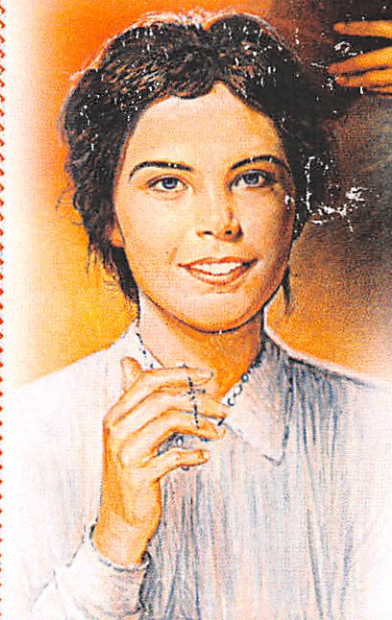


August Czartoryski



Eusebia Palomino



Alessandrina da Costa

Family of Holiness

A Family of Holiness

Never before have beatifications put the Salesian Family before the faithful so effectively as to be considered a Family of holiness. We see it in the recent beatifications of Salesian, Father August Czartoryski; Daughter of Mary Help of Christians, Sister Eusebia Palomino; and Cooperator, Alessandrina M. da Costa, along with the coming beatification of our Salesian alumnus, Albert Marvelli. They keep our attention fixed on the different expressions of Salesian holiness. It is important to recognize the basic traits in the features of these persons, so as to see what is peculiar to each and common to all within the one experience of the Salesian charisma.

Every gift of God, such as the beatification of members of the Salesian Family, is for us a “new call” to live our Salesian vocation deeply and joyfully. These signs of spiritual growth encourage us on our spiritual pilgrimage and give further force to our mission. The fact that the three belong to different parts of the Salesian Family, and indeed to those founded directly by Don Bosco, and represent the fundamental vocations in the Family, strengthens the conviction that we belong to a holy family. Within this holy family, consecrated and laypersons, men or women, adults or youngsters, can become holy by following the spiritual, educative and pastoral path of Don Bosco.

Preface

*“Our sanctification is ‘**the essential task**’ of our life...
If we attain this, we shall have attained everything;
if we fail to do so, all is lost.”*

So wrote the ninth successor of Don Bosco,
Fr. Pascual Chavez, in his first letter to the Salesians
after his election in 2002.

The beatification in 2004 of a Salesian priest,
a Salesian sister and a Salesian Cooperator
reminds us that sanctity is *‘**the essential task**’*
of the entire Salesian family.
There is a universal call to holiness.

August Czartoryski,
Eusebia Palomino and
Alessandrina da Costa
achieved holiness in the style promoted by Don Bosco:
they corresponded to the grace offered them
in the circumstances of their daily lives.
Their vastly different stories are presented here
that we might be both informed and inspired.
May their example lead us to discover in our daily lives
the grace of holiness,
And to give ourselves to *‘**the essential task**’*:
our sanctification.

*Fr. James Heuser, SDB
Salesian Provincial
April 25, 2004*

Blessed
AUGUST CZARTORYSKI, SDB
(1858 – 1893)

Introduction

August Czartoryski was an intimate friend of Andrew Beltrami. They could, in a certain sense, be considered two atypical Salesians, who, generally, are considered to be men of action, continually moving about with the young and engaged in constant activity with them. But August and Andrew were not directly involved with the young during their short lives. When they died, August was 34 years old and a priest for only one year and Andrew was 27 and a priest for four years. But they “witnessed to the holiness of life... the most precious gift to the young” (Constitution #25).

Perhaps it is God’s way to remind us that it is not so much what we do, whether a Salesian or not, but who we are in the sight of God and others. In some cases, holiness is achieved not so much in our feverish activity, but in our witness to the Gospel, as August and Andrew so vividly portrayed. On the occasion of the beatification of August, we present here a brief history of his life.

