

# Concordia

FOLLOWING THE XAVERIAN WAY



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## Our Ryken Moment: Leadership Amid Uncertainty

Stepping out in faith into the unknown was a signature move of the Xaverian Brothers founder Theodore James Ryken. Marching onward with a trust that God would indeed provide, Ryken met many challenges, and grew from all of them. The tumultuous trials of 2020 have brought forth a Ryken moment for the Xaverian Brothers; one which calls for faithful steps forward amid uncertainty.

COVID-19 prevented the General Superior and Council from their scheduled visitation to Congo in April and from visiting the Brothers in other regions as well. Zoom video calls provided a unique connection that wouldn't have happened otherwise. Leadership adjusted to the challenging circumstances and as a community, placed their trust in God.

*cont'd p.5*



*Pictured above: Children at Ryken Center in Bungoma, Kenya, take pride in gardening and enjoy time spent outside amid the Coronavirus pandemic.*

## Grappling with Pandemic: Ryken Center for Hope Presses On

“We’re trying our best to keep the children at peace within the facility by engaging their minds in practical activities,” said Brother Edmond Juma. The Ryken Center for Hope in Bungoma, Kenya has been working to create space for children to play amid the stresses and panic caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, while strictly adhering to the health protocols provided by The World Health Organization (W.H.O.). “In our small ways, we have tried to put up some structures that would help us in poultry and animal keeping,” said Brother Edmond. “Projects aimed at facilitation of income to the Center.” Brother Edmond reports that he hopes to harvest maize in the Center’s farm with hopes of reducing food cost in their budget at least for a few months depending on how the field yields. “I am pleased and thankful to the Almighty for the gift of life He has freely blessed the staff and children with amid the pandemic,” said Brother Edmond.

## Work Continues at Ryken Primary School

At the Brother George Center in Likasi, Congo, construction work continues at the Ryken Primary School. Brothers Zacharie, Ananie, Vital, Serge, Alain, and Gracien are overseeing the project. This very needed center was started by Frère Georges, a Belgian Xaverian Brother who was completely mission-driven and committed to the poor; especially the youth of Congo where he spent over 50 years serving.



*Pictured above: Construction progress underway at the Ryken Primary School at the Brother George Center in Likasi, Congo.*

## Food for the Body & Soul: Brother William Ciganek on Serving in a Pandemic

Despite uncertain times, Brother William Ciganek is certain of one thing: God is showing up in new and unusual ways. Sometimes it is through late night phone calls from parishioners asking for prayer or counseling, other times God shows up in the people who come to receive food from the church distribution center. Brother William has seen God in donors, personal stories, memories, and even Facebook posts.

“I had to become more technological due to COVID-19,” he said. “The circumstances pushed me to learn and challenge myself to find new ways to connect. I have seen God show up in people, places, and conversations I wouldn’t have experienced otherwise.”

A native of East Baltimore, Brother William grew up in the Sacred Heart of Mary Parish where he works now under Bishop Dennis Madden. He attended Mount Saint Joseph High School where he experienced some of “the greatest, most wonderful and formative years” of his life.

Now a Pastoral Associate and Director of Faith Formation, pastorate of three parishes in East Baltimore, Brother William has faithfully stepped up to the challenge presented by the Coronavirus pandemic.



*Pictured above: Brother William Ciganek seated at his desk, taking calls for prayer and counseling, as well as learning new technologies and ways to connect amid COVID-19.*

“Countless families have been affected by food insecurity in these times,” he stated. “Lately I have found myself getting into conversations with people I wouldn’t have had otherwise; evangelizing and sharing the Gospel. People are looking for more than just food.”



*Pictured above: Brother William Ciganek stands with parishioners, volunteers and recipients of food distribution in East Baltimore, MD, serving the community amid the Coronavirus pandemic.*

Feeding the body and the soul has become Brother William’s calling. Spending his days working on food distribution and donations, he has humbly encountered God in ways that have moved him; growing his faith.

“I met a woman from Honduras who came to the U.S. to get her son away from gang life,” he said. “When she came to pick up food she asked if she could make an exchange, presenting cleaning materials that she had stocked up on. It was in this woman I saw the living out of our Fundamental Principles.”

Another woman in the parish gave Brother William forty dollars to buy food for the distribution center. “The twenty dollars I would have spent on gas and the other twenty I would have spent at the hair salon I no longer need at this time,” she said generously. “I want this to go to feeding the vulnerable.”

Brother William feels much like a missionary now more so than ever. Whether it is connecting in new ways with others over the phone, Zoom, social media, email, or through food distribution and serving his city, he looks to St. Francis Xavier’s example and strives to be a disciple of Jesus through the simple and ordinary.

