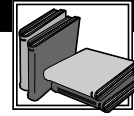


Chapter 15 Biography Activity

One motivation for European exploration was the desire to bring Christianity to other continents. In the 1500s, most Roman Catholic missionaries in Asia (textbook page 372) were members of the Jesuit order, founded as part of the Roman Catholic Church's response to the Protestant Reformation. ♦ *As you read, think about what motivates missionaries to try to take their beliefs to other cultures. Then, on a separate sheet of paper, answer the questions that follow.*

Francis Xavier (1506–1552)

In 1534, seven theology students at the University of Paris met in a chapel to take vows of poverty, and promised to dedicate their lives to spreading Christianity. Their leader was Ignatius Loyola, a former soldier from Spain. A few years later his group would be recognized as a new religious order—the Society of Jesus, or Jesuits.

One of the seven was a young Spanish noble, Francis Xavier from Navarre. Like many younger sons (who did not inherit land), he meant to enter the Church. Loyola's group preached and took care of the sick in Italy, gaining new followers as well as the attention of kings. After Xavier was ordained as a priest in 1537, he and the others offered their services to the Pope. King John of Portugal asked for his services as a missionary in Asia, where Portuguese explorers had claimed territory.

Xavier arrived in India in 1542 and worked for several years with villagers on the coast. He believed that missionaries should learn the language and customs of the people they worked among and should train local priests. Over the next few years, he baptized thousands of converts. In 1545 Xavier moved on to preach and start missions on the Malay peninsula. His vows of poverty drew many poor villagers closer to him. He then went back to Portuguese Goa, in India, trying

to develop a center there to train priests for Asia and Africa.

Europeans had only recently reached Japan, where they found an educated and sophisticated culture. Xavier sailed there with a new convert, Anjiro. Instead of preaching on street corners to ordinary people as he had in India, he made his appeal to the educated and ruling class. Liking Japanese culture, he wrote that they were “the best people yet discovered.” The Japanese admired the determination of the missionaries and hoped that European contacts might encourage trade, but at first they considered Christianity as a version of Buddhism. Xavier set up a few small communities of converts, but then decided that converting China first might have more influence with the Japanese. As he tried to get permission to enter China, however, he

caught fever and died in 1552.

Francis Xavier is considered the greatest Roman Catholic missionary of modern times. Besides taking European beliefs to Asia, he also sent the first reports about Japan back to Europe. Long after his death, his letters inspired others to become missionaries. He was formally made a saint of the Catholic Church in 1622.

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**Questions to Think About**

1. How did Francis Xavier become involved in Jesuit missionary work?
2. Where did Xavier work in Asia? How were his appeals different in different countries?
3. **Recognizing Ideologies** Why would the king of Portugal have been eager to send missionaries to a newly established colony or outpost?