

## Day Four

March 7

Living with St. Francis Xavier



Ignatius of Loyola had this 'thing' about the Holy Land, even if it was ruled by the Turks. He had been there once already and came home only because the Franciscans said they would excommunicate him if he did not leave.

So back to Spain he went to start his education. Then to Paris for a degree. While there he gathered a band of spiritual brothers about him. He persuaded them to go to Jerusalem with him. He went back to Spain to recover his health but agreed to meet the others in Venice in 1537 to sail from there for the Holy Land. So Francis Xavier, Peter Favre and four others set out in November of 1536. Dressed as pilgrims they marched through Germany, then a hotbed of Lutheran heresy, across the Alps in the dead of winter, and down into sunny Italy.

But they never left Venice. No boat would take them. They then directed Ignatius to go to Rome to put all of them at the Pope's disposal.

I was luckier than Francis. Airplanes are a great invention. When I worked on behalf of refugees, I visited Palestinians living in camps in Bethlehem, within walking distance of the site where Jesus is believed to have been born. I also went to see Palestinians who had been driven out of Israel and were living in camps in Jordan. And after the first Gulf War, I went into eastern Turkey to visit Kurds who had fled from Iraq into neighboring Turkey. They were detained in a camp. I got to the entrance. The authorities would not let me into the camp. So I went into Iraq where I was warmly received. It was a grace from St. Francis Xavier.