



# The Cup of the New Covenant

MISSIONARIES OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD  
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## Rediscovering Our Patron Saint

by Barry Fischer, C.P.P.S.

### INTRODUCTION

This year marks the quincentenary celebration of the birth of St. Francis Xavier, that great Jesuit missionary under whose protection St. Gaspar placed our Congregation. It only seems fitting that in celebrating our patron we dedicate some time to reflecting upon this figure whom many would say is the greatest missionary since St. Paul. What can he teach us today about being missionary and how can we be inspired by his example in our own response to our missionary charism? These are some of the questions which have motivated

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St. Francis Xavier

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## St. Francis Xavier and C.P.P.S. Missionaries

by Robert Schreiter, C.P.P.S.

The Missionaries of the Precious Blood join the rest of the Catholic world in celebrating the 500th anniversary of the birth of the great Jesuit missionary, St. Francis Xavier. We do this not only out of great respect for the man whom successive popes have named as a special patron

of mission work. We do it also because our Founder, St. Gaspar, made him the special patron of our Congregation. We all know of St. Gaspar's special devotion to St. Francis Xavier, a devotion that began already with his mother. We know too

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how serving at Mass at the altar of this great missionary saint in the Church of the Gesù led to St. Gaspar's own missionary vocation.

St. Gaspar and the Missionaries who have followed him have often pointed to St. Francis' tireless zeal for missionary work as a source of motivation for C.P.P.S. Missionaries. In his scant ten years as a missionary in Asia, he baptized thousands of people, traveled more than 100,000 kilometers, and founded many schools. He has been considered the greatest missionary the Church has produced since the Apostle Paul.

Important as his influence was on the young Gaspar, and his image as the tireless evangelizer has been for us, is there still more that we can learn from him? This is a pertinent question for the C.P.P.S. at this moment in its history – not only because of the quincentennial of our Patron's birth, but also because of the call from the XVIII General Assembly to look more closely at our understanding and practice of mission as we begin the third millennium. This article will focus upon Francis Xavier the missionary. Although he has left us a great number of letters, he never wrote a systematic treatise on mission. His life, however, speaks volumes.

### **AN INTERNATIONAL MISSIONARY**

Francis Xavier's life began in the Basque country of Navarre. During the first two decades of his life, his native land lost its independence and was incorporated into the Kingdom of Spain. He went to the University

**“St. Francis Xavier can be seen as the pioneer of missionary internationality.”**

of Paris and studied there for ten years. There he met another countryman, Inigo de Loyola, who became his spiritual mentor. Along with a small group of others, they formed a new apostolic congregation, the Society of Jesus.

Xavier volunteered for a new missionary enterprise to the Indies when those first indicated were unable to go. Between 1541 and his death in 1552, he was to work in India, Malaysia, the Spice Islands, and Japan. Along the way he learned Tamil, Malayan, and Japanese. Although Basque and Castilian Spanish were his native languages, most of his letters are in Portuguese (albeit liberally sprinkled with Castilian). He not only learned languages to a degree not known among the Portuguese missionaries of his time, but he adapted to the local circumstances as much as was possible. He was a genuine cosmopolitan, a “citizen of the world.”

In the C.P.P.S. today we speak much of internationality, and an important number of young C.P.P.S. Missionaries have shown themselves willing to work in international teams. St. Francis Xavier can be seen as the pioneer of such missionary internationality. Not content to stay within the confines of the Portuguese com-

pounds in Asia port cities, he lived among the people, directed in his final years international missionary teams, and sought out especially the company of the poor and the sick. We have much to learn today from this great missionary.

### **MISSION METHOD**

Francis Xavier did not write a textbook of missiology, but his example speaks volumes. He fostered a kind of inculturation long before the term was even known. He recognized the importance of language, as has already been mentioned. In his delirium from fever shortly before he died, those who were with him recount that he spoke in many different languages.

He stressed the importance of winning good will among the people by kindness, rather than confronting them with a implied superiority. In giving instructions for work to new missionaries recently arrived from Europe in 1548, he said, “Make an effort where you go and stay to win people over with good works and words of love.” Rather than stressing their status as cohorts of the powerful Portuguese, they were to be marked by their gentleness of spirit and of manner.

Xavier stressed the importance of getting to know the situations in which missionaries find themselves, rather than imposing a uniform approach for every setting.

He insisted on gaining this knowledge directly. In Goa in 1548, he spoke of the need to go to new places in order to understand their needs before sending missionaries there: “If I do not visit these lands myself,” he said, “then I do not know their needs. Then I lack the necessary experience to give the Fathers proper directives. For one of the main requirements of prudence is personal experience.”

Questions always arise about local customs, and what things should be

**“It was Xavier's capacity to engage all levels of society – to care for the poor and to challenge intellectually the elite – that made him a model for subsequent generations of Jesuit missionaries.”**



Students at the Colegio San Francisco Javier, Fuente de Cantos, Spain

maintained from the past among new Christians. Xavier's own approach mirrored the advice that Pope Gregory the Great had given to Augustine, the first Archbishop of Canterbury in the seventh century: if something is not clearly against the Gospel, it need not be removed. He proposed to Father Torres in Japan in 1551: "If it is not sinful, then it is better to change nothing, lest a change no longer gives due honor to God."