Early life

Throughout its history, Poland was a buffer among its neighboring more powerful countries. During this time of its history, Poland became fragmented and the royal family lost its power, sending the heir to the throne, prince Ladislaus Czartoryski, into exile in Paris, France. He married Maria Amparro, daughter of Mary Cristina, the Queen of Spain, and the Duke of Rınarez. Their son, August, was born in exile on August 2, 1858 in Lambert Palace, Paris. As the first-born male, his birth brought great joy to the severely tried royal family as well as fresh hope to the humiliated and oppressed Poles. The child was baptized two days later. However, at the age of six, August lost his mother, before he could understand what a great person she was.

Prince Ladislaus married Margaret of Orleans, daughter of the Duke Pretender to the throne of France. August's stepmother was very loving, but the early death of his mother and the frequent absence of his father left a void in the life of young August. This emptiness was alleviated by a very deep religious spirit, which was clearly evident in the young boy.

In the month of April 1865, at the age of six, August was in Rome. He accompanied the family to an audience with Pope Pius IX. On April 4, he served Mass with his father at the catacombs of St. Callistus.

For reasons of health and because of the political scene, August moved frequently. He visited Poland for the first time in 1867. From 1868-1870 he studied at the Carlo Magno Lyceum in Paris. He was in Poland again during the Franco-Prussian War and studied at Krakow. On September 1, 1871, he received his First Communion in the crypt of the parish church of Sieniawa, near the tombs of his ancestors.

He returned to France and continued his schooling in the lyceum, though his studies were interrupted by long tours to Italy, England and Ireland. Because of frail health, his father employed tutors, who taught him in a way suited to his state of health.

In 1875, at age 17, August had to interrupt his studies, and his life became a continuous movement to various climates, as he sought to regain his health. During this time, his constant companion and spiritual guide was St. Joseph Kalinowski, (1835-1907). Joseph would later become a Carmelite priest, a spiritual guide and a living example of Christian holiness. Pope John Paul II canonized him in 1991. Joseph met August at Sieniawa in 1874 and returned with him to Paris.

When August had to quit his formal education, Joseph Kalinowski accompanied him during his visits to the health resorts. Joseph also saw to it that life in the Lambert Palace was more monastic than princely, which kept August away from worldly influences.

August was very sincere and intelligent. He had clarity of vision and religion, which were uncommon. He was a young prince who lacked nothing, but suffered the difficulties that his country and family had to endure. He loved Poland deeply. He had little contact with persons his own age and very little of normal home life. The only ray of hope was his religion and the spirit of faith that helped him put up with the situation.

On assuming the office as August's tutor, the first thought Joseph Kalinowski had was that of taking him away from the solitary life in which circumstances had placed him. This was not to be. August became sick and went to Menton and then to Eaux-bonnes in France and finally to Davos in Switzerland. This sickness brought with it special graces from God. One could notice the work of an interior change. If the path of suffering was not his deliberate choice, August did accept this cross with all his heart and deep love for the Lord.

Several years later, when Joseph Kalinowski was leaving him to enter religious life, August expressed the desire to have a priest as his tutor and guide. On November 6, 1876, as he was about to enter the Carmelite Order at Krakow, Joseph wrote to August's father, Ladislaus, from Switzerland: "I am regretful at the thought of leaving August. But the reasons that prompt me to take this step to become a religious are so strong that I cannot disregard them any longer. However, I still think of the young prince and his need for guidance. I admire his total love for God, which he cherished at a young age and now nurtures with fervent prayer and sacramental life. For the good of his soul and for preserving the treasures God has infused into his soul, it is highly desirable to have a priest to take my place."

Twenty days later, Kalinowski wrote again to Ladislaus: "August desires to have a priest in my place. He is afraid that this desire may not be honored and does not dare broach this topic with you, unless you speak to him about it. He happens to be away from his country and family, without the company of any friends or dear ones. Only a priest can adequately help him in this situation."

Out of humility, Kalinowski does not speak of the part he played in bringing into the life of August the deeply spiritual values he manifested. After the death of August, Fr. Julius Barberis visited Kalinowski (now Fr. Raphael) in Poland, who gave him the following information: "At the age of 17, August had firmly resolved to lead a life that was totally spiritual, to live continually in the presence of God and to do all his actions in the most perfect way. From then on, he was totally indifferent towards worldly things and the enticements of the riches, honors and pleasures of this world."

