

Day Nine

March 12

Living with Saint Francis Xavier

On departing from Japan, Francis headed back to India where a letter from Rome asked him to return to Rome to report on his work. He felt he had to make one more attempt to enter China before returning to Europe. In September, 1552, Xavier reached the island of Sancian off the south coast of China. By November he was feverish and he died there on December 3, 1552. He never made it into China. His brother Jesuits would be more successful and under the leadership of Matteo Ricci experience great apostolic success in China. Two Maryland Province Jesuits are presently living and working in Beijing.



Nor did I ever get into China. I did make a number of trips to Hong Kong but that was while it was still a protectorate of Great Britain. But the Chinese, in the 1980's and 1990's were an even less open society than they are now. Moreover, they would never admit that they harbored refugees from foreign countries.

I did get to Macao, at that time a Portuguese protectorate island off the south coast of China. From there I could see Sancian where my baptismal patron had died.

Few of us reach all our goals; many reach only some, many even less than some. Often we have to readjust our dreams to other demands. As I aged, I knew others must take my place; as my body began to give me mobility problems, I knew I could no longer traipse throughout the refugee camps of the world. Once again St. Francis Xavier came forward with his graces; he let me learn that till I greet him personally in another world I must be a missionary of prayer. Amen.