

Introduction

# Heaven in Her Heart

*By Kristen Van Uden Theriault*







*If the Sacred Heart would give me the means I would construct a boat called “The House of Cristoforo” (“Bearer of Christ”) to traverse with one Community, little or big, so as to carry the Name of Christ to all people, to those who as yet do not know Him, and also to those who have forgotten Him.*

So writes Mother Cabrini, the tenacious saint whose great zeal for souls led her across oceans and continents to spread the Word of God.

The scale at which Mother alleviated human suffering is unmatched. Throughout her lifetime, her Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus established sixty-seven institutions dedicated to serving schoolchildren, orphans, and the poor. The scope of these missions made her order one of the farthest reaching and impactful of its day.

Mother Cabrini’s vocation transcended humanitarian concerns, being first and foremost concerned with the salvation of the *souls* of all she served. She was driven by a supernatural charity that was always fixed on Heaven.

Her personal writings reveal this zeal for souls in an intimate way. As she writes, she had “Heaven in her heart,” and sought to

## The Mother Cabrini Companton

project this beatific bliss to the most lost and isolated of God's sheep. Indifferent to background or socioeconomic status, she treated each person she encountered as a dignified child of God, always with an eye to deeper conversion.

Her great devotion to the Sacred Heart was the impetus for her love of souls: she loved them as Jesus loves. As she comments in a letter of encouragement to her sisters, "Your love must be active as that of Jesus on Golgotha. 'Sitio,' 'I thirst,' cried Jesus, 'for souls.' |"

She recognized that the missionary's primary work was to continue Jesus' divine mission:

There was a time when Our Lord went through the streets of Jerusalem drawing souls to Himself by His Divine looks; but, to-day, it is by His spirit and His loving Heart that He draws souls to His following and inflames them. My Jesus, how good Thou art! I shall never cease to speak of Thee and Thy Divine Heart! I shall never tire of proclaiming Thy praises, so that Thou risest every day like a bright and ardent lamp and run as a Giant in every country, enlightening souls, warming up hearts, drawing them into the fold of Thy Church and helping them to follow Thee more closely.

Dedicated to illustrious patrons such as St. Francis Xavier, whose name she took by the addition of "Saverio" to her given name, Francesca, Mother envisioned missionary work as truly apostolic, separated only by time:

"You are the light of the world, the salt of the earth," Jesus said, when from the mountain He spoke to His Apostles. And you, Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, belong in a certain measure to the Apostolic family.

## *Heaven in Her Heart*

Have you not to continue the Apostolate of the great Mission of Christ? To you also is entrusted the Mission of being the salt of the earth and the light of the world.

Like Our Lady, Mother Cabrini was always concerned with reflecting Jesus in all her actions, with *being* Jesus to others: from her neighbor to the souls of the Far East that she so wished to save.

The urgency and energy of Mother's actions make evident that she understood the immediacy of the missionary vocation in our short sojourn in this vale of tears. She instructs her sisters:

The days fly, souls are being lost. Death is approaching more quickly than we realize, and then the time for work is over. Work, then, while you have time. Work with energy, and especially with the spirit of sacrifice, for it is this that forms the true Missionary. This storms the Heart of Jesus, and draws from It, as it were, the most precious graces for those souls who are the hardest and the most obstinate in resisting His love. Work with an apostolic spirit which offers everything, actions, prayers and sacrifices for the conversion of souls.

Indeed, the magnitude of her ambitious work would have been impossible if not for supernatural means. Her simple yet profound trust in God enabled her to overcome worldly roadblocks. Mother Cabrini's childlike faith in God's Providence lent her confidence to conquer the world in love, embodying her contemporary Pope St. Pius X's injunction to "restore all things in Christ."

Mother writes, assertively:

The Missionary knows no distance |—| the world is so small. Space is an imperceptible object to a Missionary, because she is accustomed to dwell on eternity, to

## The Mother Cabrini Companion

which she wishes to conduct all the souls she can |—  
|those souls which have been redeemed by the Most  
Precious Blood of Jesus Christ.

The missionary's role is not just to preach the Gospel and gain Baptisms, but to facilitate the religious development of the whole person, setting the foundation for lifelong devotion. Catholic education was a cornerstone of Mother Cabrini's mission: solid formation is essential to equip the soul for a life well lived.