Xavier gave special preference to caring for the sick, for seeking out those imprisoned, and for educating children. In all of these things, he was genuinely a missionary "of the people." But he also could engage intellectuals and the highest refinements of a culture. He was much impressed with the learning of the Buddhist monks in Japan, and gladly entered into philosophical disputes with them. The monks were fascinated by the fact that he had come to

**"His willingness to cross ever new boundaries, his ability to bring together international teams of missionaries, his gentleness and genuine love for the people, his ability to speak to all levels of society – these remain essential elements for mission today."**

them from India, the home of the Buddha. He engaged the monks at their own level of discussion, and made a deep impression on many of

them. Among the aristocracy, he displayed his learning from the University of Paris, and saw the engagement of scholars at the great universities in Japan as a key place for bringing the message of the Gospel.

It was Xavier's capacity to engage all levels of society – to care for the poor and to challenge intellectually the elite – that made him a model for subsequent generations of Jesuit missionaries. Two of the greatest of them – Roberto de Nobili in India, and Matteo Ricci in Japan – have since stood as models of genuine inculturation, or making the Gospel understood according to the minds and hearts of a people. Centuries before Pope Paul VI's eloquent teaching on evangelization given in his *Evangelii nuntiandi*, Xavier instructed two generations of Jesuit missionaries in how to bring the message of the Gospel to people in a way that they could understand.

### FRANCIS XAVIER AND C.P.P.S. MISSION TODAY

A half millennium later, St. Francis Xavier remains a model of missionary activity for us in the C.P.P.S. His willingness to cross ever new boundaries, his ability to bring together international teams of missionaries, his gentleness and genuine love for the people, his ability to speak to all levels of society – these remain essential elements for mission today. All of this was made possible and sustained by his deep prayer life. His companions tell of him often spending the night in prayer. In so conforming his own life to the message and ministry of Jesus, he was able to accomplish astonishing things in a short but fruitful life as a missionary. As we look at the challenges of mission for the C.P.P.S. in the coming years, we can turn again and again to that great missionary who is our Patron, St. Francis Xavier. ♦

# THE RELEVANCE OF XAVIER IN HIS QUINCENTENNIAL

by Alberto Núñez, S.J.

The special significance of Xavier for us today is not simply a matter of rousing our missionary activity, but more precisely in doing this “ecclesially,” that is to say, evangelically, raising the question of our *intentions, desires, and ends*. For this reason, we should recognize his relevance even given that he lived in a historical period that differs from ours in its religious culture and language. His relevance lies at the heart of some themes of Christian identity.

For Xavier, what does it mean to be a Christian?

[The author continues by reflecting on three “strong” experiences of Xavier: salvation, renunciation, and persistence. For reasons of space, we are including here only what he has written on the last two themes.]

## RENUNCIATION

We could regain his strongly lived *renunciation* that has implications for being Christian. In Xavier this is revealed in the form of a triple “exodus”: leaving individual egoism (one’s own wants and interests), national egoism (patriotism and base colonial interests), and community egoism (institutional self-satisfaction).

The experience of the Christian life as exodus from oneself is found at the origins of Xavier’s apostolic vocation. It is present in the words of the gospel on which Ignatius invited him to reflect repeatedly: “What profit would there be to gain the whole world and forfeit one’s life?” (Mt 16, 26) This little verse that Jesus directs to his disciples is preceded by the no less blunt challenge: “Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself” (v. 24).

Xavier had pondered deeply this fundamental criterion: “For let each one think that he will benefit himself in all spiritual things in proportion as he goes out of his self-love, will and interest.” (*Spiritual Exercises* n. 189) Later, in the intensity of his apostolic activity, he will exclaim: “What death is greater than to abandon Christ for one’s own opinions and desires, after having already known him! There is no work equal to this. On the contrary, how comforting it is to live while dying each day, to go against our own desiring, seeking not our own interests but those of Jesus Christ!”

## BEYOND EGOISM

The fundamental pattern of Christianity, Xavier reminds us, is death and transformation, which are implied in the stories of faith since the time of Abraham. “Go forth from your native land and from your father’s house... “ (Gen 12, 1). It presupposes a break on the personal, national, and cultural levels. It means to welcome a presence that does not belong to me, which breaks in from outside, encountering me and drawing me more and more out of myself, creating a new reality that did not exist before.

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The good news of Jesus Christ that comes from outside me will always be a scandal for the person who seeks to affirm his self-sufficiency or his autonomy. The history of Christianity, the history of the Christian missions, confirms in practice this challenge. It is so at the present moment. Perhaps it is not easy to present our contemporaries in the West a Christian ideal based on renunciation. We prefer to suggest “taking” to asking for “letting go.” However, the fresh inbreaking of Christ into the life of persons will always call into judgment the awareness of our insurmountable individual identity, placing us before the prayer of Jesus, “that all may be one. As you, Father, in me and I in you...” (Jn 17, 21).

In the matter of national egoism, one can say that Xavier did not situate his ideal in any earthly homeland, but in the heavenly homeland. Francis had loved the Xaviers’ plot of land in Navarre, where he spent the first nineteen years of his life at the side of his parents. In light of his family situation, three paths were open to him: law and politics (following in the footsteps of his father); the military; and teaching, probably in some ecclesiastical career. However, his intense spiritual transformation in Paris, his “conversion,” as he called it, influenced the new direction of his sensitivity. Xavier went on to become part of an international group of friends in the Lord, the Company of Jesus, and then to build up his apostolate in the Indies subject to the Portuguese crown, (albeit sometimes quite critical of it, to be sure).

