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## Apostle #52

News from the SSPX District of Asia

Summer 2019





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News from the District of Asia



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## The Reparation Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary



In the year 1980, a priest of the diocese of Tuticorin, Fr. Antony Xavier, started a loosely organized pious confraternity aimed at spreading the messages of Our Lady of Fatima, as well as observing the devotion of reparation of the First Saturdays called for by Our Lady in her messages to Sr. Lucy at Fatima. It eventually came to include a good number of faithful, both married and unmarried alike. They came to be known by the name "Apostles of Mary" by 1982, having by then inspired certain of these faithful to consecrate themselves to Our Lady according to the method of St. Louis de Montfort, as well as dedicating themselves to reciting the Rosary everyday, wearing the Brown Scapular, and publishing Catholic books in the Tamil language.

At first, they had no fixed place of meeting, but in 1987 one of the faithful provided for the

group a piece of land upon which they had dreams of eventually building a church. Fr. Antony Xavier, in part, fulfilled that dream, by building a small chapel with his own funds. He was joined in promoting this work by another priest of the diocese until a core group of 7 faithful, all married, came forward to help manage the activities in 1992.

Several years later, in 1999, some younger unmarried people joined the group with aspirations for religious life. Thus, they took over the responsibilities from those who were married, and a revived vigor was infused into the group. In the year 2000, they established a group which was to be exclusively for young women eager for religious life, calling them the "Society of Daughters of Mary." They lived together in a house and engaged in prayer and penance.



*A Glorious Bride of Christ! A new novice for the Reparation Sisters!*

Fr. Antony Xavier tried many times to get approval from the Bishop of Tuticorin for the two groups so that they could become canonically established, but permission was never given. Father, himself being an opponent of Modernism in the Church and having offered the Tridentine Mass for many years, wanted the groups to be the same, and to attend the Tridentine Mass exclusively, whereas the bishop wanted to impose the New Mass on them. This state of affairs persisted until the death of Fr. Antony Xavier in 2008.

After this, the groups approached the priests of the Society of St. Pius X to take care of their spiritual needs. This arrangement appeared to have produced some fruit, since by the year 2013, the young women of the Society of Daughters of Mary were formed into a newly-made religious institute, the Reparation Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, by his Excellency Bishop Alfonso de Galarreta, with the blessing of the Asian District Superior of the SSPX, Fr. Daniel Couture. Fr. Couture himself did much to encourage them and helped them to write out their statutes. They have moved from Tuticorin to a house close to the Sacred Heart Priory in Palayamkottai in order to receive a daily Mass and a religious formation by the priests.

According to their newly-written statutes, the Sisters would now devote themselves to several goals: (1) the glory, honor, and love of God, (2) their personal sanctification, (3) the sanctification of priests and for the repentance of fallen priests, (4) praying for more priestly vocations, and, especially (5) reparation for sins committed against the Sacred and Immaculate Hearts. In this spirit, they have been living out their religious lives for the last six years, and are as always, seeking new vocations. In addition, the sisters are engaged in several other works such as making Rosaries and Scapulars, and also teaching children's catechism.

Recently, all the sisters have attended their annual retreat which was preached by a venerable priest of the Society of St. Pius X, Fr. Coenraad Daniels. Included in their ranks during the retreat was a young lady aspiring to join the sisters as one of their members. Thus, after the retreat, on the Feast of the Queenship of Our Lady, she made an oblation of her life to Our Lord, donned the religious habit and will spend the next two years learning the ways of the religious and spiritual life, in preparation for taking her first vows in the order. We pray that God will grant that many young women will follow her example.

## Dear Friends and Benefactors....

by Father Patrick Summers

Once again you have in your hands the latest issue of the APOSTLE magazine with some news and information about our apostolic work here in this vast region of Asia. In this particular issue we can see a little glimpse of the history and the work in India and Sri Lanka.

The life of our priests and religious in India and Sri Lanka is never one of ease, luxury or monotony. The landscape is forever changing with new challenges and obstacles forever rising up to keep us on our toes. Those challenges can be government bureaucracies, physical difficulties (the heat and insects etc.), or, more commonly, the battle against the ignorance and confusion caused by decades of Novus Ordo malformation.

