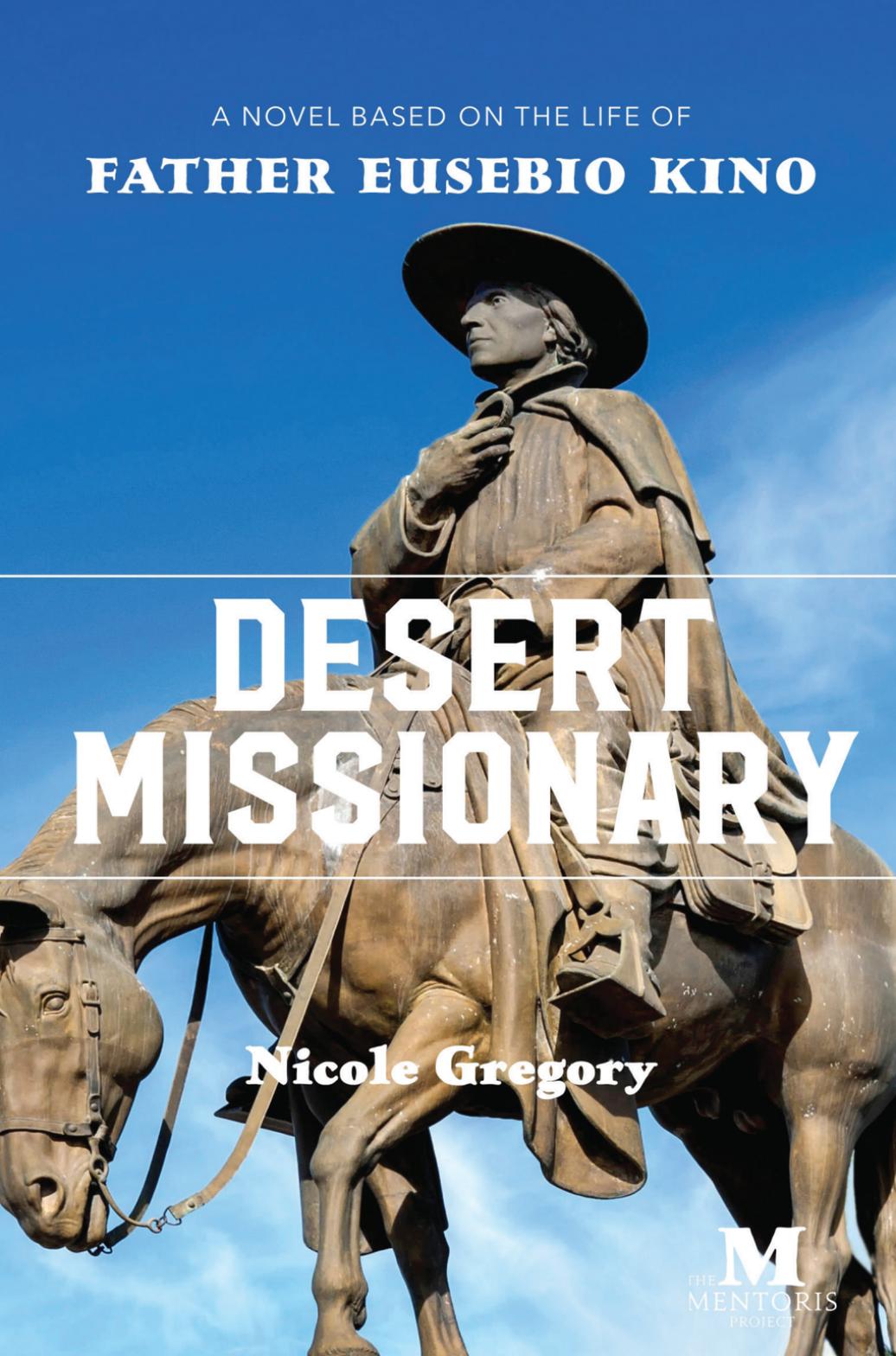


A NOVEL BASED ON THE LIFE OF  
**FATHER EUSEBIO KINO**



**DESERT  
MISSIONARY**

**Nicole Gregory**

**M**  
THE  
MENTORIS  
PROJECT

# Chapter One

## CURIOUS BOY

**M**artino Martini trudged up the steep, grassy mountainside and breathed in the warm, fragrant air that wafted from the fields of yellow wildflowers. He stopped to look around. How good it was to finally be back in the Italian Alps after traveling through China for so many years! His legs were sore, the sun was setting, and he was very, very hungry.

