Converting “the Indies” of Naples in Luca Giordano’s *St. Francis Xavier Baptizing Indians* Altarpiece

Rachel Miller

Department of Art, California State University, Sacramento

Rachel.miller@csus.edu

Abstract

This article discusses an altarpiece by Luca Giordano painted for the church of San Francesco Saverio (now San Ferdinando) in Naples in 1685. Described in contemporary sources as “St. Francis Xavier baptizing the people of Japan,” the painting reveals little about Japan or Jesuit missionary efforts in Asia; instead, the painting discloses much about how Jesuits approached their mission in Naples. Here, Jesuit missionaries found a heterogeneous environment, filled with a variety of different types of potential converts, including unruly nobles, superstitious peasants, fallen women, and a large number of Muslim slaves. Giordano’s altarpiece uses the figures of St. Francis Xavier and St. Francisco de Borja to exemplify two models for the conversions that Neapolitan Jesuits hoped to bring about—the baptism of non-Christians and the religious reform of those who had been born Christian. This article will demonstrate that Giordano’s altarpiece thematized the transformation of heterodoxy into orthodoxy, while also contributing to a Jesuit discourse that characterized Naples as being another “Indies,” an environment mired in religious heterodoxy and thus attractive to ambitious Jesuits who longed for the mission fields of far off lands.

Keywords

Jesuits – Naples – Luca Giordano – St. Francis Xavier – early modern art – missiology – conversion

The 1623 canonization bull that confirmed Francis Xavier’s (1506–52) sanctity described one of his most famous prodigious gifts, the ability to miraculously

acquire languages like one of the apostles of the early church.¹ While in Asia, Xavier often had to speak to diverse crowds of people who all spoke in different tongues. Miraculously, each person in the crowd would be able to hear Xavier in their own language and thus receive the word of God.² At the moment of this miracle, the heterogeneous crowd, normally unable to communicate with one another, was united by a new understanding of the Gospel. Although Jesuit missionaries are justifiably famous for their acculturative methods, their fundamental objective was to reduce religious difference in the world, creating a state of Catholic orthodoxy and homogeneity. St. Francis Xavier's miracle of the languages serves as a parable for this goal, which Jesuits pursued both on the overseas mission fields and within Europe itself. The Kingdom of Naples was especially fertile for Jesuits. Not only was there a sizable presence of Muslim slaves, the kingdom was also filled with prostitutes, profligate nobles, badly behaved clerics, and superstitious peasants, a metaphoric "paradise inhabited by devils."³ Converting and reforming this heterogeneous cultural and religious environment was the main prerogative of the Jesuits who began arriving in the kingdom in the late 1540s.⁴

Like other Jesuits stationed in provinces throughout the world, Neapolitan missionaries adroitly used visual art as a tool of persuasion and conversion.⁵ This article will analyze one example—the altarpiece by Luca Giordano (1634–1705)

- 1 Pope Gregory xv (r.1621–23) canonized St. Francis Xavier on March 12, 1622; however, Gregory died before issuing the bull of canonization. It was promulgated by Gregory's successor, Pope Urban VIII (r.1623–44), in 1623.
- 2 The bull is transcribed in its original Latin in Mariano Lecina, ed., *Monumenta Xaveriana: Scripta varia de sancto Francisco Xaverio*, vol. 43, *Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu* (Madrid: Typis Augustini Avrial, 1912), 706–7. A Spanish translation can be found in Mathias de Peralta Calderón, *El apóstol de las Indias y nuevas gentes: San Francisco Javier de la Compañía de Jesús* (Pamplona: Gaspar Martínez, 1665), 10.
- 3 This phrase has been used to describe Naples since at least the 1300s, contrasting the beauty of the surrounding environs with the base behavior of the Neapolitan populace. For the most comprehensive study of the history of this term, see Jennifer D. Selwyn, *A Paradise Inhabited by Devils: The Jesuits' Civilizing Mission in Early Modern Naples* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2004).
- 4 For a history of Jesuits in Naples, see Francesco Schinosi and Saverio Santagata, *Istoria della Compagnia di Gesù appartenente al Regno di Napoli*, 4 vols. (Naples: Mutio and Mazzola, 1706–57).
- 5 For an example of the Jesuit use of art as a tool of conversion in other provinces, see Jeffrey Muller, "Jesuit Uses of Art in the Province of Flanders," in *The Jesuits II: Cultures, Sciences and the Arts, 1540–1773*, ed. John W. O'Malley and Gauvin Alexander Bailey (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 113–56.

that decorated the high altar of the church of San Francesco Saverio from 1685 to 1767.⁶

This large canvas, which has often been referred to as *St. Francis Xavier Baptizing Indians* (Figure 4.1), depicts St. Francis Xavier baptizing a large crowd, filled with aristocratic figures wearing a variety of generically exotic clothing, with St. Francisco de Borja (1510–72) below. This painting sheds light on the importance Jesuits placed on their cultural and religious mission within Europe, demonstrating that their activities in places like Naples were a vital part of their larger mission to unite the world under Catholic orthodoxy. For both Jesuits and the Spanish monarchy that supported them in the Mezzogiorno, the successful reform and conversion of the Neapolitan population was proof of the idea of universal salvation and represented progress in a millenarian project to create a state of worldwide religious homogeneity that would prefigure the second coming of Christ.⁷ Giordano's painting also helped to generate and support a Jesuit discourse that characterized "the Indies" as being neither East nor West, but wherever people were in need of religious and cultural reform, including places like Naples. This allowed Jesuits who were denied the opportunity to go to Asia or Latin America to view the kingdom as a mission that was vital to accomplishing the Society's goal of eradicating religious difference on a global scale.

As the Jesuits embarked on their mission of religious and cultural reform in Naples, they encouraged devotions that were promoted by the Counter-Reformation church. David Gentilcore has described how Jesuits particularly encouraged devotion to the rosary, as well as other cults that gained prominence after the Council of Trent, like that of guardian angels and new Jesuit saints such as St. Francis Xavier.⁸ From texts like Schinosi and Santagata's *Istoria della*

6 The church is now known as San Ferdinando. Giordano's painting remained on the high altar until the 1767 expulsion of Jesuits from Naples, at which time the church was given to the Sacred Military Constantinian Order of Saint George and rededicated to St. Ferdinand of Castile. The Giordano altarpiece was moved to the Museo Borbonico in 1785 and is now in the Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte in Naples. Carlo Celano and Giovanni Battista Chiarini, *Notizie del bello, dell'antico e del curioso della città di Napoli* (Naples: L. Chiurazzi, 1870), 490.

