

Relic of St Francis Xavier

Relic is derived from the Latin *relinquo*, for *I leave (behind)*. It is part of a saint's body, a saint's possession, or an object that has touched a saint's tomb. Saints' mortal remains are associated in some manner with the holiness of their departed souls, which await reunion with their bodies in the resurrection.

God has used relics as a vehicle of His grace in biblical times (2 Kings 13:21, Acts 19:12) and today. Until February 2, a large relic from the incorruptible body of a missionary saint is touring Canada.

Catholic Christian Outreach is a Canadian ministry that encourages Catholic faith in university students on 15 campuses. One patron of this missionary movement is Saint Francis Xavier. To invoke his intercession in a more powerful way, his Relic is making a pilgrimage here.

CCO's premier event is the end-of-year Rise Up conference. It attracts students from across Canada for fellowship and challenging talks about living the faith. The recent Ottawa conference celebrated Canada's sesquicentennial and the 30th anniversary of CCO's founding.

When I met with CCO leaders to discuss how we could make this Rise Up special, someone suggested having the Relic of St Francis Xavier at it.

Father Vincenzo D'Adamo, S.J., Rector of the Gesu church in Rome where the Relic is displayed, gave us his permission and opened the door to needed authorizations from the Jesuit Curia, the Congregation of Saints, the Vicariate of Rome, and the Superintendence of Cultural and Artistic Goods of the Italian State.

In Canada, both Jesuit Provincials immediately gave their approval. Thus, the pilgrimage became a joint effort of the Archdiocese of Ottawa, the two Canadian Jesuit Provinces, and CCO.

The Relic is travelling to Canadian cities where Jesuit communities are located and campuses where CCO has a presence. The local bishops eagerly agreed to the visits.

Father Michael Kolarcik, the Canadian Rector of the Biblical Institute in Rome, accompanied the Relic on its journey to Canada. He had it removed from its display and packed, and he received the forms to be processed by the Canada Border Services Agency.

As I waited for Father Kolarcik at Pearson Airport on December 26, I overheard two border agents speaking excitedly about the “famous Arm” that would be coming through. When I expressed my worries, they reassured me that the paperwork was in order.

I took the Relic to Cornwall—I serve as Apostolic Administrator for Alexandria-Cornwall—the next day for a Christmas luncheon with the clergy. We had a period of veneration followed by Mass at St Columban’s church.

After nearly one thousand Rise Up attendees in Ottawa venerated the Relic, it left on January 2 for Quebec City, followed by St. John’s. It is in Halifax today. It travels to Antigonish tomorrow and will be in Saint Mary’s Cathedral in Kingston on Wednesday. From there, it will go to Toronto and on to Winnipeg and westward to Victoria, before returning east to Montreal for three days. Back in Ottawa, it will be displayed the evening of January 31 at Paroisse Sainte-Marie, during the day of February 1 at St John the Apostle Church, and the afternoon and evening of February 2 at Notre-Dame Cathedral Basilica. We expect tens of thousands of Canadians will view the Relic.

Visitors to the Relic may seek, through the intercession of St. Francis Xavier, these graces: the conversion of souls; the inspiration of missionary disciples who are faithful to God's will; and healing in ourselves and society.

I invite you to share the blessings of an encounter with the tender heart of Jesus through the visit of the arm of St. Francis Xavier.

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