Later, having experienced the real difficulties that this commitment

entailed, he will write from Kagoshima, Japan, about “the great and signal mercies” which God was giving him, making him work in a foreign country, where “we cannot trust in any power except in God.” In national egoism, Xavier saw an enormous impediment not only for the mission but also for Christian life itself.

Speaking of institutional self-complacency and the connection already mentioned above, we notice a recurring theme in Xavier’s life: he fulfilled his mission looking more at persons than institutions. Seeking that the Christian communities would maintain themselves without the presence of the missionaries, he did not intend to perpetuate his own works or parallel initiatives. This is

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what he was hoping for in planting the Christian faith in Japan and in China, because the people there were “a people very curious who desired to know new things about God and about natural things.” He goes on to say, “I resolve, with great interior satisfaction, to go to that land, since it appeared to me that the people themselves could perpetuate the fruit that we members of the Society will accomplish.”

## BELONGING

Finally, I believe that we need to recover his “strong” experience of *Christian belonging*: the fidelities and loyalties of Xavier, a man who

**NEW PUBLICATIONS**

*Agenda 2006: Un Anno con San Gaspare (Agenda 2006: A Year with St. Gaspar)*. edited by Gruppo di spiritualità del Sangue di Cristo and Nicola Giampaolo, C.P.P.S., (Albano Laziale: Primavera Missionaria, 2005).

*L’India di Soprassalto (India, All of a Sudden)* by Michele Colagiovanni, C.P.P.S. (Rome, 2005).

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**If you are interested in these publications, please contact the Generalate.**

belonged to Christ, to the church, and to humanity, to whom he felt called to serve.

In the mission one finds summarized Xavier’s spirituality of vocation. Xavier lives his Christian vocation as a person chosen personally by Christ, in the church, in order to be sent in mission to humankind. The saint identifies himself fully with that mission, which is not just one more task added to other aspects of his life, but which constitutes a mode of existence configured in Christ, a life that belongs to God and to his brothers and sisters totally and forever. That is what we would call a strong sense of belonging.

However, this does not arise from sheer willpower, or from personal force of character, nor from an asceticism based on the necessity of expiating sins or overcoming weaknesses, but from a simple interior conviction. That intimate conviction does not come from a dogmatic formation solidly formed, but from a spontaneous compassion that takes hold in the contemplative. We affirm that it is faith, the experience of gratitude for a God who saves, that drew out the wonder of Xavier, grounding it in the compassionate gaze of Christ. Faith as a personal surrender to God, who gives Himself, is present in all, and calls forth that response that, in the spirituality characteristic of Jesuits, is known as

“seeking and finding God in all things.”

Where did Xavier acquire that disposition? A process of spiritual initiation, common in Asiatic spiritual practice, is that based on a guru and disciple living together with the personal practice of meditation under the guidance of a master. The disciple Xavier was formed by the master Ignatius. Both shared a house in Paris from October 1529 until April 1535. Meeting again in Venice in early 1537 and forming part of the same community in Rome from 1538, they were not separated again until the departure of Xavier, the missionary.

## THE LIBERATING TRUTH OF CHRIST

Beginning with a friendly relationship living together as students in Paris, by means of which Loyola

**“Xavier would always carry his companions’ names, written in their own hand, in a little sack around his neck. He held them present and he belonged to them ‘in Christ’.”**



Children of the grade school, St. Francis Xavier Parish, St. Joseph, Missouri

introduced the practice of meditation to Xavier, the latter was capable of discovering the liberating truth of Christ. Here we speak of a personal truth, a Word made flesh, and not of one more dogma about life. The *Spiritual Exercises* were the specific path that Ignatius showed Xavier, the method for enabling a personal encounter with the saving mystery of God in Jesus Christ that is destined for all humankind. It is hardly surprising, then, that the book Xavier cites so often, besides the Bible, is the *Spiritual Exercises*. The *Exercises* will be the basis of the spiritual life, as well as of the apostolate and of the missionary methods of this disciple of Ignatius.

The strong sense of belonging to the church is manifested in Xavier by his experience of apostolic community. A company “holy,” “blessed,” a “Company of love,” he called it. “If any time I should forget the Company of the name of Jesus, let my right hand be forgotten” he exclaimed, paraphrasing the biblical

psalm. Xavier would always carry his companions’ names, written in their own hand, in a little sack around his neck. He held them present and he belonged to them “in Christ.”

Xavier lived this love for his own congregation with extraordinary freedom, yet always with reference to the hierarchical church, at whose disposition he placed himself and with which he wanted the missionaries to have an affectionate and collaborative relationship. “Look at what I recommend and command you” – he writes to P. Barceo in 1552 – “that you be very obedient to the Lord Bishop, both you and the other Fathers, and for no reason should you displease him, since he loves us beyond all the happiness you could desire, and thus there is all the more reason to serve him and to love him.”