A handsome man with an unkempt beard, the twenty-nine-year-old Jesuit missionary was tired but would not let himself slow down—he was getting close to the village of a distant cousin.

He carried his belongings on his back; among them were treasures that he guarded carefully. He was out of breath but determined to go on. It was 1653, and he longed to tell Rome stories of what he'd seen as a missionary in China. Happily, his cousin's village, where he hoped he would be given food and a place to sleep, was on this route.

The familiar scenes—sharp mountaintops, crystal-clear lakes, and medieval castles poking up from tree-covered hillsides—elated and comforted him. Hearing Italian and German, languages he understood, picking berries from bushes just like when he was a child, and eating food with familiar flavor offered by kind peasants along the way—these God-given joys buoyed his spirits.

At last, he entered Val di Non, a fertile valley of lakes and mountains dotted with crooked old apple trees. The late afternoon light cast a golden glow against the next hilltop, where he spotted his destination: the village of Segno, where his cousins Margarita Chino and her husband, Francisco, lived with their young son, Eusebio.

Martino quickened his pace—there they were! Their figures were bent over and working the field next to their sturdy stone house. It had a steep timber roof, built so winter snow would easily slide off. The home was surrounded by tall pine trees that rustled in the summer breeze.

“*Buongiorno!*” he shouted, breaking into a sprint as Francisco turned toward him. “It is me, Martino!” His cousins dropped their tools and rushed toward him with broad smiles and open arms.

“Martino, what a pleasure! Where have you come from?” Margarita said, embracing her cousin for the first time in years. She noticed his Jesuit robe was dirty and tattered. Yes, it was her dear Martino, but he appeared gaunt now.

“I have been in China, yes, very far away, but I knew I wanted to return here.”

“*Benvenuto, entra, entra!* Eat dinner, stay with us, and rest,” Francisco said, throwing an arm around Martino’s shoulder. “You look like you could use a good meal.”

“Indeed, you are right,” Martino laughed with relief.

Watching from the doorway of their stone cottage was eight-year-old Eusebio, Francisco and Margarita’s only son. As his parents and Martino reached the house, Eusebio ran out and stared up at this stranger.

“Hello, I am happy to meet you,” Martino said, reaching down to shake Eusebio’s hand. “When I last saw you, you were just a baby.” Wide-eyed, Eusebio shook the man’s hand. Over dinner of cooked rabbit and warm bread, Francisco told Martino the news of their family since he’d been gone.

“We’ve had too many years of senseless fighting. Young men in our region became mercenaries,” Francisco said, shaking his head, “to fight for whichever side will pay them. And when these men don’t get paid, they plunder villages and take what they can from the farms. Peace, that is all we want. With peace, we have a chance to live as God wishes us to live.”

Eusebio listened to his father, taking in every word, his eyes shifting from one adult to another. Both his parents were expressive, with open smiles and friendly gestures.

“Martino, enough of this—tell us about your adventures in China,” Margarita said.

“Ah, so much to tell!” Martino said. “There is a great river called Yangtze, with boats so big that entire families live on them. The Chinese have made many canals so farmers can easily bring their goods to cities along the waterways.”

“Do they have a king?” Eusebio blurted.

“No, but they do have an emperor,” Martino replied. “He lives in a palace called the Forbidden City with many gardens, rooms, and courtyards.”

Eusebio’s shyness suddenly evaporated and questions tumbled out, his imagination working fast. “Did you have to cross an ocean to get there? How did you find your way?”

“I crossed several oceans on big ships,” Martino said. Noting young Eusebio’s intense curiosity, he added, “I drew maps of the lands over which I traveled in China. I intend to take them to Antwerp to be printed. Would you like to see them?”

Eusebio vigorously nodded his head as his parents smiled and cleared the table. Martino carefully opened his bag, took out several rolls of thick parchment, and unfolded them across the tabletop so all could see. Eusebio’s eyes widened. Martino had drawn a detailed map with pictures and notes along the edges that explained the characteristics of each region of land and water. In Latin and Mandarin, he’d written the names of villages and towns, and notated the distances between them.

