

**MISSION AWARENESS LESSON PLAN (Religion Curriculum)**  
**(Younger grades)**  
**ST. FRANCES CABRINI: AN AMERICAN MISSIONARY**

**Goal:** Provide students with formal education related to the missionary nature of the church and how this reality is, and has been, realized both within and outside the United States (see Religion Program Standard IV-C)

**Materials needed:** this lesson plan, accompanying story, map of the world, and any necessary materials for optional follow up activity

**Objectives:** (Subject areas in the curriculum where the objectives could be addressed are indicated in parentheses.)

1. To assist children in developing the understanding that God's people are called to reach out to one another and help them as Jesus did-that is, to be missionaries (religion)
2. To help children respond appropriately to the question: What is a missionary?  
One who:       loves and respects everyone in God's family  
                  teaches others about Jesus  
                  lives like Jesus  
Thus, we are all missionaries (religion)
3. To introduce a special missionary: (St.) Frances Xavier Cabrini (see attached brief biography) telling as much of, or parts of, the story that you feel will interest the children at your grade level(religion)
4. To present (in the context of the story) some simple geographical concepts (social studies)
5. To help the children develop listening skills (language arts)
6. To assist children to see that the church is universal-worldwide (religion)
7. To expand children's vocabulary, as appropriate: **canonize, orphan/age, citizen, missionary, prejudice, immigrant, boarding school, oath of allegiance** (language arts)

**Procedure:**

1. Prepare the children to listen to a story (have map posted or globe available).
2. Tell the story of Mother Cabrini (elaborate/abbreviate as appropriate).
3. Use the follow up questions (below).
4. Prayer: Ask God to bless and free our country and world from racial and ethnic prejudice.
5. Present the follow up activity below (optional). **Any** follow up activity that you create is fine--e.g., children can illustrate their favorite part of the story, or they can illustrate three parts of the story in sequence.

**Follow up questions:**

1. Mother Cabrini was very good at something. What was she good at? (Allow time.) Yes, starting new things was a special talent of hers; she did what God wants all of us to do-she used her talents to show love for others. Mother Cabrini knew that God loves ALL people all over the world, so she went many places, especially to places where people were not being treated fairly.
2. Do you remember what Mother Cabrini used to make when she was a little girl-after her father read her stories about missionaries? (Allow time.) (Optional: Today we can make/draw paper boats, and take them home to show while we share the story of Mother Cabrini. Let's look at a map (globe) that shows all the places Mother Cabrini went. Begin with the place she lived-Italy. Does anyone know where Italy is on the map? (Trace.) First she went to the United States to New York. We can put dots on other countries where she began schools and orphanages--Nicaragua, Argentina, France, England, Spain, Brazil. She also went to other places in the United States- Louisiana, Chicago, Seattle, Los Angeles, Newark, Scranton, Denver.

**Follow up activity:**

One possibility for a follow up activity is to have children make a little boat in remembrance of what Mother Cabrini did as a child. These could be made from paper, walnut shells, scraps of wood or styrofoam. Anything can substitute for the flowers she put on the boats to represent missionaries-whatever your environment provides.

Or

Children can bring to class colorful leaves they find on the ground. Discuss the way each leaf is fashioned similarly and yet each leaf has a particular beauty. Point out that God creates a many-splendored variety of both leaves and people Allow the children to talk about their favorite colors and to describe the colors God gave them: eyes, hair, skin and so on. Mother Cabrini realized the beauty of all people regardless of their differences. That is what God asks all of us to do. (Children can paste their leaf to a paper and write a prayer praising God for making us all different and asking God to help us appreciate all of our brothers and sisters no matter what they are like.)

## MISSION AWARENESS LESSON PLAN (Religion Curriculum)

(Older grades)

### ST. FRANCES CABRINI: AN AMERICAN MISSIONARY

**Goal:** Provide students with formal education related to the missionary nature of the church and how this reality is, and has been, realized both within and outside the United States (see Religion Program Standard IV-Q.)

