

December 3, 2009 – Feast of St Francis Xavier – reflection prepared for and shared during mass

Our tradition tells us that Francis Xavier covered more than 100,000 km in 10 years. This was mostly on boat, living among sailors. Pulling the sails up, pulling the sails down, putting up with poor food, scarce water, shaken by unpredictable storms and left still on the dead calm seas, Francis becomes a sailor among sailors. Having gained the trust and esteem of his brothers, he can then tell them who don't know or have forgotten that God has loved them so much as to die for them... he can tell them about Christ. A Jesuit friend wrote poetically that probably right there on the forecastle of one of these boats our institute la Xaviere was born... and that no one –except God- had heard about it until 1921, when our Institute was founded...

In the light of the life of Francis Xavier and with my experience of living here in Toronto as a xavière sister, how do I understand mission today? A few aspects come to mind today that I would like to share with you.

Mission is contemplation: in the TTC every morning, I see people. People of all age and obviously all kinds of backgrounds and trades. I feel the silence or hear the chatter, or the too loud sound of an ipod. I share in the impatience of waiting and I can almost feel the shared burden of the beginning of a new day of work. On the 17<sup>th</sup> floor of the high rise where I work, I see my colleagues, in the cubicle type setting I share the silence of work focused on a task and the discussion over a particular problem to solve together. I see how Stephen looks sad today, I appreciate how Julie offers to help him out in a difficult task, I take part in the conversation about the utilization rates that were imposed on us by our manager...Rick shares the joy of the graduation of his kid... Contemplation is more than just "seeing". All other senses and faculties come into play, and I hear, and feel, and taste... I bring all in prayer to God, as an offering, in personal prayer and in the daily Eucharist. It draws me to give thanks to God. And I ponder, and I marvel, and I question God about what I see: what are you telling me Lord, in all this? I am eager to search and find you in all things, therefore teach me, in this very place, in this very day, lead me to discern your presence, lead me to discern where you lead my next step.

Wherever it is that my steps lead me the mission as I live it is "out there". Several friends in Toronto used this expression to speak of our way of life as xavière sisters as they see it.... And indeed these 2 words seem to summarize effectively the missionary movement I enjoy entering into. I am going "out there", in the "market place", because I believe the Spirit of Jesus is "out there", at work in every human being and in all of creation. I hear the call to listen deeply to what the Spirit is saying in my life and in the life of others (colleagues, family, friends), in the life of the world, in all that's happening out there. The very matter of my contemplation is "out there".

... and the very source and reason and driver for mission is "in there". There -in there - lies the source of the missionary movement. James Walsh sj writes: "the heart of mission is the indwelling". In our Constitutions we read: "notre vocation missionnaire est l'expression de notre vie in Christo Jesu" which translates: "our mission is the expression of our life in Christo Jesu". Relationship with Christ is first and central. It is up to me to take the necessary means to nurture the relationship. And I need not worry: He who sends me to His mission promises to be with me always.

Sent out by our Lord we go into the world, looking for Him to whom all power in heaven and on earth was given. We trust in His presence in the world and within us. Let us give thanks today in the celebration of this Eucharist for the call to mission, and for the loving call of the risen Christ to all men and women to enter into the relationship with Him.

Gabrielle