



Francis Xavier Biography

Saint **Francis Xavier** (April 7, 1506 - December 2, 1552) was a pioneering Christian missionary and co-founder of the Society of Jesus (Jesuit Order). The Xaverian Brothers are named after him. The Catholic church considers him to have converted more people to Christianity than anyone else since St. Paul.

Early life

Xavier was born Francisco de Jaso y Azpilcueta in the Castle of Xavier (modern Spanish Javier, Basque Xabier) near Sangüesa and Pamplona, in Navarre, Spain. He sprang from an aristocratic Basque family of Navarre. In 1512, Castile invaded Navarre. Many fortresses were devastated, including the family castle, and land was confiscated. Francis' father died in 1515.

At the age of 19, Francis Xavier went to study at the University of Paris, where he received a licence ès arts in 1530. He furthered his studies there in theology, and became acquainted with Ignatius Loyola. Along with Ignatius, Pierre Favre and four others, Xavier was one of those who on August 15, 1534 bound themselves by a vow at Montmartre and formed the Society of Jesus.

Missionary work

Francis Xavier devoted much of his life to missions to remote countries. As King John III of Portugal desired Jesuit missionaries for the Portuguese East Indies, he was ordered there in 1540. He left Lisbon on April 7, 1541, together with two other Jesuits and the new viceroy Martin de

Sousa, on board the Santiago. From August of that year until March 1542, he remained in Mozambique, and reached Goa, India, the capital of the then Portuguese colonies, on May 6. His official role in Goa was Apostolic Nuncio. He spent the following three years operating out of Goa.

On September 20, 1542, he left for his first missionary activity among the Paravas, pearl-fishers along the east coast of southern India, north of Cape Comorin. He then exerted himself to convert the king of Travancore to Christianity, on the west coast, and also visited Ceylon. Dissatisfied with the results of his activity, he turned eastward in 1545, and planned a missionary journey to Macassar, on the island of Celebes, in today's Indonesia.

After arriving in Malacca in October of that year and waiting there three months in vain for a ship to Macassar, he gave up the goal of his voyage. He left Malacca on January 1, 1546 and landed on Amboyna, where he stayed until mid-June. He then visited other Molucca Islands, including Ternate and More. Shortly after Easter 1546, he returned to Ambon Island, and then Malacca.

In December 1547, in Malacca, Francis Xavier met a Japanese nobleman from Kagoshima called Anjiro. Anjiro had heard from Francis in 1545 and had travelled from Kagoshima to Malacca with the purpose of meeting him. Following their conversations, Xavier decided to travel to Japan.

He returned to India in January 1548. The next fifteen months were occupied with various journeys and administrative measures in India.

Then due to displeasure at the unchristian life and manners of the Portuguese, which impeded proselyting work, he went forth once again into the unknown Far East. He left Goa on April 15, 1549, stopped at Malacca, and visited Canton. He was accompanied by Anjiro, two other Japanese men, the father Cosme de Torrès and Brother Juan Fernandez. He had taken with him presents for the "King of Japan", since he was intending to introduce himself as the Apostolic Nuncio.

Xavier reached Japan on August 15, 1549. He landed at Kagoshima, the principal port of the province of Satsuma, on the island of Kyushu. He was received in a friendly manner and was the host of Ajiro's family until October 1550. From October to December 1550, he resided in Yamaguchi. Shortly before Christmas, he left for Kyoto, but failed at meeting with the Emperor. He returned to Yamaguchi in March 1551. There he was permitted to preach by the daimyo, but not knowing the Japanese language he had to limit himself to reading aloud the translation of a catechism.

Memorial to St. Francis Xavier, Hirado, Nagasaki, Japan Ultimately his sojourn was fruitful, as attested by congregations established in Hirado, Yamaguchi, and Bungo. Xavier worked for more than two years in Japan and saw his successor-Jesuits established. He then decided to return to

India. During his trip, a tempest forced him to stop on an island near Guangzhou, China. There he saw the rich merchant Diégo Pereira, an old friend from Cochin, who showed him a letter of Portuguese being held prisoners in Guangzhou asking for a Portuguese ambassador to talk to the Chinese Emperor in their favor. Later, he stopped at Malacca on December 27, 1551 and was back in Goa by January, 1552.

