

Women of Grace *Journal*

For Daily Prayer and Reflection



*Mary Through Saintry Eyes:
Our Lady of the Rosary*



Instructions for Using the Women of Grace

Journal in Your Study Group

The *Women of Grace Journal* is a wonderful vehicle for small group use. It is particularly suitable for *Women of Grace*® study groups who have completed the *Women of Grace Foundational Study Series, Full of Grace*. The *Journal* provides twelve months of study material. Each year focuses on a particular theme to help the women plunge deeply into the life of faith. It can be started at any time of the year. Back copies can be ordered on request.

Through quotes of the saints, documents of the Church, and Scripture passages, the *Journal* encourages women to seek the action of the Holy Spirit in their lives and to act upon the promptings they receive. In this way, women will “aid humanity in not falling” and be a *sign* of God’s action in our day and time.

Instructions for Group Use:

Who is needed: A facilitator; study groups of 12 women or less.

What is needed: Meeting space; each participant will need a subscription to the *Journal*, a copy of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church**, a Bible*, a pen, a receptive heart, and a listening ear.

The women participants should have reflected on and prayed through the quotations and questions prior to each group meeting. The facilitator should encourage each member to share her prayer experience of the meditations.

The group meeting is not meant to be a time of problem-solving, emotional or spiritual counseling, nor a gripe session. Rather, it is a time to discover how the Holy Spirit is mightily present in each woman’s life.

The members of the group should strive to be receptive listeners who “hear” the action of the Holy Spirit at work in the lives of their sister members.

The facilitator should be sensitive to the dynamics of the group. Her role is to establish an open and respectful environment, to make sure each person has time to share, and to help ensure the confidentiality of the group.

Note to Facilitator:

A *Facilitator Guide* for the *Women of Grace Journal* is available at www.womenofgrace.com or 1-800-558-5452. It contains the following information:

- Who is a Facilitator?
- Organizing your Meeting
- The Eight “Be’s” of a Facilitator
- How to Resolve Small Group Issues
- Selecting Small Group Leaders
- Promoting Your Study Groups

* Available on-line at www.womenofgrace.com





The Women of Grace Journal: For Daily Prayer and Reflection is a publication of Women of Grace®, an apostolate whose mission is to affirm women in their dignity as daughters of God and in their gift of authentic femininity. Through its conferences, programs, publications, and curricula, Women of Grace® seeks to authenticate the genius of women, defined by Pope John Paul II as connoting the essential nature and spirit of woman, so profoundly portrayed in the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The Women of Grace Journal is a spiritual journal intended for personal use during prayer and reflection to help women focus their minds and hearts on God, deepen their personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and enhance their understanding of the teachings of the Church. The *Journal* is ideal for group use especially with *Women of Grace Study Groups*.

This *Journal*, and all of the outreaches of Women of Grace® has been placed under the protection of Saint Joseph and is dedicated to Our Lady of Guadalupe. We rejoice in the paths illuminated by all of the great women saints, especially Saints Teresa of Avila, Therese of Lisieux, and Theresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein).

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How to Use the Women of Grace Journal

Your *Women of Grace Journal For Daily Prayer and Reflection* helps you enter into a deepening experience of prayer and relationship with God through its daily *GraceLines* and accompanying articles. Uniquely, it also provides you with a place to record your thoughts, inspirations, insights, and illuminations. Thus, it becomes a treasured keepsake of your journey with God – a *personal* record of your own salvation history.

The following steps help you maximize your *Journal* experience:

1. Compose yourself for your time of prayer. Ask the Holy Spirit to illumine your mind, open your heart, and help you be receptive to His movement within you. Remember, God is always with you. Place yourself in His presence.

2. Review the monthly theme and pray to receive the monthly grace. Grace is a gift given to us by God out of His abundant love. In fact, it is a share in the Divine Life itself. Daily prayer helps us be receptive to the grace God offers us as do the sacraments and a virtuous life.

3. Pray the *GraceLine*. Read the *GraceLine* slowly. Ponder it in your heart. Let the mystery awaken and unfold within you by noting any words, phrases, ideas that move you in some way. Does it spark a memory? Give you a new insight? Instruct you? What is God saying to you through it? You may stay with a *GraceLine* for more than one day if you sense God at work in you through it.

