

# St. Frances Xavier Cabrini

Passages from the book RITRATTI DI SANTI by Antonio Sicari ed. Java Book



The Jubilee year 2000 is not only a passage of time between the second and the third millennium, but it is the year of celebration of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini which took place in Sant'Angelo in the province of Lodi and the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of her proclamation as the Patron saint of emigrants (17<sup>th</sup> September, 1950) by Pope Pious X11, by whom she had been canonised in 1946.

In a biography of Mother Cabrini, known as “the Saint of the Italians in America”, these are the precise words that are written: “In the America of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, mothers and grandmothers, who wanted to scare their lively and restless child, instead of naming the ‘ghost’ they would cry: ‘Here comes an Italian!’ and the child would immediately run and hide on their laps.

It might seem just to be a colourful note, but these are among the saddest things that were written on the tragic incidents of our emigrants, between the end of the last century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

It is the period during which signs are exposed outside of bars in American cities to notify that entrance was forbidden <<to niggers and Italians>>, being that Italians were considered as <white niggers>>.

Between 1876 and 1914, shortly before the first world war, about fourteen million Italians, according to our statistics; <eighteen million!> is the number maintained by the countries that were invaded by the throngs of our poor co-nationals. The entire population of Italy did not reach thirty million at the time!

In history books we read of the great migrations of nations and of the times during which entire nations were reduced to slavery, but we omit the fact that the history of our emigrants was in fact the very same.

Italo Balbo wrote that all those co-nationals – swallowed up in coal mines, in the digging for railroads, in oil wells, in iron and steel industries, in the textile industries, in shipyards, in cotton and tobacco plantations – were <non one's Italy>, an anonymous population of <white slaves>, <human material traded in millions>.

It is calculated that the number of Italians working in mines, at a certain point, exceeded that of the total amount of emigrants put together. They arrived in hundreds of thousands a year, harassed from the time they left up to their arrival by sinister commission agents who took advantage of their ignorance and need, deprived of protection, agreeable to anything they proposed; thus literally becoming human material on which – necessary debris of no value – the American economical potency was built.

They lived in incredible conditions of decay, crowded in human beehives (up to eight hundred people packed into small building of five floors), in beastly physical and often moral conditions. With their style of life they seemed to give credit to the idea of an Italian as a half-savage, violent and always ready to come to hands.

They lived without schools, hospitals, churches, closed in their 'little Italy's', districts, which proliferated in the suburbs of big cities. They were almost never even 'little Italys' because the various localisms were the cause of their separating and putting the various regional groups one against the other. The children lived on the streets. A future as shoe-shiners or newspaper sellers awaited them.

The impossibility of communication (almost all of them were illiterate and they expressed themselves in dialect) making all tentative of solidarity vain.

Those who succeeded in making a fortune (and many started vegetable shops or organising Mafia clans) were careful not to mix with their own despicable co-nationals, trying rather to forget their communal origin.

One day in 1879 a deputy dared to read a letter from a Venetian colonist before the Italian Parliament: *<We are here like animals. We live and die without priests, teachers, doctors>*. The Italian politics however, took no heed. They looked at the problem of emigration from a point of view of public order, with some provision of police, but with non intelligent perception of any form of economic or social tutelage.

Some years later – when Sister Cabrini herself will have done, for the love of Christ, that which the entire government had never succeeded in doing – the politicians, looking back on their legislative pseudo-precautions will say: *<We went wrong in everything>*.

Not even the Catholic Church in America could do anything. In the whole city of New York there were only twenty priests who understood a little Italian. To make things worse, our emigrants found the costumes, strange for them, that compelled attending the Church also an obligation, before entering the church, of contributing economically to the up-keep of the parish activities. They were already poor and a similar costume seemed unjust to them (they called those aims 'the customs duty'). Not to say that the sole Italian organisations present were the *<Giordano Bruno>* circles, whose only worries were to spread and maintain a fervid anti-clericalism.

