



Relic of St. Francis Xavier arrives in Canada, starts 14-city Canadian pilgrimage

OTTAWA, ON, December 28, 2017—The very venerated relic of St. Francis Xavier touched down on Canadian soil yesterday, marking the beginning of a 14-city Canadian visit and pilgrimage orchestrated by the Archdiocese of Ottawa, the Jesuits religious order and Catholic Christian Outreach. The relic, the missionary's right forearm, made the more than 7,000 kilometre trip to Toronto from Italy, where it is based.

“Organizing this pilgrimage and cross-country visit has been quite an adventure,” said Archbishop Prendergast here. “We’ve faced many challenges along the way, mainly due to the tight timeline in which we organized everything. But that’s nothing compared to the challenges of being a missionary in the middle of the 16th century. I’m sure Francis experienced more than his fair share of challenges during his lifetime.”

The relic was received at Toronto’s Pearson Airport by Archbishop Prendergast. The first major event with the relic will be at CCO’s annual Rise Up conference, where it will be greeted by a vibrant and youthful crowd of more than 900 young adults. The timing of this event, in the last days of 2017, coincides with the close of celebrations for Canada’s 150th year, and will happen near Parliament Hill. CCO is the national university student movement that is celebrating its 30th anniversary in 2018—a milestone that was the main catalyst of this visit.

“We could have never planned or foreseen such a gift for our 30th anniversary year,” said Angèle Regnier, co-founder of CCO. “Saint Francis Xavier is one of our patron saints, so Archbishop Prendergast suggested we ask for the relic. Francis’ life resonates with young people who admire his story of conversion as a university student through his roommates.”

After the young adult conference, organizers—in collaboration with host dioceses—will hold special pilgrimage events in Québec City, St. John’s, Halifax, Antigonish, Kingston, Toronto/Mississauga, Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Regina, Calgary, Vancouver, Victoria and Montréal, as well as Ottawa. Throughout these cities, close to 100,000 people are expected to visit the events—the same number of people it is believed Francis baptized with his right arm and hand.

All events are free and open to the public. A complete schedule of events, details on the life of Saint Francis Xavier and the practice of veneration is available at cco.ca/relic.

About CCO

Catholic Christian Outreach (CCO) is a university student movement dedicated to evangelization. CCO challenges students to live in the fullness of faith with a strong emphasis on becoming leaders in the renewal of the world. CCO began in 1988 at the University of

Saskatchewan. Now in its 30th year, CCO reaches out to thousands of students on 15 campuses across Canada. Saint Francis Xavier and Saint Thérèse of Lisieux are patron saints of CCO as well as the Church's patron saints of foreign missions.

Jesuits in Canada

The Society of Jesus (Jesuits) was founded in 1540 by Saint Ignatius of Loyola, a Basque nobleman and soldier, and six of his companions, including Saint Francis Xavier, who placed themselves at the service of the Church for wherever the need was greatest. They first came to Canada at Port Royal in Nova Scotia in 1611, founded the first parish and school in Quebec in 1635 and now are present across the country. Today there are almost 17,000 Jesuits serving the Church in 112 nations, making them the largest male religious order in the Catholic Church. In Canada, there are more than 200 Jesuits responsible for the direction of schools, churches, retreat centres, and a variety of ministries from St. John's, NL to Vancouver, BC. In Canada, the Jesuits serve the anglophone and francophone communities all across the country.

Archdiocese of Ottawa

The Archdiocese of Ottawa is one of the larger dioceses of the Catholic Church in Canada. Under the spiritual care of Archbishop Terrence Prendergast since 2007, the Archdiocese is comprised of some 400,000 faithful, in 107 parishes, numerous Catholic schools (public and private), deacons and a large number of female and male religious congregations and orders.

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