

The Rosary as a Spiritual Weapon for Every Catholic, Not Only for the Victorious Campaign for World Peace

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This article was prepared on October 17, 2025, prior to the canonization of St. Bartolo Longo, for the Czechoslovak Parish in Linz to encourage them to pray the Holy Rosary.

On October 19, 2025, the canonization of Blessed Bartolo Longo TOSD, KGCHS (1841-1926), an example of great conversion, who subsequently converted the entire valley of Pompeii in Italy to God through the Holy Rosary and tireless charitable work, will take place in the Vatican. In honor of this great Rosary Saint, and on the basis that October is the month of the Holy Rosary, this article was written, which aims to support the daily prayer of the Holy Rosary, especially for peace in the world. The article discusses the history of the Rosary, what the Rosary represents, how to pray it correctly, what its spiritual power is and what instructions the Virgin Mary gave us so that we can achieve peace in the world through its prayer.

Introduction

Pope Leo XIV invites us to pray the Rosary daily throughout October 2025, offering this intention for peace in the world—whether personally, within families, or in ecclesial communities. This call is profoundly wise: anyone who commits to praying the Rosary earnestly and faithfully each day for the entire month will find it hard to ever let go of this practice!

The Pope reminds us that the Rosary is far more than a simple devotion; it is a powerful spiritual weapon. Given that, this article aims to provide a brief introduction to the history of the Rosary and the immense spiritual strength it carries when prayed with devotion. Let us discover the spiritual weapon entrusted to us by Our Lady, Queen of the Holy Rosary.

The History of the Rosary

Since the third century, the Desert Fathers prayed the 150 psalms of the Old Testament. Because many monks at that time were illiterate, they were permitted to substitute 150 recitations of the *Our Father* for the psalms.

In the 12th century, during the first great wave of Marian devotion—promoted primarily by the Cistercian Order—the practice evolved: the 150 *Our Fathers* were replaced by 150 *Hail Marys*. This marked the beginning of what became known as the **Marian Psalter**.

Originally, the Desert Fathers used 150 small stones to count their prayers, carrying them in a bag—a rather impractical method. Eventually, these stones were strung together, forming what was called the **Paternoster**, later adapted for the Marian Psalter.

The rosary as we know it today—50 beads divided by *Our Father* prayers—was shaped mainly by the Carthusian Order in the 14th and 15th centuries. The name “rosary” comes

from the Franciscan tradition of the 15th century, symbolizing a crown or wreath of roses offered to the Virgin Mary with each prayer.

According to a legend embraced by papal tradition and confirmed by several Marian apparitions—most notably in Las Lajas, Colombia (1754)—the Virgin Mary herself revealed the correct way to pray the rosary to St. Dominic Guzmán, OP (1170–1221), founder of the Dominican Order.

In the 13th century, St. Dominic faced the spread of the Albigensian heresy in France, which denied the Incarnation by claiming that only the spirit was pure and the flesh inherently sinful. This error rejected core mysteries of the Catholic faith: the Incarnation, Passion, and Resurrection of Christ. Despite his eloquence, Dominic could not stop the heresy. In deep sorrow, he withdrew to the forests near Toulouse, fasting and praying for three days. There, the Virgin Mary appeared to him and instructed: **“Preach my psalter.”** She gave him 15 mysteries for meditation:

- **Joyful Mysteries** (Incarnation)
- **Sorrowful Mysteries** (Passion)
- **Glorious Mysteries** (Resurrection)

The rosary thus became both a tool for meditation and a powerful means of evangelization, enabling St. Dominic to overcome the heresy.

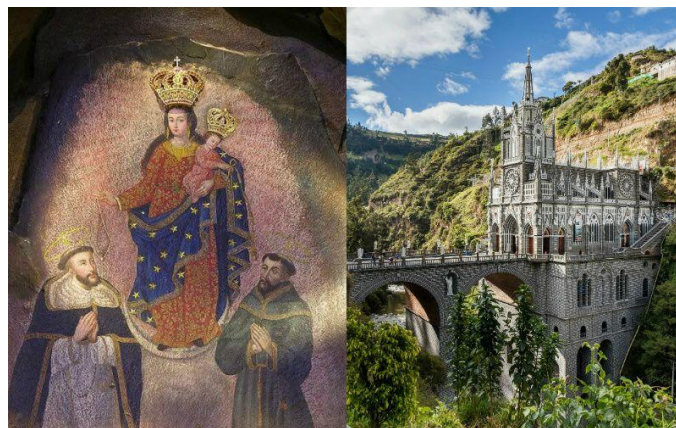


Fig. 1: Basilica Minor featuring a rock painting commemorating the apparition of the Virgin Mary at Las Lajas, Colombia (1754). The image is traditionally believed to affirm that the Virgin Mary bestowed the rosary upon St. Dominic and that the Dominicans and Franciscans were the first to promote its devotion. A distinctive feature of this artwork is that it is carved directly into the rock to a depth of up to one meter, which is often cited as evidence of its miraculous origin. (Source: Wikipedia)

In the second half of the 15th century, Blessed Alan de la Roche, OP (1428–1475), founded the first Rosary confraternities in Europe, greatly spreading devotion. The first

confraternity in Cologne, Germany, was officially approved by the Church on the day of his death—September 8, 1475, the Feast of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary.

