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At least 1 million Polish people pray Holy Rosary at border on October 7th, 2017

A devotee takes part in a rosary prayer on the Baltic beach in Gdansk, Poland, Saturday, Oct. 7, 2017. Polish Catholics are holding rosaries and praying together at hundreds of locations along Poland's 3,500-kilometer (2,000-mile) border, appealing to the Virgin Mary and God for peace in Poland and in the world. (AP Photo/Alik Keplicz)

· GDANSK, Poland (AP) — Polish Catholics held rosaries and prayed together Saturday along the country's 3,500-kilometer (2,000-mile) border, appealing to the Virgin Mary and God for salvation for Poland and the world in a national event that some felt had anti-Muslim overtones.



· The unusual "Rosary to the Borders" event was organized by lay Catholics but was also endorsed by Polish church authorities, with 320 churches from 22 dioceses taking part. The prayers took place from the Baltic Sea coast in the north to the mountains along Poland's southern borders with the Czech Republic and Slovakia, and all along the border of this country of 38 million where more than 90 percent declare themselves Roman Catholics.

· Organizers say the prayers at some 4,000 locations commemorated the centenary of the apparitions of Fatima, when three shepherd children in Portugal said the Virgin Mary appeared to them.

· But the event also commemorated the huge 16th-century naval battle of Lepanto, when a Christian alliance acting on the wishes of the pope defeated Ottoman Empire forces on the Ionian Sea, "thus saving Europe from Islamization," as organizers put it.

· Prime Minister Beata Szydlo showed her support by tweeting an image of rosary beads with a crucifix and sending greetings to all the participants.

· While organizers insisted the prayers Saturday were not directed against any group, some participants cited fears of Islam among their reasons for praying at the border.
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Anna, OFS, The Whole World!
Tel.: 732-325-7779

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