

# Children reminded of their power at Rosary Congress

When Father James Boric asked more than 150 Catholic school students to name the most powerful person in the world, youngsters offered suggestions far and near: Pope Francis, President Donald J. Trump and Archbishop William E. Lori.

While the rector of the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Baltimore agreed those were good selections, he insisted that it was the children themselves who held the real power.

"I think you all have more power, and that's because of the power of prayer," said Father Boric, speaking Oct. 8 during a special children's event on the fourth day of the 2019 archdiocesan Rosary Congress.

The congress, which includes the hourly praying of the rosary, round-the-clock eucharistic adoration, spiritual talks, opportunities for confession, liturgies and more, runs through Oct. 11 at the basilica. Several parishes are also concurrently offering special activities.

"When you pray, God will listen to what you say," Father Boric said, "and he will do what you ask. That's real power."

Father Michael DeAscanis, pastor of St. Philip Neri in Linthicum, told the students that when the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to three peasant children more than 100 years ago in Portugal while the world was at war, she asked them to pray the rosary every day for the intention of peace.

"She said that the adults are making a mess and I need the children to clean it up," Father DeAscanis said. "The children listened and now two of them are canonized saints and the other is on her way."

Father DeAscanis cited St. Bernadette as another example of a young person who knew the power of prayer. When St. Bernadette was 14, the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to her in Lourdes, France. Mary asked her to dig in the ground near a

grotto, from which sprang flowing waters that had healing effects for many of those who washed in them.

The priest noted that Mary appeared to Bernadette 17 times and that St. Bernadette took up the challenge to carry forth the message of prayer and penance. Since that time, there have been 70 recognized miracles at Lourdes, he said.

“Miracles still happen for those who believe and pray,” Father DeAscanis said.

Father DeAscanis asked the children not to wait until they are older to pursue holiness. They can start now, praying the rosary regularly.

“God wants you to change the world in some way,” he said. “We need to ask him how. Ask God to show his way for your life and help you to desire it.”

Children participating in the Oct. 8 event at the basilica hailed from St. Augustine School in Elkridge, Our Lady of Mount Carmel School in Essex, St. Mark School in Catonsville, St. Michael-St. Clement Mary Hofbauer School in Overlea, St. Philip Neri School in Linthicum, Cardinal Shehan School in Baltimore, St. Pius X School in Rodgers Forge and St. Ursula School in Parkville.

A student from Archbishop Spalding High School in Severn joined several basilica docents in giving tours of America’s first cathedral.

In the presence of the Blessed Sacrament exposed on the altar in a monstrance, the youngsters solemnly moved fingers over plastic beads as they prayed the Sorrowful Mysteries of the rosary. Five student representatives led each decade.

Father DeAscanis asked the children to pray in their hearts for a different person during each of the 50 Hail Marys offered.

Alexis Morgan, an 11-year-old sixth grader at St. Pius X School, and Nolan Morrison, a 12-year-old sixth grader there, said they live in a time when they can feel powerless. Hearing about the power they hold in prayer was eye opening, they said.

“I feel like prayer gives you power because your soul is opening up to God so you feel like you are better able to deal with these bad times,” Nolan told the Catholic

Review. “If there’s something bad happening and you want to fix it, you call on God to fix it in that moment. You ask for help.”

Onyinye Igbanugo, a 7-year-old second grader at St. Mark School in Catonsville, is a member of her school’s rosary club. More than 25 students of all ages gather every Monday after school to pray the rosary. Onyinye said she also sometimes prays the rosary with her family on weekends.

“It’s important to pray to God,” she said, “especially to pray for others who are sick.”

The girl was emboldened to think of the power she holds in prayer.

“It makes me feel special to know that I have a voice to speak to God,” she said.

*For more information about the Rosary Congress and a schedule of events, visit [archbalt.org/rosarycongress](http://archbalt.org/rosarycongress)*

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