

# Xaverian Brothers Sponsored Schools



Book of Prayers



# Xaverian Brothers

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## *Sponsored Schools*

Dear Friends,

In Xaverian Brothers Sponsored Schools, prayer is a vital element of our formation. As we pray together, we not only form a closer relationship with God, but we also come to a better appreciation of our Xaverian charism and mission. The prayers in this book, rooted in the spirituality and Fundamental Principles of the Xaverian Brothers, have been created over time by a number of Partners in Mission. We encourage you to use these prayers and adapt them to your unique setting.

It is also our hope that these prayers honor our tradition while helping us to remember that we are a part of something greater than ourselves. May they further inspire our faith life as we call to mind the motto of the Xaverian Brothers, “Concordia Res Parvae Crescunt”, In harmony, small things grow”

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# Xaverian Mission

**Leader** We are a holy people, men and women called by our God to ministry in this moment of history—and the spirit of God is upon us.

**All** We pray this day for the grace to serve as effective stewards of the mission of [Name of School] and Xaverian Sponsorship.

**Reading:** Xaverian Brothers Sponsored Schools serve the Catholic Church’s educational mission by forming young people to be faith-filled contemplative leaders who address the evolving needs of our world. Informed by our Xaverian and gospel values, our schools seek to educate the whole student by nurturing each person’s unique giftedness. Xaverian students model Christ by utilizing their talents to respect the diversity of God’s creation, seek justice, and love their neighbor.

*Mission Statement of the Xaverian Brothers Sponsored Schools*

**Reading:** Education can play an outstanding role in promoting the inculturation of the Gospel. Nonetheless, Catholic centers of education will be able to engage in authentic evangelization only if at all levels they clearly preserve their Catholic identity. The content of the education they impart should make constant reference to Jesus Christ and his message as the church presents it in her moral teaching. Only in this way will they train truly Christian leaders in the different spheres of human activity, and in society, especially in politics, economics, science, art and philosophical reflection.

The influence of these educational centers should extend to all sectors of society without distinction or exclusion. It is essential that every possible effort be made to ensure that Catholic schools, despite financial difficulties, continue to provide “a Catholic education to the poor and the marginalized in society.”

*Excerpts from “The Church in America” Apostolic Exhortation, Pope John Paul II*

**Reading:** [Insert your school’s mission statement]

**Optional** Invite prayer participants to reflect for a moment on the readings above. Then consider asking and inviting comment on any number of the following:

1. What words in the mission statement of my school stand out for me? What catches my attention? Why?
2. How does the mission statement of my school or the network of Xaverian Brothers Sponsored Schools support me in my ministry of education in the following areas?
  - i. Supporting my personal growth as an educator
  - ii. Supporting students and their families
  - iii. Supporting my colleagues

- iv. Supporting my superiors
  - v. Supporting the national network of Xaverian Brother Sponsored Schools?
3. What gifts do I bring to living out my school's mission statement? How might this mission statement empower my work moving forward?
  4. How does the mission statement of my school or of the XBSS challenge me? How might this new position challenge me to grow as a person of faith and a professional educator?

**Response:** (Please respond after each reader ... "Loving God, make us open and receptive to new ways of realizing our mission.")

**Reader 1** When we meet unexpected barriers in ourselves and others, we pray...

**Reader 2** When being a catalyst for change demands new courage and vision, we pray ...

**Reader 3** When carrying out the educational mission of the Church requires us to widen our vision, we pray ...

**Closing Prayer:** Good and gracious God, we are thankful for your call to serve in the Catholic educational mission. Help us to articulate once again your vision so that it pervades the hearts and lives of each of us and all associated with the [insert school name] school community. Give us the strength to carry out the vision for the mission of the Church and the service of the poor. We come to you with ready hearts.

**AMEN.**

# Xaverian Charism

**Leader:** We recall that we are surrounded by God's love and care for us. Let us take a moment to recognize God's presence with us today...

**Reading:** Although the time founders of religious congregations walked this earth varied, the Spirit weaves a common thread among all of them. In every account, each of the individual founders saw a great need within the church, and powered by Christ's love, they dedicated their life to addressing it. In response to his or her calling, they "lived into" that passion, and the fruits of their labor — through the Spirit's rendering — became known in time as that person's gift or charism. This special gift that was bestowed on individual founders did not point others to them; rather, it drew followers closer to God and to the church. Their charisms were so strong that they shaped the spirit and identity of entire communities. Those communities organized a way of life that continued the spirit of the founders.

In her book *Religious Life at the Crossroads: A School for Mystics and Prophets*, Sr. Amy Hereford, CSJ describes the rich story of religious congregations in this way:

"Each religious institute is the recipient and guardian of such a gift or charism. The founding members received the gift or charism in a particular way and had the task of articulating that charism for the time and place in which they found themselves. Generally, this involved a particular experience of God, community, and mission. The experience of God gave rise to a spirituality and spiritual tradition that grew in depth and clarity over time with each succeeding generation. The experience of community enabled the group to grow and attract new members to live it."

*WHAT IS A CHARISM? (Adapted from Catholic Health Association Prayer Resources)*

**Reading:** The vision of a Xaverian Brothers Sponsored School has its origin in the charism of the Brothers of Saint Francis Xavier. This charism, the founding impulse of the Congregation, is a gift received by the Founder, handed on and further enriched and enlivened by the giftedness of those who collaborate in Xaverian Sponsored education. Together, the Xaverian Brothers and those who collaborate with them in their educational ministry serve as stewards for the Xaverian charism.

