

12. September 2026

“The Sweet Name of Mary”

Isa 61:9-11

A reading for the Feast of the Most Holy Name of Mary

Their race will be famous throughout the nations and their offspring throughout the peoples. All who see them will admit that they are a race whom Yahweh has blessed. I exult for joy in Yahweh, my soul rejoices in my God, for he has clothed me in garments of salvation, he has wrapped me in a cloak of saving justice, like a bridegroom wearing his garland, like a bride adorned in her jewels. For as the earth sends up its shoots and a garden makes seeds sprout, so Lord Yahweh makes saving justice and praise spring up in the sight of all nations.

The optional memorial that we celebrate today in honor of the Most Holy Name of Mary, takes us back to the year 1683... An immense Turkish army, led by the Grand Vizier Kara Mustafa, is at the gates of Vienna, ready to take the "golden apple of the Holy Empire", as the Ottomans called this city. Already in the previous century (1529) the Turks had tried to conquer it, under the command of Suleiman the Magnificent, but had not succeeded. This time their army was much more powerful and the Grand Vizier was convinced that they would take the city, so that the opportunity to penetrate deeper into Europe would be open to them.

Had this succeeded, it would have spread Islam even further and exerted its dominance over European nations. Many Christians regarded the violent expansion of Islam as an anti-Christian danger.

With the support of Pope Innocent XI, an army of Austrians, Poles, Bavarians and Saxons was assembled. For the first time, the troops of the Holy Roman Empire were allied with those of Poland-Lithuania.

After a 61-day siege by the Turks, the population of Vienna became increasingly desperate. Many were starving and thousands of Turkish miners were working underground to blow up the city's fortifications for conquest.

Meanwhile, many Christians prayed to God... On August 15, 1683, on the Feast of the Assumption, the Polish King John III Sobieski personally left for Vienna to come to the aid of the Holy Roman Emperor. On the advice of a holy Capuchin priest, Marco d'Aviano, Emperor Leopold had entrusted the Polish king with supreme command over the Christian troops.

Before setting out on the march to the besieged city with the Christian army, Father Marco celebrated the Holy Sacrifice while King Sobieski acted as acolyte. He then exhorted the soldiers to repeat many times the names of Jesus and Mary. On September 12, 1683, when the moment of the decisive battle arrived, Sobieski encouraged his soldiers by telling them, "Let us advance against the enemy with full confidence in the help of heaven and in the protection of the Blessed Virgin".

Thus, carrying the banner of the Virgin in front of them, the Christian army succeeded in defeating the Turks, despite their remarkable numerical superiority, and was thus able to save the besieged city of Vienna. This victory, which went down in history as the "Battle of Kahlenberg", was of great significance: not only did it put an end to the second Turkish siege of Vienna, but it also marked the beginning of the end of Ottoman rule in Europe.

In thanksgiving for the liberation of Vienna, Pope Innocent XI determined that the Feast of the Most Holy Name of Mary, which had arisen in Spain in the 16th century, should be celebrated every September 12, the day of the decisive victory, in the Universal Church.

In history, we know of various situations of grave threat in which Christians confidently invoked the Virgin Mary and obtained the expected help through her intercession. In the case of the battle of Kahlenberg, they were able to ward off the anti-Christian danger of Islam that threatened Europe.

Today the anti-Christian spirit manifests itself in many ways and threatens all men. It is the powers of darkness, which, in their hostility to God, try to establish their perverse dominion in every possible way to lead man away from God and subjugate him. This does not always happen through physical and aggressive warfare, but can also happen simply by undermining and weakening the Christian faith.

Recall that in the siege of Vienna the Turkish strategy was to dig subway tunnels to place their powder kegs there for lethal explosions. Had these actions not been prevented at the last moment, the city's fortifications would have been blown up and the Ottoman army would have been able to conquer the city.

Today, too, there are miners working in hiding - subway, so to speak - to erect an anti-Christian dominion. They have infiltrated even our Church, which is the bulwark and fortress against all forms of anti-Christian rule.

It is therefore more than appropriate to implore the help of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, to resist against these powers hostile to God. In Vienna, the Christian army faced the enemy troops, despite its numerical inferiority, and with God's help won the victory. Today we need an army equipped with spiritual weapons to fight the battle against the forces of evil.

Undoubtedly, the Mother of the Lord is always ready to come to the aid of the "army of the Lamb", and there is no doubt about who will triumph: *"and they will go to war against the Lamb; but because the Lamb is Lord of lords and King of kings, he will defeat them, he and his followers, the called, the chosen, the trustworthy"* (Rev 17:14). In all circumstances, the Church militant is called to fight, without being deceived by her enemies.