In July of 1877, August and Joseph said good-bye to each other at Le Havre, France. Joseph Kalinowski went to Poland and August went to Asturianos, Spain as guest of the royal family of Spain. At the diocesan process, a cousin in Spain deposed the following: "August impressed me with his spirit of piety, as it was edifying to see a young man of nineteen assist at Mass every morning and spend time in meditation before the crucifix." Another cousin had a similar impression: "He was very pious, made his meditation every morning, confessed and received Communion frequently. I also noticed how lovingly he treated the servants and the poor people, who were working in the house. Everyone loved him."

In the fall August returned to Davos in the company of his new master, Fr. Stanislaus Kubowicz, who helped him further along in his spiritual life. It was evident that August was working seriously at personal holiness. In Paris Fr. Pitot was his spiritual director, to whom he gave a written account of his spiritual life every month.

Meeting Don Bosco – 1883

In 1883, Princess Margaret d'Orleans, the second wife of Ladislaus Czartoryski, invited Don Bosco to celebrate a Mass in their private chapel in Lambert Palace. Don Bosco was in Paris at the time to raise money and visited them on May 18. August and his father served the Mass, and from that day on August's religious vocation began to grow. His meeting with Don Bosco gave it a definitive direction.

August was struck by the first words of Don Bosco: "For a long time I have been anxious to meet you." There was no mention of a possible vocation then. But August was so won over by Don Bosco's manner that he began writing to him and even enclosed donations. The first note written by Don Bosco to August was precisely one of thanks, dated October 4, 1883. It was written in French and read: "With deepest gratitude I have received the sum of one thousand lire which Your Highness sent for our orphans. The boys and I will pray and will receive Holy Communion for your intentions, asking for God's graces and blessings upon you."

Whenever he could, August would go to Turin to meet Don Bosco and seek his advice and counsel. He made several retreats with Don Bosco's Salesians. On his part, Don Bosco was very cautious, and he never openly encouraged August to join the Congregation. Prince Ladislaus wanted his son to take to worldly ways, get married and assist his countrymen, who had been dispersed to other countries since the partition of Poland. Though he counseled August to obey his father, Don Bosco made it clear to August's father that "if God's will were contrary to yours, you should not oppose it."

By April of 1887, August went to Turin and begged Don Bosco to admit him into the Congregation. Don Bosco was on his way to Rome for the blessing of the basilica of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which he had built at great personal sacrifice. August followed him to Rome, where he met with Pope Leo XIII. He expressed to the Pope his desire to become a Salesian and also Don Bosco's hesitation to accept him. The Pope told him to "go back to Turin and tell Don Bosco that it is the will of the Pope that you be received into his society. You, on your part, persevere in your vocation and pray much." Regarding the objection of the family, the Pope simply said, "First and foremost, do God's will."

From Paris, August informed Don Bosco of the objections of his family about his vocation, but added, "I am determined to do God's will. I want to come to Turin as soon as possible." He willingly renounced his rights in favor of his brothers.

Don Bosco relented, and August arrived in Turin by the end of June of 1887, and was sent to San Benigno Canavese. On August 15, August wrote to his aunt, Mother Mary Saverina, a Carmelite nun in Poland: "I want to be a priest in a congregation rather than a diocesan priest. More precisely, my vocation is to be a Salesian." August received the religious habit from Don Bosco's hands on November 17, just two months before Don Bosco died. August had none of the anxieties and doubts to which many entering the novitiate are subjected. He freely made all the renunciations of comfort and convenience as well as medical attention and begged to be admitted to the common life. Though he found it to be very difficult, August adapted himself to this new lifestyle totally. At the end of his novitiate, he made his profession on October 2, 1888, to Fr. Michael Rua, Don Bosco's successor.

