

Saint Francis Xavier Maria Bianchi

1743 - 1815

PARADISE

Saint Francis Xavier Maria Bianchi, a Barnabite, called the apostle of Naples, in his life had a relationship of spiritual friendship with a Franciscan Tertiary sister, Saint Mary Frances of the Five Wounds. During his last malady, the Saint was waiting to go to Heaven until a prophecy told to him by her was fulfilled. On the 29th of January 1815, to Father Ceraso, his confessor, he said: "The Saint was of her word: she faithfully kept her promise." And he recounted that Mary Frances (died in 1791) had come the preceding night, she sat next to the bed to let him foretaste the joys of happy eternity. This was for him the sign of his departure. For some time the father said to his disciples: "Three days before my death she will come to visit me and she will be here like you and I are here." To his face, one year after his own death, he appeared in order to complete the first of the two miracles proposed and approved for the beatification. Maria Casabona, twenty-three years old, struck by hemiplegia, was reduced to helplessly be idle on a chair, stricken often by atrocious pains. The Saint appeared to her – to whom she had turned, invoking his favor – and he said to her: "Rise yourself up, for you are well; you will no longer suffer from this ailment." The healing, which produced a great impression on everyone, was instantaneous and enduring, and twelve years later Casabona was able to render testimony sworn in front of the ecclesiastical judges.

Saint Francis Xavier Maria Bianchi was born in Arpino (Frosinone), on the 2nd of December 1743. He studied in the Seminary of Nola and at the University of Naples. In 1762 he entered into the Congregation of the Barnabites and he continued his studies in Macerata, Rome, and again in Naples, where he was ordained a priest in 1767. His fame of being a Barnabite scholar gave him various assignments of prestige which he carried out with great expertise: superior for twelve years of the College of St. Mary in Cosmedin in Portanova; from 1778 extraordinary professor in the Royal University; associate of the Royal Academy of Arts and Sciences, and of the Ecclesiastical Academy.

Fairly quickly he was recognized as a saint, because in him came always more the substitution of studies and of the attendance of circles of scholars, with the works of charity, the contemplation and the apostolate, especially among the humble lowly of his quarter. Devoted to penitence, he did not renounce it not even when he was struck by a mysterious malady which immobilized him in the last thirteen years of his life: on the contrary, in the last three years he prodigiously was able to celebrate Mass holding himself up on his legs, swollen and covered in sores. He died in Naples on the 31st of January 1815. Leo XIII beatified him on the 22nd of January 1893, and Pius XII canonized him on the 21st of October 1951.

