

# Vinspiration

## SAINT FRANCIS REGIS CLET

Francis Regis Clet was born to Caesar and Claudine Clet in Grenoble, France, on August 19, 1748. He was given the name of a recently canonized Jesuit saint, Francis Regis, from the same area. The Clet family were middle class farmers. Up to the age of 8 Francis Regis was educated at home and then began classes at the local parish school. At the age of 15 he was sent to the

Royal College at Lyons, run by the Jesuits.

He entered the Congregation of the Mission at the age of 21. He was ordained to priesthood in 1773, and served as professor of moral theology at the Vincentian Seminary, Annecy. He was affectionately called “the walking library” because of his encyclopedic knowledge and academic discipline. In 1788 he was sent as Novice Director at the Motherhouse in Paris. Around this time the Revolution broke out in Paris. One of the first religious houses to be ransacked was the Vincentian’s Motherhouse. Eventually all religious communities were banned in France; all churches and religious institutions were closed and confiscated. Thousands of clergy and religious were exiled, went into hiding or were murdered.

Francis applied to go to China as a missionary several times, but was refused until 1791, at the age of 43, he replaced another priest who had to withdraw. The French Revolution was making life difficult for clergy and the Church, and many priests fled France. As a result there were a lot of priests free to go to China and other countries as missionaries.

The ban imposed on the Jesuits in 1773 allowed the second arrival of Vincentian missionaries to China in 1785. The Congregation of the Mission founded several diocesan seminaries and a novitiate for themselves, which came to have 20 priests and two brothers from amongst the Chinese.

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**BEATIFICATION**  
27 May 1900

**FEAST DAY**  
18 February

**CANONISATION**  
1 October 2000

### THE MISSIONER...

They have a global world view

*Mobility in spreading the good news*

Flexibility to live and work with people of differing theological perspectives

*Speak other languages*

Live and breath inculturation

*Listen to the call of God and those in need*

Inventive and creative in the service of others

*Experts in the social teaching of the Church*

Being a man/witness of God

### Francis Regis' words ...

“I want none of this world’s goods, apart from a decent watch...”

*“I could of course, be making a mistake (in going to China), but at least I’m in good faith.”*

“Since I haven’t got the spirit of prayer I don’t draw the blessings of heaven on my pastoral work.”

*“Be on your guard against indiscreet zeal, wanting to get everything done at once; this ruins a missionary’s health and forces him to take time off...”*

“I’ve a great dislike of being Superior, but they forced me to accept, in spite of my obvious unsuitability.”

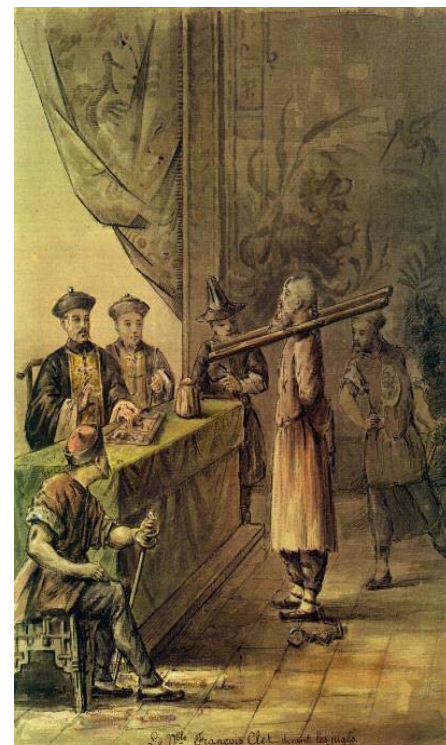
*“I can now die happy since I have a successor who can repair my stupid mistakes.”*

“My life is almost over; I’ve just been told I’ll be executed shortly, perhaps tomorrow. Make sure you don’t think of me as a martyr; my imprudence jeopardized both our house in Peking and some Christian communities who are now being persecuted...”

*“Rightly or wrongly I have done the job you gave me; all that’s now left is to prepare for dying which attracts me more than living on.”*

# SAINT FRANCIS REGIS CLET

## MISSIONARY AND MARTYR



Francis was forty-one and learning of the Chinese language was difficult. Yet he succeeded in picking up a working knowledge of the language with which he had to content himself with during his 28 years of ministry in China. Francis in his zeal was always on the move, often on foot and rarely on horse-back, which was indeed a trying ride due to the poor quality of the paths.

For several years, Francis endured abuse and attacks, which frequently forced him to find refuge in the mountains. In 1819, with a generous reward on their heads, Francis and a Chinese confrere became fugitives. He was finally betrayed by a Catholic schoolmaster. Francis was forced to suffer ignominy and forced marched in chains over hundreds of miles. On January 1, 1820, Francis was found guilty of deceiving the Chinese people by preaching Christianity and was sentenced to strangulation on a cross. The sentence was carried out on February 18, 1820, after receiving the Emperor's approval. Fifty years later his remains were brought to the Mother House of the Congregation of the Mission in Paris. The missionary spirit of Francis forms part of the rich missionary legacy left by St Vincent de Paul to the priests of the Congregation of the Mission. He proposed St Francis Xavier as a model for them. Their primary task was to set up a seminary to form the Chinese clergy.

**Something to think about ...** Reflect on the questions below ... share your thoughts with others ... or take some time to write down your thoughts and offer them to God.

What does living a holy life mean for me?

*Do I know what the social teachings are of the Church?*

Am I called to be a missionary in the sense of leaving all behind and going to another country?

*How can I be missionary in my neighbourhood/workplace?*

Would I be prepared to give up my life for Jesus' sake?

*What sort of community do I have or want?*

How does my lifestyle give witness to the simplicity that the gospels call me to?

*What are the challenges for me to live a simple life?*

How can I live in greater solidarity with the poor?

*How can I fulfill my mission as a follower of Jesus, today?*

### THE CHURCH IN CHINA...

The situation of the Church in China was totally altered with the establishment of the popular Republic. Foreign missionaries were accused of being enemies of the state and deported between 1949-1952.

More than 150 Vincentians clandestinely remained in China. Little is known about them, however, it is known that they have remained faithful to their vocation in the midst of all kinds of difficulties.



### Let us pray...

O God, we give you thanks for our brother and martyr, Francis Regis Clet.

May his missionary zeal and love for his people be our inspiration.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

### Bibliography

He Hears the Cry of the Poor: On the Spirituality of St Vincent de Paul, Robert P. Maloney CM, New City Press, New York, 1995



### Web Resources

[www.famvin.org](http://www.famvin.org) [www.vincenter.org](http://www.vincenter.org)  
[www.filles-de-la-charite.org](http://www.filles-de-la-charite.org)  
[www.secretariadojmv.org](http://www.secretariadojmv.org)



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