7 Adriano Prosperi, "Otras Indias: Missionari della Controriforma tra contadini e selvaggi," in *Scienze, credenze occulte, livelli di cultura: Convegno internazionale di studi* (Firenze, 26–30 giugno 1980) (Florence: L. S. Olschki, 1982), 205–34, here 212. Peter A. Mazur, "Combating 'Muslim Indecency': The Baptism of Muslim Slaves in Spanish Naples, 1563–1667," *Journal of Early Modern History* 13, no. 1 (2009): 24–48, here 28.

8 David Gentilcore, "Adapt Yourself to the People's Capabilities: Missionary Strategies, Methods and Impact in the Kingdom of Naples, 1600–1800," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 45, no. 2 (1994): 269–96, here 277.

FIGURE 4.1 Luca Giordano, *St. Francis Xavier Preaching to Indians*, 1685, 421 x 315 cm, Museo di Capodimonte, Naples
PHOTO BY THE AUTHOR

Compagnia di Gesù (1706–57), it is apparent that devotion to St. Francis Xavier began in the Kingdom of Naples at least twenty years before the saint's canonization when the duke of Mattaloni asked permission from the archbishop to display paintings of Ignatius of Loyola and Francis Xavier, even though they were not yet beatified.⁹ Once Xavier was declared a *beatus* (blessed) in 1619, the official public celebration of his cult was able to begin, and his 1622

9 Schinosi and Santagata, *Istoria*, 3:231–32.

canonization saw grand celebrations in the city of Naples and other parts of the kingdom.¹⁰ For eight days, Jesuits organized elaborate spectacles and processions of statues of both Xavier and Loyola through the principal streets of the city, complete with triumphal carts, music, bonfires, and other ephemeral decorations, while various renowned prelates delivered panegyrics in honor of the new saints.¹¹

Around the time of the canonization, Jesuits began an effort to found a college and church in Xavier's name. This would be their second college in Naples, following the enormously successful Collegio Massimo, dedicated to educating the sons of the Neapolitan elite.¹² The Collegio di San Francesco Saverio and its attached church were founded for the benefit of members of the *Congregazione degli Spagnoli*, a confraternity that the Jesuits had created for the Spanish of Naples, with strong ties to the viceroy.¹³ The *Congregazione* had acquired a house close to the viceroy's palace, which they gave to the Jesuits for the college, and in November 1622, members of the order moved in.¹⁴ A source dated as early as 1624 already describes the chapel attached to the house as being dedicated to the newly canonized St. Francis Xavier.¹⁵ The first rector of the college, Girolamo di Alessandro, ardently hoped to enlarge it and build an accompanying church; however, due to a severe lack of funds, there was little hope that these ambitions would come to fruition.¹⁶ However, later that year,

10 Schinosi and Santagata, *Istoria*, 4:157–58.

11 Schinosi and Santagata, *Istoria*, 4:234.

12 Vincenzo Regina, *Le chiese di Napoli: Viaggio indimenticabile attraverso la storia artistica, architettonica, letteraria, civile, e spirituale della Napoli sacra* (Rome: Newton Compton editori, 1995), 166. Maria Ann Conelli, "The Gesù Nuovo in Naples: Politics, Property, and Religion" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1992). Maria Ann Conelli, "A Typical Patron of Extraordinary Means: Isabella Feltria della Rovere and the Society of Jesus," *Renaissance Studies* 18, no. 3 (2004): 412–36. Michele Errichetti, "L'architetto Giuseppe Valeriano (1542–96): Progettista del Collegio Napoletano del Gesù Vecchio," *Archivio storico per le province napoletane* 78 (1959): 325–52. Michele Errichetti, "La chiesa del Gesù Nuovo in Napoli: Note storiche," *Compagnia sacra* 5 (1974): 34–75. Michele Errichetti, "L'antico Collegio Massimo dei gesuiti," *Compagnia sacra* 7 (1976): 170–264.

13 Schinosi and Santagata, *Istoria*, 4:310.

14 Schinosi and Santagata, *Istoria*, 4:309.

15 Cesare D'Engenio Caracciolo, *Napoli sacra di D. Cesare d'Engenio Caracciolo, gentiluomo napoletano* (Naples: Ottavio Beltrano, 1624), 544.

16 Schinosi and Santagata, *Istoria*, 4:313. The Jesuits stationed at this new college had no revenue of their own and were reliant on the charity of other Jesuit institutions in Naples, as well as donations from prominent Spaniards. Pompeo Sarnelli, *Guida de' forestieri: Curiosità di vedere, e d'intendere le cose più notabili della regal città di Napoli, e del suo amenissimo distretto* (Naples: G. Roselli, 1697), 301. Carlo de Lellis, *Parte seconda ovvero supplimento a Napoli sacra di Cesare d'Eugenio Caracciolo* (Naples: Roberto Mollo 1654), 231.

they acquired a wealthy benefactress, a former vice-queen of Naples, Doña Catalina Zunica de la Cerda y Sandoval (d.1648).¹⁷ In 1622, after the death of her husband, former viceroy Pedro Fernández de Castro y Andrade (in office 1610–16), Doña Catalina joined a convent of Poor Clares in Madrid and being childless, began to give away her worldly possessions as pious acts of charity. In particular, she had thirty thousand *scudi* that had been given to her by the barons of Naples while she was vice-queen for her “slippers and lace trim” that she desired to return to the city of Naples.¹⁸ Carlo de Lellis and Pompeo Sarnelli, writing in 1654 and 1697 respectively, both commented that it was extremely appropriate for the ex-vice-queen to donate her so-called “slipper money” to build the first church in the world dedicated to St. Francis Xavier, since he was famous for having requested the same type of funds from the queen of Portugal, Catherine of Austria (r.1525–57) to start seminaries for the converted Christian Paravars of the Pearl Fishery Coast of India.¹⁹ Doña Catalina’s gift to the Jesuits of Naples came with various stipulations, including the college’s dual dedication to Francis Xavier and Francisco de Borja, the vice-queen’s great-grandfather, who had been beatified the same year as her donation.²⁰ With funds secured, the building of the college and adjacent church began in 1628.

At some point, work on the interior decorations began with particular attention paid to the painting for the high altar, which went through several iterations by various artists. Unfortunately, reconstructing the circumstances around this commission involves relying on sources that are notoriously inaccurate, such as Bernardo De Dominici’s *Vite de’ pittori, scultori, ed architetti napoletani*, published in the 1740s.²¹ However, more recently, scholars have noted that art historically, these biographies are useful because they reveal early modern Neapolitan attitudes about aesthetics and the art making process that

17 Schinosi and Santagata, *Istoria*, 4:314–16.

18 It is likely that this money was not just for slippers and lace trim, but more generally, for the maintenance of the vice-queen and her court. Lellis, *Parte seconda*, 231–32. Sarnelli, *Guida de’ forestieri*, 302.

