

BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Alexander Sauli

Life, prayer, novena and pilgrimage

Feast day: October 11

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IN BRIEF

Saint Alexander Sauli

Barnabite religious, bishop of Aleria in Corsica and then of Pavia, known as the apostle of Corsica.

Feast day	October 11
Born	February 15, 1534, Milan
Died	October 11, 1592, Calosso, near Asti (Piedmont)
Canonized	canonized on December 11, 1904, by Pope Pius X
Era	16th century
Patron saint of	Cervione

In this booklet

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Cathedral of Saint Erasmus in Cervione

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Alexander Sauli

Saint Alexander Sauli was a Barnabite religious born in Milan in 1534 into a great Genoese family. As bishop of Aleria for twenty years, he gave himself completely to Corsica, then poor and torn apart, so much so that he was called "the apostle of Corsica." Named bishop of Pavia in 1591, he died the following year, on October 11, 1592, during a pastoral visit. His feast day is October 11.

Who was Saint Alexander Sauli?

Alexander Sauli belongs to the generation of great Catholic reformers of the 16th century who put the Council of Trent into practice. A friend and confessor of Saint Charles Borromeo, chosen as bishop by Saint Pius V, he was at once a demanding religious, an admired preacher and a pastor close to the poor. His life is well known, thanks to the documents of his episcopate and to the biographies written after his death, especially for his beatification process.

Key dates

- **February 15, 1534**: Born in Milan, into a noble family of Genoese origin.
- **Around 1551**: At 17, he joins the Clerics Regular of Saint Paul, the Barnabites.
- **September 29, 1554**: Religious profession.
- **April 19, 1567**: Becomes superior general of the Barnabites.
- **February 10, 1570**: Pius V names him bishop of Aleria, in Corsica; he is consecrated on March 12 by Charles Borromeo.
- **Late 1578**: Construction of the cathedral of Saint Erasmus in Cervione begins under his episcopate.
- **May 10, 1591**: Gregory XIV names him bishop of Pavia.

- **October 11, 1592**: Dies at Calosso, near Asti, during a pastoral visit; he is buried in Pavia Cathedral.
- **April 23, 1741**: Beatified by Benedict XIV.
- **December 11, 1904**: Canonized by Pius X.

A young nobleman among the Barnabites

Alexander could have had a brilliant career: his family had given Genoa doges, bishops and cardinals. Yet at seventeen he chose to join a very new institute, the Clerics Regular of Saint Paul, founded by Saint Anthony Mary Zaccaria and called Barnabites after their Milan church of Saint Barnabas. According to his biographers, his superiors tested his vocation by asking him to carry a cross through the streets of Milan, which he did simply.

Once a priest, he taught, preached and stood out for his learning and his piety. Charles Borromeo, archbishop of Milan, chose him as his confessor. In 1567 his brothers elected him superior general, and he gave his institute a great new impetus.

The apostle of Corsica

In 1570, Pius V named him bishop of Aleria, one of the dioceses of Corsica. The situation was very difficult: the island was poor, the ancient city of Aleria was almost abandoned, the clergy were poorly trained, and conflicts between Genoese and Corsicans kept violence and vendettas alive. Alexander settled in his diocese, which was not a given for a bishop at the time, and he stayed there for twenty years.

He applied the decrees of the Council of Trent with energy. He promulgated them, reformed the clergy, opened a seminary and wrote a catechism. He traveled his diocese tirelessly, often on difficult roads, to visit the parishes. He had churches built, including the cathedral of Cervione, where he made his

residence. He devoted himself to the sick and the poor, and worked to calm hatreds. Pope Benedict XIV would say of him: "For twenty years he was not only the bishop of Aleria, but the apostle of all Corsica."

Bishop of Pavia

In 1591, Pope Gregory XIV called him to Pavia, in Lombardy. Alexander left Corsica with regret. He left it a large part of his goods: to the cathedral of Aleria, to the seminary and to the poor of the island. In Pavia, he immediately took up his pastoral visits again. It was during one of them that he died, at Calosso, in the region of Asti, on October 11, 1592. His body was brought back to Pavia and buried in the cathedral.



The former cathedral of Saint Erasmus in Cervione.

Veneration and iconography

Many healings were attributed to his intercession. Beatified in 1741, he was canonized by Pius X in 1904. His feast day is October 11. Since 1963 he has been the patron saint of the town of Cervione, whose cathedral of Saint Erasmus keeps relics of him; every year the feast of "Santu Lisandru" is celebrated there with a Mass and a procession. Images show him as a bishop, with miter and crosier.

What can we learn from Saint Alexander Sauli?

Alexander Sauli gave up the honors his birth promised in order to serve. As a bishop, he chose to live among a poor and divided people instead of governing from afar. He shows that the reform of the Church comes through presence, patience and care for the weakest. He can be invoked for bishops and priests, for peace in torn families and societies, and for Corsica.

To pray with him, see the prayer to Saint Alexander Sauli and the novena to Saint Alexander Sauli.

Where to pray to Saint Alexander Sauli

- **Cervione** (Haute-Corse, France): the former cathedral of Saint Erasmus, founded under his episcopate, which keeps his relics.
- **Pavia** (Lombardy, Italy): the cathedral, where he was buried.
- **Milan**: the church of Saint Barnabas, the cradle of the Barnabites.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Alexander Sauli for Pastors and for Corsica

Saint Alexander Sauli, a Barnabite religious, was bishop of Aleria, in Corsica, for twenty years. There he devoted himself to the poor, reformed the clergy and worked for peace. He is called the apostle of Corsica. This prayer is an original composition inspired by his life, not an official liturgical text. It entrusts to him the pastors of the Church, poor or divided regions, and all who serve without counting the cost.

Prayer to Saint Alexander Sauli

Saint Alexander Sauli,
you left the honors of your family
to follow the poor Christ
in religious life.

Sent to Corsica, you loved a poor and wounded land.
You traveled its roads,
visited its villages,
formed its priests,
cared for its sick and helped its poor.

Pray for our bishops and our priests:
may they remain among their people
and serve them with patience and gentleness.
Pray for families and countries torn apart by hatred,
that forgiveness may win out over revenge.

Obtain for me a generous heart,
ready to serve wherever God sends me,
until the last day of my life.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray to Saint Alexander Sauli

- On his feast day, October 11.
- For the bishop of your diocese and the priests of your parish.
- For Corsica, and for poor or forgotten regions.
- When a grudge or a family quarrel seems to have no way out.
- For someone who is sick, remembering the healings attributed to his intercession.

A prayer for peace

> *Lord, where there is hatred, let forgiveness be born,*
> *and where there is revenge, reconciliation.*
> *Saint Alexander Sauli, pray for us. Amen.*

To prepare for his feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Alexander Sauli from October 3 to October 11, and read the life of Saint Alexander Sauli.

Novena to Saint Alexander Sauli

This novena is an original composition inspired by the life of Saint Alexander Sauli, Barnabite, bishop of Aleria in Corsica and then of Pavia, who died in 1592. It is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on his feast day, October 11, begin on October 3. You can also pray it at any time of the year, especially for the pastors of the Church and for peace.

How to pray this novena

Each day, begin with the Sign of the Cross and entrust your intention to God. Read the meditation, say the prayer of the day, then an Our Father, a Hail Mary and a Glory Be. End with: "Saint Alexander Sauli, pray for us." The act suggested for each day helps you live out what you have prayed.

Day 1: Giving up honors

Born into a great Genoese family, Alexander could have aimed for the highest offices. At seventeen, he chose religious life. Christ does not ask us to despise our gifts, but to put them at his service.

Prayer: Lord, free me from the desire to impress. Teach me to seek your glory rather than my own.

Today: Do something good without letting anyone know.

Day 2: Carrying the cross

His biographers tell that, to test his vocation, his superiors asked him to carry a cross through the streets of Milan. He did it without shame. Following Christ means accepting that people will see us differently.

Prayer: Lord, help me never to be ashamed of you before others.

Today: Make the Sign of the Cross before a meal, even in public.

Day 3: In the school of Saint Paul

The Barnabites are the Clerics Regular of Saint Paul. Alexander nourished his life with the words of the Apostle, so ardent and so completely given to Christ. "For to me to live is Christ."

Prayer: Lord, may your word dwell in my heart and guide my choices.

Today: Read a chapter of one of Saint Paul's letters.

Day 4: A friend of saints

Alexander was the confessor and friend of Saint Charles Borromeo. Saints help one another forward. Spiritual friendship is a treasure.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the friends who help me grow. Make me a friend who leads others to you.

Today: Share with a friend a word or a reading that has nourished you.

Day 5: Sent to a poor land

In 1570, Alexander was sent to Corsica, a poor and troubled land. He could have governed from afar. He chose to live there, among his people. Love proves itself by presence.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to be present to those entrusted to me, and not only from a distance.