The intricate maps mesmerized Eusebio. He followed the lines that indicated hills, rivers, and mountain peaks, wondering if those places looked like the beautiful landscapes of the Tyrol region of his home. He wondered, *Are there children in China just like me?*

“The people of China are mostly poor, but like us they are good farmers,” Martino said. “They have all kinds of superstitions. But when I meet people who seem strange, I look into their eyes and I see they are human beings, just like me. I want to

tell them about our God, our Christianity, but first I learn how they live and what they do.”

“When you were on the ship on the ocean, how did you know where to go?” Eusebio asked.

By now it was nighttime, and Martino replied with a question of his own. “Do you know how to find pictures in the stars, Eusebio?” The boy shook his head no. “Well, I used these constellations to guide me.”

Martino took him outside and pointed to the North Star, then to the Great Bear and Little Bear constellations. He explained how sailors used specific stars and constellations to navigate across the vast ocean. Eusebio was so interested that, in the following days, Martino taught the boy rudiments of astronomy and even some mathematic calculations.

Eusebio shyly brought out his own maps of the hills surrounding their farm and village. He’d drawn them on long pieces of tree bark.

“Ah, Eusebio, I see you are a cartographer like me,” Martino said. “Maps are very important in exploration. They help us understand where we are and how to find where we are going. With maps, everyone can understand the lands that lie beyond our little village.”

^pMartino smiled and touched the boy’s head. “You are a brave boy, but you must be strong to travel great distances. Help your parents now and have faith—dreams come true by remembering them, working for them, and asking for God’s help.”

With tears welling up in Eusebio’s eyes, he watched his

cousin's figure disappear over the next hill. His parents looked at each other. Their young son had been inspired by Martino's adventures and his kindness. After Eusebio went to bed that night, they talked about him. They'd seen how excitedly he'd learned everything Martino taught him—he would eventually need more stimulation than the dull work of farming.

Meanwhile, Eusebio lay wide awake in his bed. He thought about Martino's words and tried to visualize the oceans and far-away countries with strange names—he could get there if he could see the pictures in the stars. Eusebio's mind reeled.

Finally, the boy became drowsy. Something had changed deep within his young soul. A map—yes, a map—had been given for his imagination. Now he knew where he was and where he wanted to go in his life. He wanted to be a real cartographer and traveler, like his cousin. He wanted to know how to read the stars and how to map exotic new lands.

In the following weeks and months, Eusebio became restless. "I know every tree there is to climb, Papa," he complained to his father. "I know every stream and every good rock to hide behind."

He had free rein to roam the countryside. He'd found a horse that a neighbor no longer wanted and rode it bareback over the fields, following trails along the edges of hillsides. He made friends with other children and brought them along on his horseback explorations.

His parents sent him to a nearby school, hoping it would fill his appetite for learning, but he quickly outgrew it. He was as bored as the lizards sunning on the hot rocks and as restless

as the birds darting in the trees. He knew there had to be life beyond the farm's dreary routines. He watched his parents work until dark every weekday, just to be sure they had enough to eat.

When Eusebio turned twelve, his parents sent him to a Jesuit school in nearby Trento. He took to the rigorous studies like a fish to water. The Jesuit priests, who were educated and disciplined, but also courageous, fascinated him. On his sixteenth birthday, he begged his parents to send him to the Jesuit College in Innsbruck, Germany. They agreed, but with deep sadness. They watched as he left their little village, turning to wave as he climbed the last hill that would take him north.

"Your name?" asked an elderly Jesuit priest, seated at a large wooden desk in the great hall of the Jesuit College of Innsbruck. A shaft of sunlight fell on the paper he wrote, making it blaze white. The man had wispy white hair and light blue eyes, and he held a long quill pen as he looked expectantly at the young man before him. It was a humid day in late August—the day all new students came to register at the university.

"Eusebio Chino," the young man said proudly. He was of a stocky build with thick, wavy brown hair and lively dark eyes. His smile was wide and playful as he looked at the seated priest. He was eager to begin his new life here with the Jesuits, who were known for their great knowledge, belief in education, and courageous missionary work in far-off lands. Eusebio was ready to be part of it.

