

## St. Francis Xavier



**1506–1552**

**Feast Day:**

December 3

Francis Xavier was born into a wealthy and noble family in Spain. While at university in Paris, Francis roomed with Ignatius of Loyola. Initially, Francis and Ignatius did not get along, but eventually Ignatius won him over with his simple way of life and preaching of the Gospel. The pair, along with five other men, soon took vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience to the pope. Together they founded a new religious order, the Society of Jesus, or the Jesuits, and lived under a rule of life written by Ignatius. Pope John III requested that the Jesuits be sent out as missionaries around the world.

Francis was sent on the first Jesuit mission, which brought him to Goa in western India. There, he preached to the Portuguese settlers who lived there, many of whom led sinful lives. He cared for the sick, catechized children, and built almost 40 churches. He evangelized a group of nearby natives who had been baptized Christians a decade before but had never really been taught about Jesus or the Faith.

Over the next eight years, Francis pushed eastward, spreading the Gospel to parts of Malaysia. Eventually, Francis became the first Jesuit missionary in Japan. To overcome the language barrier, he used simple paintings of Mary and the child Jesus to preach the Good News. He also used the Rosary, his catechism, and above all the example of his own life to evangelize.

Francis Xavier died of a fever while waiting for a boat to take him to China to continue his missionary work. It is thought by the time of his death, by his response to Jesus' command to teach the ignorant, he had personally converted to Christianity over 50,000 people. He was canonized by Pope Gregory XV in 1622 and is the patron saint of foreign missions.