

News & Events

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By Connie Dunwoody

Photos courtesy Connie Dunwoody

It was a solemn moment, one filled with sanctity and wonder, curiosity and more than a little awe.

On Saturday, January 28, 2018, the Diocese was blessed with the visit of the St. Francis Xavier Canadian Relic Pilgrimage, presented by the [Archdiocese of Ottawa](#), the [Jesuits in Canada](#), and [Catholic Christian Outreach \(CCO\)](#), as a gift for the Church in Canada at the close of our 150th Anniversary year.

This relic is the right forearm and hand of St. Francis Xavier. It is estimated that he baptized more than 100,000 people with this arm. This relic typically remains in a reliquary in Rome at the Jesuit mother church, the Church of the Gesù. The remainder of his body is enshrined at the Basilica of Bom Jesus in Goa, India.

His arm, as well as the rest of his body, is *incorrupt*. Saints are referred to as incorrupt when their body, miraculously, does not experience natural decay. Despite attempts to accelerate the decomposition of his body by covering it with lime, a corrosive powder used for this purpose at the time, St. Francis's body remained stubbornly fresh for many years. It has been 465 years since the saint's death, and his remains are now completely dry. They are venerated by thousands each year in both Goa and Rome.

The veneration of relics is a longstanding practice inside and outside the Catholic Church. Within Christianity, the practice rests on the belief that God came to humanity in the flesh, namely in the physical person of Jesus of Nazareth. Important Sacraments of the Faith include water, wine and bread—physical elements that take on spiritual, supernatural value and characteristics. Similarly, the relics of saints provide for an incarnational experience of God's graces. Catholics believe that saints can intercede for humanity, given their proximity to God in what is commonly referred to as the Communion of Saints or the Mystical Body of Christ.

There are analogies to this in our human experience. When we have lost a loved one, going to their places or touching their favourite things evoke reverence, affection and connection to them.

We are grateful to the Pilgrimage for including the Diocese of Victoria on their tour.

*Learn more, or share your Relic experience,
at www.cco.ca/relic.*