The rosary was formally defined as a prayer by Pope St. Pius V (1504–1572) in his 1569 papal bull *Consueverunt Romani Pontifices*. The most recent addition came from Pope St. John Paul II (1920–2005), who introduced the **Luminous Mysteries**—five mysteries from Christ’s public ministry—in his 2002 apostolic letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*.

The Rosary: A Powerful Spiritual Weapon

Throughout history, countless saints have spoken about the Rosary and its extraordinary power. Pope Leo XIII (often cited in this context) and others have compared it to David’s slingshot against Goliath—a simple yet mighty tool through which the humble triumph over the proud. Some have called it a “spiritual atomic bomb” or even a “machine gun,” but the most enduring image is that of the Rosary as the **spiritual sword of the Virgin Mary**.

For centuries, Dominicans and Franciscans have worn the Rosary as part of their habit, fastened to the left side of the belt—symbolizing a sword ready to be drawn for spiritual battle whenever needed.

St. Padre Pio (1887–1968), who prayed 30 to 40 Rosaries daily, described it as a weapon for our times. His words remain strikingly relevant:

“A Christian without the Rosary is like a soldier without weapons!”

In these challenging times, every Christian should arm themselves with this powerful spiritual weapon—the Rosary.

The Virgin Mary’s Call to Pray the Rosary

Throughout history, the Virgin Mary has repeatedly invited us to pray the Rosary and turn to repentance during her many apparitions. Tradition holds that she prayed the Rosary with St. Bernadette in Lourdes in 1858. Some of the most significant Marian apparitions associated with the Rosary occurred in Fatima (1917) and Akita, Japan (1973).

Her call to prayer continued in Slovakia at Litmanová in 1990, and since 1981, she has appeared in Medjugorje as Gospa—our spiritual mother and Queen of Peace—urging us to pray the Rosary and fast for peace in the world.

One of her most famous messages came during the first Fatima apparition on May 13, 1917:

“Pray the Rosary every day to obtain peace for the world and an end to war.”

This simple yet profound invitation remains a timeless guide for all Christians—a spiritual recipe for peace, tranquility, and the resolution of conflicts throughout the world.

Rosary victories in the world

The power of praying the Rosary has been demonstrated many times throughout history. The first recorded instance occurred during the time of St. Dominic, when the Albigensian sect was defeated near the French city of Muret in 1213. The Catholic forces numbered only 1,500 soldiers, while the Albigensians commanded an army of 30,000 men. Despite this overwhelming disadvantage, the Catholics achieved victory after fervently praying the Holy Rosary.

One of the most memorable Rosary victories took place on **October 7, 1571**, during the **naval Battle of Lepanto** in Greece. At that time, the Ottoman Empire sought to exploit divisions within the Catholic Church caused by the Reformation and the rise of the Evangelical movement. Europe appeared vulnerable, and the Turks assembled a fleet of 100,000 well-trained warriors with the clear goal of conquering Rome and the Vatican.

In response, Pope St. Pius V formed the Holy League, which managed to gather about 70,000 men—many of them poorly trained. On the eve of the decisive battle, the Pope urged Catholics in Rome to pray the Rosary for victory, and the Catholic soldiers aboard the warships did the same. The following day, the Ottoman fleet suffered a crushing defeat from which it never recovered.

To commemorate this miraculous victory, Pope St. Pius V established October 7 as the Feast of Our Lady of Victory, now celebrated as **the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary**.



Fig.2: St. Pope Pius V learns through a vision of the victory of the Christian armies over the Turks in the naval battle of Lepanto; painting by Lazzaro Baldi, Pavia, Italy (1673). (source: wikipedia.org)

The Rosary has the power not only to win wars but even to prevent them. This power of praying the Holy Rosary to prevent war conflicts or remove dictatorial regimes was demonstrated, for example, during the Philippine “Rosary Revolution” in 1986, when two million people prayed the Rosary in front of armed soldiers, ultimately forcing dictator Ferdinand Marcos to leave the country.

