 Reading time: 13 min.

A cross that appeared in 1832 on the earth of Balasar, Portugal, awaited, seventy years before she was born, the person for whom it had been placed. Alexandrina Maria da Costa (1904-1955) threw herself from a window at the age of fourteen to defend her purity and lived the last thirty years nailed to a bed. From there she relived the passion of Jesus every Friday, for thirteen years she nourished herself solely on the Eucharist, obtained from Pius XII the consecration of the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and welcomed thousands of visitors with a smile that hid her martyrdom. A Salesian Cooperator since 1944, she was beatified in 2004. This novena – ***to suffer, to love, to make reparation*** *– accompanies the prayer of the Salesian Family for the miracle we await to open the way for her canonization.*

NOVENA to Blessed Alexandrina Maria DA COSTA

Salesian Cooperator

To obtain the miracle necessary for her canonization

“To suffer, to love, to make reparation”

Balasar, 30 March 1904 – 13 October 1955

How to pray this novena

Every day this order is followed: the testimony of the day, the invocation of the day, the concluding prayer. The novena can be prayed individually or in community, in the family, beside the bed of a sick person or before the Blessed Sacrament.

At the end of the invocations, mentally, each person can ask for a personal grace,

or – in agreement with others – a special grace.

Those who wish may add each day the recitation of a mystery of the rosary and a Eucharistic communion, according to the two recommendations that Blessed Alexandrina left to her last visitors on the very day of her death.

Extraordinary graces obtained through the intercession of Blessed Alexandrina Maria da Costa must be communicated to the Salesian General Postulation (postulatore@sdb.org or gracasalexandrinabalazar@gmail.com): their documentation is essential for the progress of the cause.

Suggested times for the celebration: the nine days preceding 13 October, the anniversary of her death (‘dies natalis’) or the nine days preceding 25 April, the anniversary of her beatification (2004); or, in Lent, the nine days preceding Good Friday, in reference to 27 March 1942, the beginning of her Eucharistic fast; or whenever one wishes to ask for a grace through the intercession of Blessed Alexandrina.

FIRST DAY – The cross was ready, the victim was missing

The cross of Balasar, which appeared on the day of Corpus Christi in 1832 along the road of the hamlet called “Calvary”

“Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you” (Jer 1:5).

Testimony

On the day of Corpus Christi in 1832, when the people of Balasar were returning to their homes, after the celebration of Mass and the liturgical procession, they noticed that there was a cross imprinted directly on the earth, leading to the place called Calvary.

No broom and no water could erase it. The event was remembered and handed down from generation to generation, but no one understood its meaning. Seventy-two years later, on 30 March 1904, Alexandrina Maria da Costa was born in Balasar.

When she was already lying motionless in her bed, she was given to understand that that sign concerned her: the cross had been prepared beforehand, and was only waiting for someone to let themselves be nailed to it.

The pilgrims who today go up to the parish of Balasar to pray, walk the same path on which the cross had appeared almost two centuries earlier.

Invocation

Lord Jesus, You announce first and then You wait. You prepare the place, arrange the time, and wait for a free creature to pronounce their yes. You did thus in Nazareth with Mary, so in Balasar with Alexandrina, so You do with each of us. Give us eyes capable of recognizing the signs You sow along our most ordinary paths, and the patience of those who let Your design mature in Your time and not in our time. Look upon those who cannot read their own history and judge it only as chance; the young who seek their vocation and fear the answer; those who carry a cross they did not choose and cannot glimpse its meaning. Grant that we do not let Your calls fall on deaf ears. Grant us the grace we ask of You. You who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

Our Father…, Hail Mary…, Glory Be…

Blessed Alexandrina Maria, pray for us.

SECOND DAY – Rather the void than sin

The defence of purity: the leap from the window, Holy Saturday 1918

“Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit?” (1 Cor 6:19).

Testimony

On Holy Saturday 1918, Alexandrina turned fourteen. She was sewing at home with her sister Deolinda and a young apprentice, while her mother was away. Three men forced the door to enter the house. To escape them, Alexandrina threw herself from the window: a leap of about four metres. She survived, but the injuries she sustained to her spine never healed, and from that day her health progressively worsened until definitive paralysis. She did not report her attackers and never spoke of them with resentment. Years later, knowing that the main culprit had fallen into extreme poverty, she sent him help; and that man, weeping, would repeat to anyone who approached him that Alexandrina was a saint and that she was nailed to that bed because of him.

