December 3

Francis Xavier (1506-1552) priest

Today the Catholic church and the churches of the Anglican Communion commemorate Francis Xavier, a priest and missionary in Asia.

Born in 1506 in Xavier Castle in Navarre, Spain to a noble family, Francisco de Jassu y Xavier left his country and went to study in Paris. The course of his life changed when he found himself sharing his lodging with his classmate Ignatius of Loyola. For a long time, Francis resisted the strong appeal Ignatius exerted on him, but he eventually became one of the first Jesuits and made his vows at Montmartre.

Ordained a priest at the age of thirty-one, he placed himself entirely at the service of the Church, and was soon sent on a missionary voyage to the East Indies. Without hesitating, Francis disembarked first in Mozambique, and then in Goa, on India's West coast, in 1542. He went on to carry the Gospel to Sri Lanka, Malacca and the Moluccas. Convinced that he was called to bear Christ's joyful message even farther, he sailed to the south of Japan in 1548, and founded the first Christian communities there.

From Japan he sailed towards China, but this was to be his last voyage. He caught a violent fever and was taken to the island of Sachnan, where he died during the night between December 2 and 3, 1552.

Because of his enormous missionary activity, Francis Xavier was proclaimed patron saint of missions by the Catholic Church in 1927, together with Theresa of Lisieux.

BIBLICAL READINGS

1 Cor 9:16-19.22-23; Mk 16:15-20

THE CHURCHES REMEMBER...

ANGLICANS:
Francis Xavier, missionary, apostle of the Indies

WESTERN CATHOLICS:
Francis Xavier, priest (Roman and Ambrosian calendars)

COPTS AND D ETHIOPIANS (24 hatur/hedar):
24 presbyters of the book of Revelation

LUTHERANS:
Ämilie Juliane von Schwarzburg-Rudolstadt (d. 1706), poetess in Thuringia

MARONITES:
Zephaniah and Obadiah, prophets

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS AND GREEK CATHOLICS:
Zephaniah (7th cent. BC), prophet
Serge Melitopol'skij (d. 1937), bishop and martyr (Ukrainian Church)

EAST SYRIAN ORTHODOX:
Francis Xavier (Malabar Church)