



The Life of Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini

Frances was born two months prematurely on July 15, 1850, to a modest family of farmers in northern Italy. She was the tenth of eleven children and she and three others survived. Frances knew the suffering of poor family conditions, the death of her siblings and parents and the strict rearing by her older sister, Rosa. "Cecchina"

(nick name in the family) suffered from poor health, and was rejected by two religious congregations. Frances had been certified as a teacher with the Daughters of the Sacred Heart in 1868 and taught in a school in Vidardo. She was asked by the local priest in Codogno to take responsibility for an orphanage called "The House of Providence." However, in 1880, the bishop realized it was impossible to change the situation at the orphanage and decided to free Frances to follow her dream to become a missionary saying: *"I know you wish to become a missionary. I don't know any institute, found one."* She simply replies: *"I will look for a house."* This was the birth of the Institute of the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the town of Codogno in 1880.

At the request of Pope Leo XIII, Frances Cabrini had to change her dream of going to China and instead in 1889 she migrated to the United States to give special attention to the newly arrived poor Italian immigrants. After numerous hardships, she established many schools as well as hospitals and orphanages in the United States, Latin America and Europe.

Frances Xavier Cabrini made twenty-four trips across the oceans and established 67 institutions. At the age of 67, she suddenly died in Chicago, December 22, 1917. During her lifetime, many people witnessed her faith, courage and untiring commitment to the needy and believed she was a saint. Ten years after her death, the process of beatification was begun and on July 7, 1946, Frances was canonized a saint. Frances Xavier Cabrini was the first naturalized North American saint having become an American citizen in 1909. Pope Pius XII named her "Universal Patron of Immigrants" in 1950.

The mission of the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is intended to bring the mercy that flows from the Heart of Jesus to every person to whom we serve in any of the Cabrinian ministries throughout the world. Each member of the Cabrinian Family, (sisters, lay missionaries, and collaborators) is invited to live the Charism of Mother Cabrini. It is a call to each one of us to build, heal and repair.

The Sisters are present in the world through: schools, clinics, orphanages, hospitals, nursing homes, immigration and parish work. The mission of the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart is in: Australia, Ethiopia, Swaziland, Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, England, Spain, Switzerland, Mexico, Nicaragua, Guatemala, the Philippines, Russia, and the United States: New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Louisiana, Colorado, Washington and California.



Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini in Colorado

At the request of Bishop Matz, Mother Cabrini came to Denver in 1902, to minister to the Italian people many of whom worked in the mines. In a letter dated December 23, 1902 to one of the Sisters in Chicago she wrote: "I am happy to have a mission in the Rocky Mountains where I always desired to go. God be blessed!" In August 1909, Mother Cabrini and Mother Luigina, the local superior at Queen of Heaven orphanage in Denver, set out in a horse and buggy heading for Golden. On this day, she purchased the first tract of land on Mount Vernon Canyon as a summer camp for the girls of the orphanage. Mother Cabrini explained to Mother Luigina that the property cost so little because of a lack of water.

Mother Cabrini visited Colorado again and on April 16, 1910, she with her sisters left Denver once more for Golden. This time she purchased the second tract of land. On November 15, 1912, the last time Cabrini would be in Colorado, she purchased the third tract of land. During this time, Mother, the sisters, and the girls went to Mount Vernon Canyon and climbed to the topmost point of the mountain to enjoy a picnic. Mother Cabrini asked the Sisters and girls to gather white rocks and bring them to her. They arranged them upon the ground in the form of a heart surmounted by a cross and used smaller stones to form a crown of thorns. This arrangement is at the top of the stairs under the Sacred Heart statue.

The Sisters told Mother Cabrini of the hardships they endured because of the lack of clean water to drink, cook and bathe. The water from a stagnant pond near the pump house had to be boiled before it could be used for household purposes. In an undated letter, a Sister wrote: "Our Mother walked around as though looking for something, then said, 'Surely there has to be a spring here. Look for it daughters and find it...I say a spring has to be here.' " She walked over to a large red rock and touched it with her cane. She then said, "Even here beneath this rock there is true water, pure and good, for children to keep clean. Dig a small hole, for beneath this rock is water fresh and light that all can drink, a marvelous mineral water." The spring was discovered around the first part of September, 1912, and has never stopped running to this day.

The Sisters recorded the following account: On Saturday, September 2, 1928, Mother Luigina and Mother Candida, at Monsignor Della Chioppa's request, took him to Mount Vernon Canyon's Summer Camp for children. Monsignor was so impressed by what he saw and commented that if such a small, sickly person could find water in such a desert place it must have been inspired by God. He told the Sisters, "This place is a miracle of a Saint." He recommended that a grotto and chapel, dedicated to Our Lady, be built near the place where the water was found under the large red rock.