Invocation

Lord Jesus, You accepted the defence that that young girl made of her own body as one defends a temple, and You allowed her to pay the price for it every day for thirty-one years. Teach us that purity is not a sad rule, but the transparency of one who truly loves, and that there are goods for which it is worth losing everything else. Look upon the young people of today, exposed and often alone, and give them a clear fortitude. Look upon those who have suffered violence and carry in their body or memory a wound that no one sees; those who cannot forgive; those who have done wrong and no longer dare to hope in Your forgiveness. Give families the courage to educate in chastity without shame and without harshness. Grant us the grace we ask of You. You who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

Our Father…, Hail Mary…, Glory Be…

Blessed Alexandrina Maria, pray for us.

THIRD DAY – A life destroyed, remade in Jesus

14 April 1925: definitive immobility and surrender to God's design

"Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain" (Jn 12:24).

Testimony

On 14 April 1925, at the age of twenty-one, Alexandrina took to her bed and never got up again. She had thirty years of complete immobility left. She had been a cheerful girl, who worked in the fields, sang in church, and taught catechism. She expected to recover and planned to leave as a missionary. For years she insistently asked for healing, and in 1928, she prepared for a pilgrimage to Fatima which she was later prevented from making: it was the last human hope to fall. From then on, she stopped asking for health and began to ask only for the will of God. She went so far as to say that she would not exchange her pain for anything in the world, and every year she celebrated that 14 April as a wedding anniversary. By her side, during all those years, watched her sister Deolinda, a tireless assistant.

Invocation

Lord Jesus, You let Alexandrina's plans fall one by one, and when she had nothing of her own left, You began to build. When our plans also collapse, do not allow us to confuse the end of our projects with the end of our lives. Look upon those who today are nailed to a bed, to a wheelchair, to a diagnosis of no return; those who have lost their jobs, their health, their loved ones, and can no longer imagine a tomorrow; the young whose dreams have been shattered too soon; those who care for a sick person and can no longer cope. Sustain those who care in silence, without expecting a reward. Teach us to pass from the desire for healing to the acceptance of Your will, without running away and without despair. Grant us the grace we ask of You. You who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

Our Father…, Hail Mary…, Glory Be…

Blessed Alexandrina Maria, pray for us.

FOURTH DAY – To suffer, to love, to make reparation

The offering of herself as a victim of expiation and participation in the Passion of Jesus

“I complete in my flesh what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions” (Col 1:24).

Testimony

Alexandrina accepted in prayer the request to offer herself as a victim for the conversion of sinners, for peace, for priests, and for the sick. She handed over her hands, her feet, her head, her heart, her whole body, without knowing what that yes would entail. From 3 October 1938 to 27 March 1942, every Friday for more than a hundred and eighty times, she relived in her own body the passion of Christ, from the agony in the garden to Calvary, stopping only short of the “Consummatum est”. For about three hours, she remained alienated from her senses and repeated the gestures and words of the suffering Lord. Once this cycle was finished, she continued to bear the same suffering in a hidden form for the rest of her life, without anyone noticing. Questioned out of obedience about how heavy the cross she carried was, she replied that it had a worldwide weight. She summarised her programme in three words: to suffer, to love, to make reparation.

Invocation

Lord Jesus, You made Alexandrina a sharer in Your passion and accepted her offering for the salvation of sinners, for peace, for priests and for the sick. Teach us that no offered pain is lost, that suffering united to Yours is fruitful, and that the Church, Your body, is also built up with what we judge useless and wasted. Look upon those who suffer without knowing why and find no meaning in their pain; the terminally ill and those who accompany them; those who are tempted to judge their lives as already over and worthless. Give Your Church souls capable of making reparation, who offer with love what others suffer with anger. To us, who flee from the smallest adversity, grant a little of this courage: to suffer, to love, to make reparation. Grant us the grace we ask of You. You who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

Our Father…, Hail Mary…, Glory Be…

Blessed Alexandrina Maria, pray for us.

FIFTH DAY – You did not choose him: it was I who sent him to you

The gift of spiritual guidance: Father Mariano Pinho and Father Umberto Pasquale. Entry into the Salesian Cooperators

“How can I understand, unless someone guides me?” (Acts 8:31).

