



## **Blessed Mary Frances Schervier (O.F.S.)**

**[January 8, 1819 – December 14, 1876]**

**(Feast Day December 15)**

This woman who once wanted to become a Trappistine nun was instead led by God to establish a community of sisters who care for the sick and aged in the United States and throughout the world.

Frances Schervier (German: *Franziska*) was born into a wealthy family in Aachen, Germany. Her father, Johann Heinrich Schervier was a wealthy needle factory owner and the vice-mayor of Aachen. Her French mother, Maria Louise Migeon, the Goddaughter of Emperor Francis I of Austria provided a strict home environment. In 1832, after the death of both her mother and two sisters from tuberculosis when she was thirteen, Frances become the homemaker for her father, and developed a reputation for generosity to the poor, from her growing awareness of their desperate conditions.

In 1844, Frances and four other young ladies became members of the Third Order of St. Francis **[know now as the Secular Franciscan Order]**.

In 1845, Frances' life took an unexpected turn when her father died. From 1845 until 1848, the women continued to care for the sick in their homes and to operate a soup kitchen. They also cared for prostitutes in their own small home and nursed women suffering from syphilis. Relying entirely upon donations for support, the women experienced extreme poverty. The pre-revolutionary potato and grain failures and the refusal of some benefactors to continue their assistance once the Sisters began ministering to prostitutes, intensified their difficulties. More women joined the group in 1849, expanding the ministry beyond Aachen; not only did they care for victims of cholera, smallpox, typhoid fever, and cancer, but they also supervised women prisoners at the Aachen prison and assisted them in finding employment after their release.

The Sisters of the Poor of St. Francis (a variant of the original name) obtained formal Church recognition from the local bishop on July 2, 1851. She was the foundress of two religious congregations of Religious Sisters of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis, both committed to serving the neediest of the poor. One, the Poor Sisters of St. Francis, is based in her native Germany, and the other, the Franciscan Sisters of the Poor, was later formed from its Province in the United States.

In 1857, she encouraged Philip Hoyer, a Franciscan tertiary **[Secular Franciscan]**, in his efforts to establish the Poor Brothers of St. Francis.

The first U.S. foundation was made in 1858. Mother Frances visited the United States in 1863 and helped her sisters nurse soldiers wounded in the Civil War. She visited the United States again in 1868.

In 1876, Mother Frances Schervier died in Aachen, Germany, on December 14. There were 2,500 members of her congregation worldwide. Pope Paul VI beatified Mother Frances on April 28, 1974.

*[Bold was added for emphasis and sometimes for clarification.]*

*[Compiled by Deacon Dave & Thérèse Ream, O.F.S., Revised July 2017]*