



Tours

Docent-led tours of the Mission are available Monday through Saturday, 9:30 a.m. through 12.30 p.m. Visit the Patronato web site for more details: www.patronatosanxavier.org

Ways to help

For church hours and Mass schedule or to contribute to the church or school call (520) 294-2624 or visit the parish website at www.sanxaviermission.org


For more information about the Patronato and their important work restoring this national jewel, please visit Patronato's website at www.patronatosanxavier.org

Tax-deductible donations can be made online at: www.patronatosanxavier.org/donate or mailed to:

PATRONATO SAN XAVIER
P.O. BOX 522 • TUCSON, AZ 85702



Patronato San Xavier, a non-profit 501(c)3, oversees the restoration of the church structure.

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MISSION SAN XAVIER



A Short History

As a national historical landmark and the only remaining intact mission in Arizona, Mission San Xavier del Bac is considered the finest example of Mexican Baroque architecture in the United States. The

Mission remains a working parish for the Tohono O'odham people, many of whom still live nearby.

First founded in 1692, the Mission is part of a series of missions established by Jesuit missionary Father Eusebio Francisco Kino,



who traveled throughout the northern part of Mexico and the Southwestern parts of the United States, bringing Catholicism to the indigenous peoples of the area.

Earlier, simple churches were constructed near the site, but the current structure was begun in 1783 by a Franciscan, Father Velderrain, using 7,000 pesos borrowed from Antonio Herreros, a rancher from Sonora. Designed by Ignacio Gaona, a Spanish architect, the villagers from Bac helped from start to finish. They gathered sand, lime, clay, rock, and wood; built kilns and excavated trenches. Thirty-three-inch foundations were

built and brick was laid up for both the inside and outside faces of the wall; rock rubble and a lime-sand grout was poured between. Artists from central New Spain (now Mexico) worked to complete the interior.

Work on the Mission continued for 14 years before the money ran out, causing the artists and master artisans to be discharged. The east tower was left with bare brick and no dome or lantern while, in the choir loft and baptistry, paintings were left unfinished.

But Bac's parishioners were still at work – dismantling their old Jesuit church from the 1750s and rebuilding it as the mud adobe wing to the east of the East Tower. This structure enclosed the north side of the plaza in front of the church, providing for better defense against raids and attacks.

The flags of four nations have hung over the Mission: It fell under the jurisdiction of Spain until Mexico won independence in 1821. The Gadsden Purchase brought San Xavier into the United States in 1854. Today, following the creation of the Tohono O'odham reservations, the flag of the Tohono O'odham Nation now flies over the Mission.

Who are the Patronato?

The Patronato San Xavier was formed by a group of concerned citizens from nearby Tucson in 1978 for the sole purpose of restoring and preserving the church. More than \$10 million has been raised and spent to remove rigid, water-trapping cement plaster, repair and stabilize the original adobe brick, and protect the exterior surfaces with a soft lime-sand plaster that allows the brick beneath to “breath.”

Interior restoration has focused on removing soot, dust, and grime, repairing and restoring the statuary and stabilizing paint pigments in the artwork from the salts that leach from the adobe and endanger the color and integrity of the paintings.

But substantially more must be done before the project is finished. Most significant is the stabilizing and restoring of the east tower, a task that is just beginning and will take four to five years and \$3 million. Future renovations include the four-column façade at the entry, the mortuary chapel to the west, and the graveyard walls.

Additionally, the Patronato is building an endowment to pay for vital but never-ending maintenance.

The Parish and its School

San Xavier remains a working church. The Franciscan pastor and the parochial vicar provide spiritual leadership to the parish. Services occur throughout the week.

Next to the Mission and dating back to 1873 is the mission school. Run by the Franciscan Sisters of Charity, the school operates grades K-8 and continues a tradition of educating students from the surrounding area.

Please be respectful at all times.

You will encounter people worshipping as you move about the Mission. The many candles are the offerings of parishioners and other faithful. Of special veneration for pilgrims from near and far is the reclining figure of San Francisco Xavier in the west transept. Milagros pinned to his blanket are acts of petition or thanks by worshippers.

Timeline:



1692

Fr. Kino (Jesuit) visits village of W'ak. Kino begins foundations on a church never built

1700

Kino dies in Magdalena, Sonora

1711

Fr. Alonso Espinosa constructs the first church

1756

Jesuits are expelled from New Spain

1767

Spanish Franciscans arrive

1768

Construction of present (2nd) church begins

1783

San Xavier completed

1797

Mexico gains independence from Spain

1821

The Gadsden Purchase puts the Mission inside US

1854

Santa Fe diocese begins first repairs of Mission

1859

Earthquake in Sonora damages parts of the Mission

1887

Bishop Granjon begins major repairs

1906

Lightning strikes West Tower

1939

Church facade is restored including replica plasters

1953

San Xavier becomes National Historic Landmark

1963

Patronato San Xavier established to preserve Mission

1978

Water infiltration forces emergency restoration

1989

Conservators begin 5-year interior conservation effort

1992

West Tower exterior restored

2009

(Left to right) Padre Kino statue near Kino Parkway in Tucson, AZ; San Xavier illustration 1849; Commemorative Gadsden Purchase 3¢ Stamp (Issued 1953); Timothy O'Sullivan photo, National Archive 1871; Photo of West Tower © 1939 Tucson Citizen; Donatella Zari shows Tim Lewis how to clean a cornice above niche of Santo Domingo de Guzmán. Photo by Helga Teiwes, 1993; San Xavier Mission West Tower 2010.