the bishop of that region, was praying the rosary in front of the Blessed Sacrament. During his prayer, Jesus suddenly appeared to him in a vision with a sword in His hands. Without saying a word, Jesus handed the Sword to the Bishop. So Bishop Doeme reached out and received the sword from Jesus. But as soon as he received it, the sword instantly turned into a rosary. Then Jesus told Bishop Doeme in these exact words, "Boko Haram is gone! Boko Haram is gone! Boko Haram is gone!" Then Jesus disappeared. Bishop Doeme immediately understood what Jesus meant. It is not through an army but through the power of prayer, by praying the rosary that they will be able to expel Boko Haram from his diocese. The Bishop started to promote praying the rosary in his diocese and within a year they gained their freedom from terrorism. As soon as the persecution ended, people started to return to Church. It was through the power of the Rosary the poor Catholics in Nigeria were saved.

Today the Church honours our Blessed Mother and celebrates the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary, because back in 1571, she saved Europe and Christianity from the Turkish Ottoman Empire. After successfully invading the Byzantine Empire in 1453, the Ottoman Empire continued to expand their territory towards Europe for the next 100 years. In 1565 they attacked Malta, with the

goal of eventually invading Rome. Malta was able to fight them off, but the Turks captured Cyprus in 1570. The following year, the Spanish Empire, Republics of Genoa and Venice, and the Papal State formed an alliance called the Holy League to try defending Europe and Christianity from Turkish invasion. A decisive battle broke out on the coast of modern day Greece on October 7th, 1571. As the fierce battle broke out, Pope Pius 5th launched a campaign to pray the Rosary throughout Europe. The Holy League destroyed many of Turk's vessels and captured almost half of their vessels in a stunning victory. With a smaller number of vessels and less skillful sailors than the opponent, who were seasoned veterans, it was a miraculous victory! According to some accounts, Pope Pius V was given a miraculous vision of the Holy League's victory. So as soon as the battle was over, Pope Pius V attributed the victory to the intercession of the Blessed Virgin.

The Rosary is a beautiful prayer. As a matter of fact, the Rosary was the favorite prayer of St. Pope John Paul II. Contrary to the common misunderstanding, the Rosary is not just a repetitive vocal prayer. In reality, the Rosary is meant to be a meditation. When we pray the rosary, we reflect on the life, death and resurrection of Christ. Praying the rosary is not circumventing Jesus. Rather it is going to Jesus through Mary. When we pray to Mary, our Blessed Mother, we are not taking anything away from Jesus. But she adds to it and elevates it to a level we can't.

Some years ago, I was talking to my secretary while I was putting a birthday card and the birthday present for a friend in a shopping bag that it came in. She couldn't resist asking, "Is that a birthday present for your friend?" I replied, "Yes it is." Looking surprised, she said, "You can't give a birthday present like that! Let me help!" So I stepped aside to see what she was going to do. She first took out everything from the shopping bag, and started to wrap the gifts in wrapping paper. Then she squished a few thin colored wrapping papers and placed them on the bottom, and then she placed the birthday gift inside a nicer gift bag. Then to top it up, she placed a few more papers on top of the gift. It was a stunning transformation. I used to justify

my poor presentation to 'it's the thought that counts!' But truthfully the presentation really elevated the birthday gift to another level, looking more caring, intentional and thoughtful.

St. Louis de Montfort encouraged others to go to Jesus through Mary, saying it so beautifully: when we offer ourselves, our prayers and our actions to Mary, she transforms them with her own "marvelous beauty and splendor" before presenting them to Jesus, giving more glory to God than if they were offered directly.

From the cross, Jesus entrusted His mother to St. John, and St. John and the entire church to our Blessed Mother. Therefore, Catholics have always fled to Our Blessed Mother for her protection from very early on. The oldest known Marian Prayer, known as Sub Tuum Praesidium, actually dates all the way back to the year 250 AD. The prayer goes like this. "We fly to Thy protection, O Holy Mother of God; do not despise our petitions in our necessities, but deliver us always from all dangers, O Glorious and Blessed Virgin. Amen." Let us entrust our hearts to our Blessed Mother who loves us and cares for us, and invoke her powerful intercession, especially during the time of our need. Our Blessed Mother abandons no one, because we are her children and she is our mother.