19 Lellis, *Parte seconda*, 232. Sarnelli, *Guida de’ forestieri*, 302. For Francis Xavier’s request, see Manuel Teixeira’s 1579 manuscript biography of Francis Xavier, published in Lecina, *Monumenta Xaveriana: Scripta varia*, 852–53. Georg Schurhammer, *Francis Xavier: His Life, His Times* (Rome: Jesuit Historical Institute, 1973–82), 2:406.

20 Domenico Antonio Parrino, *Teatro eroico, e politico de’ governi de’ vicerè del regno di Napoli* (Naples: [n.p.], 1692), 78–79.

21 Art historians of the nineteenth and early twentieth century criticized De Dominici for a lack of accuracy with Benedetto Croce famously nicknaming him “Il Falsario” for this reason. Benedetto Croce, “Sommario critico della storia dell’arte nel Napoletano, 1: Il Falsario,” *Napoli nobilissima* 1 (1892): 122–26 and 140–44.

surpass De Dominici's biographical "facts" in importance.²² His account of the altarpiece on the high altar of San Francesco Saverio in Naples does allow the critical reader to discover broader issues, such the strong guiding role played by the viceroy in Jesuit commissions and the public's extreme interest in high-profile artistic productions.

De Dominici and other sources also reveal that early modern viewers of the various altarpieces displayed in San Francesco Saverio were unclear on the precise geographic location of Xavier's missionary activities depicted in the paintings. All of these sources use extremely vague language in this regard, demonstrating a lack of precision in describing the origin of the people depicted in the altarpiece. While one might conclude that this vagueness is a result of Europeans' lack of knowledge about the wider world in the early modern period, this article will argue that instead, a lack of geographic specificity was useful for the creators, patrons, and audience of this altarpiece. In fact, being very precise about the geographical setting of St. Francis Xavier's mission would have undercut the actual message of the decorative program at San Francesco Saverio in Naples, which was to portray Francis Xavier as an effective eradicator of religious heterodoxy globally.²³

According to De Dominici and other sources such as Carlo Celano's *Delle notitie del bello, dell'antico, e del curioso della città di Napoli* (1692), the altarpiece on the high altar was changed a surprising number of times during the history of the church. Salvator Rosa (1615–73) completed the first painting placed on the high altar. According to Celano, this painting depicted "St. Francis Xavier in the air with many Indians below in the act of humble supplications," using the phrase "molti Indiani" to describe the object of Xavier's mission.²⁴ De Dominici, however, writes that the altarpiece represented the peoples of Japan listening to the preaching of St. Francis Xavier ("i Popoli del Giappone").²⁵ To the twenty-first century reader, this seems like a contradiction, since we view India and Japan as being distinctly different sovereign nations. However, for

22 J. Nicholas Napoli, "The Visual Arts," in *A Companion to Early Modern Naples*, ed. Tommaso Astarita (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 317–22.

23 See Rachel Miller, "Patron Saint of a World in Crisis: Early Modern Representations of St. Francis Xavier in Europe and Asia" (Phd diss., University of Pittsburgh, 2016).

24 "S. Francesco in aria con molti Indiani di sotto in atto d'humiliati supplicanti." Carlo Celano, *Delle notitie del bello, dell'antico, e del curioso della città di Napoli*, 10 vols. (Naples: Giacomo Raillard, 1692), 5:150.

25 "rappresentando in esso i Popoli del Giappone, che ascoltano la predica del Santo." Bernardo De Dominici, *Vite de' pittori, scultori, ed architetti napoletani* (Naples: [n.p.], 1743), 3:224.

the early modern European, these terms were not mutually exclusive. “Indian” was generally synonymous with “non-European,” functioning to generically mark people, places, and things as being different or Other.²⁶

Rosa’s painting did not stay on the high altar for long; Celano writes that it was not satisfactory and that after the artist returned to Rome, it was replaced by another version by Cesare Fracanzano (c.1605–51) depicting St. Francis Xavier in the act of baptizing many Indians (“molti Indiani”).²⁷ It is unclear why Rosa’s painting was taken down, but De Dominici explains that Fracanzano, who was Rosa’s brother-in-law, disparaged the painting to the Jesuits.²⁸ Both authors describe how Rosa heard about this betrayal and went to see a Neapolitan Jesuit priest named Salviati, who was in Rome to preach during Lent. When Salviati returned to Naples, he had Fracanzano’s painting taken down and Rosa’s restored to the high altar.²⁹ Years later, in 1685, the Jesuits decided to enlarge the tribune of the church and thus had to replace the painting by Rosa, as it was not large enough for new high altar.³⁰ The Jesuits then selected Luca Giordano (1634–1705) to paint the new altarpiece for the church because he had been recommended by Gaspar Méndez de Haro, the seventh marquis of Carpio and viceroy of Naples from 1683 to 1687.³¹ De Dominici describes the subject of the new painting as St. Francis Xavier baptizing the people of Japan (“S. Francesco Saverio che battezza i popoli del Giappone”), but as we will see, the figures depicted by Giordano do not have any specifically Japanese details of dress or appearance.

Giordano promised to finish by December 3, 1685, in time for the feast day of St. Francis Xavier. However, Giordano was busy at the moment with commissions for foreigners and kept delaying the Xavier altarpiece.³² The day before

26 Jessica Keating and Lia Markey, “‘Indian’ Objects in Medici and Austrian-Habsburg Inventories: A Case-Study of the Sixteenth-Century Term,” *Journal of the History of Collections* 23, no. 2 (2011): 282–300, here 287.

27 “ma non essendo riuscito à sodisfatione ne fecero fare un altro da Cesare Fracanzano, nel quale vedevasi S. Francesco in atto di battezzare molti Indiani, e lo collocarono nel luogo del primo.” Celano, *Delle notitie*, 5:150.

28 De Dominici, *Vite de’ pittori*, 3:224.

29 Celano, *Delle notitie*, 5:150–51. De Dominici, *Vite de’ pittori*, 3:224.

30 It was moved to the corridor above the stairs and, according to De Dominici, was later sold to an unknown foreigner who took it to England. De Dominici, *Vite de’ pittori*, 3:224. The whereabouts of Rosa’s painting, as well as Fracanzano’s, are currently unknown.

31 This story is related in Bernardo De Dominici, *Vita del Cavaliere D. Luca Giordano, pittore napoletano* (Naples: Francesco Ricciardi, 1729), 48–49.

