

The Story of Francis and Frances

One of the perils of admiring the Saints is that we see them as so extremely rare as to be nearly impossible to comprehend, much less imitate. Consequently, we're tempted – perhaps unconsciously – to believe that we've acquitted ourselves of our duty if we simply extol the saints, without ever giving any thought, much less effort, to emulating them.

Consider this quote from Saint Francis Xavier: *“As to the numbers who become Christians, you may understand them from this, that it often happens to me to be hardly able to use my hands from the fatigue of baptizing: often in a single day I have baptized whole villages. Sometimes I have lost my voice and strength altogether with repeating again and again the Credo and the other forms.”*

Awed both by his generosity and God's inscrutable Providence in making use of Xavier's generosity, might we not be tempted to say, “Who can compete with that?”, and then let slip away our inclination to become saints? I doubt that I've ever baptized more than 10 people in one day; and I confess that I thought of myself as a bit of a (white) martyr for having preached at five Masses on a Sunday – until I read that quote from my Jesuit brother. Now I know better than to ever speak of how hard I've been working.

Our response to reading such accounts of the Saints is turn them almost into comic book legends – heroes of such heights that, barring some overwhelming endowment or intervention by God, no ordinary person can or should hope to become a saint. So we tell ourselves, at least tacitly, that the age of great saints and heroic generosity has passed. Those heroes, those saintly legends, we say, emerged from a time and place so different from our own. As a result of such musings, we dispense ourselves (or so we think, or perhaps wish) from our own vocation and obligation to become saints.

And that thought leads me to Frances as a response to Francis, or, more precisely, Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini as a response to the heroic example of Saint Francis Xavier of the Society of Jesus. Consider her words: “I will go anywhere and do anything in order to communicate the love of Jesus to those who do not know Him or have forgotten Him.”

Could not Saint Francis Xavier have signed his name to those words? Can we? Mustn't we at least desire to do so? Mother Cabrini read the same Scriptures and prayed the same Creed as Saint Francis Xavier. Those same Scriptures and that same Creed are available to us. God did not withhold from them the grace that they needed for saintly lives of evangelical generosity. If we ourselves are not living lives of saintly generosity, shall we say that God has withheld His grace from us? Or shall we confess instead that we have not have asked for the graces as they had asked, and have not been stewards of our graces as they were?

Saint Francis Xavier and Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini, separated from each other by vast distances of time, space and circumstances, have in common a passionate love of God that fired a zealous charity for souls. They show that God can work good in any place, time or circumstance, with any human instrument who makes himself available to Divine Providence.

As we continue with our Novena of Grace in honor of Saint Francis Xavier, let's ask for the intercession of Saints Francis and Frances, that we might follow their examples of generosity as well as their trust in God.

Prayers for the Novena

Novena Prayer to St. Francis Xavier

(By Father Marcello Mastrilli, S.J.)

O most lovable and loving St. Francis Xavier, in union with thee, I adore the Divine Majesty with all reverence. Filled with deep joy on account of the extraordinary graces which God bestowed upon thee during thy sojourn here on earth, and on account of the extraordinary glory conferred upon thee after death, I thank Him from the depths of my soul. I implore thee at the same time from my innermost heart, to secure for me through thy powerful intercession the special grace to live a holy life and die a holy death. I also beseech thee to obtain for me the following graces. (Make some petition). But should my supplication not be in keeping with the greater honor of God or the good of my soul, obtain for me then what is more conducive to both. Amen.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be. (300 Days Indulgence)

To the Passion and Precious Blood of Jesus

Antiphon: His sweat became as drops of blood trickling down upon the ground. One of the soldiers opened His side with a spear, and immediately there poured forth blood and water.

V. O Lord, come to the aid of Thy servants.

R. Whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy Precious Blood.

Let us pray: O Lord Jesus Christ, Thou didst come down from Heaven and shed Thy Most Precious Blood on the Cross for our salvation; by Thy Sacred Wounds and the bitterness with which Thy holy Soul departed from Thy Body, we humbly beseech Thee, through the merits and intercession of Thy servant, St. Francis Xavier, who always bore in his heart Thy bitter Passion, mercifully grant us the favors we ask of Thy infinite mercy, Who livest and

reignest, world without end. Amen.

To the Immaculate Conception

Antiphon: Thy Immaculate Conception, O Virgin Mother of God, has brought joy to the whole world, for from Thee has arisen the Sun of Justice, Christ our Lord.

V. In Thy Conception, Thou wert immaculate.

R. Holy Mother of God, pray for us.

Let us pray: O God, Who by the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary didst prepare a worthy habitation for Thy Divine Son, preserving Her by the foreseen merits of the Passion and Death of Thy Son from every stain of sin: we beseech Thee through Her intercession and the prayers of St. Francis, who always devoutly venerated Her Immaculate Conception, to cleanse us from all sin, in order that we may be partakers in the Divine Grace, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

To the Holy Angels

Antiphon: Holy Angels, Archangels, Principalities, Powers, Virtues, Dominations, Thrones, Cherubim and Seraphim: praise the Lord and be our intercessors with God.

V. He hath given His Angels charge over thee.

R. To keep thee in all thy ways.

Let us pray: O Lord Who doth dispense the services of angels and men in a wonderful order, mercifully grant that our life may be defended by them on earth, as they always protected St. Francis, and that what we ask of Thee we may obtain by their intercession, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

To St. Francis Xavier

Antiphon: The Lord led the just man by right paths and showed him the Kingdom of God.

V. Pray for us, St. Francis Xavier.

R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray: O God, Thou wast pleased by the preaching and miracles of St. Francis Xavier, to unite unto Thy Church the nations of the Indies. Grant, we beseech Thee, that we who reverence his glorious merits may also imitate his example, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayer of St. Francis Xavier for the Conversion of Infidels

Eternal God, Creator of all things, remember that Thou alone didst create the souls of infidels, framing them to Thy Own image and likeness; behold, O Lord! how, to Thy dishonor, hell is daily replenished with them. Remember, O Lord! Thy Only Son, Jesus Christ, Who suffered for them, most bountifully shedding His Precious Blood: suffer not, O Lord Thy Son and our Lord to be any longer despised by infidels; but rather, being appeased by the entreaties and prayers of the elect, the Saints, and of the Church, the most blessed spouse of Thy Son, vouchsafe to be mindful of Thy mercy, and forgetting their idolatry and infidelity, cause them also to know Him Whom Thou didst send, Jesus Christ Thy Son, our Lord, Who is our health, life, and resurrection, through Whom we are freed and saved, to Whom be all glory forever. Amen.

Saint Francis Xavier's Hymn of Love

O God, I love Thee for Thyself,
And not that I may Heaven gain,
Nor because those who love Thee not,
Must suffer hell's eternal pain.

Thou O my Jesus! Thou didst me
Upon the Cross embrace;
For me didst bear the nails and spear
And manifold disgrace;

And griefs and torments numberless,
And sweat of agony;
E'en death itself - and all for one Who was Thine enemy.

Then why, O blessed Jesus Christ,
Should I not love Thee well:
Not for the sake of winning Heaven,
Or of escaping hell;
Not with the hope of gaining aught, not seeking a reward;
But, as Thyself hast loved
me, O ever-loving Lord?

E'en so I love Thee, and will
love, and in Thy praise will sing;
Solely because Thou art my

God and my eternal King.