

Novena Day 1 (Sunday) 4/3/18

St. Francis Xavier was born at Xavier Castle in Spain in 1506. He went to the University of Paris when he was eighteen, where he studied and taught Philosophy. Here he met St. Ignatius Loyola, who was about to start the Society of Jesus. When Francis was thirty-four, St. Ignatius sent him as a missionary to the East Indies. During his travels as a missionary in Goa, India, Japan and other lands of the east, St. Francis made thousands of converts. In fact, he baptized so many people that he became too weak to raise his arms.

Francis' love for Jesus was so strong that he could not rest at the thought of so many people who had never heard the Gospel. He found that there were so many villages where there were Christians but no priest to say Mass or teach them their prayers and the Commandments of God's Law.

During his painful journeys and hard work, the saint was full of a special joy that came from God. St. Francis longed to get into China, into which no foreigner was permitted. At last, the arrangements were made, but he fell ill. He died almost alone in 1552 on an island off the Chinese coast when he was just forty-six-years- and 8 months old. Today his body is preserved in a church in Goa.

St Francis Xavier blazed a trail, like a blazing meteorite across the sky and people revered him in the east. Goa, Southern India and so on, Singapore and Japan particularly Nagasaki, which I will be talking about later during the week.

The theme of this Novena is "God So Loved the World that he gave his only begotten Son", another translation of this "For God So Loved the World he gave his only beloved Son for us so that we will not stray away but have eternal life", that's the centre of our faith, the Christian faith. God gave everything for us. He loves till the end. We carry that meaning in today's world, just as St Francis Xavier went out with that message to the ends of the world, in the East at that time. God so loves the world, present tense, who gives his only beloved son, in the Eucharist, in our heart and in our lives. That is everything. That love and bestowing salvation as we struggle in our lives and the offer of eternal life. Goodness and truth and the eternal love of God, in our hearts transcends and transforms our lives. That's our destiny. We hold on to it. People like St Francis Xavier, went with that message.

St Francis Xavier is named after St Francis of Assisi, an extraordinary man who went centuries before him. Another man named after St Francis in our own day is Pope Francis, who in his own way wants to bring back love and mercy to the ends of the earth.

So, our Novena is about all that. It is about a time of prayer, traditionally in this city since 1712 when down in St Mary's Lane, there was a little chapel in penal times as we call them. By a Priest there Cornelius Neary, and began in Gardiner St church in 1832, the year the church was built. It is a time of prayer and true intercession of a Saint of particular person, who's heart was dedicated to Christ. I want you to bring the light of the love, that truth, that Gospel to the ends of the Earth. We pray for his intercession through this Novena, that is what this Novena is about, we pray for people and our own needs. Such as parents in Temple Street Hospital across the

way, we pray for them, we pray for our neighbour's needs as well. We also pray during this time of Novena for the intercession of Blessed John Sullivan, who was beautified here last May and his remains are here and who intercedes for us too. So we have St Francis Xavier and Blessed John Sullivan with us during this time.

We are now living in a secular world; Ireland is becoming international in a certain sense. I don't want to be simplistic. But, to hold faith in today's society is a wonderful gift, to hold humanity and faith that's a light. The light of Christ shines out in some way. Christ is the light of nations and that is a great inspiration, choosing where that light goes out. It incorporates all people, the people of God. We are all God's people. This is a Novena of humanity and faith and we draw our example from St Francis Xavier and indeed Blessed John Sullivan. May they strengthen us during this time of prayer. With this in mind, we bring our prayers, through the intercession of Saint Francis Xavier as we pray the Novena Prayer...