4. Answer the questions in *For Reflection and journal your insights*. These questions are “prompters,” meant to help you dig deeply into the *GraceLine* to discover the grace meant just for you. Answer all of them or none of them depending on what the Holy Spirit is revealing to you.

Then record your insights, thoughts, and the movements of your heart in your *Journal*. This solidifies the grace you have received and provides you with a record of God’s transforming love in your life. Your personal “salvation history.”

5. Respond to God’s action within you through a prayer. This prayer should be a prayer of the heart. It is, in a way, your *fiat* or “yes” to God’s movement in you. It may be a prayer of thanksgiving. Sometimes, a prayer of repentance. You might pray for more insight or guidance, or your prayer could be a deep interior cry asking for God’s healing love and mercy. Know that God hears you with a ready and loving ear.

Grace Notes



Dear Women of Grace,

Writing in his apostolic letter *On the Most Holy Rosary*, Pope John Paul II states, “*The Rosary has accompanied me in moments of joy and in moments of difficulty.* To it I have entrusted any number of concerns; in it I have always found comfort.”

Like the Holy Father, I, too, have experienced the great joy this holy prayer affords as well as the solace and comfort it provides. No other prayer held me so securely or more consolingly as did the Rosary when I lost my son, Simon, in 2004. It also was the steady rudder that guided me in the early days of my widowhood. Indeed it has been an anchor of hope to me in countless moments and situations. In all times I have found it to be a conduit of great grace.

I have witnessed the power of the Rosary bountiful times at the Women of Grace retreats and conferences. I have seen women set free from the bondage of abuse, I have seen women set free from the effects of their own sin, I have witnessed women coming to hope and healing, clarity and conviction — all by means of these holy beads and the prayers that attend them.

My own coming back to the faith was procured by means of the Rosary. My grandmother prayed a Rosary a day for me, as she did for each of her thirteen grandchildren. When my own life was headed on a collision course, this lasso of love “caught” me and brought me back

to the fold. The tiller of my soul, the Rosary plowed the hard earth of my interior being and prepared it for the seed of truth.

We ought not be surprised at the efficacious effects of the Rosary. As John Paul II states, “*Through the Rosary the faithful receive abundant grace, as though from the very hands of the Mother of the Redeemer.*”

The reason for this is that the Rosary is “Christocentric” and focuses the prayer’s heart and mind on key moments in the life of Christ. These moments, like all of those pertaining to Our Lord, are mysteries and not limited to the historic time they occurred. Rather, they are eternal moments, imbued with a supernatural value and efficacy that can be appropriated at any time in any place. The Rosary is a mystical entry into these most sublime realities of our faith.

As we give particular attention to the Rosary this month, let us ask Our Blessed Mother to sojourn with us on its holy path. After all, she knows the way. With her Son, she lived them abundantly.

I faithfully remain,
Your sister in Christ,

Johnnette S. Benkovic



Theme



The prayer of the Rosary is powerful and leads us into the heart of Jesus through the intercession of Mary Our Mother.

Grace



I pray for the grace to enter more deeply into the prayers of the Rosary.

Know the Faith

The Rosary: Scourge of the Devil and Treasure of Grace



The rosary, an icon of Catholicism and one of the Church's most beloved prayers, began its glorious history in the humble realm of pebbles, knotted chords and the hearts of simple peasants.

Since the earliest days of the Church, Christians have been using rosary-like counting devices for prayer and penitential exercises. Mostly comprised of knotted rope, pebbles, or chains, penitents originally

used them to count the number of "Our Fathers" to be recited in a day, a devotion they referred to as a "Paternoster."

Evidence dating back to the 4th century proves that the Desert Fathers used similar prayer chords to keep track of their devotions and Venerable Bede (d. 733) tells us about churches in France and England that were making prayer beads available for use by the faithful during his era.