Friendship with Beltrami

After his profession, August remained at Valsalice, where he had already spent part of his novitiate. Soon afterwards he was admitted to the study of theology. Here he developed a spiritual friendship with the seminarian Andrew Beltrami, though they were quite different in temperament, education and culture. In the summer of 1889, August had to be taken to a more agreeable climate and needed assistance. Beltrami was chosen to accompany him. The two young candidates for the priesthood had placed their lives on the altar of suffering. In a sense, they were preparing themselves for a way of life that, at first sight, would seem alien to a normal Salesian life. But this forced inactive and solitary life, though painful, became a very fruitful apostolate for these two young Salesians.

By nature August was gentle and kind, but showed great courage in upholding and defending his Salesian vocation. He had to contend with the constant psychological "persecution" carried on by his family, who were trying their best to make him leave the Salesians. The family had recourse to Cardinal Parocchi, requesting that he use his influence to get August to abandon his vocation. They presumed that, somehow, August was enticed by the Salesians to join them.

But August wrote the Cardinal: "My family speaks of my Salesian vocation as something doubtful, and presume that I was forced into the Congregation, almost against my own will. But, Your Eminence, I must tell you that I am over thirty years old and capable of understanding my own rights and duties. I did not enter the Congregation without full knowledge of what I was doing, nor did I let others influence me in this decision.

"I loved Don Bosco while he was alive. And I esteemed his Congregation from the day I came to know him in Paris. I thought about my vocation for a long time, and I asked several times to be admitted into the Congregation before Don Bosco finally accepted me. My superiors did not use any moral force. I did everything of my own free will. I consider my entering the Salesian Congregation a special grace from God, and I want to live in this state, willed by God for me." Though Prince Ladislaus did not relent in his fight to get his son back to the family, August was always respectful to his father.

While this opposition left August with a heavy heart, he was ordained at San Remo, Italy, on April 2, 1892, by Bishop Thomas Reggio of Ventimiglia. Although the family was not present to see him ordained a priest, they did come together at Mentone a month later. August celebrated Mass for them and gave them Communion. There was a bit of tacit reconciliation between Ladislaus and the Salesian Congregation, which, he claimed, had "robbed" him and Poland of his son August.

Earthly end

August's priestly life lasted barely a year. Cardinal John Cagliero summarized his life: "He was no longer of this world. His union with God, conformity to God's will even in the most crucial moments of sickness, and his desire to be with Christ in suffering and affliction, made August heroic in patience, calm in spirit and invincible in his love for God." Fr. Julius Barberis shared Cardinal Cagliero's views and said: "When I met him at Alassio, where he spent the last months of his life, I had the impression that he was not a man of this world. He was still in this world, but deeply rooted in God."

August died of cardiac arrest on Easter Saturday, April 8, 1893, while he was resting in a chair used by Don Bosco when he would visit at Alassio. August was not able to celebrate Mass the final two days before his death. He did, however, receive Communion. Otherwise, the daily tempo of his life remained unchanged. He was thirty-four years old.

His mortal remains were moved to Poland and interred in the family tomb in the parish of Sieniawa, where he had first received Communion. Later his remains were transferred to the Salesian church of St. Joseph in Przemysl.

IMPORTANT DATES

1858	Birth in Paris	August 2
1867	Visited Poland	
1883	Met Don Bosco in Paris	May 18
1888	Religious profession	October 2
1892	Priestly ordination	April 2
1893	Death	April 8
1921	Beginning of the process	February 14
1978	Declared venerable	December 1
2004	Declared blessed	April 25

Blessed
EUSEBIA PALOMINO, FMA
(1899 – 1935)

Introduction

In 1931, on the eve of the Spanish revolution, Sr. Eusebia Palomino, FMA, offered herself to God as a victim for the salvation of her brothers and sisters in Spain. What was the driving force behind the spirituality of this sister, who died at the tender age of thirty-five? The Church recognizes her as blessed because of her deep relationship with God, rather than for great works. Like August Czartoryski, she did not have a long life to work on perfection. What these two young people lacked in longevity, they made up in a burning spirit of love for God and their fellow human beings.

Early Life

Pooling together their poverty, Juana and Augustine Palomino of Cantalpino, Salamanca, Spain, were married in 1892 and blessed with five children. Only three lived beyond childhood. Augustine never had a permanent job but was often employed as a cowhand by the local ranchers.