The experience of the mystery of God in the love of Christ and in the community of life in the style of the apostle animates the life story of Xavier and gives meaning to his

undertakings. Any examination of his life that would not take note of this would fall short. A dialogue with Xavier that makes him present in the fifth centenary of his birth and that makes him the inspiration of our present missions must arrive at such mystical experience, as a renowned French theologian reminds us:

“A dialogue between the saint and me begins at the moment in which I understand that the mystery of his existence is not exhausted in the exterior ordinariness of his works and his travels. Moreover, I must take care not only to recognize the spiritual elements of his existence, but also to always presume the secret presence beyond the visible events. All of life is a journey. Only the mystical journey gives genuine meaning to the external and material things we see.” (Xavier Leon-Dufour, *San Francisco Javier. Itinerario místico del apóstol*, Mensajero-Sal Terrae: Bilbao-Santander, 1998, p. 23.) ♦

# SAN FRANCISCO JAVIER: A School for Education and Mission

In response to the invitation to write for this issue of *The Cup of the New Covenant* marking the fifth centenary of the birth of St. Francis Xavier, I would like to summarize the experience and ministry of the educational community of the Colegio S. Francisco Javier, with particular attention to the missionary character of our Congregation. May this serve as worthy homage to that Spanish saint who carried the faith to distant lands and to those who, centuries later, continue the task of evangelization in the field of teaching.

## A LITTLE HISTORY

It is more than fifty years since the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, once settled in Spain, felt the need to offer the ministry of education to the church and to society, just as they had in other countries. They were convinced that this would be one of the best ways of transforming society, raising the cultural level of its inhabitants, at the same time forming witnesses of Jesus of Nazareth. Destiny and a family of the town of Fuente de Cantos did the rest. This is how the Colegio S. Francisco Javier got its start in Fuente de Cantos in the year 1953.

We consider the Colegio S. Francisco Javier as an heir of the legacy of the Precious Blood and of the charism of St. Gaspar by its very name. We know that at the age of two St. Gaspar suffered from a serious illness that threatened his vision. His mother's prayers to her beloved St. Francis Xavier and Gaspar's rapid recovery insured that this Jesuit saint, patron of the missions, would always occupy a special place in the Congregation. It is for this reason that in our Iberian Province our church in Cáceres and our school in

by J. M. Borreguero Fernández, C.P.P.S.

Fuente de Cantos bear the name of this saint from Navarre.

## FROM THE PAST... TO THE PRESENT

The Missionaries of the Precious Blood and the present educational community of the school are convinced that education is one of the most important ways, at least in the long run, to respond to the cry of the blood in the world. For this reason, in our school and wherever we might be involved in teaching we must provide:

- an education that supports ethics and whose objectives aim at the integral progress of humanity;
- a humanistic education;
- an education in sensitivity, in justice, and in solidarity;
- an education in brotherhood, affectivity, and self-esteem;
- an education for democracy, tolerance, and multiculturalism.

The integral formation of the students must be the goal and principal objective of a C.P.P.S. school, along with handing on Christian values and a progressive education in our spirituality, which they should know and live.

In the *Educational Plan of the Colegio* we read: "as an educational center of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, we see ourselves as repositories of the message inherited from our founder, St. Gaspar del Bufalo, and from our patron St. Francis Xavier, and thus we will attempt to live and to support an

awareness of life in the midst of so many cultures of death."

The same document recognizes the missionary character which our school must have, as it states that "our educational community will be strengthened by being aware of the missionary task received from God the Father and it will try to live the experience of brotherhood-sisterhood that is held up in the charism of our Congregation: 'the bond of charity'."

## FROM THEORY... TO PRACTICE

The pastoral ministry department of the school recognizes proclaiming the gospel as a priority and offers the students moments and opportunities designed to present this gospel as the norm of life, educating them in non-violence and solidarity, supporting and reinforcing the educational activity of the teaching staff through talks and media presentations, to both students and their parents. To this end the pastoral ministry department is especially involved in the workshops of *Domund* and *Manos Unidas* and in the special campaigns of the center supporting the third world: very concretely our mission in Guinea-Bissau. They promote the sensitization of the students and economic collaboration as a concrete form of assistance to the mission.

In its fifty years of existence the Colegio has always had a special concern for the missions to and aid for the third world. An example of

**"Education is one of the most important ways... to respond to the cry of the blood in the world."**

this concern arose during the 1990s from a youth ministry group of the school, the first initiative of “Trade with Justice and Solidarity” (Comercio Justo y Solidario) undertaken by Fr. Queño Mora and a group of students of the school. That first activity in this area has, with the passing of the years, developed into the opening of a permanent store of “just trade” in the town that is now run by Caritas of the local parish.

For several years the help provided by various teachers of the school at the international seminars on the spirituality of the Precious Blood in education, both in Chile and in Germany, as well as the meeting of lay associates in Italy (MERLAP in 2001), were also important and were points of reflection for handing on our spirituality and missionary spirit to the rest of the teaching staff and the students. These international seminars should continue to take place because of the enrichment that they provide for our concrete way of living the educational apostolate.

The move toward the missions and specifically to the mission in Guinea Bissau that the Iberian Province opened several years ago gave rise to a movement of support for that mission which eventually led to the formation of a non-governmental organization called “Solidarity with Guinea-Bissau” on the part of a group of teachers of the school.

Fr. Paco Gil, one of the C.P.P.S. Missionaries in Guinea-Bissau, was a member of the community of the Colegio San Francisco Javier for many years. His annual visits, coinciding with the rainy season in that country, “mobilizes” all of the students and teachers during his stay at the Colegio. After receiving this direct information from our missionary through his conferences and videos about the mission, they work hard to collect school supplies (notebooks, pencils, etc.), since Fr. Paco’s principal work there consists in opening schools in the most isolated villages so that a greater number of children can have access to education.



These students of the Colegio raise money for the Guinea-Bissau mission.

In the present course Fr. Pedro Carrasco, coordinator of the pastoral team of the school, has launched the campaign “Somos Hermanos” ‘We are brothers and sisters’ for the sponsorship of and a sister relationship with the schools of Guinea-Bissau. In this campaign of solidarity the point of departure is that these children and young people who live in a situation of injustice are my brothers and sisters. Our students who live in a situation of privilege discover that they can do something to change a part of the world in which students live under less favorable conditions. By means of the campaign they try to support the schools of Guinea-Bissau financially and with materials so that the schools can continue their work of education and health care. The goal that they try to achieve, beyond that of sensitizing these young people, is to collect € 4000 during the year. With this money the students of our Colegio will contribute to the salary of the professors, to acquiring material, to remodeling and maintaining the school buildings, and to meeting the nutritional

and health needs of the students in Guinea-Bissau. The proposal made to the students is to pursue a relationship of brotherhood-sisterhood between the students of the Colegio San Francisco Javier and the students of the schools of Guinea-Bissau.

May St. Francis Xavier, in the fifth centenary of his birth, bless our school, and may he raise up among the students many priestly and missionary vocations which will courageously extend the reign of God and apply the merits of the Blood of Christ. ♦

**“Our students who live in a situation of privilege discover that they can do something to change a part of the world in which students live under less favorable conditions.”**

# ST. FRANCIS XAVIER, PARISH PATRON

When St. Gaspar was only a year and a half old, he came down with smallpox. So serious was the threat that his parents had him confirmed. Soon the disease was healed. But then another disease caused serious eye problems, threatening blindness. His mother, Annunziata, so strong in faith, went to the nearby Church of the Gesù and prayed fervently before the altar and relic of St. Francis Xavier for the healing of her little son. Her prayers were answered and Gaspar again experienced healing. From that point on, Gaspar had a special devotion to St. Francis and would often kneel at that same shrine, praying with great fervor.

Once Gaspar had founded the Congregation, he wrote in a letter to Msgr. Cristaldi, a good friend and benefactor: "Some particular offices have also been granted to us by the present Pontiff who also, in our suffrages, permitted me to assign St. Francis Xavier as the Protector of our Institute." (Letter 1627) In another letter, Gaspar wrote: "...you should not cease stimulating people to practice devotion to St. Xavier...What a great advocate we have in Xavier." (Letter 1929) Those words of Gaspar have special meaning for members, lay associates, and all our friends as we honor our patron St. Francis Xavier in this fifth centenary of his birth.

## XAVIER'S LIFE

St. Francis Xavier was one of the most effective and zealous missionaries in the history of the Church. Born in Navarre (Spain) in 1506, Francis eventually studied at a college in Paris, where he met St. Ignatius of Loyola. At the age of 28 he made the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius and six years later joined him and a small community of like-minded priests to form the nucleus of the Society of Jesus. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1537

by Michael Volkmer, C.P.P.S.

and in 1540 was appointed to evangelize the peoples of the East Indies. Arriving at Goa in India in 1541, Francis spent several years proclaiming the gospel and ministering to the sick. From there he moved on to the Molucca Islands, which had Portuguese settlements. Some believe that Francis also went to Mindanao in the Philippines, though his presence there is not certain. In 1549 he went to Japan, learning enough of the language to do basic catechesis. His zeal for the gospel

I'm not so sure that Catholics today honor patron saints, as was more common in Catholic cultures in the past. Of course, someone like St. Patrick continues to be very popular, perhaps not for all the right reasons. Many statues of St. Joseph are purchased, some only to be buried! Devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe continues to be very popular in Latino cultures. At one time Catholic couples were conscientious about naming children after a saint, seeking that saint's intercession. It is not so true any more. It may also be that devotion to St. Francis Xavier

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(St. Gaspar)**

led him to set his sights on missionary work in China, but in 1552 he died on the island of Sancian near the coast of that country before he could reach the mainland. In those few years, the missionary spirit of Francis touched thousands of lives. He was canonized in 1622. His body is enshrined in Goa, India.

## PATRON SAINT

It is not surprising that St. Gaspar would name St. Francis Xavier as the patron of the Congregation. That same missionary zeal of Francis was very much in the heart and mind of Gaspar. In one of his letters Gaspar wrote: "With two hundred copies, I will surely be able to build up devotion to my dear Saint, the great Xavier." (Letter 2398)

The Constitution of our Congregation says this: "By a special devotion, our members honor the Blessed Virgin Mary, Our Lady of the Precious Blood, St. Gaspar, our Founder, and St. Francis Xavier, our Patron."

by Missionaries of the Precious Blood members was more prominent in earlier days of the Community than it is today.