**Materials needed:** this lesson plan, accompanying story, map of the world.

**Objectives:** (Subject areas in the curriculum where the objectives could be addressed are indicated in parentheses.)

1. To develop students' understanding that the Spirit calls and sends all Christians to service in a particular way (religion)
2. To develop the students' concept of a missionary as: one who reverences the dignity of all people, who cooperates in spreading the reign of God by telling others about Jesus, and who lives like Jesus (religion)
3. To learn about the life of a woman of holiness who was a leader in the history of the Church in the United States (religion)
4. To extend the spirit of Mother Cabrini, Patron Saint of Immigrants, to current moral issues and concerns (religion), and to emphasize immigration and show how it contributed to ethnic diversity in the United States (social studies)
5. To encourage sharing information-e.g., by re-telling the story of Mother Cabrini to younger children and to expand vocabulary, as appropriate: **canonize, orphan/age, citizen, missionary, prejudice, immigrant, boarding school, oath of allegiance** (language arts)
6. To review geographical knowledge and terms, as appropriate-e.g., Italy, India, China, Pacific Ocean, Statue of Liberty (social studies)

#### **Procedure:**

1. Introduce the life of Mother Cabrini in a manner appropriate to the grade level-i.e., the teacher can read the story, or a group of students can prepare the story for the rest of the class.
2. Use follow up questions (suggestions below).
3. Ask God to bless and free our country and world from racial and ethnic prejudice (prayer).
4. Present an appropriate follow up activity (a couple of suggestions below).

#### **Follow up questions:**

1. Mother Cabrini was given the spirit (grace) of God in a particular way. How would you describe the gift she received? (or) Scripture tells us: "As often as you did it for the least of my children, you did it for me." How do these words of Jesus apply to Mother Cabrini?
2. What are some lifestyle choices in these days that remind you of Mother Cabrini's work?
3. We know that salvation (heaven, life forever with God) is for everyone. How did Mother Cabrini show that she believed this?

#### **Follow up activity:**

1. Write a letter to a missionary priest or sister or lay Missionary. Thank him or her for what s/he is doing.
2. Trace Mother Cabrini's missionary travels on the map.

## SAINT FRANCES XAVIER CABRINI

Frances Cabrini was born in Italy (*show a map or relate to the country where the Pope lives*) about 150 years ago (1850). She was the youngest of 13 children. Her father was a farmer. Francesca was especially tiny when she was born; they did not expect her to live. But she lived to the age of 67 and did some extraordinary things. When she was little, her father read her missionary stories to his children gathered together in a big kitchen. Frances loved the stories; she used to make little boats out of paper, drop violets into them, call the flowers "missionaries" and send them off to countries like India and China.

In Italy, she became a teacher and tried to enter several religious communities but they all refused to accept her because her health was poor. She began working with five other women at an **orphanage** in Italy; however, the bishop closed the orphanage. But while she was working there she began a religious community called the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart. Next she asked the Pope if she and her companions could go to China as missionaries. He said no. With her sisters she continued to do whatever work was needed—caring for orphans, teaching, doing hand work. She became known as Mother Cabrini.

But then the Pope decided to send her to the United States (to New York) to help some of the people (**immigrants**) who had come from Italy to the United States and were having a hard time in this country; they were victims of **prejudice**. So, Mother Cabrini was to become a missionary to the United States. In 1889 when she arrived in New York with seven other sisters there was no place for them to stay and the bishop advised them to return to Italy. However Mother Cabrini and the sisters remained and gathered a houseful of orphan children. They soon ran out of money to buy food for the children and they began to go to homes and shops asking for anything that could be spared—food, clothing, or money. Mother Cabrini and the sisters remained in New York, opening other orphanages and schools and beginning a small hospital. When things were running smoothly in the United States, Mother Cabrini left the other sisters in charge and went to found missions in Nicaragua, Louisiana, Argentina, Paris, England, Spain, and Brazil. (*In order to show the extent of Mother Cabrini's work, indicate on the map where these countries are.*)

In the United States, Mother Cabrini opened missions on the Pacific Coast. She founded a school in Los Angeles in Burbank—called Villa Cabrini Academy. (*This is right here in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.*) This was a **boarding school** and existed until about thirty years ago. It is now the site of Woodbury University.

In Seattle in 1909, Mother Cabrini took the **oath of allegiance** to the United States and became a citizen of the country at the age of 59. She died in Chicago in 1917 at the age of 67 while preparing for a children's Christmas party in one of the hospitals she founded.

On July 7, 1946 (50 years ago) she was **canonized** a saint in Rome—the first American to be canonized. She is buried under the altar of the chapel of Mother Cabrini High School in New York City. In pictures she is often shown against a background of New York harbor with the Statue of Liberty. Her **feast day** is November 13.

*Prayer: Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini, you always said that God did everything. Help me to trust that God cares for me and what I am trying to do.*

Words printed in **bold type** are words that may need special explanation, depending on grade level.