

# XAVERIAN BROTHERS

## MISSION SPIRITUALITY



## INTRODUCTION

October 10, 2014

Dear Brothers and Associates:

Pope Francis is calling the whole Church to celebrate the place of Consecrated Religious women and men in the life and mission of the Church. We also celebrate the 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of our foundation as "Brothers who are sent as missionaries to the world." With grateful remembrance of our past and with a deep desire to embrace our future with hope, we are happy to present you with the statement of our Xaverian Missionary Spirituality. This past year, the General Council worked on the statement. With grateful hearts we remember the six pioneer Brothers who brought the Xaverian Way from Belgium to the United States. With grateful hearts we also remember the faith and generosity of our Brothers who in 1931 went as missionaries to Congo, then to East Africa and Nyasaland (Malawi) (1949), Bolivia (1961) and Haiti (1989) in addition to our home missions of the Rosebud Reservation, Appalachia and Orangeburg. We connect our past with the future by living the present with passion.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ed', representing Brother Edward Driscoll, C.F.X.

Brother Edward Driscoll, C.F.X.  
General Superior

## HISTORY

The mission spirituality of the Xaverian Brothers is grounded in the charism of our Founder, Theodore James Ryken. Through his profoundly personal experience of God's unconditional love, Ryken received the grace to turn toward God. Ryken described the experience as "being put in my place." This place of humility and simplicity freed Ryken to love God and enkindled his missionary impulse that would shape his vision of "a congregation of religious brothers sent as missionaries to the world."

Since the time of Ryken, the Church's self-definition and the model of Catholic missionary activity have certainly evolved. What has remained essential to Xaverian mission spirituality, however, is Ryken's core belief in the unconditional love of God that, in his own words, "cannot be understood." The Xaverian missionary, through his humility and simplicity, manifests God's love to the people of the world in these days.

Ryken was impelled by his love of God and his devotion to the Church. He insisted on a "solid spiritual foundation" for missionary activity of his Brothers. In his early writings, Ryken even proposed a central house in Belgium where Brothers would be initially formed in spiritual exercises and be prepared for their eventual missionary work. For example, language study, methods of guiding children and teaching catechism. After spending time in the missions, the Brothers would then return to the central house for renewal. Ryken insisted that his brothers enter into an intimate relationship with God as the priority of the congregation. He viewed solitude and prayer as essential to our mission spirituality.

Xaverian mission spirituality calls us to unite ourselves to God through an integrated life of contemplation and service. Thus we are awakened to the Spirit of God and impelled to put our individual and communal giftedness to the service of the gospel.

## Needed Attitudes and Dispositions

Brothers undertaking mission in other cultures need a period of formation that encourages greater self-awareness. Besides knowledge of their personal strengths and limitations, the Brothers need to understand the dispositions of heart that open them to living with others in their life of service. Self-awareness also requires the Brothers to learn how to manage those dispositions that may become obstacles to their missionary life.

Experience indicates that certain dispositions are needed for ministry in another culture: faith, empathy, adaptability, the ability to share, the ability to receive, to collaborate, to confront, and the ability to accept different points of view.

Xaverian mission spirituality needs to be grounded in humility and simplicity with the growing realization that the shared faith, hope and charity of the community are the gifts that the missionaries offer to others in their desire to serve The Lord.

Xaverian mission spirituality is not, therefore, based in money or power. Brothers engaged in mission especially in Third World countries need to be careful about their use of money so as not to obscure the

"Look at Jesus, spending even as many as thirty years in solitude and only three years in preaching." -Ryken



purpose of their mission work. While motivated by a desire to help people who have material need, missionaries run the risk of creating even greater dependency in those they serve by giving individuals money and material goods that go beyond the purpose of their mission.

Effective mission work requires listening, an understanding heart, compassion, and the ability to reflect on and discern together the very experiences that the members of the mission community are experiencing.

Prayer and contemplation lead the Brothers to the realization that the mission and ministry they share is the work of the Spirit who reveals itself in their lived experiences.

Mission spirituality flourishes when there is a commitment to certain basic practices, such as, prayer life, ongoing communal formation, compassion as well as openness to personal and communal transformation found in the turning points in the life of the community.

Essential to Xaverian mission spirituality is the belief that the work done is the work of God.

## Preparation for Mission and Ministry in Another Culture

Prior to entry into the Congregation's mission and ministry in other cultures, the Brother is to discern with the General leadership whether he possesses the dispositions needed for such ministry and the compatibility needed to work with other Brothers.

The Brother prepares to enter this mission and ministry by going through cross-cultural training.

The Brother does any needed language study. He learns about the history, customs and manners of the people among whom he is to live.

## Establishing, Maintaining and Withdrawing from Missions

The General Superior with the deliberative vote of the General Council is responsible for establishing, maintaining and withdrawing from a mission.

Xaverian missions are established with the blessing and authorization of a Bishop to help build the Church under his care.

The Bishop and General Superior sign an agreement that spells out the mutual responsibilities as well as the terms of service.

The ministry needs to be a collaborative effort between native personnel, vowed members, Associates and volunteers who have the needed



**“Mission is at once a passion for Jesus and a passion for people”**

**- Pope Francis, *The Joy of the Gospel***

competencies and preparation for a particular ministry.

Before vowed members, Xaverian Associates or Volunteers takes up their responsibilities for ministry in the other culture, they complete the preparation outlined above.

The Congregation undertakes no financial obligation for the mission other than personnel. The Congregation may assist the Bishop in raising funds for a particular ministry.

All fund raising for the Xaverian missions is done by the person designated for Mission Advancement by the General Superior. The Director of Mission Advancement will consult the Brothers engaged in the missions to establish the annual goals for the fund raising appeals.

The General Administration will honor all gifts restricted for a particular purpose.

Brothers, Xaverian Associate or Volunteers are, therefore, asked not to undertake private or personal fund raising for the ministry or for an individual native person. Such a practice creates an unsustainable expectation and fosters favoritism.



**“Let none of you deceive yourself: we cannot excel in great things unless we first excel in lesser.”**

-St. Francis Xavier

**Xaverian Mission Spirituality Statement approved by  
General Superior and Council, June 2014**

**“Stand ready to answer when asked if you are available for God to become more present in your life and through you to the world.”**

- Fundamental Principles

