As we continue to celebrate our 175th anniversary and the Year for Consecrated Life, we recall our founding spirit. It is a special spirit fostered by Theodore James Ryken, our Founder. It is the spirit of openness to the needs of the Church and world. The Founder’s example inspired in his early followers the willingness to follow Christ wherever He leads. For Ryken we are indeed grateful. For the Brothers, who took up the mantle after the Founder and who showed us how to respond in turn, we are grateful.

“The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.”
Frederick Buechner

God called Ryken to many places where his passion for the mission of Christ met the world’s deep hunger. In 1823, the Founder was called to work with Joachim Le Sage ten Broek in Meer en Bosch with orphans and victims of poverty. In 1826, he was called to Groningen to work as an orderly during a disastrous epidemic of influenza that took many lives. In the early 1830’s, Ryken was called to America – a number of times—to minister to the Native Americans in Indiana and Michigan.

To serve the world’s deep hunger was Ryken’s gladness and joy. This spirit, this openness formed our Brothers’ lives dur-
A watercolor painted by artist Brother Edward Rice of the tower of Working Boys Home, Newton Highlands, MA, another childcare institution of the Brothers. It later became the novitiate for the St. Joseph Province.

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A watercolor painted by artist Brother Edward Rice of the tower of Working Boys Home, Newton Highlands, MA, another childcare institution of the Brothers. It later became the novitiate for the St. Joseph Province.

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ing our foundation in America. For God’s call to those in greatest need, we are grateful. For the openness and willingness of our early Brothers to follow Christ where He led, we are indeed grateful. We pray that this founding spirit continues to inspire us.

We know that immigration in the 19th Century reshaped the face of both the country and our Church. The problems were many. Immigrants were mostly peasants from agrarian areas. They could not read or write or speak English. Most were destitute. By 1900, there were approximately 15 million Catholics in America and more than half lived in poverty. God called Theodore Ryken’s Brothers to Louisville and Baltimore where “their deep joy” and the Church’s greatest need would meet. Education and child care would become the focus of our mission in the foundational period.

In recalling our past with gratitude, we must remember fondly and gratefully the ministry our Brothers performed in childcare institutions. From the period 1866 to 1965, the Xaverian Brothers staffed eleven facilities for orphans, semi orphans and boys sent by the courts to the homes. Due to the conditions they encountered at some of these institutions, and the demands on their time, attention, and energy, the Brothers missioned to those homes were heroic and, by and large, their influence on the young men in their charge far-reaching.

Brother Paul Van Gerwen captures what the Brothers’ ministry of child care and education was like when he speaks of Saint Mary’s Industrial School in Baltimore:

While we impart to the boys under our care the usual elements of primary instruction in reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar, and geography, we aim also to train their hearts to virtue, and thus to form them in those virtues which will make them good citizens, by first making them good Christians. We are happy to be able to report that their progress in learning has been satisfactory, while their general good conduct has come up fully to the standards of our reasonable expectations. (Annual Report, 1868, Brother Paul Van Gerwen)

This same openness guided our principal homes, in addition to St. Mary’s: The Working Boys’ Home in Newton Highlands, MA; Don Bosco Home (CYO Home), in Detroit, MI; Saint James Home, Baltimore; Mount Saint John’s, Deep River CT, that later evolved into a comprehensive treatment center and continues even today as an education and clinical center under the auspices of the Diocese of Norwich.

Our story is a continuum. The passion with which we approach the present is a result of Ryken’s openness to follow Christ where there is great need. From that same attitude and spirit we embrace our future. The stories you’ll read in this issue of Concordia continue to show how we align the world’s great need, with the Xaverian Brothers’ deep gladness.

(You can read some further reflections from Brother Edward about the Xaverian Brothers’ ministry in childcare on our Living The Charism website at tinyurl.com/stmarysYQCL. You can also read about how we are continuing our work with social issues around the world on our website [xaverianbrothers.org]. And see Peter Corbett’s reflection about his experience as a young boy at Working Boys Home in the adjoining article.)

Memories from an “old Workie boy”

Reflections by Peter Corbett, aka Eaglebeak, WBH ’53

A seemingly lost part of the Brothers’ history is a place called The Working Boys’ Home, Newton Highlands, MA. I am a part of the legacy of those Xaverian Brothers from so long ago who gave this unwanted and abused boy their love and care.