I was surprised to hear Fr. Barry Fischer say that our parish of St. Francis Xavier in St. Joseph, Missouri, is the only parish served by the Precious Blood Community to have Xavier as its parish patron. When the city of St. Joseph began to grow in the late 1800s, the bishop of St. Joseph in 1890 asked that a new parish be formed and chose priests of the Society of the Precious Blood to oversee the building and staffing of the parish. It was certainly under the guidance of the Society and its first pastor, Fr. Seraphim Kunkler, that St. Francis Xavier was chosen.

## ST. FRANCIS AND OUR PARISH

Has devotion to St. Francis Xavier had much of an impact on the parishioners? In the early days of the

parish, it is likely that Precious Blood Missionaries led the people in some devotional prayers. No documentation is available except a copy of the novena mentioned later in this article. The rectory was a mission house, so that parishioners would have been aware of the missionary activities of the Precious Blood fathers and brothers. It is quite likely that these Missionaries occasionally celebrated Masses and shared with the parishioners their experiences, asking for their prayers. Whether it included invoking the intercession of St. Francis Xavier we do not know.

Does the patronage of St. Francis Xavier have an impact on the people of the parish today? Perhaps not as much as it could or should have. Each First Friday we have exposition of the Blessed Sacrament from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM, concluding with the recitation of the Rosary for religious vocations and then Benediction. During Benediction, we pray the "Prayer to Saint Francis Xavier for Vocations." Also, on the feast of St. Francis Xavier we have an all-school Mass, always relating to the students the life of St. Francis Xavier and his great missionary exploits. We point out the large statue we have of St. Francis Xavier in the back of the church.

Each year our students write essays on the saints, and St. Francis Xavier is always among the saints assigned. We hold a vocation awareness week in January and our patron is sometimes featured on the poster for the priesthood and religious life.

**"When we celebrate the feast of St. Gaspar, we remind the people of his connection to St. Francis Xavier, who so much influenced his missionary spirit."**



C.P.P.S. Companions, St. Francis Xavier Parish, St. Joseph, Missouri

When we celebrate the feast of St. Gaspar, we remind the people of his connection to St. Francis Xavier, who so much influenced his missionary spirit. On Mission Sunday, we include in our petitions prayers for the missions, naming the intercession of Gaspar and Francis.

I asked one of our older Companions and a long-time resident of the parish if she had any memories of devotion to St. Francis Xavier. She graciously found an old copy of the "Novena of Grace to St. Francis Xavier." It included one special prayer to the "Passion and Precious Blood of Jesus," which includes the words: "We beseech you through the intercession of your servant, St. Francis Xavier, who always bore in his heart thy bitter passion..." We do not know if the novena drew a large

crowd or whether it spiritually enriched the parishioners.

People seem to know much better the other St. Francis (of Assisi), who is popular because of his association with animals, nature, and the simple life. Maybe the Franciscans are better promoters than the Jesuits!

One blessing our Congregation has received in recent years is that a new foundation seems to be flourishing in India. Our Indian Precious Blood Community will help us to better keep alive the spirit of St. Francis Xavier. As we commemorate the 500th anniversary of his birth in 2006, perhaps we will better appreciate and honor this great patron. The challenge to reflect on the celebration has inspired me to do a much better job in promoting awareness of the patron of my parish and our Congregation. ♦

# ST. FRANCIS XAVIER: A PRECIOUS LEGACY FOR INDIA AND THE C.P.P.S.

## INTRODUCTION

St. Gaspar had a lifelong devotion to St. Francis Xavier because he had received a special grace through him when he was a child. Suffering from a disease that threatened his vision, Gaspar was healed through the intercession of Xavier, to whom his mother had a great devotion. When on mission Gaspar always carried pictures of St. Francis and of the Blessed Virgin. Later he made him the patron of the Congregation of the Missionaries of the Most Precious Blood. He urged the Missionaries to have a great devotion towards him and called for the spiritual activities in honor of the celebration of the feast of the saint on

by Peter Pradeep

December 3. So great was Gaspar's devotion to Francis that he wanted to travel to Goa in India (where Xavier worked and is now buried) to continue the apostolate of St. Francis. This dream has been realized today through the Missionaries of the Most Precious Blood, who for more than twenty years have been working in different areas of India.

## EARLY LIFE, EDUCATION, AND THE SOCIETY OF JESUS

Who was this great Francis Xavier, who inspired so many souls? What

was his mission in India, a mission that inspired our Founder so deeply?

Francis was born in Navarre, Spain, of a noble Basque family in 1506. At the age of twenty he entered the University of Paris to begin his theological education and came under the influence of the St. Ignatius, another Basque and a former soldier who had experienced a profound religious conversion. Together with some other young men they vowed to bind themselves to the service of God in 1534. This was the beginning of the Society of Jesus.

Francis was ordained in Venice in 1537. In 1541 he left for India as



The Pearl Fishery Coast, India



St. Francis Xavier Church, Goa, India

apostolic nuncio in the East, arriving in Goa in 1542 after a long and dangerous journey.

### GOA AND THE PEARL FISHERY COAST

Goa was for many years a Hindu city and was later occupied by Muslims, who were defeated by the Portuguese admiral Albuquerque about the time of the birth of Francis. It was an important economic center for the Portuguese.

Francis immediately placed himself at the service of the church in Goa,

ministering to the sick and imprisoned, often in terrible conditions. His catechesis was simple, and he would gather the young by going through the streets ringing a little bell and asking parents to send their children to catechism.

