

St Francis Xavier

The large and thriving Goan Community within St George's Parish in York recently commemorated the Feast Day of St Francis Xavier with a special Mass celebrated by Canon Jerry. This was a very special day for the Goan community as St Francis Xavier is the Patron Saint of Goa.

St. Francis Xavier is most honoured by the Catholic Church, for his missionary accomplishments particularly in Goa, India. He is one of the greatest Roman Catholic missionaries of modern times and was instrumental in the establishment of Christianity in Goa.

As a Jesuit, Francisco underwent and then, in turn, led others through the Spiritual Exercises of his great friend St. Ignatius Loyola. He worked in hospitals in Italy, caring for the sick and downtrodden before going to India. He set sail for India as the papal nuncio in 1541, reaching Goa on May 6, 1541. In Goa, he would walk through the streets, ringing a little bell, inviting anyone who would care to listen to him preach the Word of God. St. Francis Xavier was influential in evangelisation work, most notably in early modern India, Goa.

He died in a straw hut in 1552 on Sancian Island, off the Southern coast of China. The body of Saint Francis Xavier, lies in a silver casket in the Basilica of Bom Jesus, the Basilica being more than 400 years old. The body and arm of St. Francis Xavier is considered a first class relic

St. Francis Xavier was canonized by Gregory XV on March 12, 1622, and ranks among the greatest missionaries in Christian history. The Church asked for a relic. At the time it was considered evidence of his saintliness and the revered right arm, which did all the baptising, was severed at the request of the head of the Jesuit order and sent to Rome, where it is till this day.

The practice of venerating relics has been a Scripture-based tradition in the church for centuries. The decennial exposition of the Sacred Relics of St Francis Xavier, popularly known as "**Göycho Saib**" will be held between November 21, 2024 and January 5, 2025 at Old Goa. The last exposition of the relics was held in 2014-15. This Spiritual event will draw thousands of pilgrims from all over the world, to pay their respects to St. Francis Xavier.

To commentate the Feast Day, in St George's Parish, a statue of St Francis Xavier (which had been specially shipped from Goa last year) was blessed and installed on the altar between St Theresa and St Anthony, whilst a hymn was sung in Konkani (the Goan mother tongue), by the Goan choirists.

Members of the Goan community provided light refreshments for all parishioners after the Mass, at the back of the church, to celebrate the feast.

Ines Gracias and David Harper



The Thriving St George's Parish Goan Community at the Mass for St Francis Xavier with Canon Jerry.