So they stopped attending the Church and many of those last shreds of spiritual and moral dignity, were lost.



House in Lodi where *Frances Cabrini* was born

In Italy the problem was perceived by Pope Leo XIII (who presented and faced the problem in the famous encyclical *Rerum novarum*) and by the Bishop of Piacenza,

Scabrini who had founded a congregation to look after the emigrants.

Frances Cabrini was a Lodigian who had desired to be a missionary since she was a young child, when her father read to the children, during the long evenings, the *Annals of the Propagation of the Faith*, she would sit day dreaming. She dreamt in those days of mysterious China. She went as far as to stop eating cakes when she was convinced that in China they did not have cakes, so she had to prepare herself.

She had become, after many hardships, the founder of a

small religious congregation aimed at missionary life, a strange project for a female institute, and she felt ready to make her old girlhood dream come true.

She met Bishop Scalbrini who tried to make her change her mind describing the miserable conditions of the emigrants in America.

Frances was confused and so she decided to leave the decision to Pope Leo XIII, who listened to her lengthily, then decisively told her: *<Not in the Far East, Cabrini, but to the West>*. It was as though the same word of God was indicating His will to her.

She was thirty-nine years old, she had lung problems and the doctors had given the prognoses that she had not longer than two years of life to live.

She left with seven companions; the ship on which she made her first trip, carried 900 emigrants in 3<sup>rd</sup> class.

She arrived in New York at the end of March, 1889, she had been informed that the Arch Bishop Corrigan and an American noblewoman, the wife of an Italian Earl who had become the director of the *Metropolitan Museum of Art*; would be there to meet her, but the two had quarrelled over points of view and disagreements of programming, and they had written to Italy advising that the departure be suspended.

The result being that there was nobody to meet the nuns. It was pouring rain when they went ashore, as God granted, they arrived at the poor house of the Scalabrini fathers, soaking wet and tired, but they had no means of giving them hospitality. They ended up in a lurid lodging near the Chinese quarters, where the beds were so dirty that they hadn't even the courage to lie on them: they sat on the floor shivering from the cold resting their shoulders against the wall.

The archbishop received them, the day after, and briskly advised them to return to where they had come from. *<Never, your Excellency, I am here under order from the Holy See, and here I must remain>* - she answered.

In the end, and with the help of the countess, she succeeded in opening a small school for a few orphans, that she called "The House of the Holy Angels".

Whereas, the countess, in obedience to the archbishop, organised a big school for the Italian children. It was a *sui generis*. The children arrived in enormous numbers; there was no other place to put them up but in the poor Scalabriniani Church, and there, between one service and another, in spaces made in the choir, in the sacristy, in corners of the church curtained off, here the classes were established. The benches were used as desks, the kneeling benches as the teacher's desk.

The nuns, who were teaching, often began with the washing and combing of hair of that crowd of dirty and ruffled boys. In the afternoon they had catechism, followed by playing the courtyard, a hidden and unhappy place sunk between high and dark buildings.

In her free time, and until late in the evening, Frances Carrini, would plod through the muddy lanes of the Italian quarter, in search of those parents who otherwise she would have never known.

In a paragraph of the *New York Sun*, dated the 30<sup>th</sup> June, 1889 we read: <During the last few weeks, some women, dressed as Sisters of Charity, are going through the Italian quarters of the Bend and Little Italy, climbing narrow and long stairways, going down into dirty basements and in certain dens where not even the New York police would dare to enter alone>.

Notwithstanding the countess's help, the principal problem of money remained. Therefore, the nuns began to travel through the city looking for help, refusing, on principal, all discrimination.

In an environment where division reigned (between the same Italians who were separated into groups of families and localisms), where the Catholic Irish considered the Italians as neo-pagans and where the natives met to organise <the ethnical protection>, those nuns moved with dignity and the graciousness of love.