32 Eduardo Nappi has found documentation that Luca Giordano received fifty ducats in payment for the altarpiece on November 15, 1680 in the Archivio Storico del Banco di Na-

the altarpiece was due, the Jesuits informed the viceroy that they were having problems getting the painting from Giordano, and the viceroy went to the artist's house personally to inquire about its status. Giordano hid in fear from the viceroy, who threatened to have the painter arrested if he did not finish the painting by the appointed day. Giordano, finally provided with sufficient motivation, began work immediately. He labored all day and through the night, not even stopping to eat, except for a bit of chocolate to keep his stomach calm. Giordano continued to work during the next morning and after having finished the painting in only forty hours, delivered it to the church. The news flew through Naples and the church of San Francesco Saverio filled with people eager to see an altarpiece that was finished so quickly. The viceroy also came because he could not believe that Giordano had accomplished such a feat. De Dominici states that when the viceroy saw the painting, he exclaimed in Spanish, "He who has made this painting is either an angel or a demon."³³ Giordano's relationship with the viceroy was thus repaired and his reputation as "Luca Fa Presto" spread throughout Naples.³⁴ De Dominici's main prerogative here is to spin a fascinating yarn about Giordano's legendary speed; however, it is apparent from this account that the Spanish viceroy took a keen interest in the project, acting as if he were the patron, instead of the Jesuits.

The composition of Luca Giordano's altarpiece, *St. Francis Xavier Baptizing the Indians*, is a complicated arrangement of more than twenty figures on two levels. The upper level, standing above a stair, is Francis Xavier himself, wearing

poli. Eduardo Nappi, "Momenti della vita di Luca Giordano nei documenti dell'Archivio Storico del Banco di Napoli," in *Ricerche sul '600 napoletano: Saggi e documenti per la storia dell'arte dedicato a Luca Giordano* (Milan: L&T, 1991), 157–182, here 175. Nappi, "Le chiese dei Gesuiti a Napoli," in *Seicento napoletano: Arte, costume, e ambiente*, ed. Roberto Pane (Milan: Edizioni di comunità, 1984), 318–37, here 337. See also Oreste Ferrari and Giuseppe Scavizzi, *Luca Giordano: Nuove ricerche e inediti* (Naples: Electa, 2003), 123.

33 "Vel que ha eche este quadros es un Angelo, o un Demonio." De Dominici, *Vita del Cavaliere D. Luca Giordano*, 49. Benedetto Minichini provides a modern Spanish transliteration: "El que ha hecho este cuadro es un ángel o un demonio." Benedetto Minichini, *La reale chiesa di S. Ferdinando di Napoli: Monumento nobile della via Toledo* (Naples: Tip. dell'Accademia reale delle scienze, 1887), 16.

34 While De Dominici's life of Luca Giordano is embellished with a rich number of details that may or may not be strictly true, the speed with which Giordano completed the altarpiece is confirmed by other sources. Celano, *Delle notitie*, 5:151. Onofrio Giannone, writing in the 1770s, also states that the painting was done in one day ("in un giorno") and that much of it was actually completed with Giordano's finger ("molti dei tratti fatti con ditto." Onofrio Giannone, *Giunte sulle vite de' pittori napoletani* (Naples: R. Deputazione di storia patria, 1941), 165. Oreste Ferrari and Giuseppe Scavizzi, *Luca Giordano* (Naples: Edizioni scientifiche italiane, 1966), 1:117. Celano and Chiarini, *Notizie del bello dell'antico*, 490.

a stole and surplice over his black cassock and in the act of baptizing. In his right hand, he holds a shell from which baptismal water pours onto the figures kneeling before him. The painter has captured Xavier in the midst of one of his famously large mass baptisms,³⁵ filling the composition with a crowd that surges forward dynamically along a diagonal that goes from lower left to upper right. The multitude is surprisingly diverse; there are several figures with African features, alongside sumptuously dressed Turks in turbans. The figure closest to Xavier has a shaved head, most likely representing a Japanese convert with his son behind him, while the man with his back to the viewer in the center of the painting wears the feathered skirt stereotypically associated with Amerindians. Women with European features in both the bottom left and the upper right bring their infants to be baptized, while a scene in the upper left depicts a group of men with hammers about to destroy a pagan idol.

In the lower right corner, there is an empty space upon which the crowd has not encroached. Few people in the multitude notice a second saint, Francisco de Borja, dressed in the simple black cassock worn by Jesuits with a long cape.³⁶ He kneels and looks to heaven with his arms spread wide. At his feet are strewn the symbols of Borja's renunciation of worldly and ecclesiastical privilege. A sword and pieces of armor, including a breastplate decorated with the red cross of the Order of Santiago, symbolize the abdication of all his titles and knighthood before becoming a Jesuit, while a *galero*, the broad-brimmed tasseled red hat worn by cardinals, and a miter represent Borja's reluctance to take on any high ecclesiastical offices once he became a priest, including a cardinalate that Pope Julius III (r.1550–55) attempted to thrust upon him in the years after Borja entered the priesthood.

35 Francis Xavier himself wrote about his success baptizing astonishingly large numbers of people while in Asia. For example, he wrote from Travancore on January 27, 1545, "I have news to tell you about these regions of India, how in a kingdom where I now am God our Lord has moved so many people to become Christians that within a single month I baptized more than ten thousand persons." Saint Francis Xavier, *The Letters and Instructions of Francis Xavier*, trans. M. Joseph Costelloe (St. Louis, MO: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1992), 117.

36 In nineteenth- and early twentieth-century sources, St. Francisco de Borja was often mistaken for St. Ignatius of Loyola in this altarpiece, the dual dedication of the college and church having been forgotten. Much of the confusion may have resulted from Ignazio Anders's inventory of the paintings in the Museo di Capodimonte, created in 1800. He described Giordano's altarpiece as representing the "Battesimo di S. Francesco Saverio agl'indiani, S. Ignazio inginocchioni [*sic*] con gloria d'Angeli." Quoted in Chiara Ruggiero, "San Francesco Saverio battezza gli indiani," in *Luca Giordano, 1634–1705* (Naples: Electa Napoli, 2001), 218.

Several art historians have compared Giordano's composition to Peter Paul Rubens's (1577–1640) *The Miracles of St. Francis Xavier*, painted for the Jesuit church in Antwerp in 1617 or 1618 (Figure 4.2).³⁷ One major difference, however, is that Giordano did not depict specific miracles pulled from Xaverian hagiography, like Rubens did.³⁸ Instead, Giordano evoked generic categories or types of miracles from the life of Francis Xavier. The women holding babies are obvious examples; these figures would remind the knowledgeable viewer of the saint's resurrection of a boy who had drowned in a well during his ministry somewhere in the vicinity of Cape Comorin (Kanyakumari), one of the earliest reported and most widely disseminated of Francis Xavier's miracles.³⁹ Other figures in Giordano's composition purposefully recall the various kings and queens that Xavier was thought to have converted throughout his Asian ministry; most conspicuous is the figure closest to the missionary with a shaved head, a feature often used by European artists in Xaverian images to connote that the figure is Japanese. This figure brings to mind the daimyō of Bungo, Ōtomo Yoshishige (1530–87), a prominent Japanese lord who became close friends with Francis Xavier during his Japanese ministry and later wrote letters to support the canonization effort. Though a scene of baptism, the varied nature of the crowd also suggests the so-called "miracle of the languages," described above. This miraculous acquisition of foreign languages clearly casts the Jesuit missionary saint as a new Apostle, filled with Pentecostal zeal to spread the word of God and granted the power to transcend language barriers and speak to all people of the world.

