



LIVING THE
FAITH

Consecrated for Mission

Who is a “Mother Cabrini” in your life—someone who daily responds to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and lives the mission of the Church? How do you imitate that person?

When Frances Cabrini received the Sacrament of Confirmation, she was more perfectly bound to the Church as a true witness to Christ and more urgently called to spread and defend the faith in word and deed. She heard that call and responded with extraordinary generosity. This is her story.

This spirited woman was born in Italy in 1850. Early on, she felt the call to religious life, but no congregation accepted her because of her poor health. At age twenty-seven, her missionary zeal led her to found a new congregation, the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart. Within a few years, she and her sisters had opened six orphanages.

In 1889, she obtained an audience with Pope Leo XIII, asking him to support her desire to open a mission in China. Pope Leo directed her elsewhere. He told her to go to America and work among the Italian immigrants there. A short time

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later, she was in New York City opening a Catholic school at St. Gioacchino’s parish church. Within a year, she had begged enough money to buy a 450-acre Jesuit property across the Hudson River to house her first American orphanage. Soon after, she realized that Italian immigrants and others needed a hospital. Her skills at fundraising and getting people to give of themselves led her to found the first Columbus Hospital, where she relied on the donated services of the doctors, Catholic as well as Jewish and Protestant. The hospital had free wards for the poor and private rooms

for the rich, whose fees helped finance the care of the poor. She built other Columbus hospitals in Denver, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Seattle, New Orleans, and Chicago.

She continued to visit the various convents and institutions she founded in Europe. She also sailed to Brazil and Argentina to expand the work of her community. Her thirty-seven years of apostolic service saw her almost constantly on the move. She could be found deep in a Denver mine encouraging Italian American miners or, on another occasion, at a scaffold holding



hands and praying with Italian American prisoners who were about to be hanged.

When she died in 1917, she left behind sixty-seven convents in Europe, the United States, and South America and 1,500 Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart. She had become a citizen of the United States in 1909 and was the first American citizen to be canonized a saint. At her canonization in 1946, Pius XII said this in his homily:

Where did she acquire all that strength and the

inexhaustible energy by which she was able to perform so many good works and to surmount so many difficulties? She accomplished all this through the faith that was always so vibrant in her heart; through the divine love that burned within her; and, finally, through the constant prayer by which she was so closely united to God. . . . She never let anything turn her aside from striving to please God and to work for his glory for which nothing, aided by

grace, seemed too difficult or beyond human strength. (*Liturgy of the Hours*, vol. IV, 2022)

Mother Cabrini lived deeply the mission of the Church to bring Christ's compassion and care to all people. She responded generously to the grace of the Sacrament of Confirmation that binds Christians to such a deeper identification with the Church and her mission.