“Who knew I could do so much through technology, food, and prayers,” said Brother William. “It all leads back to the empty tomb and the hope of the Risen Christ.” God is certainly using Brother William to reach people in new ways, meeting both physical and spiritual needs in times of uncertainty.

# St. Xavier High School Bungoma Continues to Engage Learners Amid Pandemic



*Pictured above: Students outside of St. Xavier High School in Bungoma, Kenya, pre-pandemic.*

Revision materials sent through emails and social media, phone calls and frequent communication with parents, and engaging students via WhatsApp are just a few ways teachers at St. Xavier High School in Bungoma, Kenya have continuously engaged learners amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Neighboring students have occasionally visited the school while wearing masks and observing health directives, collecting vital reading materials that have been made possible by the presence of the resident Xaverian Brothers who are part of the teaching staff and administration.

“Providing these services to students has been a challenge to achieve the desired learning objectives,” said Principal Ogutu Charles Wandera. “High cost incurred in printing learning materials and a lack of technological knowhow of the parents to access the materials for the students sent through different platforms has proven challenging. We appreciate our teachers for consciously engaging students despite all of this.”

“Despite COVID-19, St. Xavier High School is grateful to the Xaverian Brothers for the continuing moral and financial support during this trying period.”

**- Principal Ogutu Charles Wandera**

Earlier this year, Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta directed the country’s Ministry of Education and other relevant stakeholders that due to the increase in COVID-19 cases, to consider the reopening of basic educational institutions in January 2021. The Ministry of Education through the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) was mandated to offer virtual learning programs through radio stations and television.

The pandemic has negatively affected the financial state of the school, bringing fee collection to a halt, hence affecting other services such as payment of wages and salaries, school maintenance, security services, electricity bills, gardening and repairs.

“It is concerning that the school is experiencing only expenditure with no income from fee collection during this period,” said Mr. Wandera. He continued, “Despite COVID-19, St. Xavier High School is grateful to the Xaverian Brothers for the continuing moral and financial support during this trying period. We pray that God sees us through to a returned normalcy once again.”

# Our Ryken Moment: Leadership Amid Uncertainty

*cont'd from p.1*

While acknowledging that technology can never replace in-person visits, Brother Lawrence Harvey, a member of the General Council, stated that “the ability to meet via Zoom with the regional councils in Congo and Kenya was very positive.” The technology allowed for simultaneous translation making these calls and the encounters with the Brothers engaging and productive. Monthly video calls among Brother Daniel Skala and the members of the General Council, greatly enhanced communication among the General leadership team.

The ability to connect with Brothers, Associates, and Partners in Mission over periodic and well thought out online prayer services helped create a sense of solidarity among the Xaverian Family. This has also opened the door for new communication methods to incorporate even after safe travel resumes.

“The leadership of the Xaverian family still connects with its members around the world to share their faith experiences and lives,” said Brother Dominique Omedjunga Olondo, who shared about manifesting God’s love during one of the services. “Zoom meetings and prayer services allow the Xaverian family’s leadership to continue to connect and support, encouraging us to share our talents, participate in building a diverse community, and cultivating a sense of belonging in the congregation’s mission while reminding us that we’re all fundamentally loved by God.”

Joy, happiness, and communal life in God’s love are just some of the revelations Brother Dominique has realized through the newfound connection. “I understand that the love of God is present, constant, and unconditional,” he said.

“The Spirit of God is speaking to all members of the Xaverian family; therefore, we must hear how members live their faith in these uncertain times.”

A Foundation Day Online Prayer service celebrated with Brothers, Associates, Partners, and Benefactors, providing an opportunity to reflect on Ryken’s founding vision; celebrating how the Xaverian charism is lived out today. Amid tensions sparked by racial injustice, prayer service participants were invited to reflect on the Fundamental Principles that call us to give witness “to God’s care and compassionate love to all, especially those who suffer from want, neglect, and injustice.”

“We deplore racism in all its forms,” said Brother Daniel Skala. “This sin challenges us to raise our voices in support of the changes needed to bring about justice and compassion.”



*Pictured above: Brother Dominique Olondo and novices at Xaverian Center in Nairobi, Kenya, appear on Zoom during an online prayer service for Foundation Day.*

In addition to navigating new technological means of connecting, the Generalate staff encouraged the congregation to take time to read together and reflect on the adversities that Ryken overcame to fulfill his vision in the digital version of Ryken’s abbreviated autobiography, “March On! God Will Provide.” [www.xavb.ro/MarchOn](http://www.xavb.ro/MarchOn)

“While none of us could anticipate the challenges of this year, our charism continues to be a source of light and encouragement to all of us,” said Brother Daniel.