37 Ferrari and Scavizzi, *Luca Giordano: Nuove ricerche*, 20. Giuseppe Scavizzi, "La actividad de Giordano desde 1682 hasta su muerte," in *Luca Giordano y España* (Madrid: Patrimonio Nacional, 2002), 43–55, here 45.

38 Rubens's specificity demonstrates that the painter was well informed of Xavier's then in-progress canonization process in general and the biography of Xavier written by Orazio Torsellino in particular. Graham Smith, "Rubens' Altargemälde des hl. Ignatius von Loyola und des hl. Franz Xaver für die Jesuitenkircher in Antwerpen," *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen in Wien* 29 (1969): 39–60. Christine M. Boeckl, "Plague Imagery as Metaphor for Heresy in Rubens' *The Miracles of Saint Francis Xavier*," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 27, no. 4 (1996): 979–95. Ferrari and Scavizzi, *Luca Giordano: Nuove ricerche*, 20.

39 The exact location of this miracle is disputed, but it most likely took place in either Kombuture or Punicale (Punnaikayal). It was widely described in witness testimony taken during the canonization investigations that took place in 1556 in Goa and in 1557 and 1616 in Cochín. Schurhammer, *Francis Xavier*, 2:344–46. Because the miracle was attested to by so many witnesses, it was included in the canonization bull. The bull is reproduced in its original Latin in Lecina, *Monumenta Xaveriana: Scripta varia*, 711. Torsellino includes this story as well. Orazio Torsellino, *De vita Francisci Xaverii: Qui primus è Societate Iesu in Indiam & Iaponiam Evangelium invexit* (Rome: Luigi Zannetti, 1596), 73.

One aspect of this altarpiece that has not been remarked upon is that Giordano utilized the two-tiered composition to present two different types of conversion: a baptism of non-Christians and a Catholic's mid-life turn towards a more religious life. Massimo Leone refers to the latter as a "second conversion" and proposes that during the Counter-Reformation, Ignatius of Loyola was widely promoted by the church and by Jesuits as an ideal model for such conversion.⁴⁰ Francisco de Borja also had experienced such a conversion, marked by an extraordinary "redefinition of [his] social condition," having renounced his noble titles and wealth in favor of leading a religious life.⁴¹

Unlike Ignatius of Loyola and Francis Xavier, the precise moment of Borja's conversion is difficult to determine. Hagiographers often focus on an event that took place in 1539, when Borja was twenty-nine years old.⁴² The wife of Emperor Charles V (r.1519–56), Isabella of Portugal (r.1526–39), died in childbirth in Toledo. Her body was transported to Granada to be buried in the royal chapel where Ferdinand of Aragon (r.1475–1516) and Isabella of Castile (r.1474–1504) had been laid to rest. The day after the cortege arrived in Granada, the identity of the empress's corpse had to be verified. This proved to be a difficult task as she had requested not to be embalmed and the journey to Granada had taken sixteen days. Borja was present when her decomposing body was displayed and he was rendered distraught by the sight of her face, its beauty and youthfulness ravaged by the power of death. According to his later biographers, Borja famously vowed that, "Never again, never again will I serve a master who can die."⁴³

While this episode is often considered to be the moment when Borja decided to abandon the vanities of the world, it can really be viewed as an interior

40 Massimo Leone, *Saints and Signs: A Semiotic Reading of Conversion in Early Modern Catholicism* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 60. Many Counter-Reformation saints, particularly Jesuits, had similar second conversions. Francis Xavier's took place when he encountered Ignatius of Loyola as a student at the University of Paris.

41 Leone, *Saints and Signs*, 56.

42 See Chapter 7 of Pedro de Ribadeneyra, *Vida del P. Francisco de Borja, que fue Duque de Gandia, y despues Religioso y III. general de la Compañia de Jesús* (Madrid: P. Madrigal, 1592). Juan Eusebio Nieremberg, *Vida del santo Padre, y gran siervo de Dios el B. Francisco de Borja, tercero general de la Compañia de Iesvs, y antes duque quarto de Gandia* (Madrid: por Maria de Quiñones, 1644), 26. Juan Eusebio Nieremberg, *De la diferencia entre lo temporal y eterno: Crisol de desengaños con la memoria de la eternidad* (Barcelona: Sebastián de Cormellas Mercader, 1643), 90. D. Scott Hendrickson, *Jesuit Polymath of Madrid: The Literary Enterprise of Juan Eusebio Nieremberg* (Leiden: Brill, 2015).

43 "Nunca mas, nunca mas servir à señor, que se me pueda morir." Ribadeneyra, *Vida del P. Francisco de Borja*, 17^v.

conversion only. Borja continued to live his life as a Spanish grandee, taking on the position of viceroy to Catalonia later the same year. It was not until the death of his wife, Leonor de Castro (1512–46), seven years later, that he began to take steps towards a religious life.⁴⁴ Borja and his wife had been living in a celibate marriage, remaining partners in "spiritual love and fraternal companionship" when God sent Leonor an illness that would "cleanse and perfect" her more.⁴⁵ As she lay dying, Borja prayed that God would allow his wife to recover. In the midst of his prayers, he saw a light and heard a voice saying, "If you wish me to give the Duchess more time in this life, I leave it in your hands; however, I warn you that it will do you no good."⁴⁶ Borja then accepted that it was God's will for his wife to die and began to think about which order he would join. Following his decision to join the Jesuits, Borja had another vision, after which he resolved to renounce any ecclesiastical honor that may be bestowed upon him.⁴⁷ While praying, he saw a vision of a bishop's miter floating over his head and the sight filled him with great fear. The miter remained hovering above him for seven days, until Borja cried out, saying that if the vision did not stop, he would refuse to take the habit.⁴⁸ The miter then disappeared.

