

Jesuit Jubilee

Celebrating the Spirit of the Society of Jesus Founders

BY SUZANNE CREAN



Three Companions, painted by Rev. F. Podsiadly, S.J., 2005. Pictured (l-r) are St. Francis Xavier, St. Ignatius Loyola and Blessed Peter Faber.

JESUITS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD ARE CELEBRATING A JUBILEE YEAR TO RENEW THE SPIRIT OF THE THREE FOUNDERS OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS: ST. IGNATIUS LOYOLA, ST. FRANCIS XAVIER AND BLESSED PETER FABER. THIS YEAR MARKS THE 450TH ANNIVERSARY OF LOYOLA'S DEATH AND THE 500TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BIRTHS OF XAVIER AND FABER.

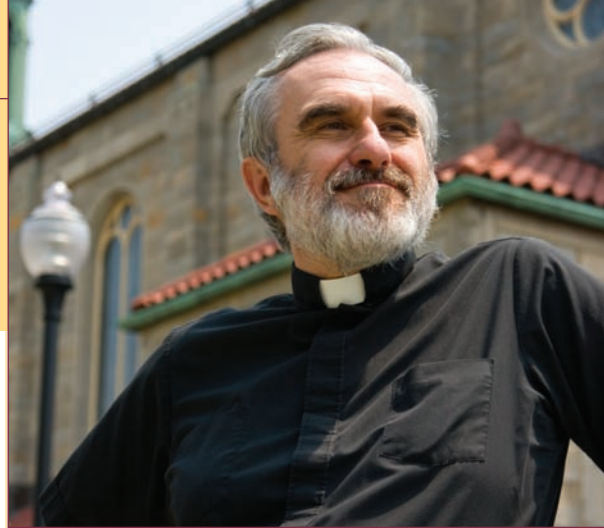
"The anniversary invites us to examine and intensify our fidelity to the Lord," said Jesuit Superior General Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., when the Jubilee began on December 3, 2005. "We remember especially some aspects of the original spirituality that moved these three companions of Jesus and that continue to challenge the Society today."

The celebration reminds us that the history Canisius College shares with its sister Jesuit institutions is rooted in a friendship that is not unlike many of today's Canisius students and alumni: The Jesuit founders met and became life-long friends at college.

Ignatius was a soldier with a taste for swordplay and women but his indulgences changed after he was wounded in a battle of the French Invasion. With only a copy of the *Life of Christ* and a book on the saints to read while he recovered, Ignatius found peace and the beginning of spiritual discernment. To expand his

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— REV. JOHN P. BUCKI, S.J.



intellectual and spiritual horizons, Ignatius entered the College of Sainte Barbe at the University of Paris. There, he met his roommates Xavier and Faber.

Xavier was a Spanish nobleman with a quick temper. Faber was a peasant from Savoy, where he tended his father's sheep and taught catechism. Both were greatly influenced by Ignatius' spirituality and from their relationship, the Society of Jesus arose.

Following graduation, they, along with four others, took vows to work for souls in Jerusalem. But when war broke out between Venice and the Ottoman Empire, which controlled Palestine, these “seven friends in the Lord,” were unable to honor that promise. They then put themselves at the disposal of Pope Paul III. Three years later, they requested and received papal approval for the Society of Jesus – a religious order of priests and brothers commonly called Jesuits.

Each – Ignatius, Xavier and Faber – made a unique contribution to the order. Their influence is evident in contempo-

rary Jesuit education, which promotes Catholic intellectual life, service to others and spiritual development.

Catholic Intellectual Life

Upon recovering from his battle wounds and prior to entering the University of Paris, Ignatius made his first pilgrimage to the Holy Land. On his journey, he stopped in Manresa, a city about 30 miles from Barcelona, Spain. For 10 months, Ignatius spent many hours each day praying and working in a hospice there. It was in Manresa that he had a vision that enabled him to see God in all things, one of the central characteristics of Jesuit spirituality. It was there that Ignatius' ideas for what are now known as the *Spiritual Exercises* began to take shape.

“The *Spiritual Exercises* are a program Ignatius laid out for making a 30-day retreat,” explained Rev. John P. Bucki, S.J., director of Campus Ministry. “In that plan, he outlined a series of meditations and prayers that would lead to spiritual freedom, and deeper knowledge of self and Christ.”

Eventually Ignatius reached Jerusalem but he was turned away by the Franciscans who would not permit him to stay in the Holy Land. Ignatius left to pursue education for the priesthood at the University of Paris.

Ignatius served as superior general of the Jesuit Order from 1541 until his death and saw the Society grow from seven to 1,000 members. In the early years of the Order, Ignatius concentrated on preaching and delivering the *Spiritual Exercises*.