## Xaverian Education Endures Amid COVID-19



*The Our Lady of Good Counsel High School community gathered on campus in July to join in a student led peaceful protest and prayer service regarding racial injustice, following the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis. Student leaders did an incredible job organizing and speaking to the hundreds that came out to show their support.*

The Xaverian Brothers Sponsored Schools faced a Ryken moment of their own amid the uncertainties and challenges of mission-driven education during a global pandemic. Stepping out in faith and perseverance, Xaverian values were on full display, shaping character, building resolve, and living into mission.

“It is easy to see the zeal with which we embrace our mission of educating and forming young people,” said Kelli Hammond, Social Studies teacher at Saint Bernard School. “All signs point to growth and rejuvenation, even in the midst of the pandemic.”

Uncertainties about the format of the upcoming year has weighed heavy on faculty, staff, and administrators across the network, as well as students and families. With sincere humility, our schools have acknowledged that they do not have all the answers but plan to implement guidelines with compassion

for their communities – for those who are sick, have lost loved ones, the vulnerable, and the fearful.

Teachers have found themselves collaborating more closely with colleagues and becoming more aware of each other’s gifts, skills, and talents. The pandemic also provided an exceptional opportunity for students to live into their Xaverian values, actively engaging in servant leadership. From packing lunch bags for vulnerable families to using skills to make PPE for medical professionals, XBSS students raised funds, volunteered, and stepped out in faith to showcase God’s love. A socially distant student led peaceful protest and prayer service on racial injustice was held at Our Lady of Good Counsel while an XBSS Digital Advocacy Conversation was held online with 20 campus ministers from across the networking learning about digital advocacy as a means of fulfilling the social justice elements of the Xaverian mission amid the challenges of COVID-19.

33 presidents, principals, and ministry directors from across the network participated in a month-long virtual retreat focusing on self-care and discernment in Xaverian spirituality. The weekly sessions aimed at providing opportunities for personal reflection and spiritual sharing on Xaverian mission, provided much needed time and space for network leaders to focus on their inner selves as they prepared for the school year.

The class of 2020 had an unconventional end to their senior year, crossing stages and picking up diplomas at outdoor, socially distant commencement ceremonies, when possible. Following all guidelines established by each state and national health organizations, the live graduations hosted family members, faculties, and staff.

“There are many challenges and obstacles in our world, and many opportunities if you can keep an open mind and heart to see them,” said St. John’s Prep Headmaster Dr. Edward P. Hardiman as he addressed the graduating class. “We are facing two pandemics today: COVID-19 and racism. Both illustrate an unfulfilled need for every talent you possess. They will create better days. You will find those unfulfilled needs of our world, and you will be the change we need to see.”

Re-opening under hybrid and distance learning models, XBSS have succeeded in navigating unprecedented territory by putting students first and continuing to provide exceptional education.



33 presidents, principals, and ministry directors from across the network participated in a month-long virtual retreat focusing on self-care and discernment in Xaverian spirituality. Pictured above is a Zoom screenshot from the online event.



Pictured above: Outdoor and socially distanced commencement ceremony for the Xaverian Brothers High School class of 2020 in Westwood, MA.

“Trust in God’s benevolence allows us to be confident that we are where we ought to be and doing what we ought to be doing,” said Hammond. “It gives us the courage and commitment to face the world as it really is.”

## New XBSS Administrators



Due to COVID-19, a series of virtual meetings for new XBSS administrators will stretch through the fall. From building personal relationships to discussing the XBSS Governance Structure, Board Handbook, relationships between the XB’s, Sponsorship Office, and the local boards and schools, the meetings also provide time for reflection and discussion on the newly released *Partners in Mission: Understanding the Xaverian Way* booklet.

Pictured above from left to right: Frank Espinosa, new Principal at Mount St. Joseph, Rose Maria Redmond, new Principal at Malden Catholic, Paul Colistra, new President at St. Xavier, Amy Sample, new Interim Principal at St. Xavier.

## Novices Make First Profession in Congo

In his homily, Bishop Ruvezi encouraged the novices in their vocation as Brothers as they made their first profession. He mentioned that brothers do not seek privileges but rather lead a life hidden with Christ.

"Brothers do not have ambition in the Church of seeking high position," he said. "They remind us of our universal brotherhood, fraternal love and service."

He went on to remind the newly professed brothers that their first profession must be an intention for life and not a trial; bearing a desire to give their life totally to God. He mentioned his high esteem for elderly brothers such as Brother Victor Kazadi. The newly professed are assigned to various different communities. Brothers Kevin and Robert will go to Likasi and stay at the Lumumba community while Brothers Douglas and Gregory will go to Lubumbashi at the scholasticate community. Brother Claude will stay at the novitiate. Our prayers are with the Brothers as they move forward in their faith journey.



From left to right: Brs Gregory Maina, Br Kevin Masese, Director of Novices Br Patrick Fumbisha, Bishop Gaston Ruvezi of Kipushi diocese, Br Robert Kaunda, Br Claude Suse, and Br Douglas Okenyoro.

## Renewal of Vows in Nairobi



Renewal of vows in Nairobi, Kenya on August 1, 2020. Back row: Brothers Joseph Mbithi, Damiano, Gabriel, Vincentian Father Pat, Christopher, Stephen, Peter, Francis. Front row: Brothers Festus, Daniel Ouma, Edmond.

## Postulants Installed in New Community at Kipushi, Congo

Six postulants in their third year have been installed in their new community at Kipushi, Congo. Brother Patrick is their master and is assisted by Brother Germain Kisimba. Featured in this photo on the left are the two promotions (second year and third year) in Likasi after the annual assessment.

# Generalate Employee Spotlights



## Fallon Bakalich - Sr. Administrative Assistant

Fallon joined the staff in February. She has held Executive Assistant positions, worked as an Events Director for company health fairs in Baltimore, is life insurance licensed and has also worked as a financial advisor. Fallon has been an animal foster for MAS Rescue since 2014 and volunteers for Blue Water Baltimore, an organization that works to restore Baltimore's waterways for a healthy environment, strong economy, and thriving communities. In her spare time, she enjoys refurbishing old items and reads a new book every month for self and professional development. "I was extremely excited to join the Xaverian Brothers," Fallon said. "I have always wanted to use my skills in the nonprofit industry and love the environment of working with likeminded individuals that 'love thy neighbor' and believe we are all children of God."

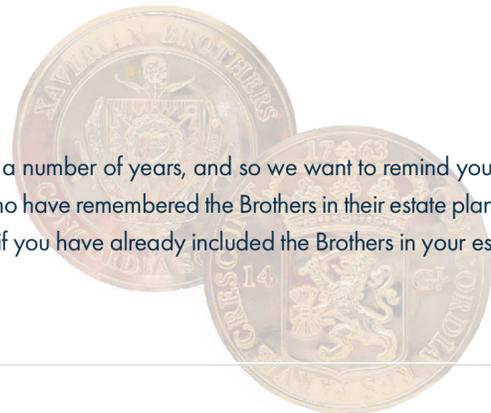
## Josh Kinney - Director of Communications

Josh joined the staff in March. Having previously worked in the faith-based, nonprofit world, he was thrilled to come onboard as Communications Director. "During my interview, I felt a sense of peace and belonging I had never felt before in my previous workplaces," he said. "Joining the Xaverian Brothers is an answer to prayer, and a blessing I am incredibly grateful for." Josh is excited about the creative potential to enhance, amplify, write, and create through his role. He sees his position as more than just a job, but rather a calling; an extension of himself, his values, and his heart. "There's no greater honor than to use my gifts and talents for purpose-driven mission rooted in faith." Josh is responsible for all things communications, managing social media, publications, newsletters, and website; helping to tell and share the Xaverian Brothers story in ways that uplift and inspire. Josh is a Philadelphia expat living in Baltimore. He is passionate about writing, traveling, and photography.



## Concordia SOCIETY

Many of you have been faithful and generous supporters of the Xaverian Brothers over a number of years, and so we want to remind you about the Xaverian Brothers Concordia Society. This Society and its benefits acknowledge those who have remembered the Brothers in their estate plans. For a list of benefits and information on how you can include the Brothers in your estate plans, or if you have already included the Brothers in your estate plans, please contact Stephanie Stricker at 410-646-6777 or [sstricker@xaverianbrothers.org](mailto:sstricker@xaverianbrothers.org).