My years there were from 1949-1953 (grades 5-8). The Brothers were a part of our lives as much as we were a part of theirs. I consider those four years the best time in my young life, where my life had started. It was a wonderful place, a place where I was safe and cared for, where I was clothed, fed, and had a loving roof over my head. Sad to say I never realized just where all the clothing, food, heat, and love was coming from, until I was in my 60’s. Yes, we did mail out the Working Boy magazine, asking for donations, but I was unaware that it was the Brothers and their donors who really provided for me.

The Xaverian Brothers gave their time educating us, giving us direction in life and, above all, giving us their love and care. Brothers’ names from so long ago I still remember: Brother Oswald, and Brother Aubert; we had three Brothers there with the name of Peter, one of whom was my 8th grade teacher, music director, movie projectionist, and part-time administrator as well, we called him Big Pete; Brother Peter Julian was the refectory director, with all his other duties; Brother Peter Celestine the boss of the kitchen and scullery. There was the amazing Brother Roland, my 6th grade teacher and lower dormitory chief. One thing about him was pipe smoking and the aroma from that was a dead giveaway that we better be on our best behavior because he was close by. He was also a very talented Brother as every year he would decorate our 6th grade chalk boards with his images of the Nativity

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the annual March for Life, the largest pro-life event in the world, took place on Thursday, January 22, at the National Mall in Washington D.C. Xaverian Brothers Schools were well represented with students from most of our schools participating and the following schools able to send delegations: Lowell Catholic, Malden Catholic, Mount St. Joseph, Our Lady of Good Counsel, St. Bernard, Shrewsbury, St. Mary’s Ryken, Xaverian Brothers High School and Xavier High School. Students from St. John’s, Shrewsbury and Xaverian Brothers High School, joined together to celebrate a “consistent ethic for life weekend” with visits to the Holocaust Museum, an adult day care center, Arlington National Cemetery, the Native American museum, and a soup kitchen along with their participation in the March.

A Reflection by Patrick Goodman ’15, Saint John’s High School (Shrewsbury) on the Consistent Ethic of Life Weekend and the March for Life

The March for Life is an annual Pro-Life event that is held in Washington D.C. on the anniversary of Roe v. Wade, the United States Supreme Court’s decision to legalize abortion. This event, which gathers hundreds of thousands of people from around the country, rallies around the belief that all life is sacred, beginning from the very moment of conception. This year, along with nine classmates and two campus ministers, I travelled to D.C. for the March. When people hear about the March for Life, they generally understand it as a protest against abortion. The Pro-Life movement, however, is much more than simply protesting against abortion; it encompasses all aspects of human life. To be Pro-Life is to have respect for each other at all times, not just at birth and at death. It is to live the greatest commandment that Jesus gave us: to love God above all else, and to love your neighbor as yourself. Being Pro-Life embodies this commandment. Those who are Pro-Life understand the value of the human person, and see it as being priceless. And, while the March for Life has a particular focus on the sacredness of the beginning of life, the philosophy and overall theme for our trip was to show that being Pro-Life means to value the inherent dignity of human life in all stages, from conception to natural death.

Personally, I had never been on the March for Life before this...
As part of the celebration of Catholic Schools Week, on Thursday, January 29, 2015, students from different XBSS schools had the opportunity to talk, laugh and share a little bit about themselves with one another. The young people had little in common except the network of Xaverian schools and their common mission—different regions of the country, different school populations and different missions, but the same Xaverian Brothers who made the schools what they are today. Those are the very details they happily shared with one another throughout the lunch period that Thursday of Catholic Schools Week.

Thanks to the use of technology, students were able to meet new people and ask all those “burning adolescent questions” like, “Do you have girls at your school? What is your dress code? How many days off do you get a year? What do they serve in your cafeteria?” They also queried each other on some really interesting topics that highlighted the celebration of Catholic Schools Week such as, “How many of your students are Catholic? What do you take for religion classes? Do you have pastoral advisors?”

Through the wonders of the technology used by the schools, students who participated in the “chats” were able to walk around with their tablet or other device to give “tours” of their school. Students from Xavier HS in Middletown, CT were beamed into the cafeteria at St. Xavier, Louisville, KY and Mount St. Joseph, Baltimore, MD. On their virtual tours they met students and teachers passing in corridors who stopped to offer a warm “hello.” What a great way to build community across the network of Xaverian schools and forge new bonds between adults and adolescents who share that common Xaverian spirit!

