

April

PRAYER:

Act of Hope

VIRTUE OF THE MONTH:

Obedience: saying "yes" to the loving will of God and those He has set over us

Obedience is not exactly a popular virtue in our culture. Someone who is worldly seeks power, not submission. The Christian idea of authority turns the worldly idea of power on its head: the one with the most authority is not the one who controls the most people, but the one who serves the most people. To serve others means to choose their needs above one's own, to follow God and to help others follow Him. For example, the world might see the role of a pope as one of power and control, yet one of the titles of the Holy Father is "the servant of the servants of God".

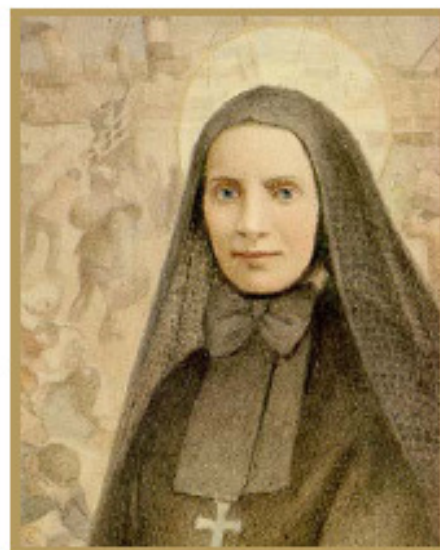
Authentic obedience guarantees us the freedom of living in the truth that our lives are guided and protected by the hand of our loving Father, who has a plan to bring everyone to salvation. We see His will in just laws, and in the lawful commands of those He has given authority. Obedience does not mean being forced to do things we don't want to do, and it certainly does not mean doing things that are sinful, just because a person in authority tells us to do it. Rather, it means that we choose to want what God wants, in order to attain the freedom and joy of following Him.

SAINT OF THE MONTH:

Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini
(1850, Italy—1917, Chicago, Illinois)
Feast: November 13

Maria Francesca Cabrini was born into a large family of Italian farmers. Maria Francesca was born two months premature and remained small and frail during her life, but she nevertheless had a strong spirit and plenty of determination. Even from her earliest years, Maria Francesca had a great desire to serve Christ and was drawn to carry out this service as a missionary to China...but God had other plans.

Refused entrance into a religious order at age 18 because of her poor health, Maria Francesca instead taught for six years at a girls' orphanage and did so well that when it closed, the local bishop asked her to found a religious community, the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, to serve the poor in schools and hospitals. The new Mother Frances Xavier Cabrini (named for the great Jesuit saint to the Far East) worked with zeal and determination, still intent on establishing her sisters in China.



*Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini,
courtesy of Missionary Sisters of the
Sacred Heart of Jesus*

OBEDIENCE: saying "yes" to the loving will of God and those He has set over us

However, when she met with Pope Leo XIII, he told her "Not to the East, but to the West", and sent Mother Cabrini and her sisters to New York City to work with the many Italian immigrants who were suffering the effects of being poor strangers in a strange land.

All the love and devotion Mother Cabrini intended to pour out on the people of China she now spent in service to the downtrodden immigrants in the United States, overseeing the founding of institutions to serve their spiritual and material needs. This required hospitals, not something that Mother Cabrini desired to include as part of the work of her sisters. However, the virtue of obedience to higher authorities once again played an important role. For after Mother Cabrini initially refused the request of the archbishop of New York to establish a hospital, she had a dream in which she saw the Blessed Virgin Mary attending to the needs of the sick. When she asked her what she was doing, the Blessed Mother responded, "I am doing the work you refuse to do." Mother Cabrini accepted the grace given through this vision and promptly opened a hospital in New York City. Mother Cabrini and her sisters went on to establish other hospitals and institutions in Illinois, Louisiana, Pennsylvania, Colorado, California, Washington state, and eventually South America and her native Italy.

Mother Cabrini became a citizen of the United States in 1909. Only 8 years later, while in Chicago and helping with the Christmas preparations, Mother Cabrini suffered her last illness and entered eternal life on December 22, 1917. In 1946, she became the first American citizen to be canonized.

PRAYER:

Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini, when you had your heart set on one thing and God asked another of you, you obeyed His plan instead of your own. Help me, like you, to obey the Lord quickly and with joy, so that His will may be done in and through me. Amen. Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini, pray for us.

PRAYER:

Pray the First Joyful Mystery of the Rosary, the Annunciation. Reflect on how Our Lady said "yes" to God's will, even when it seemed impossible. Ask her to intercede for you and to give you a heart that is obedient to the will of God.

Saint Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle. Be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray. And do thou, O Prince of the Heavenly Host, by the power of God, cast into hell Satan and all the evil spirits who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.