But it was not until the Middle Ages that the rosary as we know it today began to take shape. This was when Christians began using strings of beads to recite 50 Hail Marys which they called "Aves" because the second half the Hail Mary wasn't added until sometime later. These Aves were recited along with verses from the Gospel relating to the joys of Mary, such as the Annunciation, Nativity, Resurrection, Ascension and Assumption. This style of prayer became known as a rosarium, which means rose garden.

The first clear historical reference we have of the rosary



as we know it today comes from the life of St. Dominic (d.1221), founder of the Order of Preachers or Dominicans. According to tradition, Dominic devised the rosary after receiving a vision of Our Lady during which she told him to pray in this manner as an antidote for heresy and sin. He obeyed, and preached the rosary with great success in France during the time of the Albigensian heresy.

One of the most famous miracles of the Rosary was performed at the hands of St. Dominic. It occurred when the saint expelled thousands of demons from a possessed man in front of a crowd of 12,000 eyewitnesses after putting a rosary around the man's neck.

In spite of this and many other spectacular miracles, the rosary fell into disuse and it wasn't until two centuries later when a Dominican theologian named Alain de Roche (d. 1475) made it his life's mission to restore the devotion. He is credited with establishing Rosary Confraternities to promote the rosary and is believed to have developed what is known as the "Dominican Rosary" which was structured in three groups of mysteries related to the Incarnation, Passion and Resurrection of Christ. Since the end of the 15th century, this became the most popular and commonly used form of the rosary.

The beads underwent many changes during this time with special devotions, local customs, and even the latest fashions impacting the style of beads in use. For instance, a short form

of the rosary containing only ten beads and known as a "tenner" was a favorite among men in past centuries. Women liked the longer version and often adorned their rosaries with gems, pearls, miniature figurines, and even scented fruits and flowers. Rosaries have been known to be made of everything from pure gold to painted apricot pits. Filigree rosaries were popular in the 18th century and chain-stitched rosaries were the rage during the 19th century. It was also during this time that the three beads for faith, hope and charity were added to the beginning of the rosary.

The rosary grew in popularity and became the spiritual weapon of choice during the 1500s when Moslem Turks were ravaging Eastern Europe. In 1571, when it seemed as though the whole continent would fall under their control, Pope St. Pius V organized a fleet to ward off the invaders. He then asked all of the faithful to say the rosary and beg for Mary's intercession under the title Our Lady of Victory for victory against the Turks.

The famous battle, now known as the Battle of Lepanto, took place October 7, 1571, and even though the Moslems outgunned the Christians in both vessels and sailors, the much smaller Christian fleet managed to prevail. In thanksgiving, the pope established the Feast of the Holy Rosary on October 7 to forever memorialize the great victory wrought by the powerful intercession of the Mother of God.

Since that time the rosary has been adorned with a steady stream of papal honors. Pope Adrian VI called it the

“scourge of the devil” and Pope Paul V called it a “treasure of graces.”

Pope Leo XIII issued a record 12 encyclicals and five apostolic letters on the rosary during his pontificate (1878-1903) and instituted the custom of praying the rosary daily during the month of October.


Pope Pius X taught that “amidst all prayers, the Rosary is the most beautiful, the richest in graces, and the one that most pleases the Most Holy Virgin.” His successor, Pius XI called it “a powerful weapon to put the demons to flight.”

In 1974, Pope Paul VI issued the Apostolic letter *Marialis Cultus* which devotes 14 sections to the use of the rosary within the Church.

In 2002, Pope John Paul II introduced the Luminous Mysteries (Mysteries of Light) in the Apostolic

Letter, *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*.

Added to this list of admirers are some of the Church’s most revered saints, such as Saint Francis de Sales who named the rosary as the greatest method of prayer. St. Thomas Aquinas once preached for 40 days in Rome on just the Hail Mary and the legendary St. John Vianney, patron of priests, was rarely seen without a rosary in his hand. St. Pio of Pietrelcina called it “the weapon” and when Mother Teresa died, she owned nothing but the sari she was wearing and her beloved rosary.

The rosary is still the best antidote to sin and heresy and remains the weapon of choice for Christians. As Pope Pius IX so aptly said, “Give me an army saying the Rosary and I will conquer the world.” 

