

# Novena of Grace Day 7



O most kind and loving Saint Francis Xavier, in union with you I adore the most divine majesty. The memory of the favors with which God blessed you during life, and of your glory after death, fills me with joy. And I unite with you in offering to him my humble tribute of thanksgiving and praise. I implore of you to secure for me, through your powerful intercession, the all-important blessing of living and dying in a state of grace. I also ask you to obtain the favor I ask in this novena. (*Mention your petitions.*) But if what I ask is not for the greater glory of God, or the good of my soul, obtain for me what is most conducive to both. Amen.

**Our Father. Hail Mary. Glory Be.**

**V.** Pray for us, Saint Francis Xavier    **R.** That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ

O God, who was pleased to gather to your Church the peoples of the East by the preaching and miracles of Saint Francis Xavier, mercifully grant that we, who honour his glorious merits, may also imitate the example of his virtues, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## Reflections from Jesuits who share the name Francis

For over forty years I have been engaged in the study of the Hindu religious traditions of India and Nepal, from the time of my regency at St. Xavier's School in Kathmandu, to my doctoral studies, to my years of teaching at Boston College and now at Harvard, and during my many trips to South Asia. Some Hindu friends only half jokingly suggest that given my interests and expertise, I must have been a Hindu in previous births. More simply, at least, there does seem to have been a kind of providence at work in that I, as a baby baptized "Francis Xavier" in Brooklyn, New York, in 1950, should have spent so much of my life studying the very part of South Asia where St. Francis Xavier arrived in 1544, the first of all Jesuits in the East. Even today, India is a land which, in Christian circles, is indelibly marked by his brief, intense time there: everywhere you go, you find St. Xavier's schools and colleges, institutes and parishes.

None of us is so foolish as to compare himself to the great saint, tireless in his mission, brave in visiting new lands one after the other (India, the Moluccas, Japan, and (almost) China), inventor, so to speak, of the Catholic missionary idea for the emerging modern world, servant of God and lover of Jesus Christ, and great friend of Ignatius Loyola. Yet we

are his heirs, carrying on his mission. Today, our motivations are not exactly the same as those of Xavier, and we have learned to love and respect not only our brothers and sisters in other religions, but also those religions themselves, which are, after all, part of God's mysterious plan for the world. I in particular am not a missionary in any ordinary sense, but rather a teacher and writer and Harvard professor; my "foreign lands" lie mostly in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Xavier would surely be puzzled and perhaps dismayed, were he to come across my books and courses. How the world, and Church, and Society have changed!

But deep down, I like to think, Xavier would be pleased that the Jesuit mission has moved on, new Xaviers doing new work in service of a renewed Church, preaching the good news, still moving to the margins — where the Church is not — in order to make Christ known, to find Christ already there. Are we not we all a lineage of Francis Xaviers through the past 400 years, sinners all yet graced by God, losing ourselves in the mission as companions of Jesus, and finding ourselves again in every new place?

*Fr. Francis Xavier Clooney, SJ*