Eusebia was born on December 15, 1899, and baptized on the 20th. Her godmother, her aunt Anita, is also mentioned in her letters. Eusebia was aware of the family's poverty, but she used it for good to arouse the good will of the rich towards the poor. She referred to herself as the "little mendicant of God."

The family, though poor in material goods, was greatly endowed in human and Christian virtues. The house they lived in lacked the basic amenities of life but was brightened up by their integrity and spirit of faith. They bore their poverty with resignation and good cheer. At the age of five or six, Eusebia was already drawing water from the well. At seven she began to attend school, but sheer poverty forced her to withdraw from school at a very early age.

Because of a hand injury, Augustine was no longer able to work. So, seven-year-old Eusebia went with her father from village to village, humbly asking for help in order to survive the cold winters of Castile. Eusebia enjoyed the outings and reached out her little hand, acknowledging any gift, no matter how small, with a charming smile. From the age of eight to twelve, Eusebia worked as a babysitter and domestic in a local family, which prevented her from taking part in the carefree pastimes of other girls her age.

The possibilities of work in Cantalpino were exhausted, and Eusebia followed her sister, Dolores, to Salamanca. She was employed as governess for a while but became homesick. She returned home, but her mother convinced her to go back to her sister and find some employment, which she did as a maid in a hospice for poor and abandoned old people. Near the hospice, an elderly lady lived all alone, unable to look after herself. As soon as Eusebia was free, she would visit her and take care of her needs.

The Salesian Sisters

One Sunday Eusebia went to enroll in the oratory of the Salesian Sisters. Upon entering the chapel, she approached the statue of Mary Help of Christians, and she realized that Mary was telling her, "I want you here. You will be my daughter." But, because of her poverty, it was a very distant chance that she would ever become a sister. However, the sisters did invite Eusebia to stay in the convent as a domestic worker. In early December of 1917, she began working in the convent and did all her work with a serene smile, even when she was treated harshly.

Eusebia stated in all simplicity: "I kept busy cleaning the house, helping in the kitchen, doing laundry, bringing in firewood, accompanying the boarders to their schools, and carrying out various errands. But amidst so many occupations, I was happy. Neither the fatigue nor the small wounds of chilblains made me unhappy. Rather I was glad that I had something to offer to the Lord."

Rosa Alonso recalled: "I was a student at the school when Eusebia came to the convent. As she was drawing water from the well, my companion and I greeted her, and she returned the greeting. At once we were drawn to her gentle figure, so much so that, every day on coming to school, we looked for her, to listen to her and observe the expressions on her face." Eusebia spoke with such simplicity and conviction that her demeanor enchanted the girls.

From Eusebia's own writings, we know that she was not immune to difficulties. "During the time that I was with the sisters, I lived with several conflicts. I didn't know if I could ever realize my dream of becoming a sister. My mother kept telling me that I could be good and serve God just as well in marriage. And even though I did not like the world, at times I felt attracted to it."

On January 31, 1922, Eusebia was accepted as a postulant without dowry. Though at first her mother was resistant to her vocation, later on she gave her blessing.

On August 5, 1922, she received the religious habit and began the two-year novitiate. On the vigil of Easter, 1924, a few months before her profession in August, she tripped over her apron while hastily climbing the cellar stairs. A bottle she was carrying broke and a large piece cut into her arm, severing a vein. It was difficult to stop the bleeding and she was very near death, due to loss of blood. She struggled for two months, but eventually got well. She made her profession of vows as a Salesian Sister in August of 1924.

Eusebia spent the rest of her life at Valverde del Camino, a small town in the southwest of Spain. Her superior was Sister Carmen Moreno, who was later martyred during the Spanish Civil War in Barcelona on September 1, 1936, and is now a blessed. Eusebia performed duties as cook, doorkeeper, housekeeper and assistant of the Oratory. The other five sisters taught in the school. The girls, who at first sight saw her as a simple plain looking, uninteresting sister, soon came under her fascinating spell.

