**Memorial of St. Frances Xavier Cabrini, virgin**

The Church honors a remarkable saint today. Frances Xavier Cabrini is an example to all of us that God can write straight with the crooked lines of our lives.

Frances was born to a large and wealthy family of cherry tree farmers in Italy. She was the youngest of 13 children, although, sadly, only four of her brothers and sisters survived past adolescence. Frances herself was born two months premature and continued in weak health throughout her life.

She attended a school run by the Daughters of the Sacred Heart and earned a teaching degree, graduating cum laude. When Frances’ parents died in in 1870, she applied for admission to the Daughters of the Sacred Heart Convent. She was reluctantly told that she would not be able to stand up to their difficult life with her compromised health.

Instead, she opened an orphanage and became its headmistress. Her example eventually attracted a small community of women to join her and live a religious life. She and six others took vows in 1877. Frances was 27 years old. She added the name “Xavier” at this time for St. Francis Xavier and his missionary spirit.

The sisters continued to take in orphans and foundlings and opened a day school to help pay expenses. They offered classes in needlework and sold their fine embroidery for some extra money. Over the first five years, the new institute established seven homes, a free school, and a nursery.

Her zeal caught the attention of her local bishop and even Pope Leo XIII. The pope suggested that Frances head to the United States and help attend to the thousands of Italian immigrants arriving almost daily. She arrived in New York City in 1889 at the age of 39. She and six other sisters established their first foundation in West Park, N.Y., just down the road from our Redemptorist formation house. She continued to discern the needs of the Italian community and soon founded Columbus Hospital and the Italian Hospital in the city as well as many other schools and orphanages.

In all, Mother Cabrini, as she was called, established 67 institutions throughout the United States, South America, and Europe. She succumbed to dysentery at her Chicago Columbus Hospital on December 22, 1917.

Her beautification miracle was the healing and sight restoration of a one-day-old baby who had been given a 50 percent solution of silver nitrate drops in his eyes instead of a 1 percent solution. The baby’s name was Peter Smith, and he attended Mother Cabrini’s canonization nine years later. Peter Smith later became a priest.

As you might guess, Mother Cabrini is the patron saint of immigrants. Her intercession can be especially helpful in today’s time of migrants, refugees, and immigrants seeking safety and better lives for themselves and their families. Mother Cabrini, pray for us in our time of need.