



1. Sophia University and St. Francis Xavier

Sophia is proud to be the university that was created in accord with the long-cherished desire of St. Francis Xavier to found a university in the imperial capital of Japan. Xavier came to Japan in 1549 in order to do Christian evangelization here. Every Japanese who has been forced to study the history of Japan knows this historical fact. However, Xavier's plan to found a university in Japan does not come to light so clearly unless one carefully follows the wake of his journeys and activities. After Xavier had landed in Kagoshima, he quickly realized the deep wisdom of the Japanese, the excellence of their intellectual curiosity, and the high levels of their intellectual quests. Thus, if possible, Xavier wanted to build a university in the capital city of Japan to promote the spread of Christianity in Japan. Due to the warlike conditions that prevailed all over Japan



This painting shows the arrival of St. Francis Xavier at the port of Shimonoseki. The original is in the 26 Martyrs Museum in Nagasaki.

at the time of his arrival, Xavier was not able to meet either the Shogun or the Buddhist monks of Mt. Hiei. Very disappointed, Xavier departed from Japan after a stay of only two years and three months. After departing, Xavier had intended to go to China to learn the classical sources of Japanese culture. On his way, he died on December 3rd, 1552, on Shangchuan Island in front of the Chinese mainland. The seeds that Xavier had sown yielded fruit many years later, during the Taisho era, after the long period when Japan was closed to outside religious influences. The Pope had entrusted three priests from the same Society of Jesus to which Francis Xavier had belonged with a mission to found a university in Japan: Joseph Dahlmann, Henri Boucher, and James Rockliff. Their efforts were joined to



This famous painting of St. Francis Xavier belongs to the collection of materials related to the Christian historical period in Japan. These materials are cared for in the special collection of historical materials in the University Library.

those of the first president of Sophia University, Hermann Hoffmann, and of the third president of Sophia University, Tsuchihashi Yachita, and of others. Together they were able to create Sophia University in 1913. Before the end of the Second World War, however, though the university would celebrate annually the anniversary of the death of Xavier, there are no records to show that these celebrations included the suspension of all classes. Thus one may well ask: from when did the feast day of Xavier, December 3rd, become part of the list of annual university celebrations?

2. When did the Xavier Festival start?

Father Klaus Luhmer, former Chancellor of Jochi Gakuin, told some students from the Catholic Students Association in 2001 about his research into this question. These students were members of the committee to plan and execute activities of Xavier Week that year. They kept a record of what Fr. Luhmer told them. In 1953, the then Dean of students Fr. Bosch suggested that December 3rd be made a day of prayer. Classes were thus cancelled on that day. Under the sponsorship of the Catholic Research Organization (the predecessor of the Catholic Students Association), a one-day retreat prayer program took place in the Kulturheim chapel. This one-day prayer program continued for several years,

but the records are unclear about whether all classes were cancelled on that day.

The Catholic Students Association was formed in 1959. The members proposed to sponsor a weeklong series of programs and lectures aimed at helping the Catholic spirit to permeate more deeply and broadly among the ordinary Catholic students. Each program lasted from November 27th until December 3rd, but detailed records of activities are not available. Later, in 1966, several lectures were sponsored during what was called Xavier Week. The Xavier festival was finally fixed in the annual list of events sponsored and supported by Sophia University in 1977. From that year, the annual calendar published in the school regulations includes the feast of St. Francis Xavier, and all classes are cancelled.



Both of these pictures concern Catholic on-campus activities around 1957. The upper picture shows the baptism of a Sophia student in the sacristy of the Kulturheim chapel. The lower picture shows a prayer and meditation program for the Catholic students that was conducted in the Kulturheim chapel.



3. The Catholic Students Association and Xavier Week

The planning and management of the Xavier Festival and of Xavier Week are chiefly

the responsibility of Sophia's Catholic Students Association. The early programs included lectures with titles such as "Bringing Japanese and St. Francis into closer contact" or "The Vatican as a system". 1978 was the 70th anniversary of the return of the Jesuits to Japan; consequently, during the Xavier festival there was a well-attended Mass and reception. The 1980 program included a Symposium under the theme "Contemporary Sophia University and the Spirit of Xavier". There was also a reception to mark the completion of Hoffmann Hall, the on-campus focus of many circle/club activities. In 1983, the students sponsored a Mass to thank Cardinal Hoffner of Cologne. Thus, the Xavier Festival from year to year might include special one-off events.

The Xavier Week has developed until now by sponsoring programs and lectures that would catch the interest of ordinary Sophia students. For example, two films based on literary works of Endo Shusaku, *Silence* and *Deep River*, were presented and discussed. Programs about the roots of Sophia University's ideals were arranged: for example, research reports about St. Ignatius of Loyola or about Xavier. Finally, programs have been arranged that would help ordinary Sophia students to grasp the meaning of "Living for the Benefit of Others".

4. The Message of Xavier and the Sprit that Led to the Founding of Sophia University

Some words from the Gospel of Matthew express the motives that Xavier had for evangelization in the lands of the Orient: What does it profit a man (or woman) if he gains the whole world but loses his own soul? During the annual Festival of Xavier, when we re-experience the spirit of Xavier, we are at the same time reconfirming the spirit that led to the founding of this university. President Yanase Mutsuo made the following observation: Sophia University is based on the educational ideals of Christian Humanism. This is the ideal that Xavier had in mind when he dreamed of starting our



This 1959 picture shows a performance by student singers and musicians of the Requiem written by Mozart. This student activity was held in the old St. Ignatius Church.

university. We Sophians need to recall this spirit of Xavier. We need to rethink what the value of human living is and what the purpose of human living is. It is quite important to return often to these core questions. During each Festival of Xavier, we can turn again to the spirit that led to the founding of Sophia University. We can refresh our hearts. We must offer again our efforts on behalf of people all over the world who are not blessed either materially or spiritually.