We are forever asking our superiors, "We need more 'boots on the ground'" and, like every other place in the world, we are told, "Everyone is asking for more priests, more priories, more Brothers, more Sisters – Superiors cannot give what they don't have!" So, it comes back time and time again to the necessity of encouraging vocations

amongst the young men and women within our parishes.

We currently have 11 young men at Holy Cross Seminary in Australia (see photo below) who are trying their vocations to the priesthood and one more who is trying the brotherhood.

Thank you for all your continued support and prayers! Fr Summers





# Was there Christianity in India before St. Francis Xavier?

by Father Joseph C. Houpert



The following is an edited excerpt from the book "Christianity in India, Burma, and Ceylon," published by the Catholic Truth Society of India, 1958.

## CATHOLIC ANTIQUITY

In fulfillment of the divine commission to spread the Gospel, St. Bartholomew and St. Thomas, two of the twelve apostles, came to India. Our country was thus one of the first to be called by Christ. While St. Peter evangelized Rome and the other Apostles various parts of the Roman Empire, St. Thomas came from Persia probably first to Gandhara in North India. From there, or perhaps in a second journey from Palestine via Socotra, he landed at Cranganore (Kudungallur) in Travancore in A.D. 52. Tradition attributes to him the foundation of seven churches and then St. Thomas passed to the Coromandel or southeastern coast of India, made many converts and was martyred near the Little Mount, eleven miles south of Chennai, and was buried at Mylapore (Chennai) on July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 72 A.D. two years after the destruction of Jerusalem.

About the year 345 a colony of Syrian Christians, led by a certain Thomas Cana, a wealthy merchant, landed at Cranganore, probably as refugees from the terrible persecution of the Persian King Sapor II (313-381). Others settled in Ceylon, where Cosmas found them later. The newcomers in Malabar joined the St. Thomas Christians and were given special privileges by the ruler of the country, Cheruman Perumal (who died in 346).

## A 6<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY WITNESS

In 522 Cosmas, a Greek navigator "who had sailed in three of the great gulfs which run up into the earth" visited India and Ceylon. He then became a monk at Alexandria and wrote about 25 years later: "Even in Taprobane (Ceylon) an Island in further India there is a church of Christians with clergy and a body of believers...In the country called Male (Malabar) where pepper grows there is also a church and in another place, Calliana (near Bombay) there is moreover a bishop appointed from Persia." Of Taprobane he further says: "The Island has a church of Persian Christians (not Ceylonese) who have settled there with a Priest appointed from Persia, a deacon and a complete ecclesiastical ritual."

## NEW IMMIGRANTS

According to local tradition two more groups of Persian immigrants landed in Kerala. One with Bishop Thomas in 774 or 795, another some forty years later (822) with two Bishops, Mar Sabrisho and Mar Peroz. They settled mainly in Quilon. The Bishops made many conversions, built new churches and erected open-air crosses. The few Persian crosses of Malabar may be ascribed to this period. King Sthanu Ravi granted the newcomers many privileges, which were recorded on copper plates, duplicates of which are still preserved at Kottayam and Quilon. On a cross at Kottayam we read: "My Lord Christ, have mercy on Afras, son of Chaharbukt, the Syrian who cut this."

## MIDDLE AGES (900-1500)

The following centuries seem to have been uneventful. For some years there was no bishop at all; then one came in 988. For long there was apparently hardly a priest left. In 1490 the St. Thomas Christians applied to the metropolitan of Mesopotamia who sent them two bishops, Mar Thomas and Mar John.

## FOREIGN VISITORS

The first European priest to come in contact with the St. Thomas Christians was Friar John of Montecorvino, sent by Pope Nicolas IV and later made first Archbishop of Peking (Cambalec) in 1307. After some years spent in Persia he passed through India in 1291 on his way to China. As he wrote from Peking in 1305, he spent thirteen months at Mylapore, where the church of St. Thomas stood and he baptized about one hundred persons. In Malabar, he said, there were Christians and Jews and they were much persecuted.

Another visitor (c. 1293) was the Venetian traveler Marco Polo on his return from China. He found Christians both at Mylapore and Quilon. "The body of Messer St. Thomas the Apostle" he writes, "lies in the province of Malabar (on the Coromandel Coast) in a little town. Both Christians and Saracens greatly frequent it in pilgrimage." Marco Polo considered Coilum (Quilon) as one of the chief localities of Christians.

