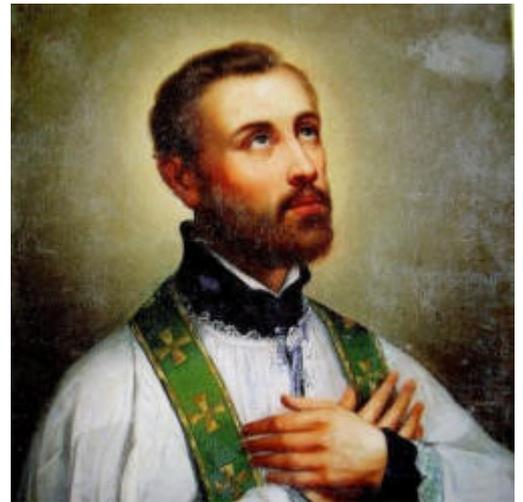


Prayer of the Month • December 2013

O God, I love you, not simply to be saved,
and not because those who fail to love you
will be punished with eternal fire.
You, you, my Jesus, have embraced me completely on the cross.
You have borne the nails, the lance, great ignominy,
numberless griefs, sweatings and anguish, and death,
and these on account of me and for me, a sinner.
Why therefore, should I not love you,
O, most loving Jesus?
Not that in heaven you shall save me,
nor lest for eternity you shall condemn me;
not with the hope of any reward,
but as you have loved me,
so also will I love you,
only because you are my King,
and because you are my God.



Francis Xavier, 1506–1552

Francis Xavier was a co-founder, with Ignatius of Loyola, of the Society of Jesus, a religious order set up to train missionary priests. The prayer shows great commitment and emotional intensity, prominent features of the Ignatian way of life. The Spiritual Exercises that Ignatius developed to train those who enter the order (and still in use today) create a deep personal commitment to Jesus in his life, death and resurrection. Francis Xavier expresses a very deep and passionate prayer. How transparent and uncompromising, to pray without regard to reward, but purely out of love for the one who is acclaimed King and God.

Francis Xavier was born in Spain in 1506 and was a student of Ignatius of Loyola. He was one of the first group of seven men who committed themselves to the service of God at Montmartre in 1534 in the foundation of this new order: The Society of Jesus. He led an extensive mission to Asia, which was mostly in the Portuguese empire at the time. Travelling to India and throughout the far east, many areas having never before been visited by Christian missionaries, he died in China on 3 December 1552.

Colin Lunt