They were accepted beyond their utmost hopes: shopkeepers of every race and religion came to the door of their shops to call them and pack them with merchandise; businessmen decided to give them a cheque; the owners of markets gave orders that no one was to stop or ill-treat those courageous nuns; a Jewish German carpenter gifted them with furniture that was to furnish schools and orphanages; the Irish nationalists, demanded that the police stopped the traffic when the nuns were passing with their household effects, because "they represented the Pope"; passengers on trams stealthy put a few dollars in their hands.

Meanwhile, the "House of the Holy Angels" had expanded and was attended by coloured, Chinese and mulatto's children.

On the 17<sup>th</sup> of July, 1889, an organised procession of three hundred and fifty boys and girls, paraded through the streets of *Little Italy*; the girls wearing their veils and carrying their rosary beads, the boys wearing their armbands of the association; in groups of thirty, carrying their St. Louis, Saint Agnes and St. Anthony banners.

Who still remembered certain processions that were once held in their parishes, when the associations were flourishing, can have an idea of the tenderness of a similar picture; but it is impossible for us to imagine the expressions of the Irish and the protestants at the sight of these boys and girls who paraded in silence and dignity, those same children that they used to consider lurid and disorderly thieves.

The first battle had been won, but they were only at the start.

Frances returned to Italy in the same month, to take care of the novices of her Congregation. While in Rome, she heard the news that the Jesuits in America were selling a huge estate in *West Park*, on the banks of the river Hudson, 150 miles from New York.

She returned to America with seven other nuns and succeeded in putting together the five hundred thousand dollars that were necessary for the deposit. God would think about the remaining ten thousand. And so she founded the house for the formation of the Institute, a college, and even a hospice for girls afflicted by typhus, the decease that was massacring the poor people.

The question comes naturally: "But where does she get the money?". There are thousands of answers, but one in particular is told that if a benefactor had decided to sign a

yearly donation cheque of three hundred dollars, Frances was able to stop his hand at the last zero, with a smile, and then – as she was used to with her pupils – she would guide the hand to trace another zero. Wasn't this the way to teach charity as you would to read and write?

There is an episode that is right to anticipate, because it gives the idea of the aptness of her style and her faith.

In New Orleans, in 1892, Frances meets an very rich adventurous Sicilian, who had made his fortune in ships, beer factories, insurance companies, building societies, and who was also the owner of about sixteen hundred thousand hectors of cotton and lemon cultivation's.

We summarise the following from a report of the times, taken from a biography by G. Dell'Ongaro:

*"Your visit is an honour for me, Mother Cabrini, all of America are speaking about you. How can I help you?"*

*"In nothing. I would like to be of help to you".*

*"I need nothing. I asked for nothing from no one, I desire only to be left in peace and carry on with my business..."*

*"I know nothing about business or affairs. But your happiness interests me. I have been told that you have been married for a long time. But you have no children. It is sad".*

*"Unfortunately it is true, I like children, but..."*

*"That's a pity. A real pity. With all these beautiful things you have, and not even a son to leave them to. Have you ever asked yourself, the reason for such a fortune? There must be a reason. I am certain that God has planned a beautiful project for your life. You do not know the joy that children can be".*

At this point the man revealed to have thought at times, of adoption, but had always renounced from fear of his wife's reaction, and ends by saying.

*"Let me think about it, let me speak to my wife, and if Maria agrees, then I will call you and you can bring us the child".*

*"The child? Who spoke of only one child? Why only one?"*

*"How many do you want to give me, Mother?"*

*"What do you think about sixty-five, to begin with?"*

This businessman will end up financing an entire orphanage. When, some years later, this building becomes too small, he donated another sixty five thousand dollars, an enormous amount of money in those days.

Having founded the *West Park* house, Frances Cabrini returns once again to Italy, where she continued to direct her missionary congregation, which was growing rapidly. She remained to Italy for a few months and then returned to America with twenty-eight nuns, determined to accept a new institution in Nicaragua. So she opened a college in Granada that, only four years later will be demolished during one of the many Central American revolutions.

