Prayer

“Go, set the world on fire!”
~ Saint Ignatius to departing missionary Saint Francis Xavier

God,

During these days of Advent, may I remember that I am a missionary also,
in my prayers, in my sacrifices, in my support.
During these days of Advent, may the witness of missionaries half a world away
bring the warmth of God’s love to communities in greatest need. Amen.

Missionary Witness: Saint Francis Xavier

St. Francis Xavier was born April 7, 1506 in Navarre, part of present-day Spain. The
youngest in a noble family, Francis grew up surrounded by war. When the war had ended,
he had completed a preliminary course of studies in his own country. From there, he
grew up went onto Paris where he entered the University of Paris, and where he would
eventually meet Ignatius of Loyola. At the time Ignatius was already preparing the
Society of Jesus (the Jesuits) and encouraged Francis Xavier to become a priest.

On August 15, 1534, Francis Xavier made his vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and was
ordained a priest three years later, along with Ignatius, on June 24, 1537. During the spring of
1539, he took part in conferences with Ignatius of Loyola to prepare for the definitive foundation
of the Society of Jesus (known today as the Jesuits). The formation was approved by Pope Paul
III in 1540, and the Pope asked the new order to take their mission to the East Indies. Ignatius
ultimately decided to send Francis Xavier.

On May 6, 1542, Francis Xavier would land in Goa, on the west coast of India. He was admired
in that country for his ability to work side by side with the poor, and spent most of his time as a
missionary there. During the summer of 1549, he landed at Kagoshima, Japan, preaching the
Gospel on this island in the Pacific.

Francis Xavier’s last mission was China, traveling by boat to the Sancain Island, off the
Cantonese coast. Before finding a way into the country, illness had incapacitated Francis Xavier.
He died on the island December 3, 1552, at the age of 46.
Though he died at a young age, he had accomplished much in his life. In addition to being a founding member of the Jesuit order, he baptized an estimated 30,000 people. Francis Xavier was beatified by Pope Paul V in 1619, and canonized by Pope Gregory XV in 1622 at the same ceremony as Ignatius of Loyola. The Feast of St. Francis Xavier is December 3.

**Meet the Missionaries…**

In telling her vocation story on the website of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Sister Ancilla Maloney speaks of the order’s foundress, Mother Theresa Maxis, and her advice to the Sisters. “Go where the life is, she would say,” Sister Ancilla noted. It’s a maxim that’s led her own service – and helped bring hope to those she has encountered. Sister Ancilla calls Sicuani in Peru home. When she saw needs in her community there, she put on her fundraising hat, gathering support for the Daughters of Mary Sisters who have a residence for abused girls in a remote mountain village in the south Andes. The dormitory in the residence collapsed five years ago in a violent mountain storm. Donations helped the Sisters complete the new dormitory, and welcome 50 girls instead of 30. Right now, she is working to help young people of poor farm families not only to attend Sacred Heart High School high in the Andes mountains, but also to have nutritious food.

**Missionary Help: Missionary journeys…**

This Advent, take a missionary journey, just like St. Francis Xavier – well, a digital one anyway. Select a country in the Missions – somewhere in Africa, Asia, the Pacific Islands or Latin America. Do some exploring about the country on the Internet, with help from your group leader, teacher or a parent / guardian. Find out about what life is like for children there. What challenges do they face? How are their lives like yours? different from yours? Pray each day during Advent for the children in that country, and make a weekly donation to support Missionary Childhood Association (MCA) projects for those children. At the end of Advent, send your Christmas gift for children in the Missions to MCA!