Rosary victories in Austria

Austria, like Slovakia, is consecrated to the Virgin Mary, and it witnessed two great Rosary victories in its history. Interestingly, Czechs and Slovaks played a key role in both.

The first major Rosary victory occurred near Vienna in 1683, when the Ottoman Empire once again attempted to conquer Europe—this time by land. A largely forgotten hero of this victory was Archbishop Juraj Pohronec-Slepičiansky (1595–1685), a Slovak who served as Archbishop of Esztergom and Primate of Hungary. Having previously worked as a diplomat in the Ottoman Empire, he observed the Turks preparing to seize Vienna.

Archbishop Pohronec-Slepičiansky celebrated Mass for the imperial troops at the site of today's Petržalka and distributed 100,000 medals of the Seven Sorrows to the soldiers. He donated over 400,000 gulden from his own property to the Viennese so they would not surrender and could hold out until reinforcements arrived. He personally led negotiations with the Polish king, John III Sobieski (1629–1696), who at the time was not a strong ally of the monarchy and had been cooperating more with the French and the Turks. Nevertheless, the Archbishop managed to convince him to join the fight.

King Sobieski led the famous hussar army after the Rosary prayer of his confessor, St. Stanislaus Papczyński, MIC (1631–1701), to whom the Virgin Mary had appeared, promising victory. The outcome of the battle near Vienna is well known. On September 12, 1683, the Ottoman Empire suffered a decisive defeat, marking the beginning of its decline in Europe.

Since this victory was attributed to the intercession of the Virgin Mary and the prayer of the Holy Rosary, Blessed Pope Innocent XI (1611–1689) established **September 12 as the Feast of the Most Holy Name of Mary**—a tradition that continues to this day. For his efforts in defending Vienna, Archbishop Pohronec-Slepičiansky was honored by Emperor Leopold I (1640–1705) with the title “Savior of Vienna.” He is buried in Mariazell, Austria, in commemoration of this victory.



Fig. 3: Archbishop Juraj Pohronec-Slepičiansky (left) and King John III. Sobieski after the victory in Vienna in a 19th-century painting by Jan Matejko (right), Vatican Museum. (source: wikipedia.org)

The second great Rosary victory in Austria was led by Father Petrus (Otto) Pavlíček, OFM (1902–1982), a Franciscan priest and Servant of God, whose father was Czech and mother from Austria. After World War II, Austria was divided among the victorious powers, with a large portion—including Vienna—under Soviet control. The Soviet Union was determined not to relinquish Austria at any cost.

Father Pavlíček made a pilgrimage to Mariazell in gratitude for surviving imprisonment during the war. During this pilgrimage, he heard an inner voice saying: ***“Do as I tell you—pray the Rosary every day, and there will be peace.”*** Remembering the promises of Our Lady of Fatima, he founded the prayer initiative ***“The Crusade of Reparation of the Holy Rosary for Peace in the World”*** a year later. This movement encouraged daily Rosary prayer and acts of penance for Austria’s liberation.

Between 1950 and 1955, Father Pavlíček also organized annual Marian processions combined with Rosary prayer every September along Vienna’s Ring-street. These events drew more than 500,000 participants, including the political leadership of the time (see Fig. 4). Ultimately, this spiritual effort coincided with a historic breakthrough: on May 15, 1955, the Soviet Union unexpectedly signed the agreement to withdraw its troops from Austria, a withdrawal completed that same year. This was rather exceptional, especially considering the violent interventions in Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968.