"Year of birth?" the man asked.

“1645,” Eusebio answered. “I am seventeen years of age.”

“You’re Italian?”

“I am from Trento in Tyrol,” Eusebio blurted. “But I hesitate to say whether I am Italian or German, for the city of Trento uses the language, customs, and laws of Italy almost entirely, and although it is located on the very edge of Tyrol, nevertheless, Tyrol is under the rule of Germany.”

“Parents?” the man asked tiredly, hoping this answer would be short.

“Francisco and Margarita Chino,” Eusebio said.

An unexpected wave of sadness flooded the young man’s heart. Yes, he wanted a new life here with the Jesuits, but he missed his parents. When would he see them again? They had watched over him for years.

“Take your belongings to your room,” the old man said gruffly, startling Eusebio out of his reverie.

“Thank you, Father—?” Eusebio asked.

“Father Antonio Rocca,” the man said, waving him away.

Eusebio quickly picked up the meager items he’d brought from home—some clothing, a map, and his treasured sling-shot—and took them to his new room. He sat on the narrow, hard bed and placed his belongings on the one small table. Then he rushed out to explore the school and all its buildings.

Though it was late summer, the air was already cool. Peeking into the classrooms, Eusebio marveled at globes and at maps affixed to the walls. And books—he could not wait to open them! The other students were boys his own age, and he immediately knew he would find good friends here.

The Jesuit school's classrooms, built in heavy stone, were chilly. Their sturdy, old wooden chairs were uncomfortable; some had splinters. The teachers, mostly young men in their twenties, were strict and set high standards for their young pupils.

But Eusebio shrugged off the difficulties, a characteristic noted by his teachers. He was cheerful, energetic, and extraordinarily focused for a teenager. He had a certain wild streak of a boy who'd experienced freedom from an early age, which gave him brash confidence. Yet he listened intently to each lesson, grasped the particulars quickly, and worked almost obsessively until he found the answers to complex problems. In geography classes, he relished the sight of maps presented by his teacher and memorized the names of countries, mountains, and oceans.

Then, just as autumn turned to winter and the trees' golden leaves fell on the campus grounds, Eusebio visited the city of Hala in the Tyrol to see two childhood friends.

On the way, he began feeling strangely weak. He normally had great stamina, such that he took his good health for granted. But as he approached Hala, he struggled to walk without stumbling. His friends greeted him with alarm, immediately seeing that he was ill. They insisted he lie down to rest. But even after Eusebio had slept for many hours, he awoke fatigued, with sweat dripping down his face and neck. His heart raced, though he barely moved. Walking became painful, and soon he could not get out of bed. A doctor from Hala came to see him, but could not diagnose his illness.

Eusebio felt darkness closing in. He awoke in the bed,

agitated and frightened. Was it day or night? Was he alive or dead? Was he at home or at school? Life was slipping out of him.

In his confused and nearly delirious state, he prayed desperately. “With the help of Saint Francis Xavier, O God, heal me from this sickness. If I recover, I promise to dedicate my life to the missionary work that he began.”

He fell back into the damp sheets and into a deep sleep.

## Chapter Two

### THE PROMISE

The doctor called it a miracle. Never had he seen a man so close to death recover so completely.

Within days of Eusebio's prayer to Saint Francis, he was able to sit up in bed and eat. Soon after that, he could walk unaided. His friends cheered when he announced he must return to the university as quickly as possible. They happily sent him off, relieved that what seemed like a dire illness had passed.

On his way back, Eusebio was somber. Since he was a boy, he'd had the faith in God that his parents had given him, but now he struggled to comprehend the apparent fact that his prayer had been heard. No one else knew about his prayer. He could easily continue his studies to become a mathematician and geographer, and no one could blame him for not carrying through with his promise to become a missionary.

As soon as he returned, he sought out Father Antonio

Rocca, who had greeted him on his arrival to the school. When he knocked on the Jesuit's office door, Eusebio was immediately invited in by Father Rocca's gravelly voice.

"What is it, Eusebio? You look well! I heard the news that you were deathly ill." The old man shook his head with a smile and gestured for Eusebio to sit in a heavy wooden chair next to his desk.