From here she moved to south of the United States where she will have an even worse impact. A large number of Italians mainly from Sicily, emigrated to Virginia, Carolina and Louisiana, where they found people who were inclined to racial hatred. Slavery had

been officially abolished only thirty years before and the Americans were not certainly pleasant to those <black-men with pale skin>, which was their definition of our emigrants.

The Sicilians however, were not submissive like the negroes'. The Matranga brother's and the Provenzano brother's Mafia domineered and the rivalry was on both sides for the ruling of the <principal port district>.

In 1890 the head of the police department of New Orleans was caught in an ambush and nineteen Italians' were incriminated. There was no sufficient proof, but some journalists, who were at the hospital, heard the policeman murmur, just before he died, <the *dagos* shot me> (this was a contemptuous terminology used for <meridian's>).

The trial kept the nation on edge, the Mafia bosses, who had the best lawyer's, were all acquitted in March of 1891.

However, if they had enough power to defend there *picciotti* from justice, their bosses did not have enough to defend them from the hatred of the people. Before they were freed, an angry throng of about ten thousand people, led by the vice-mayor, attacked the prison and lynched the prisoners: two were hung, two were killed by iron bars, others beaten by guns. The bodies were hung from trees, and street-lamps.

Almost fifty per-cent of the Union newspapers approved the massacre and the tension rose to a point that Italy re-called it's Ambassador from Washington. Other lynching followed these in two other cities in Louisiana.

In the city of New Orleans, torn apart by these implacable hatreds, Mother Cabrini arrived on Holy Tuesday in 1892. She immediately perceived that she would have to begin from the new generations, give a new semblance and another hope to those swarms of youth that waited to increase the masses of the criminal underworld, and compel the city to acknowledge the dignity of those humiliated and apprehensive people.

She needed at least an orphanage, a school and a boarding school, and at least fifty thousand dollars to begin with.

Paradoxically, in New Orleans a lot of Italians had made fortunes, they had become directors of huge industries and owners of companies; but they did not like making themselves known as Italians. They tried, in fact in every possible way to forget their origins.

Frances went looking for them, one by one: the Rocchi, shipbuilders from Milan, the Marinoni from Brescia, bankers and owners of cotton plantations, Astrada, from Naples, a famous proprietor of renowned restaurants, the illustrious clinic Formenti, Mrs. Bacigalupo, a alimentary wholesaler, the Bevilacqua and Monteleone, owners of luxurious shoe shops, and the millionaire Pizzati, Sicilian, of whom we have already spoken.

These are only some names that we wanted to mention, among many others, because they still resound in our land; almost all of them understood and appreciated Cabrini's intent; it was to demonstrate to that city, (that loved and appreciated it's music, it's artists, but hated the Italian people, considered either members of the Mafia or potential delinquents), that the real problem was the social indifference in which those youth were left, without any care or protection.

*Saint Phillip Street's* orphanage became a social centre, for the children who were boarded there and the hundreds of others who used it as an oratory, and also for dozens of other children of every race and colour.

The chapel in the Institute became the Italians Church and, in this case also, a proud and orderly procession was held in honour of the Sacred Heart – in the old style, that the population of New Orleans loved so much – to sanction a newly found dignity; a procession with lots of religious singing, and even the “*Va pensiero*” that stirred even the white <masters>, even though jazz was the dominion in the city.

For the first time the circles, the societies, the federations and the other small groups in which the Italians were divided and lacerated, paraded together.

In 1905 an epidemic of yellow fever hit the city. The emigrants of every race and colour, in their ignorance, refused medicine, they infringed all measures of hygiene and prevention, they refused to leave infected houses and buildings. France's nuns took on the task – going from house to house, risking their lives, and in some cases really sacrificing it – in order to convince them of what they had at their disposal for their well being.

Everyone trusted the nuns, and – when the epidemic was over – not only the city of New Orleans, but also the United States government and that of Rome publicly thank them.

Let us return to New York.