Eventually Francis was able to make the six hundred mile journey from Goa to the Pearl Fishery Coast

on the very tip of India. The Paravas there had already been converted to Christianity but there were not enough priests to instruct them. Francis went into their villages, taught catechism and administered the sacraments, with his limited knowledge of the local language, Tamil. Xavier actually memorized prayers and instructions in the language. His ministry was so intense that he once noted that "...there was such a great multitude of those who are being converted, that it frequently happens that my arms become exhausted from baptizing." On a single day he baptized an entire village.

For a whole year, Francis traveled to and fro, up and down the 140 miles of coastline visiting all 30 villages more than once. In the hot season walking was like mile after mile of live coals, and in the rainy season one floundered through a sea of mud. A native who often saw Francis said: "He would sometimes go two days eating only a few morsels. As for sleep, three hours was often all he snatched." Other people noticed that he spent his night praying as often as not under the stars.

### IN DEFENSE OF THE MARGINAL

He noticed that the Paravas were not kindly treated by their Portuguese fellow Christians who used them as slaves whom they could buy or carry off as they liked. Francis exploded, asking how they could expect these Indians to be attracted by Christianity, when Christians

**"So great was Gaspar's devotion to Francis that he wanted to travel to Goa in India to continue the apostolate of St. Francis."**

themselves set such a terrible example.

He was soon to come to the rescue of the Paravas in quite another way. They were being pillaged and attacked by a certain warlike tribe from the north who feared the Paravas as allies of the Portuguese. Villagers were either massacred by swift moving cavalry or put to flight, many dying of hunger, thirst or exposure. Many refugees made their way as far south as possible to Cape Comorin where Francis was, because the Paravas had no defense against further raids except the bravery of Francis. He was unselfish in his ministry to these poor people who were left without any care and such was the love for the people.

This love and concern allowed Francis to move very freely with the people. He may have converted as many as 10,000 people. He shattered their idols but gave them a new life in Christ.

### **NEW VENTURES: MALAYA, JAPAN, AND CHINA**

In the course of a retreat, Francis decided to set his sights beyond India, to Malaya, Japan, and China.

Francis did not expect to stay long in Malaya, but ended up spending several months there, re-evangelizing the Portuguese who had fallen away from their faith. Here he learned another language, Malayan, a difficult task given his strenuous schedule of ministry.

In Malaya Xavier learned about Japan and subsequently spent just over two years there, leaving behind some 2000 converts. He then returned to Goa after being appointed provincial of the new Jesuit province of India. Here he began plans to carry out missionary work

## C.P.P.S BROTHERS SYMPOSIUM

July 24-28, 2006

Spiritual Center of Maria Stein  
Maria Stein, Ohio, USA

### Celebrating C.P.P.S. Brothers, Past, Present and Future

**The goals of the Brothers Symposium are:**

- To affirm the vocation of brother within the C.P.P.S.
- To identify the experiences of the vocation of brotherhood, and to share information about the vocation of brother
- To enhance a worldwide awareness of C.P.P.S. brotherhood
- To design a process to bring awareness of this vocation back to all regions of the Congregation
- To celebrate our global bond of charity

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in China. He actually reached an island off the coast of that country.

There he came down with a fever and grew ever weaker, finally bidding farewell to this earth on December 3, 1552. Shortly after his death his body was transferred to Goa where it remains to this day. Francis Xavier was canonized in 1622 and his feast is kept on December 3.

### **ST. FRANCIS AND THE MISSIONARIES OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD**

Francis came to India with the belief that "outside the Church there is no salvation." Many missionaries interpreted this to mean that non-Christians had no chance to be saved. When we are tempted to criticize some of the missionaries who came to India we should always

**"We Missionaries are called to follow this great missionary, following in his footsteps to work in any condition, in any circumstances or situations."**

remember this phrase. By today's standards, many people would take Xavier to task for his methods of conversion. If they remember this phrase and how he understood it they might not be so quick to judge. We must remember that Francis simply wanted the people of Asia to know the good news, the Gospel.

Francis had great love for the people who were suffering in the Pearl Fishery Coast. Many times he could not tolerate the deeds of his own fellow countrymen because they were treating the poor illiterate Indians so badly. A man who had no knowledge of oriental languages took great care and trouble to learn the languages of the people in order to communicate the good news of Jesus Christ. He believed that, in the words of his Master, that those poor people were like "sheep without a shepherd," and thus he thought to become a good shepherd, as his Master would want. He worked tirelessly with little sleep and comfort. He also prayed earnestly before all his missionary activity. The stirring story of his life challenges us even today.

Even though we live in a very different world than Francis, he remains an inspiring patron for us to take as an example in our lives. We Missionaries are called to follow this great missionary, following in his footsteps to work in any condition, in any circumstances or situations. As the late Pope John Paul II put it, we are called "to go where others cannot or will not go and to undertake missions which seem to hold little hope of success."

Surely the inspiring life of our patron St. Francis Xavier embodies a generous and loving response to such a challenge. May his legacy encourage and challenge us as we also carry out the mission of Jesus

Christ in our world today. ♦

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The altar of St. Francis Xavier in the church of the Gesù, Rome

us to dedicate an issue of *The Cup of the New Covenant* to reflection on his life and work.

