

Rosary Devotion (not only) in the Framework of the OESSH Spirituality

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October 5, 2026, marks the 100th anniversary of the death of our first lay saint, **Saint Bartolo Longo, TOSD, KGCHS (1841–1926)**—a great example of a Knight of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem (OESSH). Through his unwavering Marian devotion, profound love for the Holy Rosary, and tireless charitable work, he led the entire Valley of Pompeii in Italy back to God.

In honor of this great saint of the Rosary, and in recognition that October is the Month of the Holy Rosary, this contribution was written to promote the daily prayer of the Holy Rosary for peace in the world, and especially in the Holy Land—not only within our Order, but throughout the entire Catholic Church.

This paper highlights the pillars upon which Marian devotion, and the prayer of the Holy Rosary are built within our rich spirituality. It also reflects on how our patroness, the Virgin Mary—Queen of Palestine—can, through our prayers, intercede with Her Son and with the entire Holy Trinity for peace in the world, and particularly in the Holy Land, where the deeply suffering Christian minority has been entrusted to our care.

The first pillar - Pilgrimages to the Holy Land

The Rosary should never be understood as a vain or meaningless repetition, the kind of mindless babbling condemned by Jesus in Matthew 6:7—an attempt to manipulate God through empty words. Rather, it is a deeply contemplative prayer, similar to the way Jesus prayed in Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36–56), marked by trust, perseverance, and loving surrender to the Father.

At its heart, the Rosary is a meditation on the mysteries of Christ's life: the joyful mysteries, centered on the Incarnation; the luminous mysteries, reflecting Christ's public ministry; the sorrowful mysteries, contemplating the Passion; and the glorious mysteries, celebrating the Resurrection. The repetition of prayers does not exist for its own sake but serves as a stable rhythm that supports focused contemplation. Through this structure, the believer is drawn into a deeper understanding of Christ and a more intimate relationship with Him, always in communion with Mary.

This meditative approach resonates strongly with the tradition of Saint Ignatius of Loyola, SJ. In 1523, Saint Ignatius undertook a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in order to grow closer to the concrete reality of Christ's life (**Fig. 1**). In his *Spiritual Exercises*, he introduced the method of *compositio loci*—the “**composition of place**”—which invites the believer to use the imagination to mentally enter into scenes from the life of Christ by a spiritual pilgrimage to the given Christian sacred place in the Holy Land. By prayerfully recreating these moments, the soul forms a more profound and personal connection with the divine.

Within our spirituality, pilgrimages to the Holy Land play a significant role in personal sanctification. Walking in the places where Christ lived, taught, suffered, and rose again strengthens the authenticity of prayer and deepens one's spiritual life. This lived experience, in turn, enriches the way the Rosary is prayed, making it a more genuine and transformative path toward holiness.

At the same time, the Rosary itself can become a powerful spiritual tool for all believers—a daily spiritual journey to the Holy Land carried out in prayer. Especially in times when physical

pilgrimages are impossible, the Rosary functions as a kind of **“portable Holy Land”** in a pocket, allowing the faithful to contemplate the mysteries of Christ wherever they are. In this way, the Rosary sustains an ongoing spiritual pilgrimage, nurturing sanctity and drawing the believer ever more deeply into the life of Christ.



Fig. 1: St. Ignatius of Loyola, SJ (1491-1556) by Sir Peter Paul Rubens and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem (Source: Wikipedia)

The second pillar – Our Lady, Queen of Palestine

Our patroness is honored as an original, beautiful, and humble Jewish woman—the Mother of Our Lord Jesus Christ (**Fig. 2**). She fully cooperated with God’s plan of redemption in the Holy Land and remains a living sign of faith, humility, and obedience.



Fig. 2: Our Lady, Queen of Palestine, the patroness of the OESSH granted by Saint Pope John Paul II on January 21, 1994 (left) and reconstruction of the appearance of Mary based on the Shroud of Turin and AI, Artist Atila Soares da Costa Filho and graphic designer Ray Downing from January 19, 2024 (right)

Ever attentive to the prayers of the faithful, she awaits those who ask for Her intercession, so that the graces flowing from the redemptive work of her most beloved Son, Jesus Christ, may be shared for peace in the Holy Land. Through the Holy Rosary, she invites all people to pray for peace in this cradle of Christianity.