A part of the life, in which the tragedy of the emigrants could have been touched by hand, was the sanitary problem.

As they were considered as human material, no one worried much about those who became ill because of the inhuman conditions of life in which they lived, nor about the victims of what was called <the industrial massacre> (hundreds and hundreds of injured in their places of work), nor of the fact that hospitals where emigrants could be admitted to did not exist.

There were hospitals of course, where you paid, but even having the economical means, no one wanted to go to them. What was the use for the sick that were not able to make themselves understood when they tried to explain the symptoms of their illness in that slang they mixed with their original dialect and the slang of the American slums?

The patients on having been admitted seemed to have entered a prison or an obituary, before their time had come, everything was so cold and aseptic!, and they even lost hope without a word of comfort from a nun or a priest.

They preferred to die in their hovels, without care or cleanness, but having at least a little tenderness.

Of course, the Italians, if they had gathered together, they could have had their hospital; the American government was ready to help them and the Italian government also.

They were not at a loss for projects, and the argument was one of the furthestmost in all their dreams and discussions, but every tentative had miserably failed: a hospital would

have been needed for the Sicilians, one for the Neapolitans, one for the Calabrese, one for the Lombards and so forth. Each and all were concerned about their co-regionals, when they did not go as far as to stop at their town fellowmen.

To tell the truth, they had succeeded in opening a hospital <The Giuseppe Garibaldi Hospital> - in the hope that the hero of the two worlds would bring them to some agreement – but the general Commissioner for emigration had to admit, with embarrassment, that inside that hospital <the Italian doctors argued twelve months a year> and the money that had been collected to run the hospital disappeared unexplainingly.

Frances felt, with a certain discomfort, that all were looking and hoping in her, but she did not feel able to take on that task.

Furthermore, she had enough to think about, between schools and orphanages.

Then two things happened that her conscience perceived as two voices – one from the world and one from Heaven – both of them were asking her to obey God's will.

The worldly voice came to her by the news of two nuns that had gone to visit the city hospital and one of them had heard a boy calling her, this boy had been in hospital for some months, he stated to cry when he heard her speaking his native language. He had a letter and had kept it under his pillow for three months, he was illiterate and no one had been able to read it for him. The nuns themselves had difficulty in reading the letter because it was written in very poor Italian, however it brought the news that his mother had died suddenly.

For three long months he had laid his head on this news without being able to give it a voice.

Frances cried heart-brokenly. That night she dreamt – and it was the voice from heaven – of a hospital ward in which she saw a fair and beautiful lady was walking among the beds, with incredible tenderness, she caressed the ill and pulled up their blankets. She immediately understood, in the dream (or vision, perhaps!), that it was the Blessed Virgin and she rushed to help her. It was not her duty, the Queen of Heaven, to serve the sick! But Our Lady – she was still dreaming – looked at her somewhat sadly and said to her: *"I am doing what you do not want to do!"*.

The next morning Frances had already decided to destine ten of her nuns to this task.

At first she tried to take over a home that the Scalabrinians owned, but it was going through a rough time.

When she realised that the running of the home would be very costly, she did a trick. She rented two houses, bought some beds and put the nuns to work making mattresses, and then, secretly transferred the patients (all of them with their cutlery hidden under the blankets) and some bottles of medicine to the new centre. The nuns would sleep on mattresses on the floor, using their coats as blankets.

This is the way – in 1892, the centenary of the discovery of America) - the *Columbus Hospital* started, with two American doctors working gratis, amazed as they were by the courage of that woman. The up keeping of the hospital was always guaranteed my

thousands of ways of charity that Frances knew how to find and keep coming in without interruption, up until the financial state aids began to arrive.

In just a few years the Cabrinians were known every where as <the Colombo's Sisters>. In 1896 six hundred and fifteen was the number of patients being treated gratis; in the first thirty years of the life of the hospital one hundred and fifty million patients were taken care of.