Eusebia spoke to the girls about spiritual matters in such a way that they were drawn by her enthusiasm and conviction. Her humility and kindness allowed them to experience the mysterious attraction of her sanctity. Many of those girls became Salesian postulants, and Mother Corvi, the provincial, would ask them where they were coming from. "From Valverde," was their quick response. "But what is special about Valverde that so many of you come from there?" she asked. They answered, "There is a sister in the convent, who works in the kitchen and tells us simple and interesting stories." They were referring to Sister Eusebia.

When first meeting Sister Eusebia, the students and oratory girls described her as small, pale, thin and quite ordinary with big hands and an ugly name. But in a few days they would run in search of her, willingly help her in her work and listen to her every word. God made use of this humble servant to grant many extraordinary graces to many people, both inside and outside the convent.

Facts and anecdotes about Sr. Eusebia were quickly making the rounds of the region. Sisters, priests, girls and seminarians were coming to seek her counsel, as she simply went about her daily chores. She listened to all, reassured them, encouraged some to persevere in their vocation and directed others to their true calling. She remained faithful to her ideal of personal holiness and the salvation of souls by making time to use every occasion as a spiritual moment. Eusebia put life before theory, and the girls understood her language perfectly, a heart overflowing with God's wisdom.

In the 1930's, Spain went through terrible political turmoil. In those days of trial, Eusebia offered herself to God as a victim for the salvation of her country and the safety of the Church. The Lord accepted her offering. For the next three years she experienced acute suffering. Soon, her asthma worsened and became unbearable. On the 24 of January, 1935, Sr. Eusebia took a turn for the worse. She consigned her soul to God in the early hours of the morning on February 10, 1935, at the age of thirty-five.

The sisters placed her remains in the chapel of the school, where an immense crowd from the municipality came to pay their respects. Sister Eusebia was buried in the cemetery at Valverde. In 1983 her remains were transferred to the school of Mary Help of Christians, where she had spent her entire religious life as a Salesian Sister.

As in life, so in death, people thought of Eusebia as a saint. On March 12, 1935, the parish priest of Cantalpino wrote an extraordinary page in honor of Sister Eusebia in the book of pastoral visitation: "Very remarkable things are being narrated about her. I will only copy parts of a letter, which is dated March 8 of this year. It is written by the Superior of the college at Valverde, Sr. Carmen Moreno, and is addressed to Sr. Eusebia's mother. Sr. Carmen says, 'In the midst of great sorrow, the Lord has given me the consolation of closing her eyes. I was the one who recorded everything as a witness to her saintly death. But before dying, she saw Mary Help of Christians; our Founder, St. John Bosco; Dominic Savio, the saintly pupil of Don Bosco; and heaven itself, which in her great joy she was unable to describe.' (The parish priest of her hometown continues) Here, at Cantalpino, we also celebrated a solemn funeral on March 11, 1935, at which the authorities and very many people attended."

Although the preparations for the process of Sister's canonization started as early as January 1967, it was officially inaugurated on April 12, 1982. On December 17, 1996, Pope John Paul II signed the official decree of the heroic nature of her virtues, declaring her venerable. On April 25, 2004, Pope John Paul II declared Eusebia blessed.

Eusebia's spirituality

The eighty-eight letters written by Sister Eusebia are mostly to her parents. Sister Carmen Moreno was the superior of the school of Valverde from 1925 to 1935 and she gathered these letters into a book, which forms Sister Eusebia's most precious legacy. They reveal her knowledge of the Scriptures and her endless domestic chores.

Her letters were an extension of herself, revealing her constant commitment to sanctity, passionate love of Christ, concern for the salvation of souls and a profound Eucharistic and Marian devotion. Throughout, we read of her love of the missions, religious vocations, conversion of sinners, Christian education, and souls in purgatory.

In one such letter she writes about the true meaning of sanctity: "True sanctity does not consist in praying in a corner, disciplining oneself, or in doing great things. No! True sanctity consists in renunciation, in following in all things the common life and in the exact fulfillment of our duties. Here is where we must seek sanctity and draw many hearts to God by means of our self-denial."

The girls she befriended experienced this attitude in her and knew what a great saint she was.