On April 17 he was again under way, together with Diego Pereira, leaving Goa on board of the Santa Cruz and aiming for China. He introduced himself as Apostolic Nuncio, and Pereira as ambassador of the King of Portugal. Shortly thereafter, he realized that he had forgotten his testimonial letters as an Apostolic Nuncio. Back in Malacca, he was confronted by the captain Alvaro de Ataide de Gama, who now had total control over the harbor. The captain refused to recognize his title of Nuncio, asked Pereira to resign from his title of ambassador, named a new crew for the ship, and demanded that the gifts for the Emperor be left in Malacca.

In early September 1552, the Santa Cruz reached the Chinese island of Shangchuan, 10 km away from the southern coast of mainland China, near Taishan, Guangdong, 200 km south-west of what later became Hong Kong. At this time, he was only accompanied by a Jesuit student, Alvaro Ferreira, a Chinese man called Antonio, and a Malabar servant called Christopher. Around mid-November he sent a letter saying that a man had agreed to take him to the mainland in exchange for a large sum of money. Having sent back Alvaro Ferreira, he remained alone with Antonio.

Death

On November 21, he fainted after celebrating a mass. He died on the island on December 2, 1552, at age 46, without having reached mainland China.

He was first buried on Shangchuan Dao's beach. His intact body was taken from the island in February 1553. It was temporarily buried in St. Paul's church in Malacca on March 22, 1553. An open grave in the church now marks the place of Xavier's burial. Pereira came back from Goa, removed the corpse shortly after April 15, 1553, and moved it to his house.

On December 11, 1553, Xavier's body was shipped to Goa. The body, having resisted extensive decay, is now in the Basilica of Bom J sus in Goa, where it was placed into a silver casket on December 2, 1637. The silver casket is lowered for public viewing only during the public exposition, which most recently took place in 1994. There is a debate as to how the body could have remained incorrupt for so long. Some say that Francis Xavier was mummified, while others argue that the incorruptible body is evidence of a miracle.

Legacy

Francis Xavier accomplished a great deal of missionary work, both as organizer and as pioneer. By his compromises in India with the Christians of St. Thomas he developed the Jesuit missionary methods along lines that subsequently became fateful for his order. The instruction he dispensed in connection with baptism was superficial. He combined missions with politics, and approved of the extension of Christianity by force (cf. his letter to King John III. of Portugal, Cochin, Jan. 20, 1548).

He had high qualifications as missionary: he was animated with glowing zeal; he was endowed with great linguistic gifts, and his activity was marked by restless pushing forward. His efforts left a significant impression upon the missionary history of India, and by pointing out the way to East India to the Jesuits, his work is of fundamental significance with regard to the history of the propagation of Christianity in China and Japan.

He himself witnessed many of the results of his labor, but still greater were the tasks he proposed. Since the Roman Catholic Church responded to his call, the effects of his efforts reach far beyond the Jesuit order; the entire systematic and aggressive incorporation of great masses of people on broad lines of policy by the Roman Catholic Church in modern times dates back to Xavier.

Recognition

Francis Xavier is an Anglican and a Catholic saint. He was beatified by Paul V on October 25, 1619, and was canonized by Gregory XV on March 12, 1622, at the same time as Ignatius Loyola.

In 1839, Theodore James Ryken founded the Xaverian Brothers, or Congregation of St. Francis Xavier (CFX). Currently, over twenty colleges or high schools in the United States are Xaverian Brothers Sponsored Schools (XBSS).

He is the patron saint of Australia, Borneo, China, East Indies, Goa, Japan, New Zealand.

Many churches all over the world have been named in honor of Xavier. One notable church is the Basilica of St. Francis Xavier in Dyersville, Iowa. It is one of only 52 minor basilicas in the United States, and the only one outside a metropolitan area.

His feast day is December 3.

The Javierada is an annual peregrination from Pamplona to Xavier instituted in the 1940s.

Source: *www.byographybase.com*