Given that, the author proposes a three-channel model to describe the spiritual impact of praying the Holy Rosary (**Fig. 3**). The Rosary is ultimately a Trinitarian prayer: offered **to the Father, through the Son, and in the Holy Spirit**, with Mary, our Heavenly Mother, playing a unique mediating role. At the center of this model stands Mary, our Heavenly Mother, invoked through the repeated prayer “*Hail Mary, full of grace*”, who mediates and unifies all three channels.

The first channel concerns the **internal impact** of the Rosary. At the beginning of the prayer, the three initial *Hail Marys* serve as a request for growth in the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity. As the mysteries are contemplated, the fruits attached to each mystery further foster personal virtue and holiness, leading to a progressive increase in one’s own sanctity, as introduced by Saint Louis-Marie de Montfort, SMM (1673-1716).

The second channel emphasizes the **communal and ecclesial dimension** of the Rosary. Through the principle of *ex opere operantis Ecclesiae*, personal prayer contributes to the sanctification of the entire Church, since all believers form one Mystical Body in Christ. Thus, individual spiritual growth benefits the whole ecclesial community.

The third channel highlights the **external impact** of Rosary. Prayer does not remain confined to the one who prays but becomes a means for the release and dissemination of graces into the world or given intention – in our case for peace in the Holy Land.

Together, these three channels illustrate that the Rosary is a powerful spiritual practice that transforms the individual, strengthens the Church, and radiates graces into the world, all through the maternal mediation of Mary.

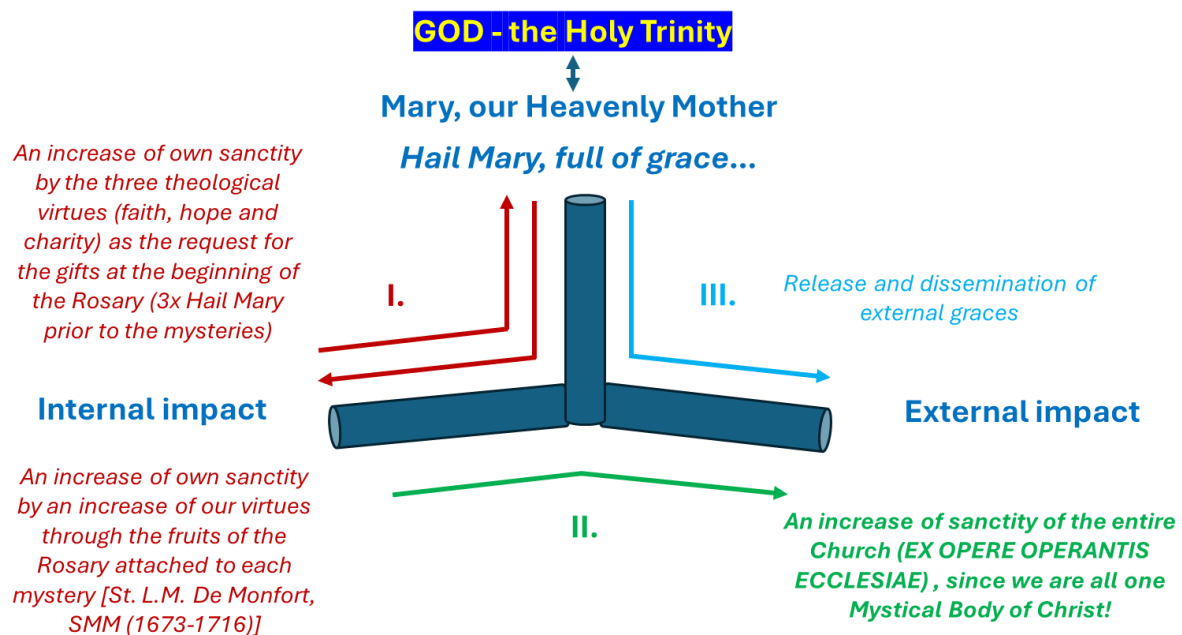


Fig. 3: The author’s proposal of a three-channel model of the spiritual impact of the Holy Rosary

The third pillar – Saint Bartolo Longo

Saint Bartolo Longo, TOSD, KGCHS (1841–1926), named by the pope Saint John Paul II as the “Apostle of the Rosary”, was a lawyer by profession who abandoned the Catholic faith of his youth during his studies at the University of Naples in Italy. During this period, he became involved in nationalist movements and anti-papal demonstrations, and was eventually drawn into spiritualism, even being ordained as a priest within that practice. This path led him into a profound state of depression and anxiety.

