

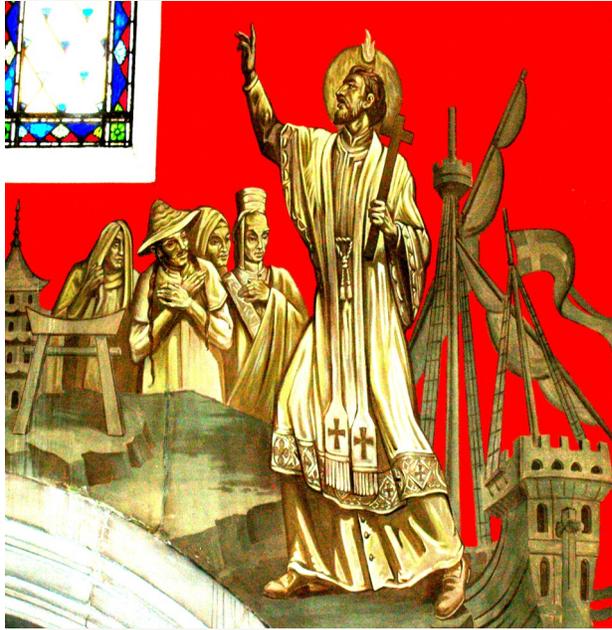
“A Great Cloud of Witnesses”

A Historical Series of the Murals on the Walls of Holy Comforter-Saint Cyprian Church

Saint Francis Xavier

16th Century Japan and China

Born in 1506 to a noble Spanish family, St. Francis was a very intelligent boy whose parents cultivated this talent by sending him to study in Paris. There he excelled in his studies and became a professor. In Paris, St. Francis also met St. Ignatius of Loyola, the future founder of the Jesuits, as St. Ignatius was finishing his studies and dreaming of starting a society wholly devoted to saving souls. St. Ignatius tried to convince St. Francis to join him, but St. Francis resisted. His head was full



of ambitious thoughts, and he bantered and rallied St. Ignatius on all occasions, ridiculing the meanness and poverty in which he lived. St. Ignatius repaid his contempt with meekness and kindness, and continued to repeat sometimes to him, "What will it profit a man to gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" This talk soon wore down St. Francis, yet it was not without many serious thoughts and grievous struggles that his soul was overcome by the power of those eternal truths.

Under the guidance of St. Ignatius, St. Francis reformed his ways, and became a member of the new Society, the Jesuits. They traveled to Rome and worked tirelessly in preaching and ministering to the poor. At the request of the King of Portugal, St. Ignatius sent St. Francis to take part in a Portuguese mission to the East Indies.

Upon his arrival in Goa, in southwestern India, St. Francis was struck by the scandalous behavior of the Christians, who lived in direct opposition to the Gospel which they professed and, by their manners alienated others from the faith; he therefore thought it would be best to begin his work with them. After half a year, the reformation of the entire city was accomplished.

St. Francis then traveled into India and began baptizing and instructing the Indians in the faith. He worked tirelessly, often on only a few hours sleep. In one region, he baptized 10,000 people in

one month, and sometimes whole villages were baptized in a single day. Miracles accompanied his work. For example, as the saint was preaching one day, he perceived that few were converted by his discourse, so he made a short prayer that God would soften the hearts of the most obdurate. Then he bade some of the people open the grave of a man who was buried the day before; the body was already beginning to decompose and smell. Then falling on his knees, after a short prayer, he commanded the dead man in the name of the living God to arise. At these words the dead man arose and appeared not only living but vigorous and in perfect health. All who were present were so struck with this evidence that, throwing themselves at the saint's feet, they demanded baptism.

St. Francis was soon traveling all over the East, and made his way to Japan where he labored for two years. He translated the Creed and short discourses on the life of Christ from the Gospel in Japanese. At times St. Francis succeeded with his preaching and baptized many; in other cities in Japan, he met with indifference and hostility.

Returning to Goa, St. Francis resolved to enter China, though this country had forbidden any Europeans from entering on pain of death. St. Francis began struggling to find a way to enter China. However, the closest he came was to a port controlled by the Chinese. There he fell ill and died in 1552 at the age of 46. Some months later, as his body was being shipped out, it was found to be incorrupt and gave off a sweet smell. After being buried in the Cathedral in Goa, many were cured of diseases who visited it. In 1744, his body was exhumed and was still found to be incorrupt. He is called the Apostle to the Indies, and is the patron saint of missionaries, sailors, and tourists. **His Feast day is December 3.**

Each month, this series will feature the murals painted on the walls of Holy Comforter-Saint Cyprian Church along with history and commentary. You can also find this series on our website at www.hcscchurch.org.

Historical commentary researched and prepared by Anthony Lickteig (Seminarian).