In 1252 Pope Innocent IV founded the "Society of Wayfarers for Christ, *Societas Peregrinantium pro Christo*," composed of Franciscan and Dominican Friars. It was a new dawn of Catholic Missions. In

1321 the Franciscan Friar Blessed Thomas of Tolentino and three others came to Thana near Bombay, but soon they were cruelly martyred by Moslems. With them had come the French Dominican Jordan Catalani. He baptized some seventy persons at Surat, then after some years he returned to France. "There" in India, he wrote, "I brought to the Faith about ten thousand souls" (*Mirabilia Descripto*). In 1330 Pope John XXII made him bishop of Quilon and gave him various documents for the Nazarene Christians. It was the first Papal mission to India. Further details are lacking.

## A SUMMARY

At the end of the Middle Ages the Catholic Church in India was still in its infancy. In course of time the tiny Catholic colonies at the Court of Gondophares near Peshawar, on the Coromandel Coast at San Thomé and on the shores of Ceylon disappeared from history, while Kerala could boast continuously of a Catholic community, small in numbers, of good social standing, but having, due to caste restrictions, no power of expansion.

This is how in 1500 A.D. this ancient community numbered only 30,000 families. If the 72 families (the traditional number for about 400 persons) brought by Thomas Cana in the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> Century had only doubled every century (a very small increase) they alone, (not to mention the majority who were Indians) should have numbered between one and two million souls. Hence there must have been an enormous leakage all the time. "Every three years" wrote Lodovico di Varthema in 1505, "a priest comes from Babylon to administer baptisms." Many a layman remained unbaptized. There being no organized parishes, no priest had any parochial duties as official shepherd of a definite flock.

To these internal drawbacks one could add the external. Various unhappy events contributed to isolate India from the center of Catholic unity. There was the break-up of the Empire into the Roman and Byzantine halves, the violent persecutions of the Persian kings, the Nestorian conquest of all the lands to the east of Asia Minor, the wedge of Islam driven in and still holding fast between the continents of Eu-



A Reparation Sister teaching catechism under the approving gaze of St Joseph!

rope and Asia and closing up the old trade routes, finally the great Greek Schism of the XI century. The Crusades of Western Christendom to Palestine (1099-1291) failed to break through the double wall of Schism and Islam. The St. Thomas Christians could keep contact only with those of Mesopotamia who themselves were soon cut off from Rome and the Eastern patriarchates and fell under Nestorian influence. Nor could the share in the later Western or Byzantine theological progress or receive help from communion with the Holy See.

It remains true that as late as 1500 A.D. there were perhaps only some 150,000 Christians scattered in more than 60 towns and villages belonging to Cochin, Purakad, and other small kingdoms on the south-west coast. Mar John, the Syrian bishop, sent in 1490 from Persia, by the Catholic Chaldean Patriarch, Mar Simeon of Diyarkebir governed that Church from his see at Cranganore, while all the priests were children of the native soil.

A new era was now to open for the Church in India by the landing of the Portuguese and the Jesuits in 1498. Up to then the Church increased by immigration and natural growth; now, and for many years to come, she was to be a missionary church.

Thus far the work of the missionaries before the arrival of Jesuits and St Francis Xavier. Stay tuned for future articles on the next stage of missionary works with the Jesuits.



## Why we need sponsorship

*“It is only by the virtue of charity that the body of your institution becomes one large family.”* More than food and clothing, orphans need love. They require the warmth of heartfelt kindness and the certitude that tomorrow brings a brighter day than the present one darkened by misfortune. Love the little orphans *“because the Church loves them dearly and will be grateful for the love you show them.”*

Pope Pius XII, Allocation for the Care of Orphans

In His providence, God has sent eighty innocent souls to our care and protection. Each child is unique and possesses a defined purpose from God. We have been entrusted to educate and form these children – to instil in them a thirst for the things of God rather than the things of this world. This is a noble undertaking and our school, Veritas Academy, has been founded precisely for this purpose. On the eve of this new academic year, we face a unique problem. In most schools, the expenses are defrayed by parents paying their children’s tuition. However, in our case, there are no mothers and fathers to bill. Thus, I have no one to petition for the upkeep of our Academy. That is why I (the proud Foster-Father of 88 children) would like to make a brief and humble appeal to your generosity. Your support goes a long way here in India. Should you have the ability and the desire to promote a child’s Catholic education, consider sponsoring a child we are exceedingly grateful for your support.