Word to Know

Mediatix - a woman who is a mediator, go-between, intercessor, intermediary; a negotiator who acts as a link between parties. In Roman Catholic Mariology, Mary is referred to as Mediatix because of her role as mediator in the salvation process. She gave birth to the Redeemer, the fountain of all grace, and therefore participated in the mediation of grace.

The Second Vatican Council explains that the motherhood of Mary in the economy of grace lasts without interruption from the consent which she gave in faith at the annunciation to that which she bore at the foot of the cross. After being assumed into heaven, she continues this saving function by interceding for the faithful. “For this reason, the Blessed Virgin is invoked in the Church under the titles of Advocate, Auxiliatrix, Adiutrix, and Mediatix. This however is to be so understood that it takes nothing away, or adds nothing to the dignity and efficacy of Christ the one Mediator. For no creature can ever be put on the same level with the Incarnate Word and Redeemer...”
(*Lumen Gentium* # 61-62)

For Pondering

A Mother's Rosary



The last trimester of my first pregnancy was the most difficult time of my entire life. I was fatigued from an acute case of hyperemesis — severe nausea and vomiting for the entire term. Additionally, I had to single-handedly sell, clean and move out of our house. My husband, an Air Force pilot, had received orders to report for training immediately. I remained behind as I too was an Air Force pilot and could not terminate my military service commitment for several more weeks.

Worried that the stress and my poor health would affect my growing baby, I tried to be cheerful. I prayed the Rosary and asked the Blessed Mother to help me bear my suffering, offering it up for the well-being of my child.


The house sold quickly, I ended my military career and finally joined my husband. Now I faced the daunting challenge of moving into a new house in a new city, with a new baby on the way. I lacked a network of friends to help me transition to my new life as a stay-at-home mom. I felt lost and overwhelmed. Again, I turned to the Rosary for comfort.

The labor pains began at last, and I soon held a wide-eyed little boy in my

arms. I was physically and mentally exhausted and not sure I was prepared for the challenges of motherhood. This child had grown in my womb for nine months, but he felt like a stranger. I sat alone, holding my baby and wondering what on earth I had gotten myself into.

At that moment, a priest knocked on my door, bearing a gift of a blue Rosary.

After he departed, I gazed down upon my baby's tiny face and was suddenly overcome by the most wonderful feeling of peace and joy. Tears rolled down my cheeks as I experienced an overwhelming rush of pure love for this "bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" (Gen 2:23). I knew at that moment that I would gladly give my life for this child. At last, I began to understand what it meant to be a mother.

Filled with this grace, I felt a powerful connection to the Blessed Mother. I imagined her great joy at finally meeting her Divine Son and holding him tenderly in her arms. I was confident that through the Rosary, she would guide me in my journey of motherhood. --- *Peggy Bowes* 



Mary Moments



The chaplet, which is a French word meaning little hat or crown, is a special type of rosary that is either prayed on standard rosary beads or on a unique set of beads.

This devotion dates back to the mid-12th century when a string of beads was used to pray 50 Aves (Hail Marys). Many of the oldest chaplets are associated with religious orders such as the Franciscan Crown and St. Anthony's Chaplet (Franciscans), Brigittine Rosary (Brigittines), Crosier Beads (Crosier Fathers), Chaplet of the Five Wounds



Flowers of the Fairest

As its name implies, this humble but popular little flower has long been known as "Mary's Gold." Legend says these flowers were offered to the Virgin as "golden gifts" by the poor who could not afford to give real gold. The name is said to have come from early Christians who used to place these flowers around statues of Mary instead of coins.



(Passionists), Crown of our Lord (Camaldoles), Chaplet in honor of the Precious Blood (Precious Blood Fathers), Rosary of the Seven Sorrows (Servite Fathers).

Some of the more popular chaplets today are the Chaplet of Divine Mercy which is prayed on a rosary with five decades of 10 prayers; the Little Chaplet of the Holy Spirit which is prayed on Sundays and consists of seven sets of seven beads in honor of the seven gifts of the Spirit; and the Chaplet of the Seven Sorrows of Our Lady which has seven groups of seven beads.

