

Students learn about Blessed Virgin Mary at Rosary Congress

“Stand up if you’re older than seven-years-old.”

The nearly 400 gathered – including approximately 350 children – at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Baltimore rose at Father James Boric’s request. All were older than Jacinta Marto, the youngest child to whom the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared in Fatima, Portugal, in 1917. The other children, Jacinta’s brother Francisco and her cousin, Lucia dos Santos, were nine- and ten-years-old, respectively, at the time of the apparition.

The children, students of 15 schools throughout the Archdiocese of Baltimore, traveled to the basilica Oct. 10 for a discussion on the Fatima apparition, recitation of the rosary and a tour of America’s first cathedral.

“You don’t need to be an adult to change the world – you can change the world now,” Father Boric, rector of the basilica, said. “God created you to become saints.”

Father Boric gave four ways to stay on the path to sainthood: go to Mass every Sunday, go to confession regularly, pray the rosary and make sacrifices, placing intentions in the hands of the Blessed Mother.

“If you do those four things, I promise you will do amazing things,” Father Boric said.

The event was part of the archdiocesan **Rosary Congress**, which has been running since Oct. 7 with perpetual adoration, hourly rosaries and talks. It concludes Oct. 13, the 101st anniversary of the final apparition at Fatima.

“The Rosary Congress is about all people coming together in prayer,” Father Boric said in an interview after his talk. “Children have just as much power as anybody in that prayer – maybe more.”

Madison Cioka, a third-grader from St. Michael-St. Clement School in Overlea, was

among the 40 children from the school's Children of Mary club to attend. Approximately 50 children – about one-fifth of the entire school – gather as a group to pray the rosary, hold discussions and make their own rosaries.

Cioka said she joined the group “because of all those cool things we can do” and thought the Rosary Congress event for children was important “so we can learn more about Jesus and Mary.”

Dawn Walsh, chairwoman of the Rosary Congress, said the committee wanted to do an event with children and reached out to Dr. Camille Brown, associate superintendent of school leadership and community programs.

“Father Boric told the children that Our Lady was so happy that they were here,” Walsh said.

Brown said all schools attending were provided a timeline, history and map of the basilica beforehand.

“All of them attend Catholic school; all of them are loved by the Blessed Mother,” Brown said. “It’s natural that they would be involved with the Rosary Congress while it’s here.”

Freshmen through juniors attending from Archbishop Spalding High School in Severn were completing testing the day of the event, and seniors, including Monica Mercurio and Lanie Martinez, had the day off.

“It just sounded really cool,” said Mercurio, a parishioner of St. John Neumann Mission Church in Annapolis.

She and classmate Lanie Martinez, a parishioner of St. Pius X in Bowie, are both active in campus ministry and decided to spend their day at the Rosary Congress.

“I didn’t know what (the Rosary Congress) was (and) there’s still a lot to learn,” Martinez said. “It’s a good reminder that I always have (Mary) on my side.”

Email Emily Rosenthal at erosenthal@CatholicReview.org

*For more photos, see our Smugmug gallery **[here](#)**.*



ROSARY CONGRESS AT THE BASILICA

OCTOBER 7-13

24/7 Eucharistic Adoration and Rosary for Peace in Baltimore