Today: Give real, phone-free time to someone close to you.

Day 6: Forming and teaching

Alexander opened a seminary, reformed the clergy and wrote a catechism. He knew that we can only love what we know. Passing on the faith is a precious service.

Prayer: Lord, bless catechists, teachers and formators. Give me the desire to know you better.

Today: Read a page of the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

Day 7: Sowing peace

In Corsica, rivalries and vendettas were tearing families apart. The bishop worked to calm hatreds. Forgiveness is often the hardest road, but it is the road of Christ.

Prayer: Lord, give me the strength to forgive and to take the first step toward reconciliation.

Today: Make a gesture of peace toward someone with whom things have gone cold.

Day 8: Caring for the poor

Alexander visited the sick and helped the poor. When he left Corsica, he left a large part of his goods to the poor of the island. He kept nothing for himself.

Prayer: Lord, open my heart and my hands to those who lack everything.

Today: Make a donation to a charity that helps the poorest.

Day 9: Dying on the road

As bishop of Pavia, Alexander died in 1592 during a pastoral visit, on the road to his people. He served to the very end. The Church recognizes him as a saint.

Prayer: Lord, help me to serve you faithfully until my last day. Through the intercession of Saint Alexander Sauli, grant me the grace I ask of you in this novena, if it is your will.

Today: Pray for elderly or weary bishops and priests.

Living this novena with Saint Alexander Sauli

Saint Alexander Sauli was a reformer, but first of all a shepherd. During these nine days, let yourself be inspired by his faithful presence to a difficult people and by his care for the poor. You can carry in your prayer your bishop and the priests of your parish, Corsica and all regions that suffer from poverty or division. You can also ask for the grace to forgive an old wound. Every small step toward peace carries on the work of the apostle of Corsica.

Closing prayer

> *Saint Alexander Sauli,*
> *religious of Saint Paul and shepherd of Corsica,*
> *you loved your people to the point of giving them your life and your goods.*
> *Present to God the intention I have carried during these nine days.*
> *Obtain for me a humble and generous heart,*
> *a love for peace*
> *and faithfulness to the end of the road.*
> *Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

You can also pray the prayer to Saint Alexander Sauli at any time, and read the life of Saint Alexander Sauli.

PILGRIMAGE

Cathedral of Saint Erasmus in Cervione

The former cathedral of Saint Erasmus in Cervione, in Haute-Corse, overlooks the eastern plain of the island and the Tyrrhenian Sea. For a long time it was the seat of the bishops of Aleria. Its first construction began at the end of 1578, under the episcopate of Saint Alexander Sauli, whose relics it keeps. Cervione chose him as its patron saint, and the cathedral is the heart of his cult in Corsica.

A cathedral born of a bishop's work

In the 16th century, the ancient city of Aleria, on the coast, was almost abandoned. When Alexander Sauli became bishop in 1570, he chose to live in his diocese, and Cervione became the residence of the bishops. He had a cathedral built there dedicated to Saint Erasmus and to the apostles Peter and Paul. The present Baroque building was rebuilt in the 18th century on the site of this first church. It remained the seat of the Diocese of Aleria until 1801 and is protected as a historic monument.



The former cathedral of Saint Erasmus in Cervione.

Visiting Cervione and its cathedral

Cervione is a hilltop village of the Castagniccia, with narrow lanes and a view of the sea. The cathedral stands in the center of the village. Every year on October 11, Cervione celebrates "Santu Lisandru": a solemn Mass, the veneration of his relic and a procession bring together residents and pilgrims.

Praying on site

Before your visit, you can read the life of Saint Alexander Sauli. Before his relics, entrust to him Corsica, the pastors of the Church, divided families and the poor, then recite the prayer to Saint Alexander Sauli. These suggestions are offered by Saintspedia.

Other places of Saint Alexander Sauli

- **Pavia** (Lombardy): the cathedral, where he was buried.
- **Milan**: his hometown and the church of Saint Barnabas, the cradle of the Barnabites.
- **Calosso** (Piedmont): the village where he died during a pastoral visit.
- **Aleria** (Haute-Corse): the ancient city that gave its name to his diocese.

Practical information

Cervione is in Haute-Corse, a little off the eastern coast road, between Bastia and Aleria. The village is best explored on foot; the streets are narrow and steep. The cathedral is a place of worship: modest dress and silence are requested during services. For opening hours, Mass times and the program of the October 11 feast, ask the parish or the local tourist office.

Credits and sources

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