### IN THIS ISSUE

We offer our readers a number of articles focusing on St. Francis Xavier from a variety of viewpoints and experiences.

Our lead article by Fr. Robert Schreiter explores the missionary dimension of the life and work of Francis Xavier, highlighting those aspects relevant to our own C.P.P.S. Congregation today. Francis's preoccupation was to bring the Gospel message to the people in a way they could understand. Fr. Schreiter identifies several key elements in his missionary approach: the importance of learning the local languages; the emphasis on good works and preaching words of love, rather than using coercive methods; acquiring a first-hand knowledge of the people and their needs; respect for the local customs as long as they are not sinful; an ability to be missionary to people of all categories; and an openness to dialogue with other religions.

A contribution from Fr. Alberto Núñez, S.J. follows. He wrote a longer article that is to be published by the Xaverian Missionaries, who graciously allowed us to excerpt a portion for our publication. He explores the vocational journey of St. Francis and particularly the great "renouncements" which Francis made in his spiritual journey: to himself, to nationalism, and to institutions. These renouncements led him to *belong* more fully to Christ, to the church, and to humanity. The renouncements and sense of belonging stemmed from a life rooted in Jesus Christ. Fr. Núñez also notes that Francis Xavier had a keen awareness that the mission he had undertaken was not a personal one,

**"Fr. Núñez also notes that Francis Xavier had a keen awareness that the mission he had undertaken was not a personal one, but one that he exercised in the company of others, as part of an apostolic community."**

but one that he exercised in the company of others, as part of an apostolic community in the Society of Jesus.

Fr. José María Borreguero offers us an interesting insight into how an educational community in the Iberian Province that bears the name of St. Francis Xavier finds inspiration and a particular missionary sensitivity in its formation programs from the patron saint of the missions.

**"We see reflected in his life an example of what Gaspar refers to when he writes: 'Unlike statues, missionaries are not motionless. They serve wherever God wills to call them'."**

He describes the practical initiatives the community is involved in to raise the consciousness and level of solidarity concerning social justice issues and to help the students and teachers discover the missionary character of their baptismal commitment.

The following article is a reflection by Fr. Michael Volkmer, pastor of St. Francis Xavier Church in St. Joseph, Missouri (USA). His parish is the only parish we have in the United States which bears the saint's name.

Fr. Michael describes how the patron saint of his parish has influenced the life of the parish by means of prayers and novenas. He mentions that in the writing of this article he felt called to do more reflection on how to bring to life St. Francis for his parish community.

Our closing article is written by one of our Indian students, Peter Pradeep. He gives us a biographical sketch of the life and ministry of Francis, especially referring to his presence in India. Peter emphasizes the catechetical efforts of St. Francis and the many sacrifices he endured for the sake of ministry as well as his defense of the marginalized on the Pearl Fishery Coast. He concludes with a call to all of us not to judge St. Francis Xavier by today's missionary criteria but within the historical times in which he lived.

### A PRAYERFUL MAN

While the articles published in this issue certainly do not exhaust the richness of this dynamic missionary priest, I hope they will spark in our membership a renewed interest in our Patron and contribute to our ongoing reflection on our missionary charism, one of the pillars of our C.P.P.S. Identity. As we look for ways of responding to the mandate of the XVIII General Assembly to engage on a process for arriving at a common theology of mission and to respond to the Holy Father's call to "go where no one else wants to go," we can find inspiration in Francis's

missionary experience. We see reflected in his life an example of what Gaspar refers to when he writes: “Unlike statues, missionaries are not motionless. They serve wherever God wills to call them.”

As we reflect on what it means to be a missionary, I would like to emphasize that the missionary dimension of this dynamic man, who achieved incredible results in just ten years of missionary endeavors, was born of his deep, personal relationship with Jesus Christ. He was formed in this aspect of his life by his companion and mentor, Ignatius of Loyola, who schooled him in the “Spiritual Exercises.” His prayer was one lived in his daily occupations, in long hours of prayer at night, and when he was alone. It was that prayer which gave him the strength and the trust to confront the enormous difficulties and loneliness which his extensive missionary endeavors entailed.

It is through prayer that the missionary grows in communion with God and puts himself totally at God’s disposition. Fr. Michael McCabe of the Society of the Missionaries of Africa said as much when he shared his reflections on mission at our last

**“It is through prayer that the missionary grows in communion with God and puts himself totally at God’s disposition.”**

General Assembly in Rome: “Mission is, first and last, God’s presence and activity in the world. God is the source and end of mission and the role of missionaries is subordinate to, and at the service of, God’s role... Only a contemplative spirit will enable us not to impose our own agendas on the already existing dialogue between God and people, but rather to enter into this dialogue with the heart and mind of Christ and thus discover God’s agenda.”

St. Gaspar reminds us as well of the importance of prayer and warns us that to neglect these times of prayer could lead to the danger of being

“like a person who sings out, but at the same time being deaf, does not hear the harmony.” (Letter 911) In another letter he writes: “God is the master to be served; it is always he that does the work: I am merely an instrument of his glory.” (Letter 1698)

Pope John Paul II in his encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* affirms that “the true missionary is the saint.” Again our own St. Gaspar writes: “Let us do great work for the glory of God and let us become saints. May the love of God inflame our souls with holy zeal, and lead us each day to the perfection that is proper for us.” (Letter 300). ♦

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