The conversations were far more than superficial banter between students. At times, the topics took turns that no one really anticipated, such as the conversation about the Xaverian Brothers and...
Bryan Hultgren,
Xavier High School, Middletown, CT

When I signed up to represent Xavier to talk with the other Xaverian schools during Catholic Schools Week, I thought it was going to be a great opportunity to talk with the other schools and discover what they are like. Upon arriving at the computer that day, I was told that I'd be speaking to folks at Saint Xavier High School in Louisville, KY, the largest Xaverian Sponsored School in the country. Initially, I spoke with a faculty member who soon found a group of students who wanted to talk with me as they were eating lunch. When he found the group of students, we had a great chat. I was able to ask different questions of them and they, in turn, also asked me questions about Xavier. Since we had recently had some pretty big snow storms in New England, they were asking how we were doing with the snow and how much we got. They wanted to know if Xavier celebrated last year when UCONN won the NCAA basketball championship, who we wanted in the upcoming Superbowl, and questions about Xavier itself and our students and programs. I learned about St. Xavier High School as well and that they had similar classes as I did, that they don’t get a lot of snow, and that they had very similar values and beliefs as Xavier. All of the students I talked to were very kind and enthusiastic; and I got to see different points and perspectives from the school. I was really amazed, because instead of just talking to one person, I was able to see different people and compare my experience in the various classes with how they are experienced and taught at St. Xavier. It was really interesting to compare my experience to another’s and to reach out to one of our other XBSS schools.

Conor Habiger,
Mount St. Joseph, Baltimore

I did not look forward to skyping with other XBSS students during my D-period lunch. With a school week boxed in with college interviews and end-of-quarter assessments in most of my classes, 40 minutes of small talk seemed like a drag. But my internal griping was soon silenced by the peppy ringtone of my iPad. A student from St. X wanted to video call, and after a few more bubbles of the software’s ringtone burst, I was talking to a roomful of guys from St. X. Guys who wanted to know my Super Bowl and Oscars picks; what the weather was like and how much snow we would need to get school canceled; which two teams I have making the finals in April, etc.

Through the flow of our conversation, we gradually transitioned to questions about each other’s schools. We exchanged stories and jokes and talked about tradition. And as I walked through Mt. St. Joe’s halls, showing them off in the low-res lens of the iPad, I forgot about my busy workload and looming interviews. In listening to the voices of so many enthused St. X students and peeping through the device’s miniature frame, I was reminded of why I am blessed to go to Mt. St. Joe, to attend a Xaverian Brothers Sponsored School. These guys spoke so highly of their teachers and provided a visible definition of fellowship. Despite missing D-period lunch, despite losing an opportunity to cram for my Bio test later in the day, I am quite thankful I skyped with students from St. X. Sometime after we hung up and before E-period began, I felt better about things: my perspective had broadened, my outlook improved. Small talk indeed.
On December 3, the Feast of St. Francis Xavier, the Theodore James Ryken Award is presented to a member of the faculty, staff, or administration of each of the 13 Xaverian Brothers Sponsored Schools who exhibits a commitment to the Founder’s vision. In writing to this year’s recipients, Brother Edward Driscoll (General Superior) and Alice Hession (Director of Sponsorship) wrote:

“You can be rightly proud of the gifts you bring to your school community. Obviously, in the estimation of the administration, faculty, and staff, you are someone who strives to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to participate in the school’s community of faith, to nurture members of the school community and to be committed to academic excellence, recognizing the talents of individuals.”

This academic year the following were presented the Theodore James Ryken Award at a school liturgy or celebration on the Feast of St. Francis Xavier:

