

“A Great Cloud of Witnesses”

A Historical Series of the Murals on the Walls of Holy Comforter-Saint Cyprian Church

Saint Francis Borgia

16th Century Portugal



St. Francis Borgia was born to a noble Spanish family in 1510. He received an excellent education, and at a young age was soon a fixture of the royal court and personal friend of Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor.

He was an expert administrator and was put in charge of large portions of Spain. As Duke, he reformed the judiciary, rebuilt defenses, rid the country of bandits, and founded monasteries. Yet when his wife died in 1546, he entered the Jesuits, and two years later made his religious vows.

This former powerful member of the nobility entered his new life with seriousness and zeal. He had to help the cook, carry wood for the fire and sweep the kitchen. When he served food to the priests and brothers, he had to kneel down in front of them all and beg them to forgive him for being so clumsy! Yet the humble St. Francis never complained.

He traveled to Rome and became a close friend of St. Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits. St. Francis was soon put in charge of the Jesuits in Spain and Portugal, and the story of his change of life captivated all who heard it. His home became a place of pilgrimage where many flocked to hear his powerful sermons. Portugal especially welcomed him as a messenger from God, and this country has preserved this veneration.

In 1565, he was named Superior General of the entire Jesuit Society, and he threw himself into this new role with typical skill, intelligence, and energy. Popes and rulers turned to him for advice and help, and he founded many Jesuit universities and provinces. He finalized and published the Rules of the Society that, with slight modifications, are still used today. Under his guidance, Jesuit missionaries were first sent all around the world. He was much saddened by the heresies then spreading due to the Protestant Reformation, and he did his utmost to prepare the Jesuits and the Church to combat them.

He died in 1572, humble to the end, but revered by all who knew him. He is the patron saint of Spain and Portugal. **His Feast day is October 10.**

Each month, this series will feature the murals painted on the walls of Holy Comforter-Saint Cyprian Church along with history and commentary. You can also find this series on our website at www.hcscchurch.org.
Historical commentary researched and prepared by Anthony Lickteig (Seminarian).