Testimony

In 1934, the Jesuit Father Mariano Pinho became Alexandrina’s spiritual director and for years accompanied her journey, submitting the extraordinary events to the examination of ecclesiastical authority. When he was forbidden to continue, she

obeyed without recrimination. She was then entrusted to the Salesian Father Umberto Pasquale, who understood her, defended her from those who ridiculed her, enrolled her in 1944 among the Salesian Cooperators, and ordered her to continue dictating her diary. To this obedience, we owe the thousands of pages preserved today and the documentation that initiated her cause. Alexandrina wanted her cooperator's diploma to be hung where she could always see it, and from that bed she prayed for the Salesians and for the salvation of youth. Father Pasquale was also taken from her, and her only response was: let us obey, praised be God.

Invocation

Lord Jesus, it is You who choose and send guides, and You made this clearly known to Alexandrina: it was not she who had chosen her own spiritual director. Give Your Church learned and holy priests, capable of accompanying without taking Your place. Look upon those who walk alone, without anyone to help them discern, and those who have been wounded precisely by those who were supposed to accompany them. Bless the Salesian Family and the Cooperators scattered throughout the world, so that they may rediscover in this humble virgin the high measure of their lay vocation. And grant us the docility of those who let themselves be guided and serene obedience even when what was dearest to us is taken away. Grant us the grace we ask of You. You who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

Our Father…, Hail Mary…, Glory Be…

Blessed Alexandrina Maria, pray for us.

SIXTH DAY – Mummy

Devotion to Mary: the Children of Mary, the month of May, the first Saturdays, the rosary

'Here is your mother. And from that hour the disciple took her into his home' (Jn

19:27).

Testimony

Alexandrina called the Virgin ‘Mummy’, with the confidence of a little girl. On 18 October 1933, she was enrolled among the Children of Mary. She awaited the month of May as a great event and closed it with nostalgia; she observed the devotion of the first Saturdays of the month; she saved up for a long time, giving up a lot, to be able to buy a small statue of Our Lady of Fatima to keep near her bed. When the suffering became unbearable, she did not ask Mary to be spared from it, but to help Jesus crucify her, so that nothing would remain in her that was not crucified. She wanted a cross and a statue of Our Lady to be placed on her tomb. She died on 13 October 1955, the anniversary of the last apparition of Fatima, after having urged visitors to pray the rosary every day.

Invocation

Lord Jesus, from the cross you entrusted your Mother to the disciples, and you wanted Alexandrina to call her by the simplest and most tender name – Mummy. Grant us too this trusting and strong familiarity with Her. Look upon families who have stopped praying together; upon those who have not known the tenderness of a mother and struggle to believe in Yours; upon those who live Marian devotion superficially and those who despise it without knowing it. Grant the sick the consolation that Alexandrina received on the first Saturdays of the month, and to us fidelity to those small daily practices that keep faith alive when feeling is lacking. Through the hands of Mary, we present our supplication to You. Grant us the grace we ask of You. You who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

Our Father…, Hail Mary…, Glory Be…

Blessed Alexandrina Maria, pray for us.

SEVENTH DAY – Let my name not appear

The mission to ask the Holy Father for the consecration of the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary

‘Do whatever he tells you’ (Jn 2:5).

Testimony

On 1 August 1935, Alexandrina received in prayer the task of asking the Pope for the consecration of the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. She could not write; she could not leave the house nor receive anyone. She dictated her letters, which Father Pinho passed on to Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli, then Secretary of State, and supported the request with offered suffering. Seven years passed, with examinations and verifications by the envoys of the Holy See and with the supplication of the Portuguese bishops gathered in Fatima. On 31 October 1942, Pius XII consecrated the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary with a radio message in Portuguese, and renewed the act in Rome on the following 8 December. When Alexandrina learned that others had asked for the same thing, she rejoiced: this way her name would never appear.

Invocation

Lord Jesus, You accomplish your works through instruments that the world does not count, and You use offered suffering more than the influence of the powerful. Teach us to serve without demanding a signature under what you accomplish through us. Support the Holy Father and those in the Church who bear the weight of decisions; look upon peoples at war and those who work for peace without seeing its fruits; remember the nations that have distanced themselves from You. Bless those who do good whose name no one will ever know: catechists, fathers and mothers of

families, cloistered religious, the sick who offer their pain in silence. Make us persevering like her, who waited seven years for an answer without growing tired. Grant us the grace we ask of You. You who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

Our Father…, Hail Mary…, Glory Be…

Blessed Alexandrina Maria, pray for us.

EIGHTH DAY – I eat: I receive communion, and it is enough for me

Apostle of the Eucharist: adoration and thanksgiving. The gift of inedia

‘Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life’ (Jn 6:54).