**Leader:** As partners in mission in a Xaverian Brothers Sponsored School, we seek to live the charism by:

- Mutually helping, encouraging, and edifying one another, and working together
- Creating school cultures that foster contemplation in action,

- turning toward God and placing ourselves in His service
- Establishing inclusive communities of faith in our schools and embracing the challenges and opportunities of dialogue between cultures
  - Building up the Kingdom of God
  - Fostering excellence and empowering those around us to realize their God-given gifts
  - Entering into an ever deeper sharing of faith and prayer and respond to our call to minister in a Xaverian Brothers Sponsored School

**Reflection:** As we reflect on the charism as lived by partners in mission, which of these characteristics are most evident in your life or your school? Which characteristic challenge you or your school community?

**Closing:** O God, may our deliberations and decisions help each member of this school community draw closer to you and further the growth of your Kingdom. Guide our paths toward you. We give you thanks for all the blessings of this school year. We pray in Jesus' name.

**Amen.**

# Stewardship

**Leader:** We are a holy people, men and women called by our God to ministry in this moment of history—and the spirit of God is upon us.

**All** We pray for the grace to serve as effective stewards of the mission of Xaverian Brothers Sponsored Schools.

**Reading:** As partners in mission, we are participants and stewards in building up the Kingdom of God. Like Theodore Ryken, we believe that the best way to bring out the giftedness in an individual is through education, but we realize that education takes many forms. We believe that it is through our life of gospel witness lived in community and through our call to seek justice that we respond to the Spirit's summons "to manifest God's care and compassionate love to the people of the world in these times.

*Partners In Mission: Understanding the Xaverian Way*

**Reading:** "As disciples of Jesus Christ, you are called to follow in His footsteps and minister God's healing touch of love, through word and deed, to all whom you meet in your journey of life. You have responded to the invitation:

Come follow me. Day by day you will need to renew your response. Do not become discouraged over the difficulties you encounter in your life of gospel service. Knowing that difficulties would be your share, Your Founder judged: that nothing special is achieved without much labor, effort and zeal. Remember, Jesus, your brother, has walked this path before you. In you, as Risen Lord, He wants to walk this path again, and His Spirit, the Spirit of God, now guides you."

*Fundamental Principles of the Xaverian Brothers*

**Closing** Good and gracious God, we are thankful for your call to serve in this Catholic educational mission. Help us to articulate once again your vision so that it pervades the hearts and lives of each of us and all associated with our school community. Give us the strength to carry out the vision for the mission of the Church. Amen.



# Enduring Personal Relationships

**Leader** Creator God, we remember your faithfulness and love; we give you thanks for the signs of your presence among us. Grant us the grace to remain faithful as you are faithful.

**All** May our inner vision be transformed so that we can see more clearly that the one who has called us will strengthen us, the one whose power now at work in us can do immeasurably more than we ask or imagine.

**Leader** May we be open to the Spirit - that we may discern with hope and joy and confidence - what we are called to be in order to build the reign of God.

**All** May we be the ones who in faithfulness and solidarity bring the loving compassion and mercy of our God to a needy world. Amen.

**Reading** In collaboration with the founder's vision, we endeavor to "mutually help, encourage, and edify one another, and to work together." We seek to develop school communities in which we foster the belief and attitude that we "were created by the God of love, in God's image and according to God's likeness, to be a unique expression of [God's] love." We believe that the ministry of teaching "has an extraordinary moral depth" and it is one of humanity's "most excellent and creative activities." We believe that in our ministry we are called to educate the whole person – spiritually, intellectually, and physically. In building upon the legacy of the Xaverian Brothers, we believe that our ministry calls us to form enduring personal relationships within and among our community.

*Partners in Mission: Understanding the Xaverian Way*

**Reading** Your life with your brothers and sisters, centered on the word and worship of God, is a sharing in the memory of Christ. You are called to be of one heart and one mind with them so that you can participate in the building up of the reign of God. This was the vision Theodore James Ryken had in view when he founded the congregation:

A band of Brothers who mutually help, encourage,  
and edify one another, and who work together.

*Fundamental Principles of the Xaverian Brothers*

**Closing** Loving and gracious God, we come before you with unlimited confidence in your love and mercy. Take from us those impediments to building a community of persons whose relationships endure and who are committed to bringing about your reign. Give us this day and all our days the grace to be faithful to our call.  
**Amen.**

# A Spirit of Harmony

**Leader:** In the name of God, our Creator  
**All:** who invites us to a life of wholeness

**Leader:** In the name of God, the risk-taker  
**All:** who invites us to deepen our unfinished self

**Leader:** In the name of God, the Spirit  
**All:** who calls us to conversion, be with us. Amen.



**Reading: A SPIRIT OF HARMONY**

Harmony, rooted in Jesus Christ's example of humility, has nurtured the growth of the Xaverian charism throughout its history.

Christian humility creates harmony by affirming both the giftedness and limitations of all members of a Xaverian school community thus freeing them to learn from each other and to seek the truth together. Christian humility offsets the effects of unhealthy attitudes that can impede human relationships and paralyze the functioning of the school community. Moreover, Christian humility can create the harmony needed to allow members of the school community to agree to ideas and programs which best serve their students. Harmony, being of one heart and one mind, promotes the growth of the community.

**Reading:**

Keep ever before you  
the motto of the congregation:

“Concordia res parvæ crescunt”  
“In harmony small things grow.”

For it is only in harmony  
that you will grow,  
that your community will grow,  
that the love of God will grow in your world,  
and that the kingdom of God will grow to completeness.

*- Fundamental Principles of the Xaverian Brothers*

**Reading:** Ephesians 4: 14-19

For this reason I kneel before the Father,  
from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named,  
that he may grant you in accord with the riches of his glory  
to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inner self,  
and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith;  
that you, rooted and grounded in love,  
may have strength to comprehend with all the holy ones  
what is the breadth and length and height and depth,  
and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge,  
so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

**Leader:** Loving God, remember your church throughout the world,

**All** --that your people may dwell in peace.

**Leader:** Remember all of us gathered here today,

**All:** --that we may receive your gifts.

**Leader:** Remember our school communities,

**All:** --that we may live in harmony. Amen.



# Christian Community

**Leader** Creator God, we remember your faithfulness and love; we give you thanks for the signs of your presence among us. Grant us the grace to remain faithful as you are faithful.

**All** May our inner vision be transformed so that we can see more clearly that the one who has called us will strengthen us, the one whose power now at work in us can do immeasurably more than we ask or imagine.

**Leader** May we be open to the Spirit that we may discern with hope and joy and confidence what we are called to be and to become in order to build the reign of God.

**All** May we be the ones who in faithfulness and solidarity bring the loving compassion and mercy of our God to a needy world. Amen.

**Reading** Xaverian Brothers and partners in mission, are a Christian community, striving to fulfill the spiritual aspirations that Theodore James Ryken had for his Congregation. Following the path of our founder, we are called to live ordinary lives that give witness to God's unconditional love. We believe that the Xaverian calling is a way of being put in our place, a place of humility and simplicity, from which we receive the grace to turn toward God, fall in love with God, and put ourselves in God's service as followers of Jesus Christ. Within each distinctive life choice, we are further invited to attentiveness, simplicity, flexibility, and openness to the common, unspectacular flow of everyday life. We unite ourselves to God through an integrated life of both contemplation and service. Through the Xaverian Way, we are awakened by the Spirit of God to our own graced potential and freely offer that giftedness in service to the gospel. Through our ministry, in particular among the poor and the marginalized, we work to help others discover their uniqueness so they, too, may "share the love of God with the world through their giftedness." In a spirit of hospitality, we try to be approachable and available, as true brothers and sisters who welcome others and accompany them in the joys and sorrows of their lives.

*Partners in Mission: Understanding the Xaverian Way*

**Reading:** "Your life with your brothers and sisters, centered on the word and worship of God, is a sharing in the memory of Christ. You are called to be of one heart and one mind with them so that you can participate in the building up of the reign of God. This was the vision Theodore James Ryken had in view when he founded the congregation:

*A band of Brothers who mutually help, encourage,  
and edify one another, and who work together."*

*Fundamental Principles of the Xaverian Brothers*

**Closing:** Loving and gracious God, we come before you with unlimited confidence in your

love and mercy. Take from us those anxieties that separate us from you. Take from us those impediments to building a community of persons committed to bringing about your reign. Give us this day and all our days the grace to be faithful to our call. Amen.

# Educational Program

**Leader:** Gracious God, send your Spirit to be with us as we gather together today to reflect on, celebrate, and deepen our call as partners in mission in Xaverian education.

**All:** May we continue to work for the common good of all the people in our school community. We ask this in the name of Jesus, our brother. Amen

**Reading:** The Spirit is calling us, as Xaverian Brothers Sponsored Schools, to implement challenging academic and cocurricular programs that promote the development of the whole person. Faculty, staff, and parents work together to create a trusting environment where the gospel vibrantly lives, and students are appropriately challenged to be their fullest, most authentic selves. As adults in Xaverian Brothers Sponsored Schools help students grow in a deeper sense of themselves, they can then call forth the unique God-given gifts within each student and challenge him or her to bring forth these gifts to build God's kingdom.

*Partners in Mission: Understanding the Xaverian Way*

**Reader:** "Global competition makes education more important than ever before. The challenges to our economy and way of life are coming from many more directions and at an ever-faster rate. To meet them, America must have students and graduates in increasing numbers who are not only highly literate, numerate and conversant in the humanities and sciences, but who are creative, motivated and confident...who are able and willing to think independently...and who possess integrity."

"If we are to achieve the promise of education for all young people... we must focus reform efforts on the predominant human capital component in the system—talented teachers—people who are the heart and soul of education, the inspiration for the young people they teach. If we are to make education the answer for every young person in our nation, then we need to find ways to elevate the teaching profession by providing not only powerful opportunities for recognition, but opportunities for professional growth as well."

*Lowell Milken*

**Reader:** Another important element of transformational education is promoting hope. Paulo Friere, in his *Pedagogy of Hope*, declares that it is the responsibility of all those involved in education "to unveil opportunities for hope, no matter what the obstacles may be. After all, without hope there is little we can do ... Hope is an ontological need."

*-Jim Hug, SJ "Center of Concern"*

**Reading:** "The entire Church ... must ensure that young people are well equipped for their special mission in the world. All our efforts to promote an active Christian discipleship and growth in Catholic identity must lead toward mission. This is our

special responsibility to the young generation. We pray with the whole Church that we can meet the challenge of Vatican II in the document titled, *The Church in the Modern World*, ‘... the future of humanity lies in the hands of those who are strong enough to provide coming generations with reasons for living and hoping.’”

*Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry National Conference of Catholic Bishops*

**Sharing:** Describe one specific way that we are ensuring “that young people are well equipped for their special mission in the world”?

**Leader:** Let us pray

**All:** To him who is able to accomplish far more than we ask or imagine, by the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in the Spirit to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.



# A Leadership Prayer

**Reader:** God of all, we thank you and praise you for the power of your presence in our midst and for this opportunity to come together to celebrate our common work on behalf of Xaverian Brothers Sponsored Schools. We thank you for the quality of leadership that is represented here among us, and for the many and diverse gifts that contribute toward the building of the kingdom. Pour out your spirit upon us. Confirm and strengthen our vision. Be the hope that encourages and sustains us in these times. For all this, we pray.

**Amen.**

**Reading 1:** Leadership is not about function or bureaucracy, but about awakening and empowering human presence. A real leader is someone who awakens individuals to possibilities that they don't see at all. There is something mysterious in each individual that cannot be reduced to a role or function. In its deepest sense, the spirituality of leadership is really the ministry of service to possibility. Good leaders lead because they recognize the privilege and burden of leadership, and they are called to that kind of frontier.

Real leadership helps people to recognize that there is something at the heart of human presence that can never be functionalized. When we keep the frontiers of possibility open, this is where great change can happen. When a good leader awakens the depth of presence in another and encounters the sacredness and inner world of the other, leadership is truly transformational and healing.

*Adapted from John O'Donohue's session at the  
83<sup>rd</sup> Catholic Health Assembly, June 1998*

**Reading 2:** Leadership is about building relationships, about unifying a community of colleagues, about believing in the value and worth of each person, about serving and teaching and, when the time comes, about entrusting the next generation with what has been learned.

*From Spiritlinking by Donna Markham,  
1999*

**Reading 3:** Effective leaders are hope-filled people... They are people of deep and abiding faith who convey to others both the peace and the excitement that flows from their experience of God's love in their own lives. They are also realists who accept themselves and the world as imperfect, but are not discouraged or depressed by this. Rather, they maintain a sense of abiding Christian hope founded in God's ongoing grace and their own willingness to use their God-given gifts to improve the world in which they live. Their optimism is based on the promises of the Word – that they and others will reveal and bring the kingdom to fruition.

*From The Collaborative Leader by Loughlan Sofield,  
S.T. and Donald Kuhn, 1995.*



**Reflection:** Do any of these definitions of leadership particularly strike you? Why?  
What is your definition of leadership?  
Do you see yourself as a leader? How so?  
Do you feel a call to leadership? How so?

**All:** Spirit of God, help us to keep our mission as the foundation of our work so that we might become a community of leaders more deeply committed to those with whom and for whom we minister. Make us leaders on fire with your love and committed to shaping a vision. For now, and for what is yet to come, we pray in thanksgiving. Amen.

## A Prayer for Growth as a Leader

**Leader:** Loving God, at times, the responsibility weighs heavy on us. There is more to do than hours in the day and more needs to be met than we have the energy to address. Remind us, now and then, of that which is most important in our ministry and in our Xaverian Brothers Sponsored School Communities. Give us the courage and sustain our commitment to do what is necessary such that our communities can grow in a spirit of honesty, unselfishness, cooperation, faithfulness and joy. May we do our part to become compassionate in our leadership and help address the needs of the community that surrounds us. **Amen.**



Home in Bruges, Belgium (Ezelstraat Street) in which Theodore Ryken founded the Xaverian Brothers Congregation

**Reading:** For a short time, the new community of Mr. Ryken in Ezelstraat consisted of seven members who did not possess any material means for their daily support. Hence, they depended entirely upon Divine Providence and the goodwill of their friends. House furniture of any kind and ordinary home comfort was a luxury they did not enjoy. Even the necessities of life were wanting. The floor was their bed, old clothes their covering, an old box their table, old bed sheets their curtains, empty stove their warmth, old cabbage leaves with potato peelings mixed with fat their dinner, dry bread with black coffee their breakfast, boiled peas or beans with dry bread their supper, cold water their beverage, their clothes were scanty and poor. But in spite of this wretched poverty, there were no murmurings, no complaints. The members of the community were differently employed. Mr. Ryken made shoes for the public, another was employed in weaving, and another was tailoring. These three were the only support of the house. The other members were employed in household duties and study. In the midst of poverty and many other and severe trials, Mr. Ryken never lost his courage but ever trusted in Divine Providence, who would help him surmount all difficulties. In certain severe trials, Mr. Ryken used to walk up and down his room praying that God would send him help in his distress. Mr.

Ryken's faith was simple, his confidence firm, his prayer fervent, his courage undaunted, his zeal for souls extraordinary, his patience persevering.

*From the Memorandum of Bro. John Segers*

**Reading:** Day by day you will need to renew your response. Do not become discouraged over the difficulties you encounter in your life of gospel service. Knowing that difficulties would be your share, your Founder judged:

*that nothing special is achieved  
without much labor, effort and zeal.*

*Fundamental Principles*

**Reflection:** Consider Theodore Ryken:

His faith was simple  
His confidence firm  
His prayer fervent  
His courage undaunted  
His zeal for souls extraordinary  
His patience persevering

But Ryken was also stubborn. Not the best planner. Lacked some key managerial skills. Maybe politically naive by some accounts. Yet he still preserved and succeeded, at the age of 40, in realizing his goal of founding a Religious Order. We all have our imperfections, but what can you take away from Theodore Ryken's life and leadership? What can be learned from him? What attributes of Ryken's might you strive to replicate in your leadership style? Where do you need to grow as a leader?

**Closing:** God of all creation, draw us into your heart. During these days of contemplation, lead us into a new awareness of your call for our work in a Xaverian Brothers Sponsored School. Grant us the courage to overcome our fears, the strength to overcome our weariness, and the grace to dream and re-envision the life you desire for our school network, for the sake of the church and the world. Give us the same audacity and vision with which you graced your servant, Theodore Ryken, so that we may overcome our current fears and limitations and continue to participate in the fulfillment of your Reign

# Leadership: Give the gift you have received as a gift!

**Opening:** Lord God, you have called forth these generous leaders to minister to you and your church by serving in a Xaverian Brothers Sponsored School. We stand in profound gratitude for the time and talents they bestow to their school communities. We pray that all of us who have gathered to serve as stewards of the mission and heirs of the Xaverian Charism may always be faithful in carrying out our role. We ask this in Jesus' name.  
**Amen**

**Reading 1:** It will be as when a man who was going on a journey called in his servants and entrusted his possessions to them. To one he gave five talents; to another, two; to a third, one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. Immediately the one who received five talents went and traded with them and made another five. Likewise, the one who received two made another two. But the man who received one went off and dug a hole in the ground and buried his master's money.

After a long time, the master of those servants came back and settled accounts with them. The one who had received five talents came forward bringing the additional five. He said, 'Master, you gave me five talents. See, I have made five more.' His master said to him, 'Well done, my good and faithful servant. Since you were faithful in small matters, I will give you great responsibilities. Come, share your master's joy.'

*Matthew 25: 14-21*

**Reading 2:** "Go in peace to love and serve the Lord." What a powerful way to end Mass. Sometimes a priest might choose, "Go forth glorifying God with your lives," or "Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord," but the underlying theme is the same: Go. It's a commissioning; a reminder of our baptismal call to mission. Some of us are called to go to the far corners of the world while others are called to serve just down the street. When we "go" – especially when we're on mission or volunteering – we might mistakenly think we are bringing God to others. But when we go out to the margins of society, or our schools, or the world, we follow God. We are not saviors, but servants. We cannot bring God to a place where he already exists.

In the Gospel we hear, "Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there my servant be." (John 12:26) We follow him to our Xaverian Brothers Sponsored Schools, to encounter him where he always is: in the humanity of every single one of our brothers and sisters. That is why we are there: to share in God's love.

*Adapted from Franciscan Mission Service: Millennial Reflections, Go Forth*

**Reflection:** Go...Give the gift you have received as a gift...



St. Walbergis (top left photo)  
Bruges, Belgium



Statue of St. Francis (St. Walbergis)

In Ryken’s time, a year after he had started the first foundation in Bruges, he would visit his spiritual advisor who was in residence at St. Walbergis. No doubt on such occasions and others, Ryken gazed up at the statue of St. Francis Xavier. The image of Francis Xavier was a reminder to “stand ready” to respond to a call, to move beyond the familiar, to move out of our own “comfort zone.” (See his left foot stepping away, moving forward)

The image of St. Francis Xavier continued to inspire Ryken and his followers even though they were ill-prepared and over-extended. Ryken, like Xavier before him, knew that there would always be good and reasonable objections to moving forward right now; that there would always be a need for more planning and preparation. But Ryken, like Xavier, was “insatiable,” even relentless, in his mission impulse – seeing people and places in desperate need of hearing the Good News of God’s love for them, he could not wait for a better moment. He went out and used his gifts and talents as God expected.

No one of us is fully prepared to address all the needs in our school communities. We all likely know full well this feeling of being over-extended and ill-prepared. But what are those God-given gifts you have been given? Are you using those talents to help others? What challenges you from giving the gift you have received from God as a gift to others?

**Closing:** Generous God, we stand now and always in profound gratitude. You have blessed our Xaverian Brothers Sponsored Schools with these talented, committed, and enthusiastic leaders. We give thanks for the opportunity you have given us to be a conduit of your care and compassionate love, to join with other caregivers in this mission, to share a sacred, reciprocal trust with those who look to share your mission. For the call to this ministry, we thank you.

Lord, your perfect love for us is manifest in the gifts you give. In our imperfection, we accept these and all your gifts and commit to steward them with reverence, employing them for the good of all.

**Amen**

## “Excelsior!”—Ever onward and upward!

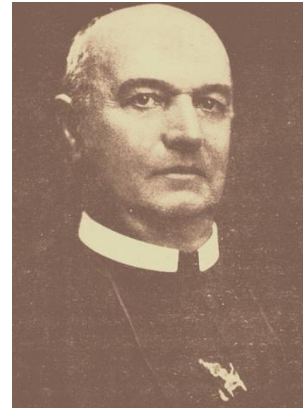
**Leader:** Gracious God, we thank you for new opportunities for serving you, one another, and our Catholic educational ministry. May the work we do be of benefit to all those we serve and may it enliven and refresh our spirits and our commitment to the cause of your Reign. Amen.

**Reading** Day by day, you will need to renew your response. Do not become discouraged over the difficulties you encounter in your life of evangelical service. Knowing that difficulties would be your share, your Founder judged:

*That nothing special is achieved without  
much labor, effort and zeal.*

### Fundamental Principles

**Reading** In the long and colorful life of Brother Isidore Kuppel, CFX (1853-1935), third Provincial in America, he displayed time and again the distinguishing traits of determination, effort and zeal that brought him many successes. And his solid, boyhood faith stayed with him throughout his life. He had a fierce desire for self-improvement, a true concern for his “beloved Brothers” as he called them, and a vision for the future that allowed him to pull up the American Province by its bootstraps and thrust it almost by force into the twentieth century.



From a very early age in his native village of Bodman, Germany, Brother Isidore’s true abiding faith in God gave him, as he says, “the nerve to do things.” It impelled him ever onward to be more and more generous in the giving of his time and talents, in the giving of himself. As Prefect of Discipline and Prefect of Studies at the Mount, he kept busy, long after hours, but he always had time to teach the novices. He did more than teach; he fired up group after group with the ambition and zeal to get ahead. “Excelsior!”—Ever onward and upward! - was his watchword. He was the living embodiment of that maxim.

As a young Xaverian Brother, he came to the realization that God had confidence in him, in giving him a vocation to the religious life.

*By Brother John O’Brien, CFX*

### Reflection Questions

- Albeit a brief description of Brother Isidore’s life, what might resonate with you in his story?

- Do you feel you are in your leadership role for a reason? Perhaps that God has confidence in you to lead?
- Brother Isidore understood Ryken’s judgment that “nothing special is achieved without much labor, effort, and zeal.” Will that same sentiment take on meaning for you in your role? How so?

**Reader:** God of Wisdom, we are thankful for your call to serve and for the commitment of those gathered here. Help us in our discussions and decisions, in the year ahead, to articulate once again your vision, so that it pervades the hearts and minds of all of us. May we experience unity as we work together, take risks together, and rejoice together.

**Amen.**



# Justice and Peace

**Leader:** God of justice, You call us to be bread for the hungry, presence for the lonely, challenge for the complacent, and hope for a broken world. Fill us with your strength and compassion that we may create with you a world of justice and peace. This we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

**Reading 1:** You have been told what is good and what the Lord requires of you. Act justly, love tenderly, and walk humbly with your God. (Micah 6:8)

**Reading 2:** You were created by the God of love in His image and according to His likeness to be a unique expression of that love. It is through you that He desires to manifest His love to the peoples of the world in these times, and to offer them the freedom of the children of God in your journey of life...

It is through your life of gospel witness lived in community with others that God desires to manifest care and compassionate love to those who are separated and estranged, not only from their neighbors, but also from their own uniqueness; to those who suffer from want, neglect, and injustice: the poor, the weak, and the oppressed of this world.

*Fundamental Principles*

**Reading 3:** The Spirit is calling us, as Xaverian Brothers Sponsored Schools, to follow the example of Jesus and to encounter and dialogue with those the world may consider "other than us" or outcasts and to reach out and meet the needs of the multicultural reality of the Catholic Church. Our schools are challenged to embrace the diversity of God's creation and welcome them into our communities.

*Partners in Mission: Understanding the Xaverian Way*

**Leader:** Good and Gracious God, Teacher of all peoples, bless and guide those of us who seek to educate others about your good news.

Guide us in our work, as we reach out to shape hearts and minds.

Walk with us as we deal with complex issues, help us to find the right words and actions to communicate your love for all persons.

Support us as we promote critical reflections on local, national and international issues.

Renew our commitment, so we can spark courage and empower others to confront injustice.

Allow our vision of a better world to transform spirits.

Help us to nurture the skills that will bring this vision to reality.

Remind us how blessed we are to have this call to proclaim justice and peace and to be able to respond even in small ways.

Give us patience and perseverance in our work. Grace us with fellowship and community. Help us to remember that you are our rest and refreshment.

**Optional  
Reflection**

How have your thoughts about justice and peace, diversity and inclusion evolved over the past year?

**Leader:**

God of Justice, You open our eyes to the needs of our sisters and brothers. Help us to see the Christ in every person and in all of creation. We ask this in Jesus' name who proclaims the dignity of humanity in every time and place. Amen.



# Faithful to the Vision

**Leader:** Come to our aid, God of Wisdom.

**All:** O God, you give us the example of those who have gone before us who leave a legacy to enliven and inspire our work. Give us their humility, trust, zeal, compassion, and simplicity so that we may articulate, once again, their vision as we live out our mission today.

**Reader:** “Humility is the recognition of our total dependence on God. Adopting the selfless attitude of Christ, we accept that each person is a unique expression of God’s love, is gifted, and is loved in their sinful and graced humanity. We recognize our brothers and sisters as images of God with whom we journey in faith.”

**Reader:** “Trust is total confidence in our God and our brothers and sisters in Christ. It is the meeting place of mind, heart, faith, and courage. This trust allows people to look toward the transcendent to grow in faith in spite of life’s difficulties. It flourishes in contemplation, and encourages, enlightens, and inspires all believers.”

**Reader:** “Zeal is the joyful and enthusiastic commitment to the mission of the Catholic Church which God has entrusted to us. We imitate St. Francis Xavier as we give ourselves wholeheartedly to the work of evangelization, in word and deed.”

**Reader:** “Compassion is the tenderness of heart which is capable of seeing and hearing the needs of all, near and far. We are called to stand with one another in difficulties, supporting and encouraging all of our brothers and sisters, especially the poor, weak, and oppressed, for they too are called to experience and share the love of God with and through us.”

**Reader:** “Simplicity is a way of thinking, feeling, and acting to offset the temptation to excessive materialism and consumerism, which can minimize the spiritual values of God’s Kingdom. Making choices that favor the common good of humanity and our common home, simplicity calls us to work for justice for all people and nations.”

**Closing:** Loving God, We pray that we who gather this day to serve in our role as keepers of the vision may be good stewards. May we be people who freely respond to your call to live our commitments and to instill in our students these values. We ask these things, God, our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. Amen.

# Humility

- Reader:** Blessed is the God of wisdom, whose presence is here now and forever.
- All:** Loving God, we meet to enrich our understanding of your call to serve. Strengthen our faith, hope and love, our sharing of thoughts and prayers for the future. We give thanks for the gift of the wisdom of one another.
- Reading:** Brothers, and sisters, I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that he may grant you in accord with the riches of his glory to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inner self, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the holy ones what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.  
Eph 3:14-19
- Reading:** Humility is the recognition of our total dependence on God. Adopting the selfless attitude of Christ, we accept that each person is a unique expression of God's love, is gifted, and is loved in their sinful and graced humanity. We recognize our brothers and sisters as images of God with whom we journey in faith.
- Humility compels all members of the Xaverian Brothers Sponsored School community to accept and affirm their giftedness and limitations as well as to acknowledge these realities in others. Humility is an attitude that demands action in loving service to all. Humility inspires a sense of connectedness, allowing members of the school community to affirm each other, to learn from each other, and to work with each other.  
*Partners in Mission: Understanding the Xaverian Way*
- Reflection:** What images of the value of humility are affirmed for you in this reading? What are the examples that demonstrate how your school lives this value?
- Reading:** Through simplicity, and in imitation of Theodore James Ryken, we adopt a way of living with less rather than more, in a spirit of appreciation and gratitude, acknowledging that 'through the common, ordinary, unspectacular flow of everyday life, [we] will experience a liberation and a freedom never before imagined.  
*Fundamental Principles of the Xaverian Brothers*
- All:** We pray in faith, O God, that we respond to your call to serve others with a humble heart. That we might be ever reminded to continually affirm each other and those who serve in our schools as we live out our gifts in service to our students and each other. Amen.

# Compassion and Simplicity

**Leader** We give thanks for the ways we have come to know of God's kindness, mercy, and compassion.

**All** And for those men and women whose lives are a reflection of Gospel simplicity and love of neighbor.

**Reader:** Recognized in the Xaverian charism are certain values that distinguish the spirituality of the Xaverian Brothers and are rooted deeply in the Brothers' history and traditions. Among these values are compassion and simplicity.

**Reader:** **COMPASSION**

Compassion is the tenderness of heart which is capable of seeing and hearing the needs of all, near and far. We are called to stand with one another in difficulties, supporting and encouraging all of our brothers and sisters, especially the poor, weak, and oppressed, for they too are called to experience and share the love of God with and through us.

Compassion compels us in a Xaverian Brothers Sponsored School community to look at life through the eyes of Christ, to encounter those who suffer, to accompany them, and to seek appropriate action to alleviate hardship. This allows us to be the eyes, the ears, and the hands of the loving God.

*Partners in Mission: Understanding the Xaverian Way*

**Reader:** **SIMPLICITY**

Simplicity is a way of thinking, feeling, and acting to offset the temptation to excessive materialism and consumerism, which can minimize the spiritual values of God's Kingdom. Making choices that favor the common good of humanity and our common home, simplicity calls us to work for justice for all people and nations.

Simplicity frees the heart, the mind, and the soul for the work of evangelization and education. The Xaverian Brothers Sponsored School community encourages us to live and work in ways that respect our vocation to be stewards of God's creation.

*Partners in Mission: Understanding the Xaverian Way*

**Reading:** In a complex world, one of the biggest challenges is in keeping one's perspective, because it is only through harmonious relationships that things become simple. When I look around at our school, I constantly marvel at the complexity of it all. Yet there is a simplicity at work -- a simple justice which aspires to have each person doing that which he or she does best. And, at the heart, there is the beautiful simplicity of a competent, caring teacher connecting with a respectful, open student.

*Mr. Stephen Gregory, St. John's High School, Shrewsbury, MA*

### **Closing Prayer**

All: O God of Wisdom, pour out your spirit upon us. As we ponder the many tasks and responsibilities that face us, may we be people of vision rooted in the spiritual values and beliefs of Xaverian Sponsorship. We ask you this through Christ our Lord, your Son and our Brother. Amen.



# Trust

**LEADER:** We take time to remember that we are always in the presence of God, who loves us and knows our hearts, our innermost dreams and desires.

**ALL:** Loving God, we are full of gratitude for all the gifts and talents you have given us to be leaders.

**LEADER:** We take time to remember that we are always in the presence of God.  
Amen.



## READING ONE

Trust is total confidence in our God and our brothers and sisters in Christ. It is the meeting place of mind, heart, faith, and courage. This trust allows people to look toward the transcendent to grow in faith in spite of life's difficulties. It flourishes in contemplation and encourages, enlightens, and inspires all believers.

As members of a Xaverian Brothers Sponsored School community we entrust ourselves to the providence of God, who knows, understands, and loves us. Trusting in God, and our brothers and sisters, we can live out God's plan for us. Trust requires that we provide time and space for contemplation of God's will for us.

*Partners in Mission: Understanding the Xaverian Way*

## READING TWO: Ephesians 1:15-23

Ever since I heard about your faith, I have not stopped giving thanks for you and remembering you in my prayers. I keep asking God to give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know God better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may see what it is God is calling you to. And may you see the glorious inheritance that is planned for you and understand the great power you have received. The power is the same power that God used to raise Jesus from the dead and to place him above all created things. With Christ, we can now experience the fullness of God who fills up everything in every way.

### **READING THREE:**

Through trust, and in imitation of Theodore James Ryken, we are joined together in our faith and efforts to build our community, comforted, and inspired by the understanding that “in harmony, small things grow.”

*Fundamental Principles of the Xaverian Brothers*

### **READING FOUR:**

Above all, trust in the slow work of the Spirit. We are quite naturally impatient in everything to reach the end without delay. We should like to skip the intermediate stages. We are impatient of being on the way to something unknown, something new. And yet it is the law of all progress that it is made by passing through some stages of instability – and that it may take a very long time. And so it is with you, your ideas mature gradually – let them grow, let them shape themselves, without undue haste. Don't try to force them on, as though you could be today what time, grace and circumstances will make of you tomorrow. Who can say what this new spirit gradually forming within you will be? Give yourself the benefit of believing that the Spirit is leading you, and accept the anxiety of feeling yourself in suspense and incomplete.

*- Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, SJ*

### **PRAYER**

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and enkindle in us the fire of your Love. Send forth Your Spirit and we shall be created and you will renew the face of the earth. O God, who instructs the hearts of the faithful through the Light of the Holy Spirit, grant that through that same Spirit, we may be always truly wise and ever rejoice in your consolation through Christ, our Lord. Amen



# Zeal

**Leader:** Loving God, we thank you for this day and the opportunity to serve you in the mission of Catholic education.

**All:** We ask your blessing on each of us as we enter into the mystery of your ongoing shaping of our life. May the Spirit of Christ give us wisdom to discern our role. Be with us as we work together for the future of Xaverian education.

## **Life and Letters of Theodore Ryken**

*Brother Aubert Downey, CFX*

This is the story of the persistent, plodding Theodore James Ryken, who in 1839 brought into being the Congregation of the Brothers of Saint Francis Xavier. In founding this Brotherhood Mr. Ryken undertook what practical and experienced men assured him was a preposterous task. Admittedly the facts were against him: he was forty; his formal education, meager; his financial means, negligible; his well-placed friends, non-existent. To all appearances he was one more visionary.

To the amazement of everybody, except perhaps himself, he succeeded not only in founding this Brotherhood but also in keeping it alive from day to day for twenty years until he was removed from office ..... From the natural point of view this is a story of persistent plodding; from the supernatural point of view, it is the story of one man's faith in the providence of God.



***Theodore James Ryken***  
*Founder of the Xaverian Brothers*

## **Reading:**

Beyond this Theodore James Ryken chose Saint Francis Xavier as the patron of the congregation so that  
*“the name of this insatiable laborer for souls will indicate with one word what is intended for the congregation.”*

*Fundamental Principles of the Xaverian Brothers*

**Reading: ZEAL**

Zeal is the joyful and enthusiastic commitment to the mission of the Catholic Church which God has entrusted to us. We imitate St. Francis Xavier as we give ourselves wholeheartedly to the work of evangelization, in word and deed.

Zeal enables us to share God's love as nourishment for others, as bread that is broken through a life of gospel service. Zeal unifies the Xaverian Brothers Sponsored School community in single-minded devotion and intense passion for the formation of the whole person, bringing about the more abundant life proclaimed by Jesus Christ.

*Partners in Mission: Understanding the Xaverian Way*

**All:** O God of wisdom, pour out your spirit upon us. As we ponder the many tasks and responsibilities that face us may we be people of vision rooted in the spiritual values and beliefs of Xaverian Sponsorship. Guide us and this school community as we face the many challenges that lie ahead. We ask you this through Christ our Brother. Amen.

# Praying with Our Fundamental Principles

## CALL TO PRAYER

We have been freely chosen to respond to the call of God to live a life of love in faith and trust as disciples of God's Son, Jesus Christ, in a Xaverian Brothers Sponsored School. So now let us pray together with the Fundamental Principles which guide and animate our mission.

## READING ONE

“You were created by the God of love In God's image and according to God's likeness, to be a unique expression of that love. It is through you that God desires to manifest Love to the peoples of the world in these times, and to offer them the freedom of the children of God”

## ALL

Gracious God, inspire us to live our lives uniquely so that we may always reflect the giftedness you have bestowed on us. May we also be generous in loving you and all whom we meet on this blessed journey of life. Open us daily to the freedom which you offer so that we may envision our world as the house of God enabling us to see and to embrace all humanity as our brothers and sisters.

## READING TWO

“Day by day you will need to renew your response. Do not become discouraged over the difficulties you encounter in your life of gospel service. Knowing that difficulties would be your share, your Founder judged: that nothing special is achieved without much labor, effort and zeal.”

## ALL

Loving God, help us to face discouragement and to meet difficulties with hearts that are faithful and reliant on your grace-filled presence. Like Francis Xavier and Theodore Ryken, may we be zealous in promoting peace and justice for the poorest and most marginalized of our brother and sisters.

## READING THREE

“If you allow yourself to be formed by God through the common, ordinary, unspectacular flow of everyday life, you will gradually