



# CABRINI

## Discussion Guide



**Migration and  
Refugee Services**  
*Renewing Hope. Seeking Justice.*  
UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

## Biography:

Francesca Cabrini, later known as Mother Cabrini, was born in Italy in 1850, the youngest of 13 siblings. Despite facing numerous obstacles, including poor health and rejection from religious orders due to her frailty, she persevered in her calling to serve others. From a young age, Francesca displayed a deep sense of compassion and a desire to help those in need. After being inspired by the works of St. Francis Xavier during her childhood, she felt a calling to missionary work. In 1880, Francesca founded the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, dedicated to serving the poor and marginalized. This marked the beginning of her lifelong mission to spread love and compassion to those who needed it most. Mother Cabrini's missionary zeal led her to establish schools, orphanages, and hospitals, particularly focusing on immigrant communities in New York City. Despite facing discrimination and challenges, she tirelessly worked to alleviate the suffering of others, becoming the first American citizen to be canonized by the Catholic Church in 1946. Her legacy continues to inspire millions around the world, and her impact on the lives of immigrants and the marginalized cannot be overstated. Mother Cabrini's life serves as a shining example of selflessness, courage, and unwavering faith in the face of adversity.

## Synopsis:

“Cabrini” takes viewers on a journey from Mother Cabrini's humble beginnings in Italy to her remarkable work in America and around the world. The film chronicles Mother Cabrini's tireless efforts to establish schools, orphanages, and hospitals, particularly focusing on immigrant communities in New York City. Despite facing discrimination and numerous challenges, she never wavered in her commitment to serving others. Through powerful storytelling and stunning visuals, “Cabrini” captures the essence of Mother Cabrini's compassion, determination, and faith. As the film unfolds, viewers witness Mother Cabrini's encounters with individuals from diverse backgrounds, each with their own struggles and triumphs. From comforting orphaned children to providing medical care to the sick and injured, Mother Cabrini's love knew no bounds. Her deep sense of empathy shines through in every interaction, leaving a lasting impact on all those she encounters. “Cabrini” is more than just a biopic; it is a testament to the power of love, faith, and service to transform lives and communities. Through her example, Mother Cabrini continues to inspire people of all ages and backgrounds to make a difference in the world and to live a life of purpose and meaning.

## Three Themes of Catholic Social Teaching:

1. Human Dignity: Mother Cabrini believed passionately in the inherent worth and dignity of every person, regardless of their social status, nationality, or circumstances. Throughout her life, she demonstrated a profound reverence for human life in all its forms. For example, in her work with immigrant communities in New York City, she ensured that every individual received dignified treatment and care and she established schools to provide education and opportunities for children who were often overlooked by society. Despite



facing financial challenges and opposition from those who doubted her abilities, Mother Cabrini persevered, believing that every person deserved access to quality healthcare and established Columbus Hospital in New York City, which provided compassionate care to immigrants and the poor. Her hospital became a beacon of hope for countless individuals who would have otherwise been denied medical care due to their social or economic status.

2. Solidarity: Mother Cabrini's life was a testament to the principle of solidarity, which emphasizes the interconnectedness of all humanity and calls us to stand in unity with those who are suffering or marginalized. She lived in solidarity with the poor and oppressed, sharing in their joys and sorrows, and working alongside them to address their needs. She chose to live among the immigrant communities she served rather than remaining aloof or distant, so she could immerse herself fully in their lives, learning from their experiences and advocating for their rights. Through her actions, Mother Cabrini showed that solidarity is not just a theoretical concept but a lived reality that requires us to actively engage with those who are marginalized or oppressed.

3. Preferential Option for the Poor and Vulnerable: Mother Cabrini's life was guided by this principle which calls us to prioritize the needs of the most marginalized members of

society. She dedicated herself wholeheartedly to serving those who were often overlooked or ignored by mainstream society, including immigrants, orphans, and the sick. She recognized that the poor and marginalized were not just recipients of charity but active participants in their own liberation, and she empowered them to take control of their lives and futures. Recognizing the challenges Italian immigrants faced in a new and unfamiliar land, she provided practical assistance such as food, clothing, and housing, as well as emotional and spiritual support. Mother Cabrini's holistic approach to serving the poor and vulnerable reflected her deep understanding of their needs and her unwavering commitment to their well-being.

## Discussion Questions:

1. How did Mother Cabrini's personal experiences shape her approach to serving immigrant communities?
2. In what ways did Mother Cabrini embody the values of Catholic Social Teaching in her work with immigrant youth?
3. How can we apply Mother Cabrini's example to address contemporary issues facing immigrants in our communities?
4. What challenges did Mother Cabrini face in her efforts to serve others, and how did she overcome them?
5. How does Mother Cabrini's legacy continue to inspire individuals and communities today?

## Action Steps:

1. Volunteer at local immigrant support organizations to directly assist those in need.
2. Advocate for immigrant rights by contacting elected officials and participating in advocacy campaigns.
3. Educate yourself and others about the experiences of immigrants in your community through workshops, discussions, and cultural events.

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