

The Otto Grotto Rosary Dog Walk

As many of you know, my irresistibly cute, larger-than-life, hyper-spastic Pomeranian puppy, Otto, is often the subject of my blog. For some strange, mysterious reason, my dog posts seem to be my most popular. (Don't worry, I'm not surprised or jealous of Otto — well, not too much anyway.)

My pooch is now almost 2 and has grown into the “heavyweight division” of Poms, weighing more than 12 pounds now. Dogs of this breed are only supposed to weigh between 7 and 10 pounds. Even Otto's father, “Cobain,” and his mother, “Duchess,” weighed less than him.

(By the way, the name of my puppy's father comes from the rockstar, Kurt Cobain, who was the lead singer of the Seattle-based rock band Nirvana. “Duchess” represents royalty. So I guess I have a prince and a celebrity on my hands now.)

I recently took Otto for a visit with his breeder. She said he looked great, but she was surprised at how much he weighed.

“You think I've been overfeeding him, right?” I suggested, a smile on my face.

“No,” she replied, noting that he very possibly is a “Throwback” Pomeranian.

The original Pomeranians which came from Europe many years ago weighed between 25 and 30 pounds. They were “downsized” later thanks to England's Queen Victoria. So a “Throwback” Pom is a rare Pom that is born in a litter that is closer to the original size. I have a friend who has one named “Thor,” and that one weighs almost 30 pounds!

Otto is still growing, in size, personality, joy and playfulness.

He is also, praise and please God, learning how to pray. Yes, it's true. Read on.

As the little pup was named after St. Otto, the great missionary bishop of Pomerania, one of the nice side benefits of his name is that Otto rhymes with “Grotto.”

I've enjoyed taking many walks up the hill from my parish church of St. Anthony

Shrine to the historic National Grotto of Lourdes here in Emmitsburg on the campus of Mount St. Mary's. Thus, we have now begun a new tradition (drum-roll please!)

It is the "Otto Grotto Rosary Dog Walk." Pilgrims and their dogs gather in front of our parish at 6 p.m., and then we take a walk up to the Grotto and pray the rosary as we go. All are welcome to come, with dogs on leash and rosary in hand!

Though my growing pup does indeed have the outgoing personality and swagger of a rock star and the attention-seeking attitude of royalty, he also is slowly learning the peacefulness of a contemplative monk and a friendly Franciscan. At least that's what I'm hoping and trying to teach him. Oh, Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Anthony and St. Otto, pray for us.

*The **Otto Grotto Rosary Dog Walks** are at St. Anthony Shrine in Emmitsburg, MD on the following dates, all from 6-7 p.m.:*

Wednesday, June 13 (the feast of St. Anthony)

Wednesday, June 27

Sunday, July 8

Wednesday, July 18

Sunday, July 22

Tuesday, Aug. 14

Wednesday, Aug. 29

*To read and see more about Otto of Grotto, see Father Collin's Twitter and Instagram: **@FrCollinPoston** and the hashtag **#OttoGrotto**. All humans and dogs are welcome on the Otto Grotto walks.*