Chaplets are traditionally prayed as a novena or to highlight special holy days or liturgical seasons. 



October 14



“Just as two friends, frequently in each other’s company, tend to develop similar habits, so too, by holding familiar converse with Jesus and the Blessed Virgin, by meditation on the mysteries of the Rosary and by living the same life in Holy Communion, we can become, to the extent of our lowliness, similar to them...”

---Blessed Bartolo Longo

For Reflection

What evidence have I seen in my own life that friends take on each other’s habits and characteristics? If I learn to enter deeply into the mysteries of the Rosary, then, I too, can become similar to Mary and Jesus. How does this enhance my desire to meditate on the mysteries of the Rosary? (See tomorrow’s Grace Line for an insight on Christian meditation.).



Lined writing area consisting of 25 horizontal lines for reflection notes.



October 15

“God sends us joys before sorrows, to prepare our hearts; but the joys themselves contain prophecies of the coming sorrows.”

---Father Faber writing about the Blessed Mother


For Reflection

How does this depiction of Christian meditation differ from other ideas of meditation presented in the secular culture? Why are all of the faculties of the soul helpful in entering into prayer? How can I engage my intellect, imagination, emotion and desire when I pray the Rosary?





October 30





“I look to all of you, brothers and sisters of every state of life, to you, Christian families, to you, the sick and elderly, and to you, young people: *confidently take up the Rosary once again.* Rediscover the Rosary in the light of Scripture, in harmony with the liturgy, and in the context of your daily lives. May this appeal of mine not go unheard!”

--- Pope John Paul II

For Reflection

How will I respond to this urgent appeal of Pope John Paul II?



October 31

Our Lady's Rosary

Dear Mother, I bring Thee roses
Because they are so sweet,
But lilies, my favorite flowers
I am placing at Thy feet.
Accept with each Hail Mary
A rose for Thy crown so bright,
Please don't forget the lilies,
The lilies so pure and white.
Let them be a bond of love
And understanding rare,
And send a blessing from above
In answer to my prayer.
Loneliness would be unknown
If more people came to Thee,
With their trials and sorrows
And said their Rosary.
With each Hail Mary, they would find
Their load much lighter grow,
And in humility, kiss the cross
In peace, would onward go.

--- Alice W. Sparks

For Reflection

How has my load been made lighter this past month as I have prayed the Rosary? Am I willing to make the Rosary a daily prayer? Why or why not?

Blessed Bartolo Longo (1841-1926)

From Priest of Satan to "Man of Mary"



Only the powerful mercy of God could have rescued a soul as steeped in darkness as that of Bartolo Longo.

Born in 1841 to well-to-do and devout Catholic parents in Latiano (Brindisi), Italy, Bartolo abandoned the faith while studying law in Naples. Members of the occult seduced him into becoming a priest of Satan and he practiced the dark arts with great enthusiasm.

Regular attendances at séances and his participation in the many horrific rituals common to satanic sects slowly began to change him from a cheerful man to a depressed and anxious soul. His mental condition gradually deteriorated until he began to hear voices such as that of his dead father who would call to him, "Return to God! Return to God!"

He was on the verge of a nervous breakdown when a good friend, Professor Vincente Pepe, confronted him about the horrible acts he was committing in satanic rituals. The reprimand not only stung Bartolo, it forced him to admit that in addition to being mentally confused, he was also very afraid of what he had become.

Pepe introduced him to a holy Dominican priest named Fr. Alberto Radente who had a deep devotion to Our Lady and the rosary. Fr. Alberto

befriended the troubled Bartolo and, under his guidance, began to help the man withdraw from the occult and repent of his sins.

Eventually, Bartolo returned to the Church and became a professed member of the Third Order of St. Dominic on March 25, 1871.

But he wasn't quite done with his past. He had to repair for the damage his evil life had caused upon others, Fr. Alberto said, which caused Bartolo to join forces with other pious souls in caring for the poor and the sick. He even tried to rescue his former friends from the occult. On one occasion, he went to a séance and held up a medal of Mary while crying out: "I renounce spiritism because it is nothing but a maze of error and falsehood!"

