

11 men and women of the Eucharist

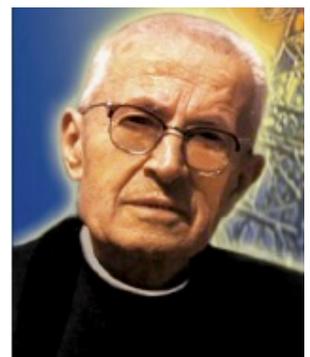
For 2,000 years, Christ in the holy Eucharist has been adored. Ever since Jesus gave himself to us in the consecrated bread and wine at the Last Supper, he has been with us in the Mass and in Eucharistic adoration. Yet, so many Catholics – not to mention people of other faiths or no faith at all – do not believe in the Real Presence, of God himself humbled in the form of bread and wine.

In this era of disbelief – and especially as the U.S. bishops launch the National Eucharistic Revival – we turn to those who have paved the way for us believers. We turn to the saints – namely, those who had a great devotion to the Eucharist and helped perpetuate greater love for Christ made present to us.

Following are 11 saints, blessed and venerables whose lives were ordered around the Eucharist, and to whom we have to thank for passing along the gift of Eucharistic faith.

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Blessed James Alberione



Blessed James Alberione entered the seminary in his native Italy at age 16. Then, during an all-night Eucharistic vigil on New Year's Eve, 1900, Alberione began to discern a call to serve the men and women of the new century with the various forms of new media that would emerge in the following decades. The Pauline Family – five religious congregations, four secular institutes and an association of lay cooperators – was born from this experience. The Eucharist fuels the Pauline spirituality, which strengthens the faithful, in Alberione's words, "to spread the sweet odor of Christ." He adds: The Eucharist directs our mission as "Christ and his grace are brought everywhere." Alberione developed Pauline spirituality with a Eucharistic Holy Hour as a constituent part of each day. He described it as "an audience or school, where the disciple engages with the Divine Master."

'What is Eucharistic adoration?' by Blessed James Alberione

by Blessed James Alberione

“Eucharistic adoration has the purpose of grounding our life in Christ Jesus, through Jesus, with Jesus.

It is the secret of our transformation.

It is the creature meeting his Creator;

The disciple before the Divine Master;

The patient with the Doctor of souls;

The poor one appealing to the rich One;

The thirsty one drinking at the Font;

The weak one presenting himself to the Almighty;

The tempted one seeking a sure Refuge;

The blind one searching for the light;

The friend who goes to the True Friend;

The lost sheep sought by the divine Shepherd;

The heart led astray who finds the Way;

The foolish one who finds Wisdom;

The bride who finds the Spouse of the soul;

The nothing who finds the All;

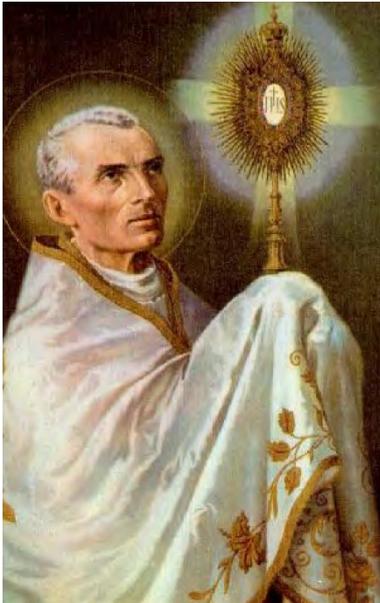
The afflicted who finds the Consoler;

The youth who finds life’s meaning.

It is the shepherds at the manger, Magdalene at the house of Simon, Nicodemus who arrives by night.

It is the holy conversations of the Samaritan, of Zacchaeus, of Philip and of all the apostles with Jesus, especially during the last week of his earthly life and after the resurrection.”

St. Peter Julian Eymard



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Though he suffered from poor health, and was in and out of seminary several times because of it, St. Peter Julian Eymard's priesthood magnified a great love for the Eucharist and a tenacious desire to spread Eucharistic devotion. These have earned him renown as an Apostle of the Eucharist. Although not supported by superiors of his religious community in carrying on these efforts, Eymard established two religious congregations to carry out the charism he was called to foster in the Church: the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament for men and the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament for women. His primary efforts were focused on helping children prepare for first holy Communion and encouraging lapsed Catholics to return to the sacraments. He advocated for frequent reception of the Eucharist.

"Love cannot triumph unless it becomes the one passion of our life. Without such passion we may produce isolated acts of love; but our life is not really won over or consecrated to an ideal. Until we have a passionate love for our Lord in the Most Blessed Sacrament, we shall accomplish nothing."