In true missionary spirit, Mother recognized that conversion is not merely a one-time choice, but an ongoing process, requiring constant conversion of heart and rededication to the Divine Will. Even in her advanced spiritual development, she saw room for continual growth:

To-day the skin has begun to peel off my forehead and nose. I am changing like a serpent. God wants me to change my life and be converted; to confirm this, my dearest daughters, pray. The Sacred Heart of Jesus will always hear favourably the prayers of children for their Mother. Pray! Pray! I am in need of your intercession. When I am converted and begin to lead a good life, it is certain that this will obtain many beautiful graces for the Institute.

She thus echoes St. Paul, who also advised continual inner conversion:

So we do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed every day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, because we look not to the things that are seen

## *Heaven in Her Heart*

but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal. (2 Cor. 4:16-18)

Mother Cabrini considered the entire world her frontier, but she never neglected the infinite frontier within her own heart, drawing ever closer to her Savior.

Perhaps the most beautiful of Mother's writings are her meditations on Heaven and eternity, always keeping in mind the ultimate end of all missionary work.

The beauty of creation, particularly the sea, which Mother had ample opportunity to study on her dozens of transatlantic voyages, prompts poetic musings:

We seem to see the portals of Heaven which do not close at the end of the day, because there daytime never ends, for the day up there is eternal and the light which emanates from the Divine Face never fails. There, in that abode, exists no night, no ignorance, no blindness, for everything is seen in God; there, no sorrows exist, no tears, no adversity, no sighs. No, daughters, in Heaven there are no clouds to obscure the Divine Sun, the Eternal Sun of Justice. There is no fear of losing God; no wiles of the enemy, for he has been routed; the world is far away, and the body spiritualized lives in harmony with the soul. No, there is no night in Heaven and the door is always open. Friends reach there at every moment, every instant; they do not disturb, but, rather, render the repose serene and sweet.

Mother always accompanies these musings with intercessory prayer and practical advice for saving souls, truly uniting the missionary's

## The Mother Cabrini Companton

temporal work in the Church Militant to her eventual home in the Church Triumphant:

Oh, sublime City, send down your beams of Light to these regions of darkness, this shadow of death where we still miserably live. Come, oh Supernatural Light, to reveal to us the beauties of that Blessed Country, and detach us from the miseries of this earth; make our eyes so pure that, through the shining crystal of Faith, they may behold the eternal good which awaits us after a short time of sacrifice and self-conquering. He who fights will be victorious, and to the victor the prize is Heaven.

What emerges from Mother Cabrini's words is a portrait of a soul completely at *peace* but never at *rest*: she did indeed have Heaven in her heart, and worked tirelessly to share the joys of God's eternal love, expanding the Kingdom of Heaven in the frontier of souls.

I hope you enjoy this curated selection of some of the most insightful writings of this joyful saint.

—KVT

Week 1

# Detachment



## The Mother Cabrini Companion

Let all your affections, my daughters, be centred in this beautiful Heart, and you will always be happy; but if, instead, you foster private affections that tie you to self, or to creatures, you will always have annoyances, hours of disgust and melancholy. Free yourselves, and put on wings, I pray you, in order that you may rise above the earth.



Oh, my daughters, what an excellent thing is a pure soul detached from everything and from self! She can bury herself in God, Who is the source of all courage. Let us then become pure, simple, unpretentious, raised above all created things. When we have achieved this, we shall begin to realise that true happiness which has awaited us this long time and is in store for us if we wish it.



Let us work, day by day, in the Lord's vineyard, seeking the greater glory of God, in perfect detachment from everything, which is of very great importance to ourselves, for often without our knowing it, we are the enemies of our own souls, troubling ourselves about many things, whilst "Porro unum est necessarium."



## *Detachment*

We also made a little meditation on the beautiful lesson of Saint Bernard, wherein he speaks of the force and power of the love of God in a soul, and how the possession of this love enables a soul not to feel further the weight of any cross, which rather becomes a great pleasure and delight.



Oh, happy the soul that lives in the true love of Christ! My daughters, detach yourselves from all persons and all things, and you will have a foretaste of the Paradise of true, solid and Heavenly love.



# My Thoughts and Prayers

