



ST. FRANCIS XAVIER



ACTIVITY

On a map or atlas, trace the missionary journeys of St. Francis Xavier. Then, with help from your parents or, perhaps, an older sibling, go on a web quest to find out more about those areas of the world. How many people there are Catholics today? How many missionaries are in those countries today? How do they – and the Church – serve the poor and the suffering?

WHO: Francis Xavier was born on April 7, 1506 in Spain. At the age of 19, he went to study at the University of Paris – and made a friend who would change his life, Ignatius Loyola. Both would become priests; Francis Xavier in 1537. Together, they would establish a religious community of men, the Society of Jesus – also known as the Jesuits.

WHERE: With little experience and just a heart on fire to tell the world about Jesus, Father Francis sailed, in 1541, from Portugal to that country's colony of Goa on the west coast of India. He next went to Cape Comorin on the southern tip of India, where he introduced many people to the Catholic faith. A trip to the East Indies – to Malacca and the Moluccas – came before a journey to Japan, in 1549, making him the first missionary to preach the Gospel there.

Father Francis' greatest desire was to proclaim the Gospel in China, at that time closed to outsiders. Some stories even claim that he bribed a ship's captain to smuggle him into the country. Once there, he became very ill and died on December 3, 1552. His body was brought back to Goa and buried in the first stop of his missionary journeys.

Wow! The only thing Father Francis took with him on all his journeys was his book of daily prayers, called a breviary, and a book of meditations. He was canonized together with his friend, Ignatius of Loyola, on March 12, 1622. He is co-patron of missionaries and the Missions along with St. Thérèse of Lisieux.