Testimony

Alexandrina had made her first communion at the age of seven and considered the Eucharist the centre of her day. On sleepless nights, she made a spiritual pilgrimage from one tabernacle to another, to keep Jesus company in place of those who forget Him, and called Him Prisoner for love. On 27 March 1942, Good Friday, she ceased to be able to ingest any food or drink. For thirteen years and seven months, until her death, she fed solely on the consecrated Host, while hunger and thirst never left her. In 1943, she was subjected to forty days of continuous clinical observation. The doctors, some of whom were totally unbelieving, had to attest that the fact had no natural explanation. To those who tempted her with food, she replied that she ate, because she received communion, and that this was enough for her.

Invocation

Lord Jesus, true God and true man, present in the Most Holy Sacrament, You wanted to be the only nourishment of this daughter of yours for thirteen years, so that the world would remember what it truly lives on. Increase our faith in your real presence and free us from the habit that makes the greatest gift meaningless. Support the priests who celebrate the holy mysteries every day; look upon those who approach communion without thinking and those who cannot receive it. Console the sick and the elderly who wait a long time for someone to bring You to them. Raise up true adorers in the Church, who make reparation for profanations, irreverence and, above all, indifference. Teach us to give thanks after communion without haste and without distraction. Grant us the grace we ask of You. You who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

Our Father…, Hail Mary…, Glory Be…

Blessed Alexandrina Maria, pray for us.

NINTH DAY – A smile on the lips, martyrdom in the soul

Apostle from the bed: the little room in Balasar became a pulpit

‘Power is made perfect in weakness’ (2 Cor 12:9).

Testimony

In the last years of her life, Alexandrina’s room became a pilgrimage destination. Hundreds of people a day went up to Balasar, on certain occasions thousands, and

almost no one left as they had come. She received them all, listened, spoke to each one the word they needed, and no one suspected how much this cost her. She had asked the Lord for a smile capable of deceiving, under which she could hide her inner martyrdom. On 13 October 1955, a few hours before dying, she again urged visitors not to sin, to receive communion frequently, to pray the rosary every day, and she took her leave by making an appointment in Heaven. On her tomb was engraved the testament she had dictated: if the ashes of her body could serve to save sinners, let them approach and trample on them, provided they no longer offended Jesus.

Invocation

Lord Jesus, You told Alexandrina that she could not go in search of souls, and that for this reason souls would come to her. Teach us that one can evangelise whilst staying still, and that the first proclamation is a serene face. Look upon those who already consider themselves useless: the lonely elderly, the chronically ill, people with disabilities, prisoners, those who in the eyes of the world no longer produce anything. Give them the certainty that their life is still fruitful and necessary to the Church. Support those who assist, those who visit, those who bring communion to homes and hospitals. And give us too her secret: to smile at pain, not to pretend, but so as not to weigh on others and to let your love pass through. Grant us the grace we ask of You. You who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

Our Father…, Hail Mary…, Glory Be…

Blessed Alexandrina Maria, pray for us.

Concluding prayer *(to be recited every day)*

Lord Jesus Christ, Lamb slain for the salvation of the world, you chose a poor

daughter of Portugal, Alexandrina Maria da Costa, and made of her an open book in which the world can read the value of the Cross, the greatness of the Eucharist and the tenderness of your Mother. For thirty years you kept her nailed to a bed, and from that bed you made a shower of graces fall upon the world. We give You thanks for the gift you have given us in her. With the Church that has proclaimed her blessed, today we ask You to manifest your glory again: deign to grant, through her intercession, **the miracle** that we hope for and that will open the way for her canonisation, so that she may be numbered among the saints and her life's motto – **to suffer, to love, to make reparation** – may reach those who today suffer without hope. Grant us, in these nine days, a heart as docile as hers: that knows how to say yes, that denies You nothing, that smiles in pain. You who are God and live and reign with God the Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. Amen.

Personal suggestions to accompany the novena

Short prayer to be repeated during the day

Taken from a prayer of the blessed: 'Jesus, I adore You in every place where You dwell in the sacrament. I keep You company for those who forget You, I love You for those who do not love You'.

Commitment of the day

Following the example of the 'spiritual flowers' that the blessed offered to Our Lady in the month of May, one can make a small concrete resolution every day: a visit to a sick person, a quarter of an hour of adoration, a fast, a gesture of reconciliation, giving up a complaint.

With ecclesiastical approval

IMPRIMATUR

Braga, 14 September 2026

Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross

† José Manuel Garcia Cordeiro

Metropolitan Archbishop of Braga

Father Miguel Neto

Head of the Secretariat of the Primate Archbishop