

personally without careful scrutiny and canonical judgements—really!

But before she left Rome, the convents were started and Pope Leo XIII not only read the rule but received her in private audience. It was in this audience that the Holy Father turned Mother Cabrini's face westward to America rather than to China. True, China was still very much a mission land, but America had its own needs. Among these were the pastoral care of the thousands of Italians recently arrived in the United States.

NEW YORK, U.S.A.

So not to China but to Chinatown and a fast growing "Little Italy" on New York's East Side, came Mother Cabrini and six other sisters, arriving March 23, 1889. Her first meeting with archbishop Corrigan was less than auspicious and he as much as told her that her projected orphanage was out of the question and she might just as well pack up and go home. Mother Cabrini waited out the archbishop's tantrum and in the end won him over. With a touch of Irish wit, he made peace not with an olive branch but by personally delivering to her the palm he had carried in the Palm Sunday Procession.

Now with the archbishop's blessing she raised money to buy a house for a convent and orphanage. Soon afterward she began the small hospital that was to become Columbus Hospital and later Cabrini Health Care Center. The remaining twenty-eight years of her life were taken up with personal apostolate, direction of her sisters, travels and building. Like all the saints, she had an insatiable hunger for the spreading of Christ's kingdom. Her strength was in prayer and unshakable trust in God.

Hospitals, orphanages, convents, schools sprang up from her inspiration in Italy, France, Spain, Panama, Chile, Argentina, Brazil as well as throughout the United States. She became an American citizen in Seattle in 1909 and in 1910 was named General Superior for life. Her official home thereafter was at Sacred Heart Orphanage, West Park, New York. It was there she was buried after she had died in Chicago, December 22, 1917. In 1933 the remains were transferred to the chapel at Mother Cabrini High School, 701 Fort Washington Avenue, Bronx, N.Y. This has been a place of pilgrimage ever since.

Beatified by Pope Pius XI in 1938, she was canonized by Pope Pius XII in 1946. At the time of her death, a long time friend, Cardinal Mundelein of Chicago, recalled the paradox of her dynamic power in so frail a frame and asked: "does not all this fulfill the concept of a noble woman?" It does indeed.

*(excerped from: www.cin.org)

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Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini

FEAST DAY: NOVEMBER 13TH



**PATRON SAINT OF IMMIGRANTS
SAINT FRANCES XAVIER CABRINI IS OFTEN SHOWN AGAINST A
BACKGROUND OF NEW YORK HARBOR WITH THE
STATUE OF LIBERTY.**

Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini **1850-1917**

*Upon the bright blue skies of the great valley of Lombardy south of Milan, Maria Francesca Cabrini first saw the light of day. She grew up on the farm where she was born, the youngest of the 15 children of Agostino Cabrini and Stella Oldini whom he had brought as his bride from Milan many years before.

The land in the Lombard valley is generous, as everyone knows, but it does not give its riches without a price. Agostino worked his land hard and, like his neighbors, probably worked his sons hard also. The girls did not have to drive the plow horse or pitch hay, but they did their share of weeding and feeding the animals, carrying the noonday meal to the men in the fields and beating the dirt out of the laundry by the river bank before leaving it to bleach in the afternoon sun. It was a good walk from Maria Francesca's farm to the mighty Po which was off in the center of the valley, reaching to the northwest into the towering mountains far away and sweeping eastward into the Adriatic. Looking back, one can see the Po as a kind of symbol of Maria Francesca's life, taking its start in the rich land and even richer history of Lombardy and moving out of Italy to the sea and to the world. The little girl growing up knew nothing of the future, of course, but the hand of the Lord was at work.

PERSONAL COURAGE

Frail of physique all her life, she often aroused the admiration of those who knew her because, paradoxically, she was evidently stronger than she looked. One wonders if her secret were not a kind of tough-minded personal courage which she developed on the farm. As the last of the long line of children, she spent her childhood with her parents in their older, quieter years. She was still a school child when her big brothers and sisters were being married. She was probably left to herself quite often and developed her own defenses against life's sorrows and disappointments. The Italian peasant is always a somewhat stoic person as indeed are most peasants,

buffeted as they are by the sun, the wind and the storms that can carry off a year's work of planting and harvesting in a month long drought or a raging flood. In Maria Francesca's case, her natural stoicism was undoubtedly baptized into conformity to God's will. Not without its significance is the fact that the death in the same year (1870) of both her parents was not the shattering end of all for the young girl of twenty, but actually the beginning of her glorious career.

By 1870, Maria Francesca had already completed school and had, with top honors, received her teacher's certificate. (Her far-sighted parents had chained none of the children to the land.) When her parents were laid to rest, she applied for admission in the religious congregation of the Daughters of the Sacred Heart at Arluno. These sisters were her former teachers and the bonds of friendship were strong. Reluctantly, they told her she was too frail for their life. Undaunted, she took the advice of her pastor, Don Antonio Serrati, and went to work as a lay helper at an orphanage in nearby Codozno. Three years later, she took religious vows. Domestic problems led to the closing of the orphanage in 1880 and the bishop of Lodi, Msgr. Dominic Gelmini, urged Maria Francesca to found her own community. Monsignor Serrati helped her by buying a house and here, joined by seven of the former orphans, she began the congregation now known as the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, Nov. 14, 1880.

Mother Cabrini's dream had always been a missionary one. Even as a child she had been an avid reader of the Annals of the Propagation of the Faith. Now that she had sisters to help, her mission zeal was stronger than ever. She would follow the Po to the sea. Then China perhaps, or Africa. It was not the Po, however, but the Tiber that was to carry her out to sea.

Having written a rule, nothing would do but to bring it to Rome and get it approved by the Holy Father himself. And while she was about it, she decided she might start one, maybe two, houses in Rome. Sophisticated churchmen, Cardinals included, were startled and amused at her apparent naivete. New convents in Rome preposterous! And a Rule submitted to the Pope