St. France Xavier Cabrini

St. Frances Xavier Cabrini's feast day is celebrated November 13. Mother Cabrini, as she's commonly called, spent her whole life traveling. She hardly ever stopped, and travel was a lot harder in her day than it is in ours.

There wasn't much in Mother Cabrini's early life to point to such a busy grown-up life. She was born in Italy and had ten brothers and sisters. Her parents were farmers, and their farmland wasn't too far from a river called the Po. Little Frances could look down into the valley and watch the river make its way to the sea.

When Frances was twenty years old she left the farm and started working as a teacher. During this time, Frances grew in faith and maturity. She took religious vows as a sister, worked hard to save a struggling orphanage, and decided to start her own religious order.

By the late 1880s, Mother Cabrini became interested in a new problem. Hundreds of thousands of Italians moved to America, seeking a way out of the poverty of their new land. Very few of these immigrants were successful right away. Most lived in worse poverty than they'd endured back in Italy. They lived in crowded and dirty apartments, lived on scraps, and were unable to find work. Sad stories traveled back to the home country, right to Mother Cabrini. So Mother Cabrini set out on the long trip to America.
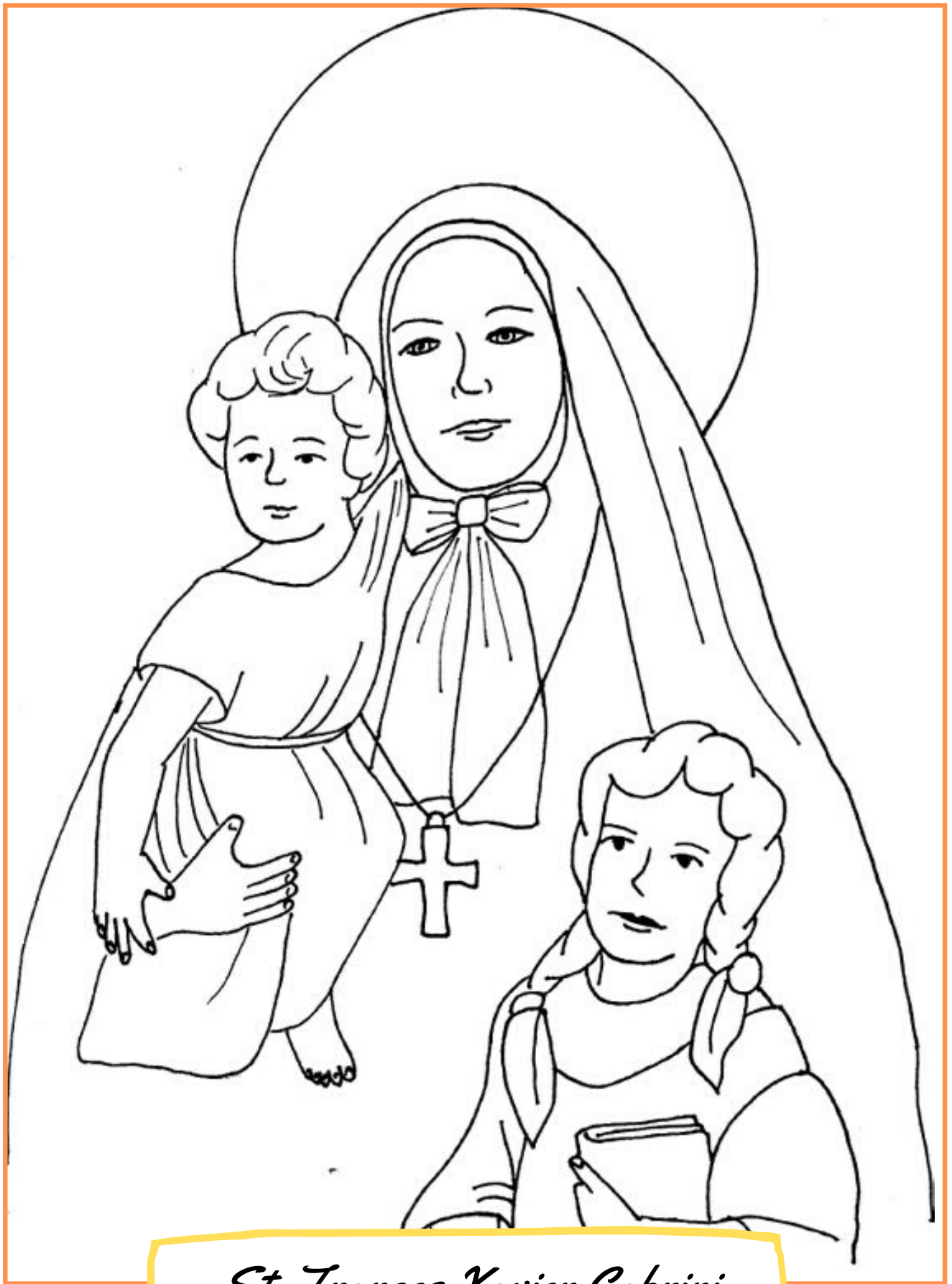
Over the next thirty-seven years, Mother Cabrini was constantly on the move, starting schools, orphanages, and hospitals for Italian immigrants, and others in need. In the first few years she traveled between New York, Nicaragua, and New Orleans. After having a dream in which she saw Mary tending to the sick lying in hospital beds, Mother Cabrini started Columbus Hospital in New York City.

After she founded the hospital, Mother Cabrini made trips back to Italy to organize more nuns for work in America. Between these trips, she and some sisters headed south to Argentina. The sisters went by way of Panama and then Lima, Peru. They made the journey by boat, train, mule, and on foot.

Back in the United States, Mother Cabrini traveled constantly taking her sisters to Chicago, Seattle, and Denver. It was in Chicago that Mother Cabrini, at the age of sixty-seven, passed away. She'd begun her work with just a handful of sisters. By the time she died, fifty houses of sisters were teaching, caring for orphans, and running hospitals. Her order had grown to almost a thousand sisters in all.

Mother Cabrini was obviously a very holy woman, and the church recognized her holiness by canonizing her in 1946 as the first American citizen to become a saint.

Mother Cabrini, pray for us!

St. Frances Xavier Cabrini