# 2020 Jubilarians



**Bro. Harold Eccles, C.F.X.**  
**(Brother Bernard)**  
**75th Jubilee**  
*Nazareth Home, Louisville, KY*



**Bro. Peter Fitzpatrick, C.F.X.**  
**(Brother Benedict)**  
**75th Jubilee**  
*Nazareth Home, Louisville, KY*



**Bro. Gabriël Vanderjeugt, C.F.X.**  
**(Brother Ivo)**  
**70th Jubilee**  
*Herdershove, Bruges, Belgium*



**Bro. Paul Feeney, C.F.X.**  
**(Brother Antoninus)**  
**70th Jubilee**  
*St. John's, Shrewsbury, MA*

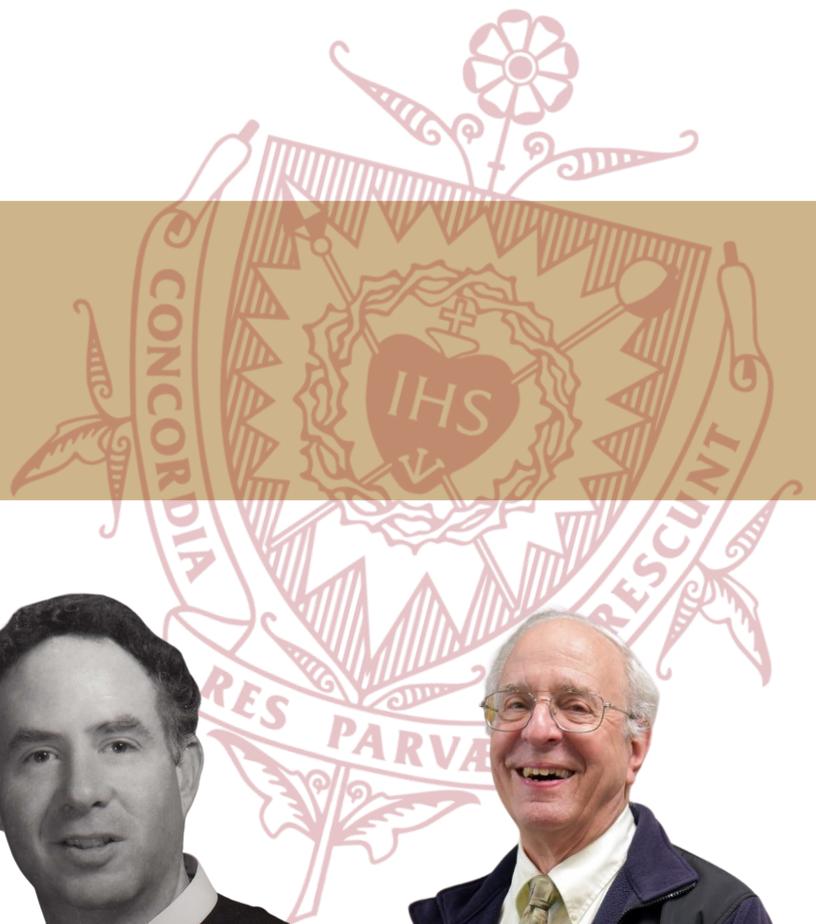


**Bro. Pat Pennell, C.F.X.**  
**(Brother Gavril)**  
**70th Jubilee**  
*Xaverian House, Danvers, MA*



**Bro. Richard Angarola, C.F.X.**  
**60th Jubilee**  
*Louisville, KY*

*This year we gathered virtually to recognize and celebrate the anniversaries of 12 Xaverian Brothers who have served the mission of the Congregation and the Church for a total of 580 years.*



**Bro. Paul LaBelle, C.F.X.**  
**60th Jubilee**  
*Westwood, MA*



**Bro. John McDonald, C.F.X.**  
**60th Jubilee**  
*Venice, FL*



**Bro. Joseph Pawlika, C.F.X.**  
**60th Jubilee**  
*Westwood, MA*



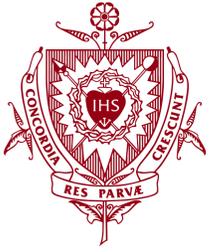
**Bro. James Smith, C.F.X.**  
**60th Jubilee**  
*Xaverian HS, Brooklyn, NY*



**Bro. Johan Vanhove, C.F.X.**  
**60th Jubilee**  
*Herdershove, Bruges, Belgium*



**Bro. Joseph Britt, C.F.X.**  
**50th Jubilee**  
*Apostolic Nunciature, Washington, D.C.*



## XAVERIAN BROTHERS

4409 Frederick Avenue  
Baltimore, MD 21229

## Haiti: Education Continues Amid COVID-19

The Sant Zaveryen Community is healthy and safe, continuing to take precautions to limit potential exposure to the Coronavirus. In addition to uncertainties due to the virus, Haitians continue experiencing a high cost of living, lack of consistent electricity, low fuel supplies which is driving up the cost of transportation, and political unrest. Brothers Vincent, Adolph, and the students at the Sant are grateful for the generosity of loyal donors.



*Student Jackson Merinor with his professors after delivering his thesis.*

**XAVERIAN BROTHERS**  
*IN HARMONY SMALL THINGS GROW*

## Stay Connected

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