*<But this is Italy!>* exclaimed the Italian Commissioner of government for Emigration, remaining speechless, on seeing the meridian atmosphere that reigned in that hospital: he then waited to be presented to Mother Cabrini, with the priggishness of an important person, who had come to <take account of the situation and refer it to those of authority>.

He was deeply impressed by her penetrating, investigating eyes and of a species of indomitable energy that emanated from that apparently fragile figure. He was even more so, when he heard her say with a frankness that did not leave space for an answer : *<You all discuss too much! It is not necessary to discuss a lot on the necessities to protect the emigrants: this is to be done! I do not discuss; I find that good must be done? I get straight down to the task with my little Institute and I never despair in finding the means, because I trust that in one way or another I will always find them>*.

Some years later, that same Commissioner, who had become her friend and an enthusiastic admirer, will say to her: *<Mother Cabrini, you do more for the emigrants than the entire Ministry for Foreign affairs put together>*.

In 1903 she build another hospital in Chicago, adapting a luxurious hotel bought for the sum of one hundred and twenty thousand dollars, when she had only ten thousand to lodge as a deposit, money that had been collected among the inter Italian of the city.

She left the refurbishing to some of her nuns who were unfortunately cheated by dishonest building contractors, who involved them in useless and badly done works, which caused frightful debts.



The Cabrinian Basilica

Frances returned ten months later, when all seemed lost. But she did not lose heart, she sacked the contractors, architects and builders, and began again employing, under her own personal command, new hosts of builders, carpenters, plumbers. She came up against the

Mafia in Illinois: she received threatening and warnings. In was during the winter when they cut the water pipes, and so the ground floor turned into a thick sheet of ice which took pickaxes to break, they burned the basements, they than threatened to blow up the building using dynamite. When no one expected it, because the works were not finished, she transferred the infirm to the building.

Saying. *<Let us see if they will blow up the infirm">*. They left her alone. She had won once again and before leaving was able to dictate regulation for the internal service of doctors and nurses.

She seemed indestructible to a point that they had given her the affectionate nickname of: <Sister perpetual motion>.

One day while she was travelling on a train in Colorado, infested by bands of outlaws, the train was attacked. A bullet penetrated Frances's compartment and seemed to be heading straight for her, but it swerved without hitting her: <*They would not harm you even if they shot you in the face*>, a railway attendant said to her in admiration. This was the real impression she gave every time she had to face difficulty or danger.

We have to renounce telling many stories that strike our imagination just to mention them.

Here we have some principal names and dates.

In 1896: she founded a college in Buenos Aires, where she arrived after having crossed the Andes climbing to the height of four thousand meters on the back of a mule; 1898: she opened three new schools in New York, a college in Paris and one in Madrid; 1900. Other congregations in Buenos Aires and a college in Rosario de Santa Fè; a school in London and an Institute in Denver in Colorado; 1903: apart from the *Columbus Hospital* in Chicago, she started an orphanage in Seattle; 1905: she opened a orphanage in Los Angeles; 1907: she founded a college in Rio de Janeiro, 1909: she opened another hospital in Chicago, 1911: she opened a school in Philadelphia; 1914: an orphanage in *Dobs Ferry* in New York; 1911: she opened a sanatorium in Seattle. Not to mention the Italian foundations, the L'Istituto Supeiore di Magistero in Rome, and a college in Genoa and Turin, all this between one journey and another.

In all, in figures: thirty seven years of activity with the foundation of sixty seven institutes; travelling forty four thousand miles by sea (joking about her country girls origins, Frances called the Atlantic: <The road of the vegetable garden>, and sixteen thousand miles overland.

The figures say nothing about the apostate of the Cabarin. It is enough to remember that Frances conducted some of them to the mines in Denver, going down to nine hundred feet in profundity, preparing them with accurate tenderness: <It will not be difficult to speak to the miners about Heaven, saying that they are already in hell>.

From then on she destined some of her nuns to the service of those who <had no air or family>.