Allow me to thank you profoundly in advance for your generosity. May the heart of Jesus bless you and your family abundantly!

**In Christo Jesu,  
Fr. Therasian Xavier**

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*O Lord, for thy name's sake, deign to reward with  
eternal life all who do us good. Amen.*

**VERITAS ACADEMY**

Annie Nagar, 8A/3 Seevalaperi Road, Palayamkottai, Tamil Nadu 627002. India





On 18 March 1541, three weeks before he set sails for India, Saint Francis Xavier wrote a letter to Saint Ignatius Loyola from Lisbon in which he mentioned Sri Lanka.

About it, he wrote: "The Viceroy [Martin Alfonso de Sousa, governor of India from 1542 to 1545], who this year goes to India, where he has already been several years, is an upright gentleman. Here at court, he is highly respected; and there in India, he is loved by all. He told me the other day that in India there is an island [Sri Lanka, then known as Ceylon] inhabited only by pagans, without any admixture of Moors or Jews, where a great harvest could be reaped, and where the king of the island and its inhabitants would have no difficulty to become Christians."

Unfortunately, the good Viceroy had been misinformed. When the Portuguese reached the shores of Ceylon in 1505 by accident, they arrived in the port of Galle right at the time when Muslim traders were loading cinnamon and elephants in their ships. The Moors were not very pleased to see the Portuguese arriving as it meant they would lose their monopoly on the Ceylon cinnamon (the best in the world as related by Marco Polo who went to Ceylon in 1283), precious stones and pearls. Two main Muslim communities existed in Ceylon when the first European vessels entered the country's busiest port, one in the kingdom of Kandy and one in the kingdom of Jaffna.

Twelve years after their first arrival in Ceylon, the Portuguese came back to stay. They gradually and methodically conquered

more land in which they encouraged conversions to Catholicism. Franciscans, Dominicans, Augustinians, Jesuits were invited to come to Ceylon and open parishes, convents and schools.

In 1543, Saint Francis Xavier himself came to Mannar, in the North of the island, and baptised 600 people. The priests he left behind were quite successful in their mission exciting the jealousy of the pagan priests who put pressure on the king of Jaffna; to please them, he sent 5000 soldiers to slaughter the Christians baptised by Saint Francis Xavier (the mass grave was discovered recently). The Portuguese later retaliated forcing the king to pay tribute to them and to allow the free exercise of the Catholic faith.

Year after year, the Portuguese rule kept expanding and likewise the Church: from 1583 to 1584, for instance, some 70,000 people from the communities of fishermen occupying the sea coast south of Colombo converted to Catholicism. The harvest was big in the Jaffna kingdom as well then under Portuguese control. The Portuguese, who possessed most of the country's territory by 1580, except the Kandyan kingdom, promoted the faith, built churches, convents and hospitals in all the provinces under their care.

This favorable situation was not going to last. In 1637, invited by the king of Kandy, the Dutch came to help him free the island from the Portuguese. After a long and bloody war, the Portuguese were eventually driven out of Ceylon, Jaffna being their last stronghold which they lost in 1658. Once the Dutch secured the possession of what was once Portuguese territory, they started implementing a ruthless anti-

Catholic policy. Catholicism was outlawed; Catholic priests were sent away, convents were closed, Catholic churches were destroyed or changed into Protestant places of worship. The Catholic Church went underground.

After decades of a violent persecution, God inspired a young priest from Goa, India, to dedicate his life for the revival of the Catholic Church in Ceylon. Saint Joseph Vaz arrived in the island in 1687 dressed up as a *coolie* (unskilled worker) and immediately started his apostolate. His ministry was successful thanks to the unlikely support of the king of Kandy who provided a haven to him in his kingdom (independent from the Dutch), and to the missionaries who would soon join him. The king, though a pagan, was impressed by Saint Joseph Vaz' holiness, his working of miracles (like the miracle of the rain that put an end to a severe drought in 1696) and the heroic charity he displayed to the victims of smallpox in 1697.

Until his death in 1711, Saint Joseph Vaz, helped by his priests, strengthened the faith of the Catholic communities in the island and made new converts, all in hiding from the Dutch authorities. The underground Church kept flourishing.