However, the relationship between ministry and learning soon led him to establish a curriculum for Jesuit schools that were formed all over Europe, Brazil and Japan; schools that fostered Catholic intellectual life. The curriculum included grammar and rhetoric, and Latin and Greek, with an emphasis on serving God.

“The Jesuit mission to find God in all

things is one reason education is so important to the Order,” said Rev. Patrick J. Lynch, S.J., associate professor and chair of religious studies and theology, and rector of the Jesuit community at Canisius. He noted, the faculty of many diverse academic departments, including English, philosophy, religious studies and theology, and art, currently have Jesuit members. “All sciences and disciplines are something where God can be found.”

Service to Others

Driven by a desire to spread the Gospel and to help children, the sick and the poor, Francis Xavier became the first Jesuit missionary. Ignatius first assigned him to India, where Xavier converted thousands to the faith. Later he traveled to Japan to spread Christianity and its teachings.

“Xavier shared Christianity but also provided a wealth of information to the Order in Europe, through letters he wrote about his experiences with the people and culture of that region,” explained Father Bucki. “Some have argued that his ministry's biggest impact was made in Europe,” he noted.

During his Asian travels, Xavier learned of the sophistication and scholarship of the Chinese people. He was inspired to carry out his ministry there. A letter to John III reveals the saint was both a religious and diplomatic ambassador. He wrote of his intention to free Portuguese prisoners held in China, and to obtain a peace treaty between China and Portugal. Although the country was completely closed to foreigners, Xavier spent his final days trying to reach the mainland in secret. At the time of his death on an island off the Cantonese coast, he had already inspired 40 other



Ite et annuntiate
2006

Official logo from the The Curia Generalizia, headquarters in Rome of the Society of Jesus.



Introduced March 16th, 2006 by the Vatican postal service, these stamps commemorate the three founders of the Society of Jesus.

Jesuits to carry out missions in Asia.

Xavier's work brought both material and spiritual relief to the needy people of Asia, and his efforts to educate and serve others are still felt today. Tokyo is home to Sophia University, a Jesuit university, which traces its roots to Xavier – and where Canisius hosts a study abroad program. Today at Canisius, the spirit of Xavier lives on through contemporary missions including service-learning experiences and service trips to places such as Jamaica, Appalachia and Mexico.

“Through service immersion programs, our students provide help to those in need but they also bring back a rich wealth of experience which becomes transformative – much like Xavier’s letters were transformative,” Father Bucki said.

Spiritual Development

Peter Faber was a devout student who studied vigorously. But like Ignatius, he suffered great indecision about his future when he was young. Abandoning an early call to the priesthood, Faber set out to become a physician. His career path changed when he made the *Spiritual Exercises* with Ignatius. A few months later, Faber was ordained.

Universally recognized for his charisma and capacity for empathy, Faber’s mission was to strengthen Catholicism around the world. He believed this could be achieved through the reformation of self. Instead of converting heretics, he sought to reform the faithful, particularly clergy. Faber carried out this task by administering the *Spiritual Exercises*.

“Canisius honors Faber’s contribution to the Society through its commitment to bringing spiritual direction to all members of the college community,” Father Lynch said.

Campus ministry continually provides students, faculty and staff



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with ways to deepen their spirituality. Retreats, including the 19th Annotation Retreat, which is an adaptation of the *Spiritual Exercises*, and prayer and meditation groups called Christian Life Communities are some of the ways Campus Ministry heightens Jesuit spirituality on campus.

“Jesuit spirituality is very rich,” said Luanne C. Tunmore, associate campus minister. “It talks a lot about discernment and how to make decisions about the future with God. I think a person’s faith and spirituality develop in college and we play a role in

that development.”

While Faber is recognized as being an exceptional director of the *Spiritual Exercises*, it was during the last six years of his life that he made his most lasting contribution to the Jesuit tradition. Under Faber’s direction, a young Dutch student named Peter Canisius made the *Spiritual Exercises* and joined the Society. Canisius, our college namesake, is the patron saint of Germany and was his era’s leading catechism writer. He strengthened Jesuit education through the addition of music, art and ballet programs to the curriculum.

“Art is a great way to instruct young adults about their own Christian faith,” explained Rev. Michael F. Tunney, S.J., associate professor of fine arts/studio arts. “Not through a list of dos or don’ts but by letting students participate in culture individually or communally. The performing arts, in particular, can help people find the sacred in the ordinary; God in all things,” he added.

While efforts to strengthen Jesuit spirituality at Canisius are ongoing, the Jubilee Year celebration is an opportunity to strengthen our connection to Jesuits throughout the world with the retelling of our common history.

“The Jubilee is about connecting with the worldwide Jesuit community,” said Father Bucki. “We are reconnecting with our heritage and celebrating the fact that we are a part of this bigger picture that goes beyond Buffalo, Western New York and the United States.”

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