His life, however, underwent a remarkable transformation. Experiencing a deep and decisive conversion, he returned to the Catholic faith and, on October 7, 1871, became a Third Order Dominican, taking the name “Brother Rosario.”

Through his tireless devotion to the Holy Rosary, Saint Bartolo Longo played a pivotal role in the spiritual renewal of the entire Valley of Pompeii, converting many to Catholicism. He became the founder of the Pontifical Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary of Pompeii and established numerous charitable works, including orphanages, schools, and Catholic communities.

In recognition of his exemplary life and service, Pope Pius XI, Grand Master of the OESSH, conferred upon him the title of Knight Grand Cross in 1925. Thus, he stands as a Knight of the Holy Sepulchre whose spiritual weapon was the Holy Rosary (**Fig. 4**).

An absolute role model for our Order, Saint Bartolo Longo stands as a powerful witness to both the love of God—radiating through deep Marian and Rosary devotion—and the love of neighbor, expressed concretely in his tireless charitable works throughout the Valley of Pompeii.



Fig. 4: Saint Bartolo Longo as the Rosary Knight of the OESSH canonized on October 19, 2025
(Source: Servants of the Pierced Heart of Jesus)

Mary and Saint Bartolo Longo can teach us how to pray the Rosary:

In the Magnificat, Mary sings:

*"My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord..
He has cast down the mighty from their thrones,
and has lifted up the lowly." (Luke 1:46–52)*

This reveals the very logic of God—and the inner working of the Rosary itself: **it is a school of Mary - it is a school of humility.**

The Rosary forms the heart by drawing it into Mary's own disposition: lowliness, trust, and total openness to God's will. Through its repetition and meditation, it gently strips away pride and elevates the soul toward God.

To pray the Rosary fruitfully, one should approach it:

- with **the utmost humility**, as seen in devotions written by St. Bartolo Longo like for example the *Supplica to Our Lady of Pompeii*, *The Fifteen Saturdays of the Most Holy Rosary* or *The Pompeii Rosary Novena*,
- and in a **deep state of grace**, nourished by regular confession, the Eucharist and sincere conversion.

Christ Himself confirms this divine reversal:

*"The stone the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone." (Matthew 21:42)*

God chooses what is humble, rejected, and seemingly insignificant—and transforms it into something glorious.

This mystery is vividly reflected in the history of the **painting of Our Lady of the Rosary of Pompeii (Fig. 5)**. Acquired by Saint Bartolo Longo in 1876, it was originally a poor, neglected image—so unworthy that it was transported on a wagon of manure. Yet through grace, devotion, and perseverance, it became the center of profound miracles, including a Marian apparition in 1884 and thousands of healings.

Today, more than **three million pilgrims each year** come to Pompeii—a living testimony to how God exalts the lowly and works through what the world disregards.

In essence, the Rosary is not merely a prayer—it is a path of transformation. It teaches us to become small so that God may act greatly, just as He did in Mary and in Saint Bartolo Longo as well.



Fig. 5: *Painting of our Lady of the Rosary of Pompeii in the Pontifical Shrine of the Blessed Virgin of the Rosary of Pompeii co-founded by Saint Bartolo and his wife the Countess Mariana di Fusco. (Source: Wikipedia)*

Conclusions

The Fatima message addressed to our Order and to all believers invites us to embrace a simple yet powerful spiritual mission:

“Pray the Rosary every day to obtain peace for the Holy Land and the end of the war.”

Even a single decade of the Rosary—requiring only five to eight minutes a day—offered to Our Lady, Queen of Palestine, becomes a meaningful and effective act. Therefore, dear sisters and brothers in Christ, pray the Rosary every day for peace in the Holy Land, helping our Heavenly Mother to carry out God’s will.

These reflections closely align with the quote from Saint Pope John Paul II **to the OESSH Consulta in 2003:**

„Be promoters of love and peace, drawing inspiration in your lives and works from the Gospel and above all from the mystery of Christ’s Passion and Resurrection. Let Mary, the Mother of all the faithful, who was always ready to comply with God’s will, be your model. Invoke Her daily with the beautiful and traditional Rosary, which helps us to contemplate Christ through the eyes of His holy Mother. As it was for your venerated brother, Blessed Bartolo Longo, this will be a source of spiritual growth for you.”

Saint JP II, Saint Bartolo Longo and Our Lady, Queen of Palestine pray for us and for peace in the Holy Land through spreading the Fatima message, Marian and Rosary devotion in and beyond our Order. Amen.

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