The situation lasted until the British took over the island from the Dutch in 1796. On 27 May 1806, The British governor restored full religious freedom to Catholics (granted only in 1829 in Britain).

As soon as religious freedom was granted, Catholic missionaries (male and female) were sent to Ceylon by Rome. Priests es-

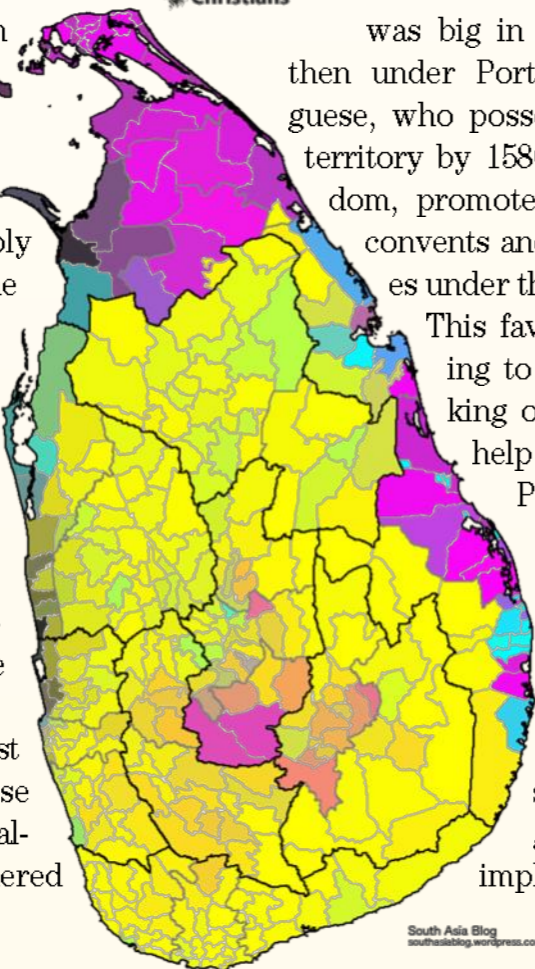
tablished parishes, build churches, religious set up convents and monasteries, built hospitals and schools. The largest contingent was sent by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate of Saint Eugene de Mazenod. The Catholic Church grew considerably during the British era.

After the independence in 1948, a terrible blow hit the Church when the government, under pressure from the Buddhists, took over 600 Catholic parish schools (out of 640) with their lands, buildings, furniture, etc. without any compensation in December 1960.

Apart from this very unfortunate episode, the Catholic Church enjoys freedom of worship in Sri Lanka and continues to develop making converts, opening new parishes, building churches, opening new schools and religious houses. The Church is an esteemed institution well regarded by the highest authorities of the country. Today, the Catholic Church is divided in 12 dioceses and there are approximately 1.2 million Catholics in Sri Lanka representing around 6.1% of the total population according to the 2012 census.

Procession of Our Lady of Guadalupe from our Priory in Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka: Religion



South Asia Blog southasiablog.wordpress.com





In the late 17th Century, when the Dutch ruled the coastal area of Sri Lanka and Catholicism was proscribed, Father Antonio of the port-city of Cochin, India, was sent to Colombo to administer to the needs of Catholics.

As priests could not exercise their ministry in public, Father Antonio held clandestine services for the faithful at night.

The Dutch discovered the priest's residence but he escaped to a neighbouring fishing village where the fishermen promised to protect him if he could request God to prevent the erosion of the beach that jeopardised their livelihood. Father Antonio placed a wooden cross at the spot most threatened by the advancing sea and prayed, surrounded by the fishermen who prevented the Dutch from arresting him. Suddenly the water miraculously receded and a protective sandbank was revealed.

The soldiers reported the incident to the Governor who decided not to take action. At the place of the miracle, Father Antonio built a

small kadé (shop) which he managed during the day and ministered to the local Catholics at night. As he was from Cochin, the place gained the name Kochchikade – "the kadé of Cochin".

Years after the death of Father Antonio, a small chapel was built where the miracle took place, then later a proper chapel and eventually the big church we all can see today that was consecrated on 1 June 1834.

The first bishop of Colombo, Christophe Bonjean, is buried in the church.