"Father, I want to tell you something," Eusebio said hesitantly as he sat down. "When I was ill, I had many dreams. And when I was most sick—indeed, I felt death's grip closing over my heart—I prayed to God in the name of Saint Francis Xavier to be healed." Eusebio paused. "And I made a promise that if I were to recover, I would become a missionary, just as Saint Francis did, in his honor. And now . . ."

"Now you understand what your recovery means, am I correct?" Father Rocca asked.

"Yes."

"My son, you have been blessed with health. You have been given life for a reason. We are told to pray for God's will for us, which has now been shown to you. Indeed, the path may not be what you planned, but you must honor this blessing."

"I understand, Father. Thank you," Eusebio said, bowing his head. "Now my prayer will be for courage to follow God's will for me. The first step . . . is to enter the Society of Jesus."

Father Rocca smiled and did not speak. He was witnessing a rare transformation and he wanted it to unfold naturally.

"I want to be a Jesuit priest, like you, and a missionary, like Saint Francis."

“Very well. You may begin your novitiate immediately,” Father Rocca said. “This is the right path for you, my son. I know it.”

As Eusebio walked back to his room, he pulled his shoulders back to stand tall. It was 1665 and he was twenty years old. Yet he felt that in just a matter of weeks, he had grown into a man. Francis Xavier was now his own personal patron saint, the one in whose name his life had been saved. Eusebio decided then that he would honor this event by taking on his name. From now on, he would be known as Eusebio Francisco Chino.

His life’s true purpose had been revealed: to become a priest and save souls throughout the world, wherever Rome may send him.

But first he had to undergo several years of training, which included long periods of silence, meditation, menial work, and prayer, in addition to academic studies.

Because all Jesuit priests were required to work as teachers, their studies were wide-ranging and rigorous. Eusebio gravitated toward philosophy, geography, mathematics, and astronomy. Even after his scholastic studies and novitiate requirements were over, his thirst for knowledge was not satisfied. He left the college and journeyed more than 250 miles away to the German city of Ingolstadt.

The University of Ingolstadt famously attracted the best scholars and thinkers in the world, and thousands of students enrolled. Eusebio hoped he might continue his studies there, and possibly teach.

He was eager to study advanced mathematics and geography, but he was excited to explore Ingolstadt's lively streets too. He marveled at the great Danube River, the second-longest river in all of Europe. As he strolled along the water, he imagined all the different countries through which this river traveled. He wandered through alleys, peeking into courtyards, admiring the massive brick Cathedral of Our Lady and the tall ducal castle, and sampling foods sold by street vendors. This vibrant city life thrilled him. It was so different from his home village, where little happened or changed, year in and year out.

But he dedicated most of his waking hours to studying late into the evening. Eusebio burned many candles at his table, challenging himself by tackling the most complex problems first and not sleeping until he had solved them. Though he dreamed of missionary work, his academic studies nourished him.

Years passed pleasantly for Eusebio at the university, where he assisted the professors as often as he could. Among his teachers was the famous geographer Father Heinrich Scherer who appreciated the young man's intensity. After taking several classes with Father Scherer, Eusebio considered the older scholar a friend. The two ate meals together, talking about the boundaries of the known world and about how maps could best serve the exploration of uncharted lands.

One evening, as they strolled next to the Danube, Eusebio told Father Scherer what he remembered of his cousin Martino Martini's visit years before and of his colorful maps of China. He held out his arms wide to demonstrate the maps' size.

“I know of your cousin,” Father Scherer said, nodding thoughtfully. “Those maps became well known once he convinced a printer to distribute copies. I have heard they contain great detail.”

“Indeed, that is how I remember them,” Eusebio said. “What I recall even more vividly are his adventures in China as a missionary. Most people he met had never seen a European before, and some were so frightened at the sight of him that they ran away! He learned to speak Mandarin and succeeded in converting many men to Christianity. He told me about the wide rivers and canals there, and an emperor who rules from a palace that is like a fortress.”

“Missionaries are brave men,” Father Scherer said.

“My cousin became like my own North Star,” Eusebio said. “From his example, I saw the life I wanted to lead. Father, I . . . ever since I heard his stories of China, I have wanted to lead the life of a missionary, to follow in his footsteps to China. It is, after all, what Saint Francis did.”

Father Scherer stopped walking and gaped at Eusebio. “But you are a scholar of mathematics and geography. Your future is here, my friend.”

“I know. Yes, those subjects are important, and I love this university. But I made a personal promise to follow Saint Francis years ago, and somehow I must keep this promise. I am thirty years old now. I cannot wait forever.”

The two men continued walking in silence. “Please keep an open mind,” Father Scherer said. “You are a fine scholar. The

essays and small maps you've been publishing in the journal are original and good. Your reputation is growing. Everyone sees you have a brilliant mind and a great deal of knowledge to impart to others. That is your gift. I think you would make a fine teacher—you would be an inspiration to the younger men."

Winters in Ingolstadt were snowy and cold. Eusebio and his fellow Jesuits Antonio Kerschbaumer and Adam Gerstle ran about in the snow, laughing and throwing snowballs.

"*Ich liebe den Schnee!*" Adam cried, forming a large snowball and aiming it at his friends.

Eusebio avoided the snowball by running toward the Jesuit residence hall, where he could warm himself in front of the roaring fireplace.

Spring was always welcome after the months of bitter cold. Students sat amongst the dogwood trees that bloomed with pink and white flowers. Rivers and streams swelled with melting snow. Summers were pleasantly warm, which meant everyone lingered outside long into the evening. And then autumn arrived once again, when rays of sunshine filtered through gold and red leaves throughout the city.

Eusebio could not bring himself to leave Ingolstadt. He continued to take on clerical research work at the university, and keep up his own scholarly research.

One day in 1676, a clamor arose outside the building where Eusebio studied. He rushed to the window and gasped as he peered out to the courtyard below. Ferdinand, the Duke of

Bavaria, stepped down from an ornate carriage followed by his old father, the Elector. The duke had long, dark hair and a white lace collar. Because he had invested much capital in the university, he felt duty-bound to periodically visit to inspect it.

Luckily, no one saw the distain in Eusebio's face as he drew away from the window. He hated pomp of any kind and was skeptical of authority figures. As far as he could tell, their sole purpose was to maintain dominance and control. Even though Ferdinand and his wife had proven to be different—they actually seemed to care about the lives of common people, and had insisted on the restoration of churches and monasteries damaged during the brutal Thirty Years' War—Eusebio was naturally suspicious.

Father Scherer was among the group with the duke, providing a tour of the university buildings. As soon as Eusebio returned to his desk, the door to the study room swung open and in walked the duke and his entourage. Father Scherer rushed forward to introduce the Duke of Bavaria and his father to Eusebio, who bowed deeply to the visitors.

"I am pleased to meet you at last. We have heard a great deal about your ability with mathematics and geography," the duke said, looking Eusebio in the eye, as if to determine for himself if this was true.

"I am humbled that this is your understanding, but many hardworking and inspired scholars have been drawn to this university, and I cannot claim to stand out," Eusebio said, glancing at Father Scherer and wondering what he had told the duke.

“We have heard this from too many men to make it a matter of mere favoritism,” the duke said. “And this university should retain the best scholars in all of Europe. Therefore, I am offering you a professorial chair here.”

Eusebio was dumbstruck. He had not been expecting the offer and struggled to find the correct response. “This—this is an honor too great for me,” he stammered.

“Nonsense,” the duke said. “From what I understand, this is well-deserved. Please let us know when you can begin.”

Eusebio’s mind worked fast. The offer was an honor, but what about his intention to become a missionary—was that to be forgotten? It couldn’t be! But to refuse the Duke of Bavaria would be disastrous.

“I am sorry, but . . . I cannot accept,” he blurted. “I am awaiting an assignment to go to China, to work as a missionary.”

“I am disappointed, but I suppose the world will be better for it,” the duke said after a long pause. “Father Scherer, could you please take us to the dining hall? I would like to see the new stained-glass windows.” As they turned to depart, Father Scherer glanced sorrowfully at Eusebio.

Eusebio leaned heavily on his table once the men had left. Looking out at the trees, his stomach tightened into a knot. He did not like to disappoint these men.

Within a few months, he left for the city of Oettingen in Bavaria for his third probation, a kind of final test for Jesuit priests to once more declare their dedication. Of course, he passed—but to his dismay, it did not guarantee he would receive orders to travel. He returned without enthusiasm to Ingolstadt.



For years Eusebio had written to Father Giovanni Oliva, the eleventh Superior General of the Society of Jesus, seeking a missionary assignment. All six of his previous letters had gone unanswered, but he tried yet again.

“I feel so endowed with the spirit,” he wrote, “that in any place or office whatsoever, even though it be most lowly, where I may be sent at the command of my superior, there I shall be most content.” He hinted repeatedly that he was prepared to go to China. He watched as his friends received their assignments and left for foreign lands. The selection process was slow—Eusebio had no control over it.

He was continually restless, though he was hardly the only one. Many young men who entered the Society of Jesus carried the same burning desire within their hearts to follow in the footsteps of the brave Francis Xavier. Eusebio commiserated with his friends Antonio and Adam—they too wanted desperately to be assigned to Asia for missionary work, imagining themselves as heroes for God. Waiting for their chance was increasingly hard.

“Here we are, three able and faithful Jesuits, yet they do not assign us to a mission,” Antonio said, shaking his head. The three young men were in the library, whispering loudly.

“I feel sure that Ignatius of Loyola and Francis Xavier would want us to do the work of converting heathens to Christianity, instead of staying here, where everyone is Christian,” Eusebio said.

“Remember obedience, my friend,” Antonio joked, slapping

Eusebio on his shoulder. This was a rule of the Society of Jesus that Eusebio found the hardest to accept.

Antonio and Adam rose to take their leave for the evening, but Eusebio remained in the library, one of his favorite places in the university. He turned to the book he'd opened that contained the writings of Saint Francis, and his eye fell to this paragraph:

*But let him to whom obedience has been entrusted and who is considered greater become as the lesser and the servant of the other brothers, and let him show and have the mercy toward each of his brothers that he would wish to be shown to himself if he were in the like situation. And let him not be angry with a brother on account of his offence, but let him advise him kindly and encourage him with all patience and humility.*

Patience. Humility. Faith. Eusebio sighed. Yes, he would wait with humility, and have faith that his call would come.

Two weeks later, as he returned to the university after a walk along the Danube to clear his mind, he looked up to see his friends Antonio and Adam running toward him as fast as their cassocks would allow.

"Eusebio, we have a letter! Come and see!" Antonio said breathlessly. He opened the letter to read it aloud. It was from the Reverend Father Provincial of Upper Germany.

"Your Reverence shall send Father Antonius Kerschbaumer and Father Eusebio Chino; one should be sent for service in New Spain and the other in the Philippines, just as Your Reverence

deems best or as it shall please them and as they shall choose for themselves.”

The two men looked at each other and laughed. “So, he’s leaving it up to us,” Antonio said.

“You must choose first, Antonio,” Eusebio said. His heart was pounding. The Philippines were so close to China—the land he had dreamed of for years. And yet, he could not insist for his wish over that of his friend.

“No, no, *you* must choose first,” said Antonio, who also fervently wanted to travel to China.

Seeing that they both were sticking to positions of humility, Adam intervened. “All right,” he said, “why don’t we let God decide? Here, I will write the names of each place on two pieces of paper and fold them up. Then each of you shall pick one and that will be your destiny.”

“A fine idea,” Antonio agreed.

When this was done, each reached for a folded paper. Antonio’s face lit up with delight—he picked the Philippines! Eusebio did his best to hide his disappointment; he was horribly jealous. Antonio regarded his friend with embarrassment. He knew Eusebio ached.

Adam, watching the feelings of his two friends, said, “I too have been assigned to the Philippines . . .”

“Mexico—or New Spain, as it is called—I never imagined going there,” Eusebio said, grappling to find the right tone. He did not want his friends to feel sorry for him, so he quickly walked away, heading for the garden of the Jesuit residence and back toward his room. He wanted to be alone.

*Maybe Antonio or Adam will not like Asia and I could take one of their places, he thought. Maybe they will find it too difficult, or maybe one of them will fall ill, and I will be called to Asia after all.*

Even as these ideas passed through his mind, he realized they were foolish. His destiny was New Spain.

*God must have a purpose for me in New Spain. Perhaps it's that I keep on going west to China!*