

FRANCIS X. CLOONEY, S. J.

SAINT JOSEPH IN SOUTH INDIA

POETRY, MISSION AND THEOLOGY IN
COSTANZO GIOSEFFO BESCHI'S TĒMPĀVAṆĪ



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ABSTRACT

Costanzo Gioseffo Beschi was an Italian Jesuit who worked in South India from 1710 to 1747. A brilliant scholar of Tamil, his works include hymns, instructions for catechists, and a robust defense of the Catholic missionary approach. His most famous work is *Tēmpāvaṇi* (*The Unfading Garland*), an epic re-telling of the early life of Jesus, set in the context of the whole Biblical story, and surprisingly focused on St. Joseph, spouse of Mary and foster-father of Jesus. Beschi shows us not only the New Testament's laconic Joseph, but also his early discernment of vocation, his place as an eye-witness to the Incarnation, his remarkable ministry as an eloquent preacher and teacher in pagan Egypt, and his final illness and death. *St. Joseph in South India* argues that Beschi's distinctively Catholic approach draws on methods already familiar in the Jesuit ethical and dramatic literature in post-Reformation Europe. The book includes a fresh translation of about 300 verses from *Tēmpāvaṇi*.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Francis X. Clooney, S.J., is the Parkman Professor of Divinity at Harvard Divinity School where he has taught since 2005, after 21 years at Boston College. His primary areas of Indological scholarship are theological commentarial writings in the Sanskrit and Tamil traditions of Hindu India. He is a leading figure globally in the field of comparative theology, and has also written widely on the Jesuit missionary tradition in India. He published with Anand Amaladass, S.J., *Preaching Wisdom to the Wise: Three Treatises by Roberto de Nobili, SJ, Missionary and Scholar in 17th Century India* (Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2000). Recent works include *The Future of Hindu-Christian Studies: A Theological Inquiry* (Routledge, 2017); *Reading the Hindu and Christian Classics: Why and How Deep Learning Still Matters* (University of Virginia Press, 2019); and a collection of essays, *Western Jesuit Scholars in India: Tracing Their Paths, Reassessing Their Goals* (Brill, 2020).

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