



Maria Candida of the Eucharist, O.C.D. (1884–1949), was a Discalced Carmelite nun and mystic, who was beatified by Pope John Paul II.

She was born Maria Barba, the daughter of an appellate court judge, Pietro Barba, whose family home was in Palermo, Sicily; she was born in Catanzaro in Calabria on 16 January 1884, during a brief assignment of her father to that city.

From the time Barba made her first Holy Communion at the age of ten, she had a special devotion to the Eucharist and developed what she called her 'vocation for the Eucharist', feeling deeply not being able to receive Communion frequently. This devotion was nurtured by Carmelite spirituality, inspired by her reading *The Story of a Soul*, the autobiography of the recently deceased Carmelite nun, Saint Thérèse of Lisieux.

At the age of fifteen, Barba felt a calling to religious life but her family opposed it. She had to wait twenty years before she could enter the Carmel of Ragusa in 1919. At that time, she took the name under which she is now known. Upon completion of her formation period five years later, she was elected prioress of the community, a position she held almost continuously until 1947.

She worked diligently to revive the spirit of their foundress, Saint Teresa of Ávila, among the nuns of the monastery. Under her leadership, the community grew to a point where a new foundation could be made in Syracuse. She also helped to secure the return of the friars of the Order to Sicily.

In 1933, Maria Candida began writing the book *Eucharist: True Jewel of Eucharistic spirituality* as a record of her own personal experiences and reflections on Eucharistic meditation. In her book she related devotions to the Blessed Virgin Mary to the Eucharist, and wrote:

" I want to be like Mary,... to be Mary for Jesus, to take the place of His Mother. When I receive Jesus in Communion Mary is always present. I want to receive Jesus from her hands, she must make me one with Him. I cannot separate Mary from Jesus. Hail, O Body born of Mary. Hail Mary, dawn of the Eucharist!"

After a long period of painful illness, Maria Candida died on June 12, 1949, on the Feast of the Holy Trinity. Her feast day is observed on March 21.

Maria Candida was declared Venerable on December 18, 2000 by Pope John Paul II, who later beatified her on March 21, 2004.