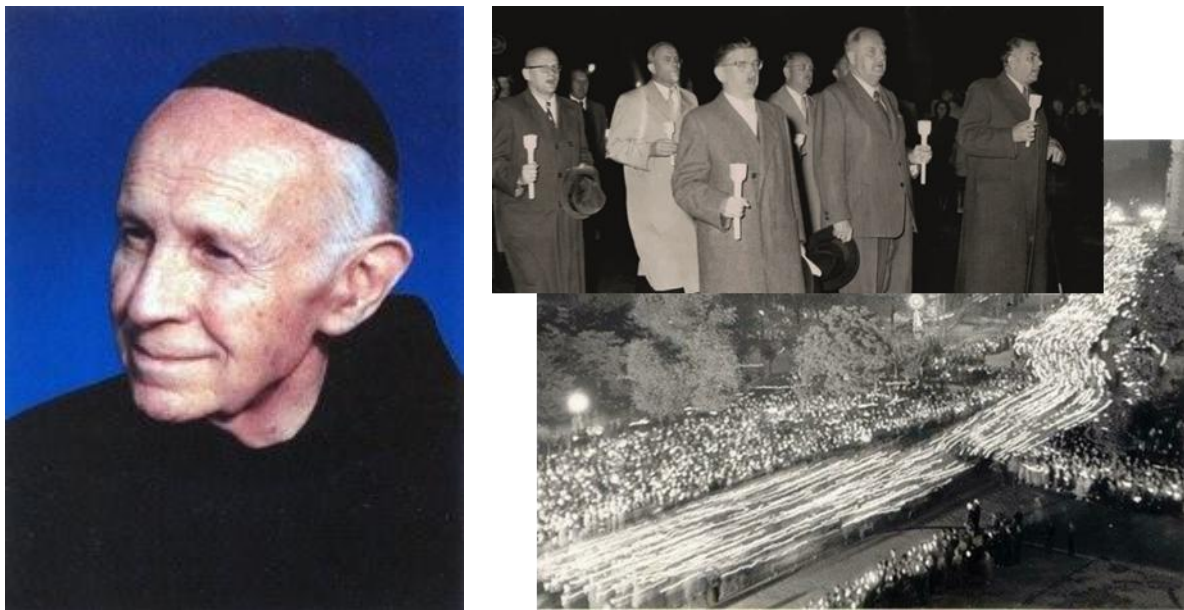


Fig. 4: Father Petrus Pavlíček (left) and the Marian processions associated with the prayer of the Holy Rosary on the Vienna "Ring", which in September 1950-1955 were attended by 500,000 believers including the then political leaders, which led to the liberation of Austria from the Russian occupation in 1955 (right). (source: wikipedia.org)

The spiritual power of the Holy Rosary

Pope Leo XIV compares the prayer of the Rosary to shining a light into darkness—and it truly works on this principle. In the Catholic Church, apart from the power of the Holy Mass, the Rosary is considered the most powerful prayer through which we can obtain

countless graces from the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary. It is highly effective when prayed individually and even more powerful when prayed in a group. Many consecrated persons have observed that the Rosary's power does not increase in a simple linear way—where each additional prayer adds the same amount of strength—but rather grows exponentially. It is as if, when praying alone, we each turn on a small flashlight in the darkness, but when praying together, we suddenly switch on one enormous spotlight. The power of the Rosary is immense, even in small groups.

For this reason, it is strongly recommended that families pray the Holy Rosary daily. However, it is not necessary to pray the entire Rosary at the beginning. Doing so can lead to excessive initial enthusiasm, quick burnout, and ultimately abandoning this beautiful prayer altogether. Therefore, starting with just one decade is enough. It takes only about 5–8 minutes—time we offer to the Virgin Mary.

What matters most is that we begin praying the Rosary. If we desire and remain consistent, we can gradually increase the number of decades we pray each day. In this way, we can eventually fulfill the request of the Virgin Mary at Fatima: to pray a full Rosary every day for peace in the world.

How to Pray the Rosary Properly

Rosary should never be prayed as a mere mechanical repetition of memorized formulas. Jesus Himself warns against empty words when He teaches us the Our Father (Matthew 6:7). The repetition of the Hail Mary is meant to help us meditate on the mysteries of Christ's life—His incarnation, public ministry, suffering, and resurrection. As St. John Paul II wrote in *RVM*, through the Rosary we contemplate the face of Jesus through the eyes of the Virgin Mary. This meditation and prayer should come sincerely from the heart, so that it may bear the greatest spiritual fruit and, at times, even bring God's grace in the form of a miracle.

The Rosary is a deeply meditative prayer rooted in the Catholic tradition. Scientific studies have shown that it can have positive effects on mental well-being and overall health (see recent articles in the *Journal of Religion and Health*). Therefore, there is no need to turn to meditation techniques from Eastern religions or philosophical movements, which are increasingly and subtly influencing Western culture. These practices can be spiritually harmful, especially for Catholics, because it is unclear what “cosmic” energy they connect us to. Instead of seeking to “empty the mind” and a false sense of peace, as Eastern meditation promotes, we should allow our minds to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Through prayer, we join the Virgin Mary in fulfilling God's will.

Conclusion

This article highlights the Holy Rosary as a true gift from heaven and emphasizes its spiritual power to obtain graces from the Most Holy Trinity through the intercession of the Virgin Mary—especially for peace in the world. Beyond granting graces for our intentions

and global peace, the Rosary also benefits our mental well-being and health, strengthens all virtues, and possesses the power to lead even the greatest sinners and heretics to conversion and repentance.

Therefore, let us pray the Rosary fervently every day, so that the light we kindle in October may continue to shine throughout our lives. May the powerful intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the newly canonized Rosary Saint, St. Bartolo Longo, guide and assist us.

Virgin Mary, Queen of the Holy Rosary, and St. Bartolo Longo, pray for us! Amen.

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