– St. Peter Julian Eymard

St. Juliana of Liège



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St. Juliana, a little-known Norbertine canoness from modern-day Belgium, spent much of her life advocating for a feast to honor and celebrate Christ's real presence in the Eucharist and all the meaning it holds for the Church. St. Juliana was prompted to advocate for the feast in response to not only her own personal devotion to the Blessed Sacrament but also in response to private revelations. Interpreted later, in consultation with spiritual guides, the visions of St. Juliana that began when she was 16 years old indicated the necessity of a liturgical feast in honor of the sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood. This resulted in the pope's 1264 declaration of the solemnity of Corpus Christi – the first universal feast to be imposed obligatorily by a pope. St. Thomas Aquinas had been assigned by the pope to compose new liturgical texts for the feast. Born from the visions, tenacity and devotion of St. Juliana, many of the original texts for Corpus Christi composed by St. Thomas Aquinas, including "Adoro te Devote," remain an essential part of the Church's sacred hymnography. The "Pange Lingua," for example, is often sung during the

Eucharistic procession after the Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday. The last two stanzas of this hymn are referred to separately as the "Tantum ergo" and are sung at Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

'Pange Lingua' by St. Thomas Aquinas

Sing, my tongue, the Savior's glory, of His flesh the mystery
sing; of the Blood, all price exceeding, shed by our immortal
King, destined, for the world's redemption, from a noble womb
to spring.

Of a pure and spotless Virgin born for us on earth below, He,
as Man, with man conversing, stayed, the seeds of truth to
sow; then He closed in solemn order wondrously His life of
woe.

On the night of that Last Supper, seated with His chosen
band, He the Pascal victim eating, first fulfills the Law's
command; then as Food to His Apostles gives Himself with His
own hand.

Word-made-Flesh, the bread of nature by His word to Flesh He
turns; wine into His Blood He changes; what though sense no
change discerns? Only be the heart in earnest, faith her
lesson quickly learns.

Down in adoration falling, Lo! the sacred Host we hail; Lo!
o'er ancient forms departing, newer rites of grace prevail;
faith for all defects supplying, where the feeble senses
fail.

To the everlasting Father, and the Son who reigns on high,
with the Holy Ghost proceeding forth from Each eternally, be
salvation, honor, blessing, might and endless majesty. Amen.

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton



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Before St. Elizabeth Ann Seton – the first U.S.-born person to be canonized – left Episcopalianism for Catholicism, she found herself gazing out the window of her former church, praying to the Lord in the Eucharist at the Catholic church down the street. This Eucharistic amazement was born of curiosity after the lasting impression of family friends and their own devotion to the Eucharistic Lord. Having arrived at Catholic faith primarily through her experiences of the Eucharist, St. Elizabeth Ann – wife, mother, religious woman and foundress – wrote in her diary when at last she became Catholic and received first holy Communion: “At last GOD IS MINE and I AM HIS.”

“The heart preparing to receive the Holy Eucharist should be like a crystal vase.”

– St. Elizabeth Ann Seton

Venerable Fulton Sheen



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Archbishop Fulton Sheen, the miracle for whose beatification was approved by Pope Francis in 2019, once said that “the greatest love story of all time is contained in a tiny white host.” This was the love that transformed him, making him an effective evangelist and Gospel witness. His daily Eucharistic Holy Hour was legendary. From the day of his ordination to the day of his death, Sheen spent an hour a day praying in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. From his office desk, through an open door, he could gaze upon the tabernacle at all times. His union with Christ enabled him to more fully, more accurately and more convincingly lead others to Christ in all he said and did. Sheen was a man of many talents and accomplishments, but it was Christ who enabled him to use them in the best ways.

“The purpose of the Holy Hour is to encourage deep personal encounter with Christ. The holy and glorious God is constantly inviting us to come to Him, to hold converse with Him, to ask for such things as we need and to experience what a blessing there is in fellowship with Him.”

– Venerable Fulton Sheen

St. Teresa of Calcutta



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Known for her heroic works of charity among “the poorest of the poor,” Mother Teresa often remarked that she and her sisters could not carry out their mission without daily, regular Eucharistic adoration. This simple, humble woman known to give her all for those on the margins and in most need, recognized that it was Christ who strengthened her, and needed to begin and end the day in adoration of his Eucharistic presence. It bore great fruit in her life, as she once remarked: “It has brought us so close to each other. We love each other better, but I think we love the poor with greater and deeper faith and love.”

“Jesus has made Himself the Bread of Life to give us life. Night and day, He is there. If you really want to grow in love, come back to the Eucharist, come back to that Adoration.”

– St. Teresa of Calcutta

St. Clare

In art, St. Clare is often seen holding a monstrance or ciborium containing the holy Eucharist. This recalls a time that St. Clare – companion of St. Francis of Assisi and foundress of the congregation commonly known as the Poor Clares – placed the Eucharist at her monastery’s front door during threat of invasion by the emperor’s troops. By a humble gesture of adoration, with the help of two other sisters, the troops’ plans were thwarted. St. Clare’s longing for the Eucharist was only underscored by the practices of her era,

during which the Eucharist could only be received a handful of times during the year. Pope St. John Paul II recalled that her “whole life was a Eucharist” on account of her “continual ‘thanksgiving’ to God in her prayer, praise, supplication, intercession, weeping, offering and sacrifice.”

