



Have you ever wondered why we take up a collection in the middle of the Sacred Liturgy? Or, why, immediately following the collection, we employ an altar server with the Processional Cross to lead a few members of the congregation in a procession to bring bread and wine down aisle to the priest for the Holy Sacrifice? What do these interconnected gestures mean? It may seem that the Collection, the procession of the gift, and then the offering (when the priest elevates and offers to God the bread and wine), is no more than a little “break” lodged between the two major parts of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass (the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist). In the Gospel this Sunday (Mk 12:38-44), a poor widow teaches us that there is a profound connection between what we put into the collection and how we worship Almighty God. You know the story. One day Jesus “observed how the crowd put money into the treasury. Many put in large sums . . . from their surplus wealth.”

Then a poor widow contributed “two small coins worth a few cents.” Jesus commented to his disciples, “Amen, I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the other contributors to the treasury. For they have all contributed from their surplus wealth, but she, from her poverty, has contributed all she had, her whole livelihood.” In fact, the two small coins offered by the poor widow constituted a real sacrificial gift to God – it was a profound act of worship! With this gift, she communicated and deepened her love for God, her trust in His providence, and her desire that He be glorified. Of course, this beautiful gesture was not missed by Jesus. This poor woman managed to warm His Sacred Heart; and you better believe, she will receive an eternal, hundred-fold, blessing from the hand of God who will not be outdone in generosity!

So, the Collection at Mass is an opportunity for us to offer ourselves – “all that we have” – as an act of worship. In a similar way, the liturgical gesture of the presentation of the gifts gives us opportunity to consciously offer all creation – all the pain and suffering of the world, all the fruit of human labor – to God to be transformed by Him and find its ultimate meaning. Pope Benedict XVI explains:

The Synod Fathers also presentation of the gifts. simply as a kind of liturgy of the word and Eucharist. To do so would least, the sense of a single interrelated parts. This gesture is actually very and wine that we bring to taken up by Christ the

Jesus observed how the crowd put money into the treasury. Many... put in large sums. A poor widow... put in two small coins. Jesus said to his disciples, “Amen, I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the others.... For she, from her poverty, has contributed all she had.” Mk 12:41-44

drew attention to the This is not to be viewed "interval" between the the liturgy of the tend to weaken, at the rite made up of two humble and simple significant: in the bread the altar, all creation is Redeemer to be

transformed and presented to the Father. In this way we also bring to the altar all the pain and suffering of the world, in the certainty that everything has value in God's eyes. The authentic meaning of this gesture can be clearly expressed without the need for undue emphasis or complexity. It enables us to appreciate how God invites man to participate in bringing to fulfillment his handiwork, and in so doing, gives human labor its authentic meaning, since, through the celebration of the Eucharist, it is united to the redemptive sacrifice of Christ. [*Sacramentum Caritatis*: Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Eucharist as the Source and Summit of the Church's Life and Mission (February 22, 2007), #47].

May the good Lord help each of us to speak to God through our sincere, loving, sacrificial gifts offered every week in the midst of the Sacred Liturgy. May our participation in the Collection and Offertory not be void of meaning; rather, like the poor widow, may we be inspired to offer “all that we have” and all of creation to be taken up by Christ the Redeemer and transformed – this is authentic worship of God which warms the Sacred Heart of Jesus and will neither go unobserved nor unrewarded by our heavenly Father!

Your Servant in Christ,
Fr. Terry Staples



Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini

Feast Day: November 13

Born: July 15, 1850, Died: December 22, 1917

Patron: Immigrants, Hospital Administrators, & Impossible Causes

First American citizen to be declared a saint

Canonized: July 7, 1946 by Pope Pius XII

Frances was born in Italy and grew up in a devout Catholic household as the youngest of thirteen children. Her parents were farmers. Frances wanted to join a religious order from an early age. Due to her frail health, she was initially denied entry into the Daughters of the Sacred Heart, so she obtained her teaching certificate and began her career as an educator at twenty years old. During this time, Frances grew in faith and maturity. Her deep trust in the loving care of God gave her the strength to be a valiant woman doing the work of Christ. Her natural talent for teaching and her compassionate nature quickly gained recognition, attracting the attention of the Bishop of Piacenza. He invited her to work at the House of Providence Orphanage where she demonstrated exceptional administrative skills and expanded the institution's services to include adult education and youth gatherings. It was here that she took religious vows as a sister and worked hard to save the struggling orphanage. When the bishop closed the orphanage in 1880, Frances founded the Institute of the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Seven young women from the orphanage joined her.

Frances had wanted to be a missionary in China but, at the urging of Pope Leo XIII, she went west instead of east. Mother Cabrini, as she was now known, traveled with six sisters to New York City in March 1889 to help the Italian immigrants living there. Hundreds of thousands of Italians had 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 had endured back in Italy. They lived on scraps, in crowded and dirty apartments, and were unable to find work. Seeing great need among those who were losing their faith, she organized schools and adult education classes.

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, New Orleans, and Nicaragua and later led her sisters to Chicago, Seattle, and Denver. Mother Cabrini never did get to China, but she found souls to save and home in the United States where she became a naturalized citizen in 1909.

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. Throughout her life, she made 23 transatlantic crossings and founded 67 institutions dedicated to caring for the poor, the abandoned, the uneducated and the sick. She began 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. Today the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is active in 15 countries across six continents. Mother Cabrini, passed away at the age of sixty-seven at one of the hospitals she had helped to establish in Chicago.

Reflection: Saint Francis Xavier Cabrini experienced some early challenges in her life that lead her in directions she had not envisioned. She put her priorities aside and accepted the path God had chosen for her. May we listen carefully to the daily call of God's will for us....and not hesitate to put our priorities aside to follow that call.