



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO MISSIONARY SISTERS OF THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS ON THE
100th ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEATH OF SAINT FRANCES XAVIER CABRINI***

*Clementine Hall
Saturday, 9 December 2017*

[Multimedia]

Dear Sisters and dear Brothers,

It is a great pleasure to welcome all of you, representatives of the Cabrinian Family, who wished to conclude in this way the celebrations for the centenary of Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini's birth into heaven. On 17 December 1917, this holy woman — who had crossed the ocean some 24 times to assist immigrants in the Americas and who tirelessly pushed herself to the Andes and even to Argentina — died suddenly in Chicago, and departed on her final journey.

I greet Archbishop Rino Fisichella, who follows you with such affection; and I thank the Mother, Barbara Louise Staley, for her words of greeting and for her active commitment wherever there are immigrants, making ever present the welcome and witness of Christian love.

Saint Cabrini was a true missionary. She grew up keeping always before her the example of Saint Francis Xavier, the pioneer of evangelization in the East. She held China in her heart and she hoped to bring the message of the Gospel to that faraway land. She did not conceive of the thousands and thousands of migrants who, due to hunger, the shortage of work and lack of a future set out for America with their few belongings, spurred by the dream of a better life. As we know, it was the foresight of Pope Leo xiii who, with a quip, caused her to change course: "Not to the East, Cabrini, but to the West!". The young Mother, who had recently founded the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart, had to open her eyes to see where God was sending her on mission; not where she had wanted to go, but where He had prepared the way for her, the way of service and holiness. This is the example of a true vocation: to forget oneself so as to abandon oneself

fully to the love of God.

After many years, the reality of migrants, to whom Saint Frances Xavier had dedicated her whole life, has evolved and is more relevant than ever. New faces of men, women and children, marked by many forms of poverty and violence, are again before our eyes and are waiting to find along their way outstretched hands and open hearts like those of Mother Cabrini. You in particular are offered the responsibility to be faithful to the mission of your Holy Foundress. Her charism is extraordinarily timely, because migrants certainly need good laws, development programmes, organization; but they also need, always and first and foremost, love, friendship, human closeness; they need to be listened to, looked in the eye, accompanied; they need God, encountered in the freely given 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 toward the poor who live in our cities and our towns. Mother Cabrini had the courage to look into the eyes of the orphaned children who were entrusted to her care, the unemployed young people who were tempted to commit crimes, the men and women exploited through the most humble labour; and this is why we are here today to thank God for her holiness. In each one of those brothers and sisters she recognized Christ's face and, gifted as she was, she was able to enhance the talents that the Lord had entrusted to her (cf. Mt 25:14-23). She had an outstanding sense of apostolic action; and if she had such great energy to accomplish extraordinary work within a few years, it was only through her union with Christ, after the example of Saint Paul, from whom she took her motto: "I can do all things in him who strengthens me" (Phil 4:13). A whirlwind life laden with work, endless journeys on foot, by train, ship, boat, horse...; creating out of nothing 67 charities including shelters, schools, colleges, hospitals, orphanages, workshops ... all in order to propagate the power of the Gospel which had opened her heart, so that it could belong to everyone.

Saint Cabrini lived the spirit of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Step after step, hers was a life offered entirely to comfort and to make the Sacred Heart known and loved. And this enabled her to look at the hearts of those to whom she drew near and assisted so as to respond to them in a coherent way. This important anniversary vividly reminds us all of the necessity of a faith capable of seizing the moment of grace that we experience. As difficult as it may seem, she tells us that we must do as she did: be able to understand the signs of our time, to read them in light of the Word of God, and to live them in such a way as to give a response that touches the heart of each person.

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