Important Dates

1899	Birth at Cantalpino, Spain	December 15
1917	A domestic in FMA convent	December
1922	Investiture as a novice	August 5
1924	Religious profession	August
1935	Death	February 10
1982	Beginning of the Process	April 12
1996	Declared venerable	December 17
2004	Declared blessed	April 25

Blessed
ALESSANDRINA MARIA DA COSTA
(1904 – 1955)

Introduction

Alessandrina is one of those unique mystics that can take the seemingly miserable conditions of a permanent situation in life and transform it into a marvelous work of God. Paralyzed as a teenager for defending her honor, she spent the last thirty years of life bedridden, unable to care for herself. Through the influence of her Salesian chaplain, she became a Cooperator and offered her life for all Salesians and their work.

Early Life

“I was born in the parish of Balazar, Porto, Portugal, on March 30, 1904. It was Wednesday in Holy Week. I was baptized on Holy Saturday, April 2.” So begins the diary of Alessandra Maria da Costa, familiarly known as Alessandrina.

Balazar was a bright countryside with a population of about a thousand people, who lived in scattered stone houses amidst the shade of pine trees and tall vines. The parish church was at the foot of a rocky hill. A short distance away was an old rustic chapel and a large cross, fixed in the ground. It was near this chapel, on a small plateau called *Calvario*, that Alessandrina lived for fifty-one years. She left only once; when she traveled about nine miles to Povia De Varzim, which lies on the Atlantic coast. She reveled in the beauty of the ocean waves.

Alessandrina had an older sister, Diolinda, of whom she was very fond. Her mother managed the family and its meager income. Alessandrina, unlike Diolinda, was a handful. Her mother said that she was like a nanny goat, running about and climbing everything. She liked to play practical jokes. The playful girl would throw small stones at the whispering matrons of the town as they returned from church.

Alessandrina was cheerful but not thoughtless. She worked around the house as any girl of her age, splitting firewood, singing songs, or doing laundry at the brook. She could not imagine an untidy Jesus. "To my way of thinking," she would say, "the Lord does not want us to be unclean, neither in the body nor in the soul."

When she was twelve, Alessandrina went to work in the household of a neighbor. The master was cruel and demanded work from her that was beyond her strength. He spoke and acted toward her in a very indecent way. She said, "For no reason, he would insult and humiliate me in front of everyone. I was young and cheerful by nature, but I now felt so much bitterness." After some five months, she could no longer put up with the situation and left that household. She returned home and worked in the fields.

Alessandrina was now fourteen and had grown into a beautiful girl. While she was knitting at home with her sister and another girl, her previous employer, along with two other scoundrels, approached the house looking for the girls. Alessandrina managed to jump out a window and immediately got up, grabbed a stick and went back to the house to defend her sister and friend. Yelling and swinging the stick, the three girls managed to send the three men off. The girls resumed their knitting. A short time later, a severe pain forced Alessandrina to her bed, where she was to remain for a long time. It seems that she injured her spine when she jumped out the window. This seemingly small injury was to take its toll on the rest of her life.

She had a difficult time reconciling the fact that she was sick and sought to find some cure. But her strength began to decline steadily. The doctors told her that she would be paralyzed for life. At the age of nineteen, she was confined to bed, never to get up again. Her older sister, Diolinda, cared for Alessandrina for the next thirty years. Gradually, she was drawn to prayer and a desire to live in union with Jesus. Her longing for a cure diminished as she felt a growing love for people who were in danger of losing their souls.

Sharing in Christ's passion

It was at this point that the mysterious grace of God began its work in Alessandrina. He was transforming her disabled body into a mystical victim at the side of Jesus crucified. It was a long and tedious journey. She began to offer her life to Christ for the conversion of sinners and for peace in the world. She wrote, "I have no other aim but to give glory to God and to save souls for Him."

It was on October 3, 1938, that Alessandrina experienced the passion of Christ for the first time. On every Friday for the next four years until March 24, 1942, she lived the passion for three hours. She offered herself as a victim for peace.

On April 3, 1942, her condition worsened. She went into a very painful mystical experience. From then until her death thirteen years later, she lived only on Communion, which she received daily.

