

Francisco Xavier (1506-1552)

Observed 3 December



Francisco Xavier was born on April 7, 1506 in his family's castle in the Basque Kingdom of Navarre. When he was still a child, most of the family castle was destroyed in a war with Castille and Aragon. Young Francisco was sent to Paris to study. He was a promising scholar, but chose of life of Christian missionary service instead. While at the University of Paris, Xavier, Ignatius Loyola, and five companions formed the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits) with the intention of spreading the Gospel throughout the world and serving the Pope wherever he thought appropriate. The Pope officially approved the new Order in 1534 and in 1537 Xavier was ordained priest. His first several years as a missionary were spent in the Portuguese colonies on the Indian subcontinent. He worked hard teaching rich and poor, adults and children among the native populations, but his special responsibility was to restore Christian living among the colonists. Next he worked extensively among the native populations of Indonesia, as a result coming to be known as Apostle to the Indies. He then became the first Christian missionary to go to Japan. He died of a fever en route to the closed Kingdom of China. He is credited with converting more people to Christianity than anyone since Saint Paul.

Tales of the missionary exploits of Francisco Xavier have been told to generations of children, inspiring them to lives of self-giving service. His reputation is so pervasive that countless babies have been named in his honor, in America and throughout the Christian world: Francis Xavier and simply Javier are very common, and always honoring this unique Basque saint,

Lessons Sirach 2:1-11; Psalm 62:1-2,6-9; I Corinthians 9:16-19,22-23; Mark 16:15-20

Collect Loving God, you called Francis Xavier to lead many in India and Japan to know Jesus Christ as their Redeemer: Bring us to the new life of glory promised to all who follow in the Way; through the same Jesus Christ, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever.