Transitioning to a New Normal

Flexibility and adaptability have been characteristics of many Xaverian Brothers. As teachers they knew when to pivot from one activity to another to keep students engaged. Over the past year some of our senior Brothers have learned to be adaptable to changes in their lives—some due to Covid and others, the normal changes that come with aging and making health care related decisions.

In Louisville, Brothers have transitioned into a new life where they are actively engaged with fellow residents at the Treyton Oaks community. They continue to have personal and communal prayers, but periodically meet with residents for discussion and prayer. They also participate in a variety of other educational, cultural and social activities.

At Xaverian House in Danvers, a few Brothers needed additional care due to health related issues, relocating to Mary Immaculate Care Center in Lawrence. Brothers there are content and well cared for. Brothers at Xaverian House have slowly gotten back to a routine as Covid restrictions loosen. Recently they had their annual retreat directed by Virginia Blass, D.Min who spoke on the theme: “Into the Depths of God’s Compassion.” While on retreat, Brothers remembered in a special way the intentions of all our benefactors and the members of the Sacred Heart Union. In these examples, the Brothers place their trust in God no matter what life brings.

Continued next page
First Professions Made in Nairobi

Five novices made their first profession on July 24 in Nairobi, Kenya. Brothers Jean Luc Kasongo Mupenda, Raphael Busangu Mwananyembo, Fabien Kabwe Mutombo, Augustine Odia Nyambi, Alex Brian Musoke (pictured left to right). The Temporary Professed renewed their vows at the same ceremony, which was held at Apostles of Jesus Shrine in Nairobi. It was a wonderful celebration which kept in mind the restrictions due to COVID, but still allowed the Brothers and guests to celebrate their commitment to the congregation.

Welcoming and Reception of New Postulants at St. Joseph Center, Bungoma, Kenya

On the Solemnity of Saint Charles Lwanga and Companions (Martyrs) Brothers in Kenya thanked God as they witnessed three young men: Ondiebo Omwanda Jackson, Matara Stephene and Hillary Juma Wekesa (pictured in light blue shirts) being admitted into the postulancy program. As the main celebrant Fr. Robert invoked the blessings of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit upon these young men, they were thanked for the choice they have made. "May this choice be transformed into the service of the church in its evangelization particularly through the ministry of Christian Education as observed in our mission of the congregation," said Brother Dan Ssenyomo, CFX, Assistant Director of the Postulancy program, pictured right.
Vestition for New Novices in Congo

Monday, August 9 was the Vestition for the new novices. On September 4, 2021 Brother Gracien made his perpetual profession and the other Brothers from the Congo renewed their vows. May God bless and guide our new novices. Be sure to keep them in your prayers.

The Xaverian Brothers Sponsored Schools (XBSS) Sponsorship office held a Leadership Development Conference July 12-13 at the Generalate Office in Baltimore. Attendees reflected upon their leadership style, discussed Xaverian leadership with a panel of Xaverian Brothers, and engaged in dialogue on the mission, values, and calls of a Xaverian Brothers Sponsored School in light of the opportunities and challenges facing Catholic education today. The group also enjoyed a tour of Mount Saint Joseph High School and a collegial dinner together in Little Italy in downtown Baltimore.

Additionally, XBSS staff and Brothers welcomed new teachers, staff, and administrators to the XBSS network at Saint John’s High School, Xaverian High School and Our Lady of Good Counsel. Excited and enthusiastic teachers were grateful for the opportunity to meet many teachers from our Network of schools and learn more about the Xaverian charism and missions.
The days were filled with classes, playing games with kids and visiting nearby schools. For Ms. Annalee Abell, Kenya was blessing her “beyond measure.”

The former Geography/U.S. History teacher and Freshman Volleyball Coach at St. Xavier High School in Louisville, KY, embarked on a summer adventure to serve God in Africa, in Lodwar, Kenya, with the Xaverian Brothers. Stepping out in faith and into the unknown, Annalee joined her colleague and friend, Jennifer O’Brien, a teacher at Frederick Douglass High School in Lexington, KY, to serve the mission, love on students and families, and support the work of the Brothers.

In May, veteran Kenya missionaries Brothers Louis Calmel and Michael Foley met with Annalee to share their knowledge and lived experiences serving the mission in Africa.

In the 21st century, Xaverian schools are uniquely positioned to have a meaningful impact in the lives of its students,” said Annalee.

Brother Louis served as headmaster in Lodwar while Brother Michael taught and developed many educational opportunities. The Brothers edified and encouraged Annalee, sharing their stories and experiences prior to her venture.

Upon arriving in Kenya, Annalee worked at St. James Minor Seminary with Xaverian Brothers Moses Wafula Barasa, Director, and Brother Bernard Albert Wandura Jumah. She visited the novitiate community in Nairobi and had a chance to see the joy on the boys’ faces at St. James as they sported their new basketball uniforms for the season; compliments of St. Xavier High School in Louisville and showcasing how XBSS schools look out for each other even across continents.

“In the 21st century, Xaverian schools are uniquely positioned to have a meaningful impact in the lives of its students,” said Annalee.

Pictured above: Annalee Abell (left) and Jennifer O’Brien (right) pose with a family in the Lodwar, Kenya, where Xaverian Brothers missions are active in the community.
“In our time at St. James Minor Seminary in Lodwar, it was clear that the mission of evangelicalism and the opportunity for rigorous education are especially prevalent. As a former XBSS teacher, it warms my heart to see the mission of the Xaverian Brothers being carried out in the desolate and often forgotten region of Turkana in Northern Kenya.”

Annalee described one of the best parts of her time in Kenya as simply visiting with families of students in the Turkana region, affirming it as “Such a true blessing.”

She quickly realized that the basis for Xaverian education rested in relationships with students. Brother Moses and Madame Ingrid allowed Annalee to teach grammar review and poem instructions which especially thrilled her given her distinct love for poetry.

“I think that all the boys will remember the day we covered love poems where they were treated to a dramatic reading of E.E. Cummings’ ‘I carry your heart (I carry it in)’ and then were tasked with writing their own poems,” she said. “For 11th graders, this was quite hilarious for them.”

As Annalee and Jennifer visited schools in the region, they began to better understand the education system and how the Xaverian mission works to serve the community.

“At St. James, the students welcomed me and Jennifer into their classrooms, challenged us to sports contests and invited us to participate in their weekly debates,” she shared. “The students and faculty are such a blessing to this world, and we felt honored to be furthering connections through the Xaverian mission of community and education.”

Time spent at St. James affirmed for Annalee that students everywhere are very much the same; all holding desires to understand their place in the world, preparing for their futures, and building their relationships with God. She treasured her time in Kenya, describing it as full of blessings and furthering of God’s mission. Through our Xaverian network, the Spirit has continued to move across two continents.

“I think of all the things we have done in Kenya, meeting the families of the students was my personal favorite,” Annalee wrote. “It has been difficult to find the words to show my gratitude towards the students and families for their warmth.”

Pictured above: Annalee Abell in a poetry class at St. James Minor Seminary School.

“"The students and faculty are such a blessing to this world, and we felt honored to be furthering connections through the Xaverian mission of community and education""
This year we gathered virtually to recognize and celebrate the anniversaries of fifteen Xaverian Brothers who have served the mission of the congregation and the church for a total of 925 years.
Brother John Mahoney passed away on St. Patrick’s Day, March 17, 2021, at Mary Immaculate Care Center in Lawrence, MA. He was 90 years old and would have marked his 72nd anniversary of his admission into the novitiate two days later on the Feast of St. Joseph. Born in Malden, MA, Brother John entered the Congregation after graduating from Boys Catholic (MC) in the class of 1948. His younger brother, James, would follow him into the Congregation upon his graduation in 1950. Given the religious name Brother Crispin upon entrance into the novitiate, he professed his first vows in 1951 and went on to study at Xaverian College, Silver Spring, MD and at the Catholic University of America, graduating in 1954 with a degree in Spanish. He received an MA at Fordham and also studied at Hunter College, Manhattan SUNY, New Paltz, NY and the Washington Theological Union. He was a language teacher at Mount St. Joseph, Baltimore (1954-56), Cardinal Hayes, Bronx (1956-65), St. John’s College High School, Washington, DC (1970-79) Our Lady of Good Counsel HS, Wheaton (1980-83). He also taught at the Brothers’ Scholasticate, Xaverian College, and served as Dean of the college (1965-70).

Brother John felt called to direct service with the poor and marginalized, so he put his language skills to good use and worked with migrants in the Diocese of Raleigh, NC from 1983-1989. He responded to an invitation to be part of the Brothers’ new mission to Haiti in 1989. He spent the next dozen years with Brother Harry Eccles on the compound of the Little Brothers of the Incarnation in Hinche, Haiti. They lived a very simple life among the Haitian people. In addition to teaching English to seminarians and working in the formation program for the Little Brothers, Brother John also helped to manage the credit union established by Fonkaze, a non-profit that seeks to empower the rural poor, especially women. He returned to the US in 2001 and ministered at My Brother’s Keeper soup kitchen in the Irvington section of Baltimore and with the Catholic Worker house. John was found most Monday’s along with other advocates of non-violence at the Baltimore jail advocating for repeal of the death penalty. He joined the Xaverian House Community in Danvers, MA in 2017.

Brother Edward Driscoll wrote, “John’s is a simple life story about living our Xaverian charism. His love of God was nurtured by his disciplined practice of prayer, fasting and service to others. His faithfulness to the missionary character of the Congregation impelled him to follow the risen Christ, as did Francis Xavier, whether in a Spanish class with American students, in the fields of North Carolina with Hispanic migrants, in the countryside of Haiti encouraging people who were seeking out an existence, or in Baltimore feeding the poor and unemployed minorities.” Read Brother Edward’s In Memoriam of Brother John Mahoney at xavb.ro/JohnMahoney

BROTHER JOSEPH COMBER, CFX

After enduring the struggles of ALS for over 7 years, Brother Joseph Comber entered eternal life at the Leonard Florence Center for Living in Chelsea, MA on April 24, 2021. He was 80 years old and had been a Xaverian Brother for nearly 63 years. A native of Lawrence, MA, Joe followed in his father’s and uncle’s (Bishop John Comber, MM) footsteps and went to St. John’s Preparatory School, Danvers, MA, graduating as valedictorian in the class in 1958. He then entered the Congregation at Old Point Comfort, VA in July, 1958, became a novice and was given the name Brother Maximus. He made his first vows on September 8, 1960. He was a Classics major at Xaverian College and the Catholic University of America, graduating with a degree in Latin in 1964. He would go on to receive an MA in Biblical Literature at St. Louis University and a PhD in New Testament at the prestigious program at the University of Chicago in 1975, writing his dissertation on the Gospel of Matthew. The majority of his teaching career was at his alma mater, St. John’s Prep (1964-67; 1973-94), with the exception of his teaching while a graduate student at the University of Chicago and courses he taught at St. John’s Seminary, Brighton (1975-79).

Joe had a caring, patient, easy-going classroom style; he called students to academic excellence, but he flavored his classes with humor, kindness and compassion. He moderated the German Club and traveled with students to Germany. He also moderated the Jazz Band.

Given that a major focus of his study on the Gospel of Matthew was on Jesus’ healing ministry, it is no surprise that he felt called to this ministry himself as he helped to care for his patients at Mary Immaculate Nursing and Restorative Center in Lawrence, MA.
He later became a certified nursing assistant and a restorative aide assisting in physical therapy. He worked at Mary Immaculate for nearly 20 years until he was diagnosed with ALS and had to retire.

For over 40 years, Brother Joe shared community with the Brothers at Vinton Street in Melrose, MA. After his diagnosis of ALS, he faced the challenges of his progressive disease with the support of his Brothers and with a zeal for life and a determination to celebrate each day. In the eulogy prepared by his confreres Brother Tim Hoey and Tom Puccio, they wrote: “It seems particularly poignant that Brother Joe died during the Easter season. This year he was undergoing his own passion as the Church remembered Jesus’ passion. Ronald Rolheiser points out in his book, The Passion and The Cross, that the word “passion” has two meanings. When we speak of Jesus’ passion, of course, it denotes his suffering, but it also points to Jesus’ passivity in His acceptance of and obedience to his Father’s will. Despite the anguish, agony, and loneliness Jesus felt on the road to Calvary. His Resurrection transformed the cross into a sign of God’s eternal love. Joe’s faith and trust in God’s love despite the suffering and difficulties he faced during his illness can inspire us as we carry our own crosses. We thank God for Joe’s brotherhood, fellowship, and faithfulness in his time with us, and we trust that he is smiling on us now, at peace knowing God’s loving embrace and life everlasting.” Follow the link below to read the eulogy Brothers Tim Hoey and Tom Puccio prepared: xavb.ro/JoeComber

BROTHER J. ROBERT HOULIHAN, CFX

On July 18, 2021 Brother J. Robert Houlihan, better known as “Brother Houli” passed away just short of his 90th birthday and after nearly 72 years as a Xaverian Brother. Although suffering with Alzheimers for many years, he had been thriving both at Xaverian House and at Mary Immaculate until he succumbed to pneumonia. Brother Robert was one of our “apostles to the marginalized” whose enthusiasm for life was contagious, just ask the many students whose life of service he inspired. A native of Peabody, MA and a graduate of St. John’s Preparatory School Class of 1949, he entered the Brothers’ novitiate in Old Point Comfort, VA in September of 1949 and was given the name Brother Arnold when he became a novice the following March 19th. Following his first profession on the Feast of St. Joseph in 1952, he spent 2 years studying at Xaverian College, Silver Spring, MD before being sent out to teach freshmen at the Manhattan Annex of Cardinal Hayes HS – Our Lady of Good Counsel, Yorkville. He then spent 5 years teaching fourth graders at St. Theresa School, Brooklyn before returning for one year to OLGC on 91st St, followed by 10 years at the main campus at 650 Grand Concourse. When the Brothers withdrew from Cardinal Hayes in 1970, Brother Bob joined the faculty at Xavier HS, Middletown, CT where he spent the next 44 years, 38 of those teaching freshman science before retiring from the classroom in 2008. Like many of his contemporaries, he earned his initial degree by riding the subway to St. John’s University on evenings, weekends and summers. He received his MA from Columbia Teachers College in 1966.

While the stories of his days in the classroom whether teaching 70 fourth graders or 40 freshmen in a science lab are legendary, he is probably best known for his work outside the classroom. Beginning in 1966 until he joined the Xaverian House Community in Danvers in 2014, he dedicated much of his energy and focus to empowering people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). At Cardinal Hayes he began his first recreation program for people with I/DD. He stayed involved with this endeavor even after he left Hayes, travelling to the Bronx a few Sundays a month to participate in the program. At Xavier High School he initiated the MYARC program with the help of students from Mercy and Xavier. Not only did he serve the I/DD community with this program – and became an advocate for their needs on the state level – he also used this program as leadership development program for his volunteers. He funded his program by collecting and redeeming bottles and cans and by selling candy at football games. In his spare time “Houli” took care of the grounds at Xavier – and they were extensive. When asked about his dedication to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, he said, “I didn’t want anything to do with it. It was the Lord’s work. I just grew into it.”

A dedication in a Xavier yearbook honoring him sums it up: “We are honored to pay tribute to this ebullient and indefatigable man, this zealous humanitarian, who never stops doing all he can for his flowers, his Camera Club, his students, his school, and his handicapped friends.”

Read Brother Thomas Ryan’s In Memoriam of Brother Houlihan at xavb.ro/Houlihan
BROTHER RICHARD ANGAROLA, CFX

Diagnosed with metastatic cancer in early July, Brother Richard Angarola would succumb to the cancer on July 30, 2021 while being cared for at the Nazareth Home, Louisville, KY. A native of Brooklyn, he first met the Brothers as a freshman at St. Michael’s Diocesan HS and was inspired to enter the juniorate at Ryken High School in Leonardtown, MD in his sophomore year, graduating in 1960, and then moving one building down to become a postulant in July that year. In September, he would begin the novitiate and be given the religious name Brother Robert. After taking vows in 1962, he went on to Xaverian College and Catholic University, graduating with a degree in French in 1966. He would go on to receive an MA in Education at Spalding University in Louisville and a Certificate of Theological Studies from the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkley, CA.

Brother Richard begin his teaching career at St. Xavier HS, Louisville where he taught for 10 years (1966-76). It was at St. X that he also began his extensive work in campus ministry and counseling, in addition to his teaching French and religion. After serving at two non Xaverian schools in Illinois, he returned to his alma mater (now St. Mary’s Ryken HS) first as assistant principal and then as principal from 1983-89. He would later serve as a guidance counselor at Xaverian, Brooklyn (1995-2002) and Nazareth RHS, Brooklyn (2002-2011). From 1989 until 1995 he would serve the Province in a number of roles as Director of Development, Director at Ryken House and Director of Volunteer Ministry. He returned to Louisville in 2012 to retire and to volunteer in Campus Ministry at St. Xavier High School.

His friend Brother Ed Driscoll wrote in an In Memoriam, “Richard’s warm down-to-dearth manner, his support and help, and his devoted loyalty to his friends created a place that they could call home. He was also gifted with a sharp analytical mind, a sense of humor, wonderful organizational talents, and a real desire to make a contribution to others his mission in life. Richard will be greatly missed by his many friends and acquaintances. And they are numerous. Richard’s impact on the lives of others was life-giving and positive. He not only accepted and helped many people, but he also enjoyed and savored their friendship. Richard exuded la gioia di vivere (the joy of living) reflecting the graciousness of his Italian heritage.”

Read Brother Edward’s In Memoriam of Brother Richard at xavb.ro/Angarola

BROTHER JAMES MALONE, CFX

Brother James Malone entered eternal life peacefully at the Kaplan Center in Danvers, Massachusetts, early in the morning of Sunday, August 1, 2021. He had been diagnosed with a bacterial blood infection at the end of June which was treated with antibiotics — it was a recurrence of a similar infection he had 12 years previously. This time, his body was not able to fight the infection. After consulting with his doctors, he made an informed decision to enroll in hospice care. A native of Somerville, MA, Brother Jim entered the Congregation after graduating from St. Clement’s High School in 1955. On September 8 that year upon entrance into the novitiate he received the name Brother Liam. A lifelong learner, he received his initial degrees, a BA in US History and MA in Religious Education from the Catholic University of America. He would go on for further studies in school administration, theology, spirituality, Black Catholic Studies, pastoral ministry to name but a few.
His early teaching career had him teaching and coaching at Notre Dame, Utica (1961-66), St. John’s, Shrewsbury (1966-72), Malden Catholic (1972-75). He then went into school administration serving as assistant principal and principal at Lansing Catholic Central HS in Lansing, MI. (1975-79) and then moving into diocesan administration as superintendent of catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Portland Oregon (1980-82), Diocese of Metuchen, NJ (1982-88), Diocese of Wilmington, DE (1998-2006). In part because of his passion for religious education, Jim also had a passion for faculty formation and served in that role twice for Xaverian Brothers Sponsored Schools (1988-94, 2007-08) as well as at Bishop Kearney and Xaverian High Schools, Brooklyn, St. Elizabeth HS, in Wilmington, DE and Pope John Paul II HS in Slidel, LA where he was ministering when the earlier blood infection forced him to retire and relocate to Louisville, KY for care. He later relocated to Xaverian House, Danvers to be closer to his family.

Brother Edward Driscoll, in the In Memoriam he wrote for Brother Jim, remarked: “It was a privilege to participate in the formation programs Jim did. Often, he presented to a hundred or more teachers. Strangers at the beginning of the program, friends at the end. Jim was a great storyteller. He always used a Gospel story about Jesus. He would bring the story alive. His sense of humor, high energy and uncanny ability to connect a gospel story to real-life situations encountered by teachers were amazing to watch. Teachers were engaged. Jim’s major message to them was always ‘to work the crowd’ as Jesus did.” As Brother Ed says, “Jim leaves us a powerful example of how to let go of one’s own will in order “to stand ready to answer God when God asks you if you are available for Him to become more present in your life and through you to the world.” Like Mary, Jim learned to willingly respond: ‘Let what you have said be done to me.’”(Fundamental Principles of the Xaverian Brothers). Read Brother Edward’s In Memoriam of Brother James Malone at xavb.ro/JamesMalone

Hope Amid Turmoil in Haiti

A devastating earthquake struck off the southwest coast of Haiti on August 14 - approximately 80 miles south of Port au Prince. Brother Vincent, Brother Adolph, and the young men at the Sant are safe. Many of the students had already left for their activities that day, but Brothers Vincent and Adolph and one other young man were home at the time of the earthquake. As soon as they felt the tremors they fled outside for safety. There was no apparent damage to their residence. In the southwest part of the country, there is much destruction and loss of life. The latest reports are of over 2,000 deaths from the earthquake. Please keep the Haitian people in your prayers as they struggle to recover from this latest disaster.

Two weeks prior to the assassination of Haiti’s President, Jovenel Moise, 18 people were murdered in one day. “Insecurity in Haiti has become a regular phenomenon that spares no one,” said Brother Vincent.

Brother Bill Griffin, who teaches and ministers full-time in Haiti at St. Gabriel’s School, had returned to the U.S. several weeks prior for his annual home visit in Takoma Park, MD. Before the attack on the Haitian government, the country’s capital city of Port-au-Prince had been experiencing a wave of kidnappings including priests and nuns from the community of St. James and the Archdiocese of Cap-Haitien. One of the kidnappings occurred in the Croix des Bouquet area where the Sant Zaveryen community is located.
As the days pass and carry lots of drama and fear for the increasingly dark future, it becomes clear that the population has been left to its own devices,” stated Brother Vincent. “We’re thankful for those who pray for us and write to us. These gestures comfort us greatly.”

In spite of the chaos, hope abounds at Sant Zaveryen where student Belardet Brisseau was recently able to attend a seminar on the analysis of communications. He was tasked with presenting his group’s work to their instructor who offered praise and encouragement.

Although the country continues taking precautions, Haiti is still experiencing the spread of COVID-19. Fortunately, classes are resuming, making up for the delay earlier in the year. We are happy to report that Brothers Vincent and Adolph as well as some of the Sant Zaveryen students have been able to get vaccinated. They are all healthy and safe; pressing on in their studies, hopeful amid these perilous times.

“Please keep praying for peace in Haiti amid these turbulent times,” implored Brother Vincent. “Thank you very much to all of you who support us. You are providing transformative opportunities and changing lives and futures forever. We are so very grateful.”

School Building Projects Underway in Africa

Two schools are under construction, one in Likasi and another in Kipushi. While the Likasi project was approved under the leadership of Brother Edward Driscoll as General Superior, Kipushi’s benefited from the funding plan approved by current General Superior, Brother Daniel Skala.

“As a region, we can only express our sincere gratitude to the entire Congregation for its spiritual and financial assistance,” said Brother Patrick.

The Kipushi school is built in an underprivileged area, where there is no electricity or running water. Despite these conditions, the Brothers desired to live within the community. On the day of the laying of the cornerstone, Gaston Ruvezi, Bishop of the diocese, expressed his joy to see the Brothers initiating such a project in this underprivileged environment. Read more and see photos at: xavb.ro/AfricaSchools

Pictured above: Brother Adolph (second from the left) stands with a grieving family who lives in the neighborhood. The Brothers and the young men at the Sant make an effort to be welcoming and supportive towards all those in their communities.
The Generalate staff held a retreat day in July at the Shrine of St. Anthony in Ellicott City, MD. Pictured (L-R) Bro Lawrence Harvey, Bro Richard Lunny, Dr. Patrick Slattery, Fallon Bakalich, Sharon Dawson, Ben Horgan, Stephanie Stricker, Bro Daniel Skala, Rhonda Tully, Bro Paul Murray, Josh Kinney, Shawn Lynch.