Pope St. Pius X



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Pope St. Pius X labored to bolster the faith of Catholics. Among other things, he prioritized strong catechetical instruction and various liturgical reforms. Among them, reflecting one of the hallmarks of his pontificate, was to increase fervor for the Eucharist. His program of Eucharistic fervor emphasized the regular, pious reception of the Eucharist, whereby, he said, “union with Christ is strengthened, the spiritual life more abundantly sustained, the soul more richly endowed with virtues, and the pledge of everlasting happiness more securely bestowed on the recipient.” Likewise, he encouraged the reception of first holy Communion at the age of reason, or about 7 years of age, abandoning the centuries’ old practice of reserving first reception of the sacrament for older children and young adults. He hoped to leave a powerful impression on the young

child's mind and also encourage their parents to more faithful observances.

“Holy Communion is the shortest and safest way to Heaven. There are others: innocence, but that is for little children; penance, but we are afraid of it; generous endurance of trials of life, but when they come we weep and ask to be delivered. The surest, easiest, shortest way is the Eucharist.”

– St. Pius X

Blessed Carlo Acutis



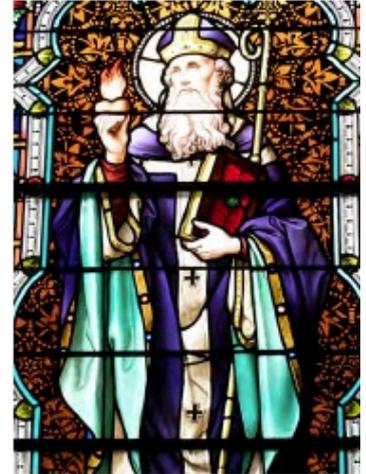
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Sainthood Cause of
Carlo Acutis

The Italian teenager Blessed Carlo Acutis has captivated Catholics young and old since his 2020 beatification. Although only 15 at his death, Carlo was resolved to prioritize his life around the Eucharist. Each day found him attending Mass and spending time in prayer before the Eucharistic Lord. He believed, as he put it, “the Eucharist is my highway to heaven.” And he endeavored to share this reality with others, with a focus on Eucharistic miracles, through his virtual and online apostleship.

“When we face the sun we get a tan ... but when we stand before Jesus in the Eucharist we become saints.”

– Blessed Carlo Acutis

St. Augustine



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The early Church Father St. Augustine has been regarded for centuries as one of the most important teachers of the Faith. This has remained true through the centuries, including in the documents of the Second Vatican Council, in which he was the most-quoted non-scriptural source. Key kernels of the Church's Eucharistic faith are found in Augustine's teaching, which has been vital to the Church's own understanding of this great mystery. Augustine stressed the ecclesial effect of the Eucharist, having made clear that the Eucharist constitutes the Church. Christ's body in the Eucharist and the Church are bound together for Augustine. He emphasized and underscored Christ's real presence in the Eucharist, saying, "Recognize in the bread what hung on the cross, and in the cup what flowed from his side." And he taught that the Eucharist is a means to sanctity, particularly through joining our sacrifices to Christ's sacrifice on the cross. All of this he experienced by means of his own well-known conversion, which came after a life of searching and recognition that only in God does our soul find rest.

“If you, therefore, are Christ’s body and members, it is your own mystery that is placed on the Lord’s table! It is your own mystery that you are receiving! You are saying ‘Amen’ to what you are: your response is a personal signature, affirming your faith. When you hear ‘The body of Christ,’ you reply ‘Amen.’ Be a member of Christ’s body, then, so that your ‘Amen’ may ring true!”

– St. Augustine

Pope St. John Paul II



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Pope St. John Paul II knew in his heart the fruits that the Eucharist can bear in our lives. His magisterium reflects a unique motivation to promote Eucharistic renewal in the life of the Church, so that Catholics could truly come to recognize the sacrament as the source and summit of its life and activity. He invited Catholics to restore “Eucharistic amazement” to their spiritual lives through various initiatives and pastoral texts that continue to educate, inspire and share the Church. He wanted “to banish the dark clouds of unacceptable doctrine and practice, so that the Eucharist will continue to shine forth in all its radiant mystery.” And he led the way by example. “Let Jesus present in the Blessed Sacrament speak to your hearts,” he said in 1997. “It is he who is the true answer of life that you seek. He stays here with us: he is God with us. Seek him without tiring, welcome him without reserve, love him without interruption: today, tomorrow, for ever!”

Thanksgiving for the Eucharist

By Pope St. John Paul II

For our paschal lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed. Therefore
let us celebrate the feast! (1 Corinthians 5:7-8)

O Christ the Savior, we give You thanks for Your redeeming
sacrifice, the only hope of men!

O Christ the Savior, we give You thanks for the eucharistic
breaking of bread, which You instituted in order to really
meet Your brothers, in the course of the centuries!

Christ the Savior, put into the hearts of the baptized the
desire to offer themselves with You and to commit themselves
for the salvation of their brothers!

You who are really present in the Blessed Sacrament, spread
Your blessings abundantly on Your people. Amen.