



Nine Days of Grace 2018

DAILY GRACES & INSPIRATION FROM ST. FRANCIS XAVIER

Day 1 | Wednesday 7 March

Victoria Ries

On each day of these Nine Days of Grace, we will begin by asking for a grace from God. So today, on this first day, **let us pray for the grace to hear and respond to the call to be companions of Jesus... (pause)**

Since it was Francis Xavier's appearance to a priest that gave birth to the Novena of Grace - we will also share a brief story about - or a quote from - Francis Xavier, as a way to inspire us to live out the grace like he did in his life... *(brief pause)*

After Francis Xavier had been in India for about a year and a half, he wrote to Ignatius:

“My arms are often paralyzed with baptizing and my voice gives out completely through repeating endlessly in their tongue, the creed, the commandments, the prayers and a sermon.”

He thought of those studying in universities back home and wrote:

“If while they study their humanities, they would also study the account which God will demand of them for the talents He gave, many might feel the need to undertake spiritual exercises that would lead them to discover and embrace the divine will rather than their own, and they would cry to God, ‘Lord, here I am. What would you have me to do?’”

May the Holy Spirit help us to listen as carefully as Francis to God's word and invitation.

Day 2 | Thursday 8 March

Joe Hastings

On each day of these Nine Days of Grace, we begin by asking for a grace from God. Today **let us pray for the grace to name and repent our social sins and turn as a people toward the Gospel... (pause)**

We also begin by sharing a story about how Francis Xavier lived out each grace... *(brief pause)*

When Francis Xavier arrived in Goa, India, he confronted the European settlers' inhumane treatment of slaves, their lack of care for poor, their use and abuse of concubines. Though the settlers were Christians, the society they ruled ignored the Gospel message. Francis dedicated himself to teaching the colonists and to serving the subjects of their injustice. Today, Catholic Social Teaching would name what Francis encountered as the social sins of slavery, injustice, and sexual exploitation. Francis could not witness to the Gospel while ignoring his social reality.

May the Holy Spirit give us the courage and humility to name and repent the social sins of our society today.



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Day 3 | Friday 9 March

Trung Pham, S.J.

Today **let us pray for the grace of strength, endurance, and freedom to face adversity...** *(pause)*

Stories which accompanied Francis Xavier throughout his missionary journeys tell of the many hours he spent in prayer each night, after long exhausting days preaching and baptizing.

Over and over, his companions mentioned that they would wake up in the middle of the night to see Francis kneeling in prayer, talking with God.

It seems clear that his life was solidly anchored in God's spirit through prayer and contemplation. Perhaps it was this consistent and profound contact with God that allowed Francis to trust so wholeheartedly in God's presence with him at all times during his ministry. This literally gave Francis the strength and courage to continue on in sometimes difficult circumstances. And it was also this prayerful, consistent time with God which allowed Francis to be connected deeply with his sisters and brothers in foreign lands.

May the Holy Spirit lead us to prayer, so that we too may have the strength, endurance and freedom to face adversity.

Day 4 | Saturday 10 March

Joe Hastings

Today **let us pray for the grace to embrace our call to seek and serve the Kingdom of God wherever Christ calls us...** *(pause)*

Francis Xavier committed himself to go where God was calling him, eventually to lands and cultures heretofore unknown and unheard of. Though his sacramental successes are celebrated, many defeats and dead ends were sprinkled among his mission work. The vocation he discerned as a student was to serve the Kingdom of God, and throughout his life he listened for where God was leading him to live that vocation.

May the Holy Spirit help us to continue to discern where and how we are called to seek and serve the Kingdom of God.



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Day 5 | Sunday 11 March

Victoria Ries

Today **let us pray for the grace to see all things in the light of faith, especially in times of darkness...** (*pause*)

On this fifth day, we hear Francis Xavier's voice from one of his letters:

“Judge now for yourselves how calm, consoled, and completely filled with joy our lives would be if we were what we should be, having all our hopes in him from whom all good comes. He does not deceive those who trust in him, but is, instead, more generous with all his gifts than we are in our request and hopes. For the love of our Lord, help us to give thanks for such great favors.”

May the Holy Spirit help us, like Francis, to see with the eyes of faith.

Day 6 | Monday 12 March (Anniversary of the Canonizations)

Trung Pham, S.J.

Today **let us pray for the grace to have compassionate hearts and faithfulness to our mission...** (*pause*)

Francis Xavier often met with opposition as he tried to bring about Christ's vision of the kingdom of God. Although Francis met with the difficulties and even with failure at times, nevertheless, he did not give up.

In our world today, we might think that Francis was closed-minded to and intolerant of the value of other religions. After all, Francis' mission was to convert to Christianity those who had not heard of Jesus. But despite the limitations of his times, Francis was a man who in loving God, deeply loved his neighbor and this made him value human beings - all human beings. In his era, this was revolutionary.

May the Holy Spirit give us compassionate hearts that value all human beings and help us to be faithful to our mission.



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Day 7 | Tuesday 13 March (5th Anniversary of Pope Francis' election)

Joe Hastings

Let us pray for the grace to live in solidarity with Christ among those who are poor and marginalized...

(pause)

In all of his mission work, wherever he went in India, Indonesia, and Japan, Francis went first to the poor people, the low castes, and offered them not only his Christian faith but his service as well. He sought to live in solidarity with them in poverty. In India and Japan, his humble lifestyle and Gospel message found little reception among the affluent, but poor and outcast peoples welcomed the Good News.

May the Holy Spirit give us the grace to let go of affluence, reach across lines of race and class, and live in solidarity with Christ in the poor.

Day 8 | Wednesday 14 March

Victoria Ries

Let us pray for the grace to seek always to do God's will... *(pause)*

One of the hallmarks of Francis' life was his compassion and love for those he met on his travels, particularly the poor and the sick. Not content simply to preach the Word of God and baptize people, Francis spent parts of almost every day nursing those who were ill in the hospitals of the towns through which he traveled or on the ships at the ports where his own ship docked. He went to the holds of the ships on which he traveled to tend to those who were ill and dying, sharing with the sick his own food, and even giving them his own bed until they were well again.

May the Holy Spirit help us do as Francis did and continue the work of Jesus.

Day 9 | Thursday 15 March

Trung Pham, S.J.

On each day of these Nine Days of Grace, we have asked for a grace from God. Today, the final day, **let us pray for the grace to see and understand what we see... *(pause)***

From Pope Francis' book *Church of Mercy*:

“Newness often makes us fearful, including the newness God brings us, the newness God asks of us. We are like the apostles in the Gospel: often we would prefer to hold on to our own security, to stand in front of a tomb, to think about someone who has died, someone who ultimately lives on only as a memory, like the great historical figures from the past. We are afraid of God's surprises.”

May the Holy Spirit grant us vision and understanding of whatever we may see.