Saint Anthony's shrine is one of those places along with the Talawila (Saint Anne) or Madhu (Our Lady) in Sri Lanka where Our Lord Jesus Christ likes to perform miracles. Every Tuesday, thousands of people of all creed (Catholics, Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims.) come and pray to Saint Anthony the wonder worker.

*This article was written shortly before the Easter Sunday Bombing by a local Islamic terrorist group. Dozens of people died in this church and the area is now under high security and police screening occurs at the entrance to the church. Let us pray for the departed souls.*

+Requiescant in Pace+



St Anthony's before the Easter Sunday Bombing

For a priest, Sri Lanka can be one of the best places in the world. The priory of the Society of Saint Pius X is situated in Negombo town (about 20 miles north of Colombo), one of the most Catholic areas in the country, and this allows the clergy of our society to feel something unique: to experience what it is to live in a Catholic region, a privilege that has almost disappeared from the face of the earth in our day and age.

While driving north along the western coastline from Colombo (the capital city) one can see holy shrines or statues of saints nearly at every corner of a street. Negombo is very famous for that; there is even a three-meter-high statue of Christ the King right in the Town Hall compound to show that Negombo is a Catholic town. Two years ago, they inaugurated a statue of Our Lady at the top the main clock tower right in the town center with electronic display welcoming the visitors to "Little Rome", Negombo's nickname.

During the Christmas season, lovely Nativity scenes are set up on the road by the Catholic residents of Negombo with beautiful statues and artistic decorations. No one would dare to vandalize such expressions of faith here, unlike in the once-great Catholic countries of Europe.

Although Sri Lanka is officially a Buddhist country, the Catholic Church is quite respected by the public authorities. This is due to the admirable work the foreign missionaries performed in the past in establishing excellent schools and hospitals and other charitable institutions. Because of that, the Catholic priesthood is held in high esteem.

As a priest, you actually experience that Sri Lanka is very special even before coming to the country. For instance, after boarding a plane of the national air carrier, Sri Lankan Airlines, the crew will treat you in a particular way. They would often bring you a drink before take off, even if you are in economy class, and once the meal is about to be served, a nice air hostess



Procession through the streets in Negombo, Sri Lanka

would bring your tray before everyone else. Once you have disembarked at the Colombo airport, you won't queue up at the Immigration counter, as an officer will invite you to have your passport stamped before all other travelers.

On leaving the country, at the Colombo airport, there are special seats for the clergy (Buddhist and Catholic) and at the gate, a member of staff will invite the priest to board the plane first, with the VIPs, even if he is in economy class.

As another example from a few years ago, when a relic of Saint Anthony of Padua came to Sri Lanka, it was brought by plane aboard a Sri Lankan Airlines aircraft. For the occasion, Sri Lankan Airlines chose Catholics for the pilot and copilot. Moreover, the relic wasn't put with the luggage but it was given a business class seat. When the relic arrived at the airport, it was welcomed with the same honors as a head of state. Outside the airport, Saint Anthony was placed on an official vehicle escorted to Colombo by the army and the police. How many countries in this world would act in such a noble manner?

**May God bless Sri Lanka and bring her to the Faith!**

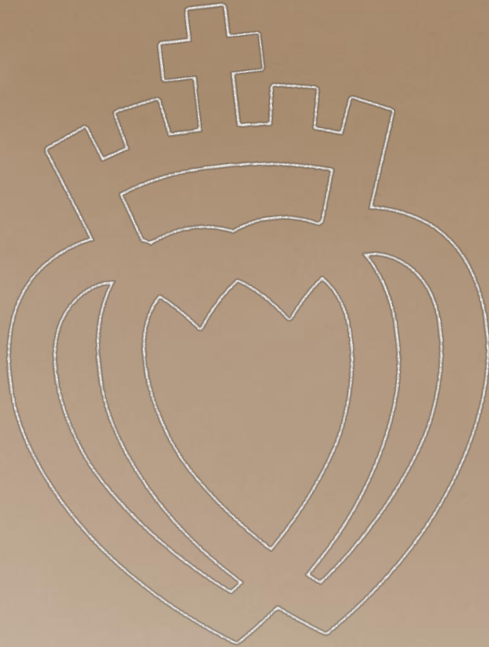


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*Fr Loschi's  
weekly visit  
to the local  
fishermen*

Matthew 4:19: And he saith to them,

Come ye after me, and I will make you to be fishers of men.