**2014 RYKEN AWARD WINNERS**

Mary Ann Scheiner – Lowell Catholic High School, Lowell, MA

Richard Hickey – Malden Catholic High School, Malden, MA

Kraig Loovis – Mount St. Joseph High School, Baltimore, MD

Jerry Naylor – Mount St. Joseph High School, Baltimore, MD

Joan Caputo – Nazareth Regional High School, Brooklyn, NY

Patricia Riely – Our Lady of Good Counsel High School, Olney, MD

John Ayres – St. Bernard School, Uncasville, CT

Al DeLuca – St. John’s High School, Shrewsbury, MA

James Stager – St. John’s Preparatory School, Danvers, MA

Christine Jaffurs – St. Mary’s Ryken High School, Leonardtown, MD

Frank Hulsman – St. Xavier High School, Louisville, KY

Mary Smith – St. Xavier High School, Louisville, KY

Robert Gill – Xaverian Brothers High School, Westwood, MA

Richard Montalbano – Xaverian High School, Brooklyn, NY

David Applegate – Xavier High School, Middletown, CT
Brother George Willenbrink (formerly Brother Wilfrid) passed away peacefully on the morning of March 19, 2015, the Feast of St. Joseph, at 4:30 at Nazareth Home, Louisville, KY. In the last two weeks of his life, Brother George was having health issues that included a silent heart attack and the gradual failure of his vital organs. A 1944 graduate of St. Xavier High School, Louisville, the young George Willenbrink first attended Harvard College before joining the Xaverian Brothers in 1948. He received his BA, MA, and PhD in Romance Languages from Harvard. George, taking the religious name of Brother Wilfrid, CFX, was clothed in the habit of a Xaverian Brother on the Feast of St. Joseph, March 19, 1949, and would die 66 years to the day later after a rewarding life as a Religious Brother, teaching, moderating student activities, working student retreats, being a Brother to his confreres, a model to his fellow teachers, and humbly following the ordinary way of a Xaverian Brother.

Brother George spent nearly 44 years at St. Xavier in Louisville, but also taught at St. Michael’s Diocesan High School, Brooklyn; Mayfield College, Mayfield, England; Xaverian Brothers High School, Westwood, MA; Malden Catholic HS, Malden, MA; Our Lady of Good Counsel HS, Wheaton, MD; and Xaverian College in Silver Spring, MD. Brother George also answered the missionary call and served two separate tours working in the Brothers’ missions in Congo (formerly Zaire).

General Superior, Brother Edward Driscoll, who taught with George for many of those 44 years at St. X, wrote of his fellow Xaverian, “George had a truly brilliant mind, whatever the language: French, Spanish, German, and Russian, plus Latin and Greek. He possessed a universal knowledge fed by his never ending curiosity. In the last few years, it was sad for me personally to see him struggle with his failing memory. George would have loved the life of a university professor. The world of ideas! Once he received his doctorate, it seems he only half heartedly applied for positions on the university level. His true love was being a Xaverian Brother. Being a Brother witnessing to his love of God was his vocation. Being a Xaverian Brother teaching adolescents French, Spanish or Russian was his avocation. Both gave him joy.”

At the funeral liturgy at St. Agnes Church, Louisville on the Feast of the Annunciation, Brother Edward spoke of how he invited Brother George to participate in the Christian Awakening Retreats program at St. Xavier. “The retreat was an opening experience for him,” Brother Edward said. “The students felt so very at home with him and he with them. George and his best friend, Brother John Wills, would spend the next forty years or so working retreats with our juniors and seniors. I am not overstating the students’ appraisal of both men; the kids simply loved both of them, but Frère Georges in a special way.”

Brother Edward concluded his eulogy of Brother George saying, “A simple heart, un coeur simple, can love without expecting to be loved in return.” That quote captures George’s life. He loved simply. He loved his vocation as a Xaverian. He loved teaching, working retreats, and tutoring reluctant learners after school. George did not seek anything in return.” May this good and faithful follower of Theodore James Ryken and the Xaverian way, now rest in peace.
When Ann E. Stromberg passed away last June, she left a generous gift to the Brothers through her estate. Ann, an orthoptist, spent decades teaching thousands of medical, ophthalmology and orthoptic students at Massachusetts Eye and Ear in Boston; this, in addition to working with children with various eye conditions. She left quite a legacy in her profession of the detection and diagnosis of eye disorders.

Ann, a native of Baltimore, also had a deep love for the Brothers and was quite familiar with the needs of the Xaverian Brothers Congregation. After all, her brother, a 1949 alumnus of Mount St. Joseph High School, was Brother Armand (Anthony Stromberg) who died in 1998. Another brother, Hank, graduated from the Mount in 1953, and five nephews were also taught by the Brothers at the Mount, graduating in ’66, ’68, ’70, ’77, and ’83. Jim Bryant, MSJ’64, who was related to Ann by marriage, notes that she was keenly aware of the dedication of her brother in his teaching ministry and how he served the Congregation by even giving haircuts to Brothers in his community. It was in witnessing his commitment, as well as the energy and devotion that the Brothers had in teaching her nephews, that Ann made the decision to honor the Xaverian Brothers through an estate gift.

Like Ann Stromberg, you too, can honor the Brothers by including them in your estate plans and by joining the Xaverian Brothers Concordia Society. The Society and its benefits acknowledge those who have remembered the Brothers in their estate plans.

Your generous bequest will help defray some of these escalating costs:

➢ Care and support for our growing number of aged and infirm Brothers
➢ Our education efforts through our Xaverian Brothers Sponsored School program
➢ Our missionary activities and the growth of the Congregation in some of the poorest areas of the world

For a list of benefits and other information, contact Ray Alcaraz at the Xaverian Brothers Development Office:
ricalaraz@xaverianbrothers.org