

Dates set for St. Francis Xavier exposition

Dennis Coday | Oct. 25, 2013 NCR Today

The archbishop of Goa, India, has announced the dates of the once-a-decade exposition of the relics of Jesuit missionary super-saint Francis Xavier: Nov. 22, 2014, to Jan. 4, 2015.

Some 2.5 million pilgrims of a variety of religious traditions venerated the relics 10 years ago. The hope has been that Pope Francis will be among the visitors next year. Francis has suggested he may visit Sri Lanka next year, but there has been no word about his visiting Goa.

Francis Xavier, a Basque, was born in Spain April 7, 1506, and arrived in Goa on May 6, 1542. His missionary work took him across Asia over the next 10 years. He died Dec. 3, 1552, on Sancian island just short of his ultimate goal: China.

The body of Francis Xavier was first laid to rest in Portuguese Malacca (present day northern Malaysia). Two years later, the body was moved to the Portuguese colony at Goa, today a popular tourist enclave, and installed in the Basilica of Bom Jesus.

The basilica and the mausoleum there that holds the relics of Francis Xavier are a popular pilgrimage site year round. Every 10 years the relics are moved in solemn procession to the nearby Se Cathedral where they are available for public veneration for 44 days.

The saint's body is intact, except for his right arm, which was removed so that it could be displayed as a relic at the Church of the Gesù in Rome. He is said to have baptized more than 300,000 people across Asia, using his right hand to pour the baptismal water.

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