As she also conducted other nuns to the Sing Sing prison, where a great number of Italians, unable to defend themselves, like the ill who were not able to explain their illnesses, they rotted in hatred and desperation.

The nuns were occupied mainly in maintaining the connections – otherwise impossible – between the prisoners and their families.

The prisoners cried when they heard that Frances had desperately battled to obtain the postponing of the execution of a boy, an only son, who's wish was to see his mother before he died and to ask her to forgive him for having abandoned her, leaving her on her own.

Frances Cabrini had helped her to come to America, paying her fare for the long journey, accompanying that poor woman wrapped in her country woman's black shawl, with infinite tenderness.

We do not have time to tell of the type of fibre that those intrepid nuns that Mother Frances escorted with her, in groups that were ever growing in number, each time she returned from Italy.

One episode is quite sufficient to have an intuition: at the docks, while waiting to board the ship for America, a nun was explaining piously to her relatives who had come to say farewell: *"I make this grave sacrifice in going to America, willingly"*. Frances, who was standing beside her, suddenly interrupted her: *"God does not want to impose you with this grave sacrifice, my child, remain here"*. And another nun took her place.

Harshness? No: realism. That same realism that never believed that anything was impossible, was telling her that you could not undertake a task without devoting yourself to it full of joy and without being completely detached from yourself, even from your spiritual habits.

Therefore she had a very precise pedagogical system: *"When I go to visit one of our homes and I see long faces, and note a certain aria of depression, of listlessness and bad humour, I never ask anyone: 'What is or is not wrong with you?', I just start a new activity that obliges the nuns to come out of themselves"*.

God only knows what would happen, and how certain institutes would be renewed, if the respective superiors would find the courage to adapt similar pedagogical criteria!

One last thing we must say. Sometimes certain <laic> love to repeat with derision that <you cannot govern with Our Fathers>, and not even with the <social doctrine> of the Church.

Never the less, there are pages of history in which faith and prayer have demonstrated the capacity of such a concrete and multiform operate, of such a prompt social geniality (*Sollicitudo rei socialis*) and anticipator to make us certain that the lack of prayer – and furthermore the lack of a real faith – that leaves man in the most tragic egoism, in a moment when they want to govern their similars and invent recipes for social progress.

Above all an <intellectual> egoism, of a mind which inevitably is obliged to lose it's time with one's self and his own prejudices, and with his own small<condition>, for whatever extension he may imagine to give it. So, the necessary consequences, also an inevitable narrow mindness, in understanding the problems and in facing the needs, the narrow mindness of man void of the infinite breath of prayer and faith.

*"The world is too small, I want to embrace it entirely"*, Mother Cabrini would say. And she did not fear – recalling certain memories of school – to confess. *"I will never be in peace until the sun never sets on the Congregation"*.

Non the less – with the same truthfulness – she would say, as had many other Saints before her: *"God is everything and I am nothing"*.



Monument to St. Frances Cabrini

The difference that came from her Holy Fathers, lay here: she desired to take her Congregation to the four corners of the world, so that the sun could never set on them, without ever thinking of herself or her projects, but only desiring to do her best in order that there would be no space whatsoever where that Christ she loved so much, would not shine on.

*“Jesus –a beautiful expression she used – it is a blessed necessity”*

She believed everything was possible, because she repeated with Saint Paul: *“I can do all in Him that gives me the power”*.

To the Christians of that time and to those of today she remembered: *“Without striving, you get no-where. What do businessmen not do in the world of affairs? And why can’t we do almost the same for our beloved Jesus’ interests?”*.

When, worn out by work and joy, in 1917, she died in Chicago, in the Hospital that she herself had founded, our emigrants said with affection and gratitude that the <Italian Columbus had discovered America, but only she, Frances, had discovered the Italians in America>.

*Monument to St. Frances Cabrini*

Divo Barsotti wrote properly: <Frances Cabrini’s life seems like a legend. A history of the Church that ignores this fragile woman is in grievous fault; an Italian history that refuses to speak of it is sectarian>.

