 Reading time: 5 min.

‘If one million children pray the Rosary, the world will change’ (St Pio of Pietrelcina – Padre Pio)

Every year in October, a wave of prayer spreads across the world, uniting children of different nationalities, cultures and backgrounds in one powerful gesture of faith. This extraordinary initiative, entitled ‘**One million children pray the Rosary**’, has become an annual appointment awaited by many, embodying the hope of a better future through the prayer and devotion of the youngest.

Origins and significance of the initiative

The idea for this initiative originated **in 2005 in Caracas**, capital of Venezuela, when a group of children gathered to pray the Rosary in front of an image of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Many of the women present there strongly felt the presence of the Virgin Mary, and remembered the prophecy of **Saint Pio of Pietrelcina(Padre Pio)**: ‘*When a million children pray the Rosary, the world will change*’. That seemingly simple phrase expressed the profound conviction that the prayer of the little ones has a special ability to touch God’s heart and positively influence the world.

Inspired by this experience and by Padre Pio’s words, these women decided to turn that image into reality. They began by organising local prayer events, inviting children to pray the Rosary. The initiative grew rapidly, crossing the borders of Venezuela and spreading to other Latin American countries.

In 2008, the initiative attracted the attention of the *Pontifical Foundation ‘Aid to the Church in Need’ (ACS)*, an international Catholic organisation that supports the Church in need around the world. Recognising the potential of this prayer campaign, the ACS decided to adopt it and promote it globally, with the aim of involving one million children in the recitation of the Rosary, one of the oldest and best-loved prayers in the Catholic Christian tradition.

Under the leadership of the ACS, ‘One million children pray the Rosary’ has grown into a worldwide event. Every year, on 18 October, children from all continents join in prayer, praying the Rosary for peace and unity in the world. The date of **18 October** is no coincidence: it is the day on which the Catholic Church celebrates

the feast of St Luke the Evangelist, known for his special attention to the Virgin Mary in his writings.

The Rosary: Marian prayer and symbol of peace

The Rosary is a very ancient prayer, centred on **reflection on the mysteries of the life of Jesus and Mary**, his mother. It consists of repetitions of prayers such as the **Hail Mary**, the **Our Father** and the **Glory Be**, and allows the faithful to meditate on the central moments of Christ's journey on earth. This practice is not only a form of individual devotion, but has a strong community and intercessory dimension, so much so that in many Marian apparitions, such as those at **Fatima** and **Lourdes**, Our Lady expressly asked children to recite the Rosary as a means of obtaining peace in the world and the conversion of sinners.

The Rosary, being repetitive, allows even young children, often unable to follow complex prayers or lengthy readings, to actively participate and understand the meaning of prayer. Through the simple act of repeating the words of the Hail Mary, children are spiritually united with the global community of the faithful, interceding for peace and justice in the world.

The spiritual and educational dimension

The initiative takes place every year on 18 October, although many groups, parishes and schools choose to extend it throughout the month, traditionally dedicated to Our Lady of the Rosary.

On the day of the event, children gather in various places: schools, churches, private homes or public spaces. Often, children are instructed on how to pray the Rosary and the spiritual meanings of the various mysteries, so that they can participate with awareness and faith. Under the guidance of adults – parents, teachers or religious leaders – children pray the Rosary together. Many communities organise special events around this prayer, such as songs, Bible readings or short reflections suitable for young people.

Some parishes organise actual celebrations, during which children bring handmade Rosary beads or made of creative materials, to express their participation in an active and engaging way. The initiative ends with the celebration of a special Holy Mass dedicated to Our Lady of the Rosary and world peace.

‘A Million Children Pray the Rosary’ is not only a time of prayer, but also an educational opportunity. Many schools and pastoral groups use this event to teach children the values of **peace**, **solidarity** and **social justice**. Through the Rosary, children learn the importance of entrusting their worries and the suffering of the world to God, and understand that peace begins in their hearts and families.

Moreover, the initiative seeks to make children understand the universality of the Church and the Christian faith. Knowing that, at the same time, thousands of other children in every part of the world are praying the same prayer creates a sense of global community and fraternity that transcends language, cultural and geographic barriers.

The value of children’s prayer

Children’s prayer is often seen as particularly powerful in the Christian tradition because of their **innocence** and **purity of heart**. In the Bible, Jesus himself invites his disciples to look to children as an example of faith: ‘Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven’ (Mt 18:3).

Children, with their open and sincere hearts, are able to pray with total trust in God, without doubt or reservation. This trust and simplicity make their prayer particularly effective in God’s eyes. Moreover, children’s prayer can also have a strong impact on adults, calling them to a purer and deeper faith.

The global impact

Over the years, ‘One Million Children Pray the Rosary’ has seen growing participation, involving millions of children in over 140 countries. In 2023, more than one million children joined in prayer, praying especially for peace in the Holy Land and for other urgent intentions.

The event also attracted media attention in various countries, helping to spread a message of hope and unity in a world often dominated by negative news. Social media became an important tool to promote the initiative and share experiences. Hashtags such as *#MillionChildrenPraying* and *#ChildrenPrayingTheRosary* have gone viral in many countries, creating a sense of global community among participants.

The Million Children Praying the Rosary initiative has received support from many leaders of the Catholic Church, including Popes. Pope Francis, in particular, has repeatedly expressed his appreciation for this campaign, emphasising the importance of children's prayer for world peace.

Beyond the religious sphere, the initiative has attracted the attention of educators and psychologists, who have emphasised the benefits of involving children in activities that promote reflection, compassion and a sense of global connectedness.

Campaign Goals

The One Million Children Pray the Rosary campaign has several key objectives:

1. **Spiritual Education**: To teach children the importance of prayer and the Rosary as an integral part of their spiritual life, to grow in faith.
2. **Honouring the Virgin Mary**: The initiative strengthens Marian devotion, a central element of the Catholic faith.
3. **Learning to pray together**: The event creates a sense of unity and solidarity among participants, overcoming geographical and cultural barriers.
4. **Promoting world peace**: Children's prayer is seen as a powerful tool to invoke peace in a world often plagued by conflict and division.

5. **Raising awareness of global challenges**: Through prayer, children are encouraged to reflect on global issues and their role in creating a better future.

How to participate

Participating in the initiative is very simple. Simply:

1. **Get informed**: Visit the official ACS website to download free materials, such as posters, illustrated stories and prayer guides.
2. **Organise a** time for **prayer**: Choose a time to pray the Rosary, on the 18th of October (or another day closer if the 18th is not possible). It can be done in a group or individually.
3. **Involve the children**: from your family, school or parish in a moment of common prayer. Explain to the children the importance of prayer and the meaning of the Rosary. Encourage them to actively participate.
4. Register **online**: Register your participation on the ACS website to make your

voice heard and help reach the goal of one million children.

5. **Share the experience**: Share photos, videos and testimonials on social media using the hashtag *#MillionChildrenPraying.* This helps create a global community of prayer

‘A Million Children Pray the Rosary’ is an extraordinary initiative that demonstrates the power of prayer and the importance of faith. Through praying the Rosary, children around the world can unite in a global community of faith, bringing hope and peace. Let us join them in this great chain of prayer and help build a more beautiful world.