

Homily – Memorial of St. Francis Xavier, Priest – Early Ministry Program, Lopez Hall – December 3, 2024

My dear brothers, today we celebrate the life and witness of Saint Francis Xavier, a priest and missionary whose zeal and surrender to the Holy Spirit challenge us to reflect on our own missionary calling.

Saint Francis Xavier did not merely preach the Gospel; he embodied it. His heart, consumed by the fire of the Holy Spirit, was driven to proclaim Christ in distant lands – places where Jesus was unknown, and the cross had not yet been lifted. His life reminds us that missionary zeal requires not only courage but humility. He acknowledged that the strength for his mission did not come from himself but from the Spirit working through his weakness.

The readings today beautifully reveal this paradox of strength in weakness. The prophet Isaiah speaks of the shoot that springs from the stump of Jesse – a fragile sign of hope emerging from apparent desolation. It is the Spirit of the Lord that makes this new growth possible, endowing it with wisdom, understanding, and courage. In the Gospel, Jesus exults in the Spirit, praising the Father for revealing the mysteries of the Kingdom to the simple and humble of heart.

As priests, we are called to imitate this simplicity. Too often, we rely on our own knowledge, plans, or charisma. But the mission is not ours; it is God's. Speaking of Saint Francis Xavier, Pope Francis has said: "His intense activity was always joined with prayer, with the mystical and contemplative union with God." Like Francis Xavier, we must abandon ourselves to the Spirit's

guidance, becoming instruments through which Christ is revealed to the world.

Saint Francis Xavier's humility allowed him to encounter Christ in the poor and to preach the Gospel with conviction and authenticity. His life reminds us that God often works through the small, the unexpected, and the broken. When we embrace our own limitations and open our hearts to the Spirit, we too can become channels of grace and peace in a world longing for the joy of salvation.

Brothers, as we approach the altar, let us ask for the Spirit's gifts. Let us pray for the wisdom to see Christ in every person we meet, the courage to proclaim Him without fear, and the humility to depend entirely on God. May Saint Francis Xavier intercede for us, that we, like him, may bring the light of Christ to all corners of the earth.

May we find strength in the tender embrace of Our Lady of Guadalupe, to go forth, full of the joy of the Spirit, to proclaim that the day is near, when the glory of the Lord will come into our lives.