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The Society of Jesus counts 2006 as an important year! It marks the 450th anniversary of the death (1556) of its founder, St. Ignatius of Loyola and the 500th anniversary of the birth (1509) of two of his original companions, St. Francis Xavier and Blessed Peter Faber. A year to be celebrated — a year of Jubilee.

In the world of Jesuit education, the names Loyola and Xavier are well known; they change our landscape as well as heal it. More than on buildings, all three were deeply rooted in the culture of the Society of Jesus. We will get special attention at Jesuit schools in the year ahead.

Peter Faber was the first of the students at the University of Paris where the idea of the Society of Jesus germinated; all three were raised to the altar of the Church after their deaths. They will be recognized as the architects of the academic and religious life of the Jesuit Order.

In 1814, when another Pope allowed Jesuits to start up again, they began with twelve schools: five in Russia, four in Italy, two in France, and one — Georgetown College — in the United States. But the move to teach was still vigorous, and it would not be stopped by the many educational institutions operating under the Jesuit aegis and more than two million students.

Conversessional role in Jesuit higher education makes us proud to join in this Jubilee celebration. For exhaustive listings of all Jesuit educational institutions operating under the Jesuit aegis, see the 2006 edition of the Jesuit Yearbook. John J. O'Callaghan, SJ, is chairman of the National Conference on Jesuit Higher Education, and professor of New Testament at Loyola University Chicago.
Prayer for the Jubilee Year

Lord Jesus, we pray to you through the intercession of your Saints Ignatius of Loyola, Francis Xavier, and Blessed Peter Faber, whose anniversaries we celebrate this year.

You gifted Ignatius with the spiritual vision to build your kingdom here on earth for greater glory. You inspired Francis to bring his missionary zeal to distant lands so your name would be known throughout the world. You guided Peter in his sharing of the Spiritual Exercises so others could deepen their relationship with you.

In your loving care, inspire us today, as you did the early Jesuit companions, to a life of faithful discipleship so we may become men and women for others.

Help us be mindful of the ways in which your justice and mercy may be brought to this world, especially to those who are poor or sick, marginalized or displaced, or those who suffer from the effects of war and natural and human-made catastrophes.

Help us to seek you in all things and to discover your grace in the ordinariness of our lives.

Grant us the openness and generosity to strengthen your church on earth. May we be your faithful companions and rejoice in your presence among us in this Jubilee Year. May Ignatius’ vision, Francis’ mission, and Peter’s prayer renew our hearts and minds and the face of the earth.

We ask this in your name, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

The icon, “Three Companions of Jesus”, from the hand of Fr. George O’Driscoll, S.J., was commissioned by the Wisconsin Province in celebration of the Jubilee Year honoring St. Ignatius on the anniversary of his death (July 31, 1556), and the anniversaries of the births of St. Francis Xavier (April 7, 1506) and Blessed Peter Faber (April 13, 1506). These three college novices at the University of Paris co-founded the Society of Jesus with their early companions.