One of his new Catholic friends, a wealthy widow named Countess Mariana di Fusco, commissioned Bartolo to collect rent from some poor farmers who were living on land she owned near the ancient city of Pompeii. Bartolo arrived there in 1872 with armed guards who were needed to protect him from the bandits and other criminals who infested the area. He was shocked by the condition of the people he found there, by their poverty, lack of faith, ignorance and moral corruption

Bartolo later wrote about this visit: “One day in the fields around Pompeii called Arpaia. . . I recalled my former condition as a priest of Satan. Father Alberto had told me repeatedly never again to think of, or reflect on (this), but I thought that perhaps as the

priesthood of Christ is for eternity, so also the priesthood of Satan is for eternity.

“So, despite my repentance, I thought: I am still consecrated to Satan, and I am still his slave and property as he awaits me in Hell. As I pondered



Interior Dome of the Basilica of Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary in Pompei

over my condition, I experienced a deep sense of despair and almost committed suicide. Then I heard an echo in my ear of the voice of Friar Alberto repeating the words of the Blessed Virgin Mary: 'One who propagates my Rosary shall be saved.' These words certainly brought an illumination to my soul.

"Falling to my knees, I exclaimed: 'If your words are true that he who propagates your Rosary will be saved, I shall reach salvation because I shall not leave this earth without propagating your Rosary.' At that moment the little bell of the parish church rang out, inviting the people to pray the Angelus. This incident was like a signature to my firm decision."

Bartolo immediately began making frequent trips to Pompeii to teach the Rosary to the people and clean out the old chapel. His efforts eventually paid off and faith began to return to the region. It wasn't long before Bartolo and his growing new faith community needed a larger church.

Pledging the equivalent of a penny a month to the project, the people laid the cornerstone of the new church on May 8, 1876, and within a month, miracles began to occur.

One of the most notable occurred in 1884. After curing a dying woman named Fortuna Agreilli, Our Lady told her: "Whoever desires to obtain favors from me should make three novenas of the rosary in petition with the reciting of the fifteen decades of the Rosary, and three in thanksgiving." Now known as the 54-day Rosary novena, it is prayed all over the world.


By 1885, almost 940 cures were recorded and described in Bartolo's

history of the shrine. In the same year, Bartolo married the Countess Di Fusco and embarked upon ambitious works of charity with his bride. They established an orphanage for girls, beginning with 15 children, one for each decade of the rosary, and founded a hospice for boys who were the sons of prisoners. They eventually formed a religious women's institute called the Daughters of the Holy Rosary of Pompeii to care for the shrine and the various orphanages and buildings that were being built.

After nearly 50 years of laboring for Our Lady, Bartolo became the object of calumny and slander by persons who accused him of mishandling funds. He bore these accusations with resignation and was eventually cleared of all charges. In 1894, Bartolo and his wife gave the Shrine of Our Lady of Pompeii to Pope Leo XIII and it has remained in the care of the Vatican ever since.

Bartolo was known to be a man of deep prayer who was often seen kneeling in ecstatic prayer before an image of Our Lady. When asked if he ever saw her, Bartolo once answered, "Yes, but not as she is in heaven."

His last words, uttered while praying the Rosary on his deathbed on October 5, 1926, were: "My only desire is to see Mary, who has saved me and who will save me from the clutches of Satan."

On October 26, 1980, Pope John Paul II beatified Bartolo Longo, referring to this one-time priest of Satan as a "Man of Mary" who would forevermore be called "Blessed." 

Modern Miracles of the Rosary



Almost everyone has heard of the famous Battle of Lepanto, that infamous day in 1571 when the intercession of Our Lady led to the victory of a fledgling Christian navy over the far superior forces of the invading Moslem Turks.

But there have been equally stunning miracles of the rosary as recently as the 20th century.

Consider one of the most breathtaking, which occurred in Hiroshima, Japan on the morning of Aug. 6, 1945, at 8:15 a.m. when Fr. Hubert Schiffer and seven other Jesuits were just sitting down to breakfast.

“Suddenly, a terrific explosion filled the air with one bursting thunder stroke,” Fr. Schiffer said in a public testimony of the event. “An invisible force lifted me from the chair, hurled me through the air, shook me, battered me, whirled me ‘round and ‘round like a leaf in a gust of autumn wind.”

When next his eyes opened, he was laying outside on the ground. Dazed, he looked around

and saw that except for the rectory behind him, not a single building on the block was left standing.

Although they didn’t realize it at the time, Fr. Schiffer and his fellow priests had just survived the blast of the world’s first atomic bomb.

Miraculously, the priests suffered only minor injuries, even though the





rectory was a mere kilometer from the center of the blast and the initial explosion which sent out a shockwave of heat in excess of 20,000 degrees Fahrenheit. The wave traveled with a sonic velocity capable of blowing apart everything in its path, which is why no other building in sight of the rectory was left standing and all of the people in the vicinity died instantly, were severely burned, or would die within days of radiation poisoning.

When they were finally able to comprehend the magnitude of the miracle that had just happened, Fr.

Schiffer and his fellow priests knew at once why they were spared.

“We believe that we survived because we were living the message of Fatima and we lived and prayed the rosary daily in that home,” Fr. Schiffer said.

As if in confirmation, he would later learn that the Franciscan Friary in Nagasaki, established by St. Maximilian Kolbe, was also unharmed in an atomic blast that destroyed the city a few days later. The Friars were also devoted to the daily recitation of the rosary and felt that an act of Divine Providence led them to build their friary in a location where a hill protected them from the full force of the blast.

Less than a decade later, in the wake of World War II, an army of the faithful in Austria, bearing only the rosary, decided to take on communism.

Their battle began when the war ended and a massive power struggle erupted in the country between the Allied forces who were occupying the nation and the communists who were in possession of the richest sector of the country in Lower Austria, which was rich in oil, agriculture and industry.

Although the communists won only four seats in the freely elected Austrian government, they used their lucrative holdings to bully the people and try to topple the government.

“Austrians had to persevere in apartments without heat, lacking sufficient food, and enduring many other privations,” said an Austrian priest named Father Norbert Burmettler in 2005 to a group of students from Franciscan University of Steubenville.

“People would go out into the countryside with backpacks begging for food. The black market flourished.”

He went on to describe how, on February 2, 1946, a Franciscan priest named Petrus Pavlicek made a special pilgrimage to the famous Marian Shrine at Mariazell to beg Our Lady for help for occupied Austria. During his prayers, he heard the voice of Mary within his heart.

“Do what I tell you, and there will be peace,” she said.

She went on to ask for a renewal of the requests she made to the three shepherd children at Fatima in 1917.

Father Pavlicek responded by founding The Atonement Crusade of the Rosary, a national prayer crusade that dedicated itself to praying for the conversion of sinners, peace in the world and freedom for Austria.

The centerpiece of the crusade was around-the clock recitation of the rosary. Father Pavlicek asked for a “tithing” of rosaries from at least ten percent of the Austrian population who would pledge to pray the Rosary daily until the Soviets left the country.

Crusaders staged processions and “assaults of prayer” in parishes which consisted of the Mass, sermons, confession, blessing of the sick and recitation of the Holy Rosary. These “sieges” of prayer could last up to five days.


The people of Austria responded generously. Within four years, more than 200,000 Austrians pledged to pray the rosary daily and by 1955, the number had grown to half a million.

Suddenly, on the eve of the Annunciation, March 24, 1955, the Russian Foreign minister invited an Austrian delegation to Moscow for the first of many conferences about a possible communist withdrawal from Austria. These talks eventually lead to a deal struck on a day that could only have been picked by Our Lady herself – May 13, 1955 – the anniversary of the first apparition at Fatima.

Two days later, the Austrian State Treaty was signed at the Belvedere Palace in Vienna and Austria was free.

This event marks the only time in history that militant Marxist forces peacefully left a country in which they held power.

During a thanksgiving celebration on Sept. 10, 1955, Austrian Prime Minister Leopold Figi acknowledged this gift from heaven.

“For eight years we prayed the Sorrowful Rosary and implored that heaven would grant us again, full and completely, our freedom and independence,” he said. “Our prayer has been heard.” 

Daughter of Grace

Pierina Morosini - Martyr of Purity (1931-1957)



It was April 27, 1947 when 16 year-old Pierina Morosini stood with her friends in St. Peter's Square and heard Pope Pius XII beatify another Italian teen named Maria Goretti who died in 1902 while defending her virginity. At some point during the ceremony, Pierina told her friends, "It would be a great happiness for me to die like Maria Goretti."

Little did any of them know that within 10 years, her wish would come true.

Pierina Morosini was born on January 7, 1931, in the picturesque village of Fiobbio in northern Italy. Born the first of nine children into an impoverished family of farmers, she grew up poor in possessions but rich in the faith of her devout Catholic parents.

From the earliest age, she exhibited a deep love for God and the Catholic faith and, after making her Confirmation at the age of six, began rising at 5:00 a.m. to attend daily Mass. A year later, she received her First Holy

Communion, a sacrament that only served to deepen her already profound spiritual life.

She was 11 years old when poverty forced her to leave school and learn the trade of tailoring. At the age of 15, she went to work in the Honegger textile factory in nearby Albino and used her earnings to support her family because her father was no longer able to work.

At the same time, she became an active member of the Young Women of Catholic Action and joyfully participated in all of their parish activities. Although she did not feel called to the convent, she joined the Third Order of Franciscans and believed that she "could become holy

without entering the convent." Instead, she lovingly opened herself up to praying and promoting vocations and accepting whatever God willed for her life.

Devoted to the rosary and Mass, these were the pillars upon which her day was built. For ten years, the story

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Only God knows if her precious rosary beads were in her hand on that fateful day of April 4, 1957 as she walked home from work. When she came to an isolated stretch of road near Monte Misma, a 20 year-old man attacked her and attempted to rape her. Pierina picked up a rock with which to hit her assailant, but he wrested the stone away from her and used it to beat her until she dropped unconscious to the ground.

Later that night, when Pierina did not return home from work, they became concerned. Her brother Santos went in search of her and found her lying mortally wounded on the path.

Pierina was rushed to the closest hospital, but did not survive her injuries. She died two days later, on April 6, without ever regaining consciousness.

At the moment of her death, the surgeon who was trying to save her cried out spontaneously, “Now we have another Maria Goretti!”

Pierina was buried three days later and even before she was laid to rest, villagers rushed to touch the coffin of a woman they believed was already a saint.

Her cause for sainthood was opened soon after and, 30 years later, she was beatified by Pope John Paul II.

At her beatification ceremony on October 4, 1987, the Pope rejoiced with Pierina’s friends from Fiobbio who came to Rome just as they had promised their friend 20 years earlier.



“The roots of her religious spirit are in the midst of you,” he told them. “Having grown up in an environment of an intense spiritual life incarnate in the family, Blessed Morosini followed Christ, poor and humble, in the daily care of many people.”

He concluded: “On her way home, thirty years ago, her martyrdom was consummated, the extreme consequence of her Christian integrity. Her steps however did not stop, but continue to mark a luminous path for all those who experience the attraction of evangelical challenges.”

Let us ask Blessed Morosini to pray for us as we seek Christian integrity of spirit. May we, like her, mark a path that leads to union with God through all the circumstances of our life. ❀

Queen of the Most Holy Rosary



Queen of the most holy Rosary, in these times of such brazen impiety, manifest thy power with the signs of thine ancient victories, and from thy throne, whence thou dost dispense pardon and graces, mercifully regard the Church of thy Son, His Vicar on earth, and every order of clergy and laity, who are sore oppressed in the mighty conflict. Do thou, who art the powerful vanquisher of all heresies, hasten the hour of mercy, even though the hour of God's justice is every day provoked



by the countless sins of men. For me who am the least of men, kneeling before thee in supplication, do thou obtain the grace I need to live righteously upon earth and to reign among the just in heaven, that while in company with all faithful Christians throughout the world, I salute thee and acclaim thee as Queen of the most holy Rosary.

Queen of the most holy Rosary, pray for us.

(Partial Indulgence per Leo XIII, July 3, 1886)