

## **Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini**

Book Title: Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini: Cecchina's Dream

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One of my favorite songs of all time is "Just a Girl" by No Doubt. I even cried at one of their concerts in their home county and mine, when Gwen changed the lyrics ever so slightly from "I'm just a girl in the world," to, "I'm just a girl in Orange County." A silly thing to get choked up about, I know, but there is something special about having something in common with someone you admire so much. It was one of those, if-she-can-achieve-her-dreams-then-so-can-I kind of moments. Because, really, we are both just girls from Orange County.

Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini probably would have said something similar in a similarly ironic way, "I'm just a girl from Sant'Angelo." That's how most people viewed her. She was sickly. She was a teacher. She worked hard in her local parish. But she had BIG dreams! Missionary dreams! Dreams that were not possible for a woman to accomplish back then. She had men in her life that were supportive of her work on a local level, but who balked when she wanted to take her sisters international. With hard work and lots of prayer, she was able to accomplish her dreams. A simple girl from Sant' Angelo founded a religious order, traveled the world ministering to the sick, and became a saint. If she can do all that, what's stopping us from achieving our dreams.

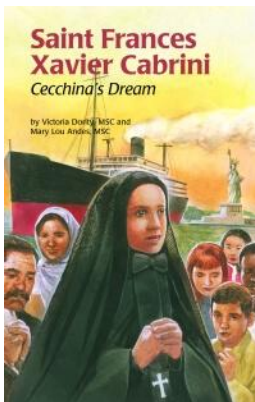
### **Reflection Questions**

1. It was Cecchina's dream to become a missionary from a very young age. What obstacles did she have to overcome to achieve her dream?
2. Have you ever heard the saying, "You can catch more flies with a spoonful of honey than with a barrel of vinegar?" What does it mean? How did Cecchina apply it to her life as a teacher? How can you apply it to your life?
3. Cecchina did not enjoy caring for the sick, but she did it anyway because people needed her help. Is there something that you don't enjoy doing, but do anyway? What motivates you to do it? How do you feel when you're done?

4. When Mother Cabrini was first starting her religious order there were several times when someone was just trying to help, but not in the way she would have liked. Has this ever happened to you? What is tact, and how does one refuse help tactfully?

### History Connection

Learn about Ellis Island and American immigration in the late 1800's and early 1900's. What motivated different groups of people to come to the United States? What kind of lives did they lead once they arrived? Why is the United States often referred to as a "Melting Pot?" Is this an accurate description?



Frances was born on July 15, 1850. As a child growing up in Italy, she dreamed about being a missionary to China.

When she grew up, Frances tried to join two different convents. Because of her poor health, she was not accepted. The Bishop asked Frances to begin a community of sisters dedicated to teaching. Without hesitating, Frances started at once. Before long, the Congregation of the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart began to grow, first in Italy and then in many other countries.

Frances, whom everyone called Mother Cabrini, had always had her heart set on going to China, but it seemed that God wanted her to go to America instead. When Pope Leo XIII told her, "Go West, not East," the matter was settled. St. Frances Xavier Cabrini sailed for the United States and became an American citizen. She especially helped large numbers of Italian immigrants.

Though Mother Cabrini and her sisters had a very hard time in the beginning, schools, hospitals, and homes for children were opened up in different states. As the years passed, Mother Cabrini made many trips to spread her congregation and its works. There were always difficulties, but she put all her trust in the Sacred Heart of Jesus. "It is he who is doing everything, not us," she would say.

Mother Cabrini died in Chicago on December 22, 1917. She was proclaimed a saint by Pope Pius XII on July 7, 1946. Children who read the life of Saint Frances Cabrini will discover the value of following their dreams. Though difficulties present themselves, following the dream God has for them will make them happy in the end and their life will have real meaning.

Ages 8 – 12

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