

Mother Cabrini, The Immigrant Saint

Mother Cabrini Statue Unveiled in New York

A statue of Maria Francesca Saverio Cabrini, one of the more remarkable human beings of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, was unveiled on Columbus Day 2020 on the southern tip of Manhattan by the Governor of New York.



THE FIRST AMERICAN SAINT

This dynamic woman -- better known as Mother Cabrini – had been honored before. In fact, she received what many would consider the ultimate tribute on July 7, 1946, only 29 years after her death, when she was canonized a Saint by Pope Pius XII, as the first American Saint.

She was born in 1850 in Sant' Angelo Lodigiano, a suburb of Milan, Italy. Mother Cabrini came to the United States in 1899, when she was 49 years old at the urging of the Pope to help the Italian immigrants who were then emigrating to the United States in large numbers and other countries.

She became an American citizen 10 years later, and died in Chicago in 1917 at the age of 67.

SERVING THE ITALIAN IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES

Mother Cabrini founded the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart, an order of nuns, and labored with them for 18 years throughout the United States, helping Italian immigrant communities. She founded orphanages, churches, hospitals, schools, libraries, summer camps and other charitable institutions in cities across the country including New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Seattle, New Orleans, Colorado and other places. In all she established over 70 institutions.

When she arrived in Denver, Colorado to help a colony of Italian miners working under very harsh conditions, she set up a parish school and orphanage for the Italian children who had lost their parents. A shrine to Mother Cabrini is located at Lookout Mountain near Golden, Colorado where she created summer camps for the children. A house of worship, a museum and statue of Mother Cabrini is located at the site which is a popular tourist destination. Mother Cabrini Day is a State Holiday in Colorado. There is also a shrine to her in Burbank, California.

In order to provide a parochial education for Italian Children she opened parish schools wherever Italian immigrants had formed communities. In New Orleans, Louisiana, she opened an orphanage and school to address the needs of the largely Sicilian population that settled there.

THE MOTHER CABRINI SHRINES

There are many shrines and statues honoring this remarkable woman throughout the world. But the latest statue erected in New York, sculpted by Giancarlo Biagi and his daughter Jill Biagi, was created following a controversy.

New York City was putting up statues to honor women and in a 2019 nominating contest Mother Cabrini received the most votes. Nevertheless, the city did not choose her. The Italian American Governor of New York intervened and promised to

have one built and erected in a prominent place. That place, Battery Park, faces Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty – an ideal location for a statue honoring the woman known *as “The Immigrant Saint.”*

In December, the congress passed a bill, signed into law by the President, to rename the Federal Post Office in Brooklyn, New York as the Mother Frances Xavier Cabrini Post Office Building.

A CHAMPION OF THE ITALIAN AMERICAN PEOPLE

During the heyday of Italian immigration to the United States in the early 20th Century, Mother Cabrini stands out as one of the Champions of the Italian American people.

This article was prepared by ICS member Bob Masullo



MOTHER CABRINI PHOTO CAPTIONS:

PHOTO AT TOP OF ARTICLE: Mother Frances Xavier Cabrini in 1880

PHOTO ABOVE: 2020 Statue of Mother Cabrini in Battery Park, New York

