



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE **BOLLETTINO**

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Audience with the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, on the occasion of the first centenary of the death of Saint Frances Cabrini

At midday today, in the Clementine Hall of the Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus on the occasion of the first centenary of the death of Saint Frances Cabrini.

The following is the Pope's address to those present at the audience:

Address of the Holy Father

Dear sisters and dear brothers,

It is with great pleasure that I welcome all of you, representatives of the Cabrinian Family, who wish in this way to conclude the celebrations for the centenary of the birth of Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini. On 17 December 1917 this holy woman, who had crossed the ocean twenty-four times to assist migrants in the Americas, and who tirelessly travelled as far as the Andes and also in Argentina, suddenly died in Chicago, and departed for her final trip.

I greet H.E. Msgr. Rino Fisichella, who follows you with great affection; and I thank the Mother, Barbara Louise Staley, for her words of greeting and for her active commitment, where there are migrants, to make ever present the acceptance and the witness of Christian love.

Saint Cabrini was a true missionary. She had grown up keeping before her the example of St. Francis Xavier, the pioneer of evangelization in the East. She kept China in her heart, and hoped to take the proclamation of the Gospel to that distant land. She did not think of the thousands and thousands of emigrants who, due to hunger, lack of work and the lack of a future, embarked with their few belongings to reach America, driven by the dream of a better life. As we know, it was the farsightedness of Pope Leo XIII that, with a joke, made her change

course: “Not to the east, Cabrini, but to the West!”. The young Mother, who had just founded the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, had to open her eyes to see where God had sent her on a mission. Not where she wanted to go, but where He had prepared for her the way, the path of service and holiness. Here is the example of a true vocation: to forget oneself in order to surrender oneself fully to God’s love.

After so many years, the situation of migrants, to whom Saint Frances Xavier dedicated all her life, has evolved and is more topical than ever. New faces of men, women and children, marked by so many forms of poverty and violence, stand before our eyes and hope to find on their way outstretched hands and welcoming hearts like those of Mother Cabrini. In particular, you are offered the responsibility of being faithful to the mission of your Holy Founder. Her charisma is of extraordinary current relevance, because migrants certainly need good laws, development programmes, and organization, but they also always need, first and foremost, love, friendship, and human closeness; they need to be heard, to have people look into their eyes, to be accompanied; they need God, Whom they encounter in the gratuitous love of a woman who, with her consecrated heart, is your sister and mother.

May the Lord always renew in you the attentive and merciful gaze towards the poor who live in our cities and in our countries. Mother Cabrini had the courage to look into the eyes of the orphaned children entrusted to her, the young people without work who were tempted to commit crimes, the men and women exploited for the most humble jobs; and therefore today we are here to thank God for his holiness. In each of those brothers and sisters, she recognized the face of Christ and, brilliant as she was, was able to put to good use the talents that the Lord had entrusted to her (cf. *Mt 25: 14-23*). She had a strong sense of apostolic action; and if she had had such a great energy to accomplish extraordinary work in just a few years, it was due only to her union with Christ, following the model of Saint Paul, whose motto she adopted: “I can do all things through Him Who strengthens me” (*Phil 4: 13*). A dizzying life full of work, endless trips on foot, by train, by ship, by boat, by horse ...; creating from nothing sixty seven works including kindergartens, schools, colleges, hospitals, orphanages, laboratories ... all to propagate the power of the Gospel, which had enlarged her heart so that it could belong to everyone.

Saint Cabrini lived with the spirituality of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Step after step, hers was an existence wholly devoted to consoling and to making the Sacred Heart known and loved. And this made her able to look at the hearts of those who approached and assisted her, to correspond in a coherent way. This important anniversary reminds us all, strongly, of the need for a faith that knows how to grasp the moment of grace that one lives. As difficult as it may seem, it tells us that we must do as she did: to be able to grasp the signs of our time, to interpret them in the light of the Word of God and to live them in such a way as to provide an answer that may reach the heart of every person.

Dear sisters, and dear brothers who share the Cabrinian charism, I thank you for your effort. I accompany you with my apostolic blessing, and I ask each one of you not to forget to pray for me.