The Salesians

On June 21, 1944, Alessandrina made the acquaintance of Father Umberto Pasquale, a Salesian priest, who was to be her spiritual director until her death. He began to gather the large amount of documentation that she had dictated to several people. Over a period of eleven years he would file it into 5,000 pages and put it on magnetic tapes. The Cardinal Archbishop of Lisbon, Emmanuel Carejeira, gave his moral support. He was happy to have his name associated with that of Alessandrina.

Alessandrina became a Salesian Cooperator, and in 1945 Fr. Pasquale brought the membership certificate to her. She had it placed where she could always have a view of it. She said, "I feel a great sense of union with the Salesians and the Cooperators. I often fix my gaze on the certificate and offer my suffering for the salvation of the young. I love the Congregation so much that I will never forget it here or in heaven."

Near the certificate, Alessandrina kept an enlarged photo of the Salesian novitiate chapel in Mogofores, so that she could be united with the religious services of that community. She was the suffering sister of Salesian novices, who were preparing to continue the mission of Don Bosco in the world. She wrote them, "I have you all in my heart. Have confidence. Jesus will always be with you. You can count on me now and also later in heaven, where I will await you. In your charity pray for me as I do for you. Yours, Alessandrina."

Alessandrina's eyesight steadily weakened, and she had to resign herself to remain in the dark, as she could not bear a single ray of light. She would call her room *my dark prison*. On October 13, 1955, she whispered to a group near her, "Do not commit sin. This world is worth nothing at all. Receive Holy Communion often; recite the Rosary each day. Farewell, and we will see each other in heaven." That very evening she passed away while uttering the words, "I go to heaven." The small village of Balazar has now become a favored place for pilgrims, who seek the home of Alessandrina Maria da Costa, Salesian Cooperator.

The diocesan tribunal of Braga began the process of sainthood for Alessandrina on January 14, 1967. She was declared venerable on December 21, 1995, and blessed on the 25 of April 2004.

Important Dates

1904	Birth at Balazar, Portugal	March 30
1918	Paralyzed for life	
1938	Experienced the passion till 1942	
1942	Lived only on Communion till death	
1945	Salesian Cooperator	
1955	Death	October 13
1967	Beginning of the process	January 14
1995	Declared venerable	December 21
2004	Declared blessed	April 25

A Family of Holiness

Saints

Father John Bosco
Sister Mary Domenica Mazzarello
Student Dominic Savio
Bishop Louis Versiglia
Father Callistus Caravario

Blesseds

Father Michael Rua
Student Laura Vicuna
Father Philip Rinaldi
Sister Madeline Morano
Father Joseph Kowalski and 5 Oratorian young men
Father Joseph Marques Calasanz and 31 companions
Father Louis Variara
Brother Artemides Zatti
Sister Maria Meneses Romero
Father August Czartoryski
Sister Eusebia Palomino
Cooperator Alessandrina Da Costa

Venerables

Father Andrew Beltram
Student Ceferin Namuncura
Sister Teresa Pantellini Valse
Cooperator Dorothy Chopitea
Monsignor Vincent Cimatti
Brother Simon Srugi
Father Rudolph Komorek

Servants of God

Father Henry Aparicio Saiz and 62 companions
Bishop Louis Olivares
Sister Maria Troncatti
Sister Laura Meozzi
Father Joseph Quadrio
Mama Margaret Bosco
Cooperator Attilio Giordani
Cardinal August Hlond
Father Ignatius Stuchly
Bishop Ottavio Ortiz
Father Elias Comini
Monsignor Anthony Lustosa
Father Joseph Arribat
Father Francis Convertini
Matilda Salem
Father Joseph Vandor
Father John Swierc and 7 companions



August Czartoryski

*"I loved Don Bosco
while he was alive.
And I esteemed his
congregation from the
day I came to know
him in Paris."*



Alessandrina da Costa

*"I have you all in my
heart. Have confidence.
Jesus will always be
with you. You can
count on me now and
later in heaven."*



Eusebia Palomino

*"True sanctity consists
in renunciation, in
following the common
life and in the exact
fulfillment of our
duties."*

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