Borja's conversion, therefore, was represented by his biographers not as a sudden event, but as a long process that occupied much of his life, beginning with his experience of the power of death during Empress Isabella's funeral, accelerating after the loss of his own wife and the abdication of his titles, and confirmed during the years of his priesthood as he continued to refuse ecclesiastical honor. Luca Giordano's altarpiece operates in this hagiographic tradition, but telescopes Borja's renunciation of his noble titles with his refusal to accept a high ecclesiastical rank. The painter combines a suit of armor with the cross of the Order of Santiago with the bishop's miter below Borja's feet into one assemblage. These objects refer to two distinct moments in the saint's lifelong conversion in order to demonstrate that this was not a sudden event.

44 See Chapter 12 of Ribadeneyra, *Vida del P. Francisco de Borja*.

45 "Biviendo pues en esta sancta conformidad, y aviendo convertido ya algunos años antes la licencia del matrimonio en spiritual amor, y hermanable cõpañia, dio el Señor ala Duquessa una larga, y trabajosa enfermedad, para purgarla, y perfeccionarla mas." Ribadeneyra, *Vida del P. Francisco de Borja*, 31^v.

46 "Si tu quieres que te dexe la Duquessa mas tiẽmpo en esta vida, yo lo dexo en tus manos, pero avisote que à ti no te conviene." Ribadeneyra, *Vida del P. Francisco de Borja*, 32.

47 Ribadeneyra, *Vida del P. Francisco de Borja*, 38^v–39^v.

48 "Perdonadme Señor mio, que no lo puedo mas sufrir. Yo os prometo que si esto no cessa, y si no me assegurays la pobreza, y el estado perpetuo en la religion, que no tomare jamas habito, ni estado ecclesiastico. porque mayor peligro temo de lo que aquí se me representa, que no de lo que aora quiero dexar." Ribadeneyra, *Vida del P. Francisco de Borja*, 39.

This depiction also serves to emphasize that Borja chose the religious path, on not just one, but on multiple occasions. We can contrast the representation of Borja's conversion with that of the non-Christians above. Giordano gives no indication of the prolonged work that Francis Xavier would have undertaken to convert just one of these figures. There are no scenes of persuasion, preaching, or teaching the catechism, just a horde of new converts miraculously and instantaneously brought to the faith through Xavier's holy presence and Catholic truth, represented by the host of angels carrying a monstrance, emitting rays of light in the direction of the baptizing saint.

The two different types of conversion that are shown in the Giordano altarpiece can be seen as a visual demonstration of Jesuit views on the theology of grace and justification. Throughout the sixteenth century, debates raged in the church on whether salvation was reached through divine predetermination or the free will of each individual.⁴⁹ The Council of Trent took up this issue in June 1546, resulting in a conception of grace and justification that was heavily influenced by Jesuit theologians and differed drastically from the Calvinist concept of predestination. The decree issued by the council in January 1547 proclaimed that salvation was "a product of both free human initiatives and divine grace." Despite the fact that Jesuits had long acknowledged that divine grace played an important role in salvation,⁵⁰ Dominicans regularly accused them of overemphasizing free will. Giordano's altarpiece is a visual reminder of the balance that Jesuits sought on this issue, demonstrating that salvation is possible through both divine determination, in the case of the non-Christian converts, and free will, in the case of Borja. The altarpiece also demonstrates the types of people that Jesuits in Naples planned to help achieve salvation. The missionaries of the Society were present in the kingdom to bring about first conversions among non-Christians, specifically Muslim slaves, but they also focused their efforts on second conversions for the Catholic denizens of Naples, attempting to persuade decadent nobles and superstitious peasants alike to live lives that were more in keeping with the teachings and doctrines of the post-Tridentine church.

The crowd in Giordano's *St. Francis Xavier Baptizing Indians* is not just a demonstration of a Jesuit saint's miraculous ability to bring about mass

49 Leone, *Saints and Signs*, 119–25.

50 Leone cites Ignatius of Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises* on this matter: "As a rule, we must not talk too much about predestination. If sometimes we somehow talk about it, we must talk in a way that the common people are not misled, as they sometimes say: whether I have to be saved or condemned has already been determined, and I cannot change it by doing good or bad. Hence they become lazy and neglect the works that lead one toward salvation and the spiritual profit of the soul." Leone, *Saints and Signs*, 119.

conversions; this heterogeneous group also helps sustain a Jesuit discourse that characterized Naples as "the Indies down here."⁵¹ Beginning in the first decades of Jesuit missionary activity, it is possible to find Jesuits working in remote parts of Europe filling their letters and reports with comparisons between the Europeans to whom they were ministering and extra-Europeans who were being evangelized by Jesuits like Francis Xavier.⁵² This was particularly common in the Mezzogiorno, with Jesuit missionaries referring to places like Sicily as a "true India" and Abruzzo as the "Italian India."⁵³ As was common in early modern Europe, the Jesuit use of the words "the Indies" or "India" lack geographical specificity. Adriano Prosperi notes that Jesuits did not have a specific geographic reality in mind when invoking the idea of "the Indies."⁵⁴ The image of the Indies to which they were referring was related neither to the East nor the West, but was the wider world where Jesuit missionaries could direct their energies towards propagating the Gospel. In general, it seems as if Jesuits viewed "the Indies" as any place where the people were ignorant in Christian matters, prone to unorthodox religious practices, and lacking in civility. Whether these places existed within or outside of Europe seems to have made no difference.⁵⁵ The idea of ignorance is particularly common in many of these accounts. For example, a Jesuit active in Messina in 1568 wrote, "This kingdom was like a true India, in regards to the great ignorance and need of evangelical light, as well as in the disposition and attitude of the people."⁵⁶ Miguel Navarro, active in Calabria and in Sicily, also used ignorance as the metric by which he judged the people of southern Italy to be similar to those of the Indies: "Many souls[...] were lost due to the appalling ignorance that reigns in these mountains[...]. And while some of us [Jesuits] go to the Indies, but here, without traveling many dangerous leagues by sea and without having to learn the language, they could use their talents."⁵⁷

51 Prosperi, "Otras Indias."

52 Luke Clossey has found examples of Jesuits referring to areas in Europe as the "Indies" in places as diverse as the Mezzogiorno, Galicia, Lithuania, and Brittany. Luke Clossey, *Salvation and Globalization in the Early Jesuit Missions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 232–33.

53 Prosperi, "Otras Indias," 207. The first reference comes from a report written by a Jesuit in Messina in January 1568 and the second can be found in a letter written by Pietro Blanca, the rector of the college in Teramo, sent to Jerónimo Nadal (1507–80) in 1578.

54 Prosperi, "Otras Indias," 208.

55 Prosperi, "Otras Indias," 216.

56 "essere in questo regno come la vera India, sì nella grande ignorantia et bisogno della luce evangelica, come nella dispositione et attitudine della gente." Prosperi, "Otras Indias," 216.

57 "Tante anime [...] vanno perdute a cagione della spaventosa ignoranza che regna in queste montagne... E come alcuni de' nostri vanno all'Indie [...], qui, senza percorrere

In all of this discourse surrounding the idea of Southern Italy as “the Indies down here,” the city of Naples plays an interesting role. When reading non-Jesuit guides to the city from the early modern era, one is struck by the positive nature of the descriptions. Enrico Bacco’s *Nuova descrittione* of 1629 is an excellent example in which the author praises everything from the “civil people who live like nobles” to the “beautiful and straight streets” to the “lovely gardens” and “beautiful buildings.”⁵⁸ Jesuits, however, still styled Naples as an “ungovernable, backward urban jungle, peopled by a bloodthirsty, incorrigible, and superstitious population,” a “paradise inhabited by devils.”⁵⁹ Additionally, Naples had special connections to the Jesuit overseas missions, serving as both a training ground for missionaries destined to go to Asia, Africa, or the Americas and also as consolation for Jesuits deemed unsuitable for such a task by their superiors. Jennifer Selwyn and Adriano Prosperi have both noted that Jesuit leaders consciously utilized letters sent back to Europe from overseas missions as a recruitment tool for the Society, inspiring in young men a desire for travel, spreading the Gospel to the four corners of the world, and even martyrdom.⁶⁰ Francesco Schinosi, writing in Naples in 1711, notes the effect that these accounts had on young Jesuit novices, citing an example where a reading of the letters of Pietro Paolo Navarra, a Jesuit martyr in Japan, “set fire to the youth here studying to go there to work in those missions, [and] at the end to perpetuate the glory of the Law of Christ and of our Province with their sweat and blood.”⁶¹ Hundreds of young Neapolitan Jesuits wrote formal requests, known as *indipetae*, to be sent overseas;⁶² Selwyn estimates that

tante leghe per mare con pericolo della vita e senza dovere molto attendere per imparare la lingua, potrebbero bene spendere i loro talenti.” From a letter written in Messina on January 24, 1575. Prosperi, “Otras Indias,” 218.

58 Quoted and translated in Giovanni Muto, “Urban Structures and Population,” in *A Companion to Early Modern Naples*, ed. Astarita, 35–62, here 36–37.

59 Selwyn, *A Paradise Inhabited by Devils*, 3.

60 Selwyn, *A Paradise Inhabited by Devils*, 99–100. Prosperi, “Otras Indias,” 213–20.

61 Quoted and translated in Selwyn, *A Paradise Inhabited by Devils*, 100.

62 Approximately 14,000 of these *indipetae*, dating from between 1580 and 1773, are preserved in the Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu (ARSI) in Rome. For more on *indipetae*, see Gian Carlo Roscioni, *Il desiderio delle Indie: Storie, sogni, e fughe di giovani gesuiti italiani* (Torino: Einaudi, 2001). Camilla Russell, “Imagining the ‘Indies’: Italian Jesuit Petitions for the Overseas Missions at the Turn of the Seventeenth Century,” in *Per Adriano Prosperi: L’Europa divisa e i nuovi mondi*, ed. Massimo Donattini, Giuseppe Marcocci, and Stefania Pastore (Pisa: Edizioni della Normale, 2011), 179–190. Ines G. Županov, “Passage to India: Jesuit Spiritual Economy between Martyrdom and Profit in the Seventeenth Century,” *Journal of Early Modern History* 16 (2012): 1–39, here 3. Selwyn, *A Paradise Inhabited by Devils*, 98–105. Clossey, *Salvation and Globalization*, 138–41.

between 1589 and 1648, three hundred *indipetae* came from Jesuits stationed in the Neapolitan and Sicilian provinces.⁶³ Very few of these petitions were successful, and thus Jesuit authorities faced a problem. They had used the lure of the Indies to attract novices, but were unable to give a position to all those who requested to go abroad since there was vital work to be done closer to home.⁶⁴ Prosperi has demonstrated that Jesuit superiors solved this problem by constructing an alternative "Indies" in Naples, emphasizing the similarities between the missions of the Mezzogiorno and those of the overseas provinces to placate disgruntled Jesuits.⁶⁵ Thus far, scholars have focused on written accounts in the creation of this alternative Indies in Naples; however, Luca Giordano's altarpiece for the church of San Francesco Saverio demonstrates that the visual arts could generate this discourse as well.

Like the use of the word "Indies" in Jesuit accounts describing missions of Southern Italy, the members of the crowd in Luca Giordano's altarpiece lack any kind of geographic specificity. Art historians have thus far been unsuccessful in any attempt to identify precise sources for Giordano's exotic figures. Unlike Rubens, who used a drawing of a man in Korean costume made from life for one of the figures in his *Miracles of St. Francis Xavier* altarpiece,⁶⁶ none of Giordano's figures seem to be a result of a specific encounter with a person from Africa, Asia, or the Americas. The figures are rather standard types, similar to the regal archetypes usually found in scenes of the Adoration of the Magi, where the three kings are seen as representatives of Europe, Asia, and Africa. Accordingly, we could compare several of the costume details included in Giordano's *St. Francis Xavier* altarpiece with those found in some of his Adoration paintings, including one now held in the Museo Diocesano of Salerno, containing a figure wearing the same long, pointed cap as the person in blue on the left side of the San Francesco Saverio altarpiece. The stylized headdress worn by the female figure on the far left is also repeated in another Giordano painting, the *Presentation in the Temple* in the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Rennes, her exotic headgear perhaps contributing to the setting of the scene in the Holy Land.⁶⁷

63 Selwyn, *Paradise Inhabited by Devils*, 99n96.

64 Prosperi, "Otras Indias," 209.

65 Prosperi, "Otras Indias," 213.

66 Stephanie Schrader, ed. *Looking East: Rubens's Encounter with Asia* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum 2013). Anne-Marie Logan and Michiel Plomp, *Peter Paul Rubens: The Drawings* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2005), 224. Anne-Marie Logan and Liam Brockey, "Nicolas Trigault, SJ: A Portrait by Peter Paul Rubens," *Journal of the Metropolitan Museum of Art* 38 (2003): 161–67, here 159.

67 Ferrari and Scavizzi, *Luca Giordano*, 2:87.

FIGURE 4.2 Peter Paul Rubens, *St. Francis Xavier Preaching*, 1617–1618, oil on canvas, 535 x 395 cm, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna
PHOTO IN PUBLIC DOMAIN

However, the figures in Giordano's crowd do exhibit a wide variety of physiognomic types, including European, African, and Asian. By including European figures, Giordano, like the Jesuits of Naples, acknowledged that there was a

need for missionary activity in Europe, in essence including it in the image of the Indies presented by this canvas. Of course, Giordano is not the only artist to have included European figures in crowds of St. Francis Xavier preaching or baptizing, but in Naples, a city that was an "interior frontier" between orthodoxy and religious otherness in the early modern world,⁶⁸ where an abundant spiritual harvest could be achieved for enterprising and skilled preachers of the Gospel, this inclusion takes on an importance and local specificity that is lacking in other Xaverian representations. The altarpiece encouraged Jesuits to see Naples and Southern Italy as an alternative "Indies," a place where they could follow Ignatius of Loyola's directive to dedicate their lives to the "help of souls." The altarpiece convinces the viewer that St. Francis Xavier himself, the ideal model of the early modern missionary, viewed the second conversion of Europeans as part of the same millenarian drive as the baptism of extra-European non-Christians, an effort that would eventually result in all of the peoples of the world being united under the Catholic faith and bring about the second coming of Christ. In this altarpiece, Xavier is celebrated not as the "Apostle of India and Japan," as he was often called in the titles of hagiographies dating to the first half of the seventeenth century.⁶⁹ Instead, he is the "Apostle of the Indies," wherever the Indies may be, an appellation that was introduced in the canonization bull of 1623 and used with greater frequency as the seventeenth century progressed.⁷⁰

68 Selwyn, *A Paradise Inhabited by Devils*, 3.

69 The title of the 1596 Latin edition of Orazio Torsellino's biography calls Xavier the evangelist of India and Japan, while the Spanish translation of that same text names Xavier the first apostle of Japan, the second apostle of India and the other provinces of the East. Torsellino, *De vita Francisci Xaverii*. Orazio Torsellino, *Vida de S. Francisco Xavier de la Compania de Jesus, primero Apostol del Japon y segundo de la India y de outras Provincias del Oriente*, trans. Pedro de Guzmán (Pamplona: Carlos de Labayen, 1620). Another early biographer, Lucena, titled his Portuguese biography *The Story of the Life of Father Francis Xavier and What He Did in India...* João de Lucena, *Historia da vida do padre Francisco de Xavier e do que fizeram na Índia os mais religiosos da Companhia de Jesus* (Lisbon: Pedro Crasbeeck, 1600).

70 The canonization bull refers to Xavier as the "new Apostle to the Indies" ("novus Indiarum apostolus"), the "Apostle to the New People" ("novarum gentium apostolus"), and "the Apostle to the Undiscovered People" ("incognitarium gentium apostolum"). The bull also uses the phrase "Apostle of the east Indies, of all the kingdoms of India, and of all the Christian World" ("orientalium Indiarum apostolus ab universis Indiae regnis totoque christiano orbe"); Lecina, *Monumenta Xaveriana: Scripta varia*, 705–6 and 715. By the second half of the seventeenth century, the titles of hagiographies increasingly referred to Xavier as "the Apostle to the Indies," following the canonization bull.

The primary audience of this altarpiece was multifaceted, consisting of both Jesuits and members of the Spanish ruling class in Naples, including the viceroy, who had played a prominent role in the creation of the altarpiece. St. Francisco de Borja is certainly an ideal model for such a viewer, having been a member of the Spanish aristocracy. Unlike Xavier, Borja has no audience in the Luca Giordano altarpiece, except for the cherub to his immediate right; his conversion is primarily witnessed by the viewer of the painting itself, many of whom may have had familial connections with Borja, like Doña Catalina, the patron of the church. The various regal figures throughout the composition could also serve as models for those who were unable abandon worldly life in the same way that Borja had. Giordano's crowd is obviously unrealistic; there is no record of mass royal baptisms in the letters of Xavier or his later hagiography. However, Xavier was widely known and celebrated for royal conversions of kings and queens in Asia,⁷¹ which was in keeping with a Jesuit missionary strategy where the conversion of a ruler was thought to bring mass baptisms of their subjects. Giordano's focus on these regal figures exclude any of the other classes to whom Xavier was known to have preached, such as the pearl fishers of southern India, humble folk who are more in keeping with the crowds depicted in other paintings by Luca Giordano, such as *The Preaching of St. Vincent Ferrer*, in Santa Maria della Sanità in Naples.⁷² Giordano's emphasis on regal figures in the Francis Xavier altarpiece brings to mind the words of Silvestro Landini (1503–54), a Jesuit missionary active in Corsica. After calling the island “my India,” he wrote that the land was in much need of a Prester John, meaning a pious and Christian king who could tame the Indies and lead his people in living civilized, Christian lives.⁷³ Any of the royal figures included in Giordano's altarpiece could be seen as a new Prester John and each could serve as an ideal model for the viceroy or other Spanish nobles in Naples.

Although descriptions of this painting written from the time of its creation onward focus entirely on Xavier's conversion of the people of Asia, it is clear that Giordano made many references to Europe in this painting—from the inclusion of Borja's second conversion, to the insertion of Europeans in Xavier's

71 It is unclear how many Asian kings or queens Xavier actually baptized. While he is given credit for many baptism by later hagiographers, the only one Xavier himself mentions is Neachile Pocaraga, the queen of Ternate, one of the islands of the Moluccas; however, he does not actually take credit for her conversion. See the letter written to Fathers Paulo, Antonio Gomes, and Baltasar Gago in June 1549. Francis Xavier, *The Letters and Instructions*, 271–72.

72 Ferrari and Scavizzi, *Luca Giordano*, 2:75–76.

73 “Questa isola sarà la mia India, meritoria quanto quella dil [sic] preste Giovanni.” Quoted in Prosperi, “Otras Indias,” 208.

crowd of the inhabitants of the world. The figures themselves lack specificity, combining European and non-European physiognomy with generically exoticized regal costuming. Instead of viewing this pastiche as a failure of Luca Giordano's knowledge about the world, the generic quality of these representations is actually the key to the argument that the work of art is making. Gauvin Bailey has written about the connection between the generic aspect of early Jesuit paintings and St. Ignatius of Loyola's technique of "composition of place" from his *Spiritual Exercises*.⁷⁴ Here, the devotee is asked to imagine all the sensory details related to biblical events themselves, creating an experience of a place in their mind in which they have filled in the specifics themselves. In the case of Luca Giordano's altarpiece, Giordano followed a similar strategy, utilizing nonspecific foreign details, plus representations of figures from all parts of the world, to compose a generic view of the Indies, one that could apply to Naples, "the Indies down here," and allow Jesuit novices to understand that they were playing a role in a global effort to bring cultural and religious reform to all.

74 Gauvin Alexander Bailey, "Italian Renaissance and Baroque Painting under the Jesuits and Its Legacy throughout Catholic Europe," in *The Jesuits and the Arts*, ed. John W. O'Malley and Gauvin Alexander Bailey (Philadelphia: Saint Joseph's University Press, 2003), 125–98, here 125–26 and 135.