



*Images (Clockwise from left) 1) The Church of St Francis Xavier on Sangchuan Island where St Francis died in 1552; 2) Painting on canvas from the Jesuit Residence in Macau, symbolising the church bridging the divide between Macau and China; 3) The ruins of St Paul's in Macau. Built from 1582 to 1602 by the Jesuits, the cathedral was the largest Catholic Church in Asia at the time; 4) The Ancient Observatory in Beijing, many of the instruments were created by the Jesuit Ferdinand Verbiest in the 1670s.*

## **In the Footsteps of Saint Francis Xavier**

During the September school holidays I was privileged to represent John XXIII College on a pilgrimage by following the footsteps of Saint Francis Xavier.

We travelled to Macau, Nagasaki, Shanghai and Beijing. Fifteen people from Jesuit and Ignatian schools around Australia made up the group, including Bishop Greg O'Kelly SJ and Fr Rob Davoren SJ. Our guides were Fr Jeremy Clarke SJ (China) and Fr Michael Ryan SJ (Japan).

We saw where Francis Xavier died on December 3, 1552 on Shangchuan Island which is just off Macau, a few miles short of mainland China. It had been his goal to carry the Gospel to China, but he barely arrived there when he was stricken with fever and died. We visited the chapel built in 1869 in his honour, restored as recently as 2006. While in Macau we visited the home of the present Jesuits, and had a Mass in their Chapel. The picture (above right) is hanging in their home.

In Nagasaki, Fr Michael Ryan SJ was the perfect tour guide leading us through places of interest. The group spent some time at the Shrine of the 26 martyrs. The Martyrs Museum is proud to showcase a letter from Francis Xavier to the King John III of Portugal - written in 1546. This Shrine was a symbol of endurance and hope for the local people in the aftermath of the atomic bombing which destroyed the city during World War II. Whilst there we also visited the Atomic Bomb Museum and saw many displays showing the effects of the bombing and had time to reflect in the Peace Garden.

Shanghai, our next destination, is a dynamic city 'on the move'. The world's tallest tower, the SWFC Observatory, is 474m tall which we used as a vantage point to view the city. We attended Sunday Mass at the Xujiahui Catholic Cathedral, also known as Cathedral of St. Ignatius, and then visited a nearby library which featured many books brought into China by the Jesuits, some dating back centuries. The bullet train

which travelled at 431kms per hour was an experience too! Later we travelled overnight by train to Beijing. There the group visited the Old Summer Palace and the Ancient Observatory side by side as astronomers, architects and engineers. We went to Tiananmen Square, the Forbidden City, climbed the Great Wall and saw, from a distance, the Bird's Nest Stadium and Water Cube, so familiar from the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

Fr Jeremy Clarke SJ with his vast knowledge of Chinese history made a wonderful tour guide. We came to understand the enormous contribution made by the Jesuits to Chinese culture and development. All the pilgrims enjoyed their time, and as well as sharing the travels also shared about life in Jesuit schools around the country. We are most grateful for this remarkable opportunity where from 1644-1911 Jesuits and Chinese Catholics worked.

Each day was planned in such a way that we the group would participate in a structured activity. With four Jesuits travelling with the group there was no problem finding a Priest to celebrate Mass. Mass was celebrated in various Churches, Chapels and hotel rooms. These masses allowed for reflection as well as celebration of the Eucharist. Each day time was set aside to reflect and share the experiences of the day as well as prepare for the activities of the day to come. Common questions in our reflections were where did I see God today? What gave me life today? What was not life giving? At our last liturgy we were asked to share ways in which we could bring our experiences to action when we returned home.

### **Journal Reflections:**

*Whilst in the footsteps of St Francis Xavier It was very easy to become aware of:*

*The old and preserved – I was reminded of a time before us/me. Important things need to be preserved and looked after. This was seen in places, books, stories, buildings and art.*

*The old and broken - I was reminded of change and the importance to accept change. I am challenged to be an instrument of change like those who we heard stories of today.*

*The new and the old – I witnessed the old and new existing together. This is seen in the people and buildings. On one side of the road there are old buildings and on the other there are skyscrapers. The construction sites remind me that renewal is necessary.*

*New and modern – I looked in awe and wonder at the brilliance of the architects, engineers and workers responsible for the amazing buildings. I am reminded to look and value the NOW.*

The pilgrimage will hold a special place for me. Wonderful relationships were formed between the fifteen people in the group. The pilgrimage allowed for spiritual, physical and emotional enrichment. An appreciation of the impact of the Jesuits throughout China and Japan was gained. The experiences of the journey reminded me that as a teacher in an Ignatian school I am part of the Jesuit story. As part of this

story I am challenged to be more than a storyteller but to go further to lead in a way that brings my faith to action in service of others. This story gives me a language to speak; a face of god see; work to do and a sense of going on mission.

Yours sincerely

Mark Antulov



Mark Antulov - Vice Principal at John XXIII College in Mt Claremont, Perth, Western Australia. Mark has worked at the college for 26 years. The College is a progressive Ignatian school resulting from the wonderful amalgamation of St Louis School (Claremont) a Jesuit Boys School and Loreto (Claremont) a Loreto Girls school. The college still has very strong connections with both Religious Orders. There is a full time Jesuit Chaplain and a Jesuit is on the College Council. The school stays linked to the Jesuit heritage through its membership of the Jesuit Principles networks and Loyola Institute programs. The college also has a full time Loreto Sister on staff as well as a Sister on the College Council. Many programs promoting the Ignatian charism at the College are run and there are staff formation programs conducted each year. Faith in action and service to others are at the centre of education at John XXIII College. Mark has been a distant friend of Xavier University having stayed

in touch through New(s) Mission and Identity at Xavier university through contact with Debra Mooney. Mark one day aims to visit and study at Xavier. John XXIII College website: [www.johnxxiii.edu.au](http://www.johnxxiii.edu.au)