A MILLION CHILDREN PRAYING THE ROSARY
Responding to the appeal by Pope Francis, inviting all children to join in this initiative, youngsters from no fewer than **136 different countries** and on every continent took part in the most recent annual event of “A million children praying the Rosary”, sponsored by the international Catholic pastoral charity and pontifical foundation Aid to the Church in Need (ACN International) which took place on 18 and 19 October this year. “This year’s involvement marks a historic record, ever since the beginning of the initiative in 2005”, stated Father Martin Barta, the spiritual assistant to ACN International.

They were followed by **Slovakia, India** and the **Philippines**.

The central idea of the initiative is to pray for peace and unity throughout the world. This was the principal focus of the prayers of the children in Maiduguri, in northeast **Nigeria**, an area that has suffered greatly from the attacks by Boko Haram. As they prayed, the children held up their own messages and drawings, praying for an end to the violence and for all persecuted Christians.

According to information received by ACN, **Poland** and **Mexico** were the two countries in which the response to the initiative was the most widespread.

This was also the principal prayer of the 517 children who joined in from **Armenia**, a country that is engulfed in war at this very moment.
From Minsk, the capital of **Belarus**, another country afflicted by violence and unrest for many weeks now, the children also joined in this worldwide prayer for peace and unity, it was revealed by Archbishop Tadeusz Kondrusiewicz, the Archbishop of Minsk, who currently finds himself exiled from his country, having been blocked from returning by the government. Consequently, he was unable to join in with the prayers in person and only able to do so via the Internet.

The children joined this worldwide prayer for peace and unity.

Elsewhere, from the Plains of Niniveh in **Iraq**, a large group of children gathered in front of the statue of the Virgin Mary in the town of Telskuf, also praying the Rosary for peace in the world, for all suffering people and for an end to the coronavirus pandemic. The suffering of the victims of the pandemic was likewise one intention of the Rosary prayed in **Nicaragua**, from the monastery of the Albertinian monks in Estelí, in the northwest of the country, where just a few weeks ago the founder of their congregation died from Covid-19 and from where they prayed “for all those affected by the virus and for the health of all people. “

On account of the pandemic, which is affecting so many people, the children in some countries were unable to gather in large groups, so they prayed in the family. We have seen wonderful videos of children in Beirut, **Lebanon** and in Carúpano, in **Venezuela**, where the children were praying in their own homes”, said Father Martin Barta.

The suffering of the victims of the pandemic was one intention of the Rosary.
In Europe, hundreds of schools all over Spain, in Britain and in Slovakia supported the initiative. Meanwhile, in South Korea, the children at the diocesan school in the capital Seoul joined in with the Rosary on 22 October, since they were unable to participate earlier owing to government healthcare restrictions.

One of the most symbolic moments of the campaign was the Rosary prayed by children from the shrine of Fatima in Portugal. This Rosary, transmitted live on many different Catholic channels, enabled thousands of Catholics and other believers throughout the world to unite themselves spiritually with this initiative.

“We have received hundreds of testimonials from all over the world, and we are delighted with the results. Although the online registration system set up to enable families and groups to register broke down by 509,771 participants. But we also know of thousands of people who were unable to register with the website because the page was subjected to a cyber-attack just two days before the event”, Maria Lozano, Head of Press and Communications at ACN International, explained.

“It’s hard to understand why anybody would want to prevent children from praying, yet on the other hand it shows that somebody is afraid of the power of these prayers, which ‘can change the world’, as Padre Pio once said”, she added.

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“For years now many people have been receiving information material from ACN through the post or otherwise distributed within their own countries, especially in Africa, because they don’t have easy access to the Internet. This was the first time we set up a webpage for people to register on. The initiative has been a real success; it has taken on a life of its own and we have seen through the social networks how a great many people were invited to join in by friends, their local parishes or dioceses,” stated Father Martin Barta.
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The original campaign for “A million children praying the Rosary” originated in Caracas, Venezuela, with a small group of children who had gathered to pray this prayer. Some of the adults present remembered the words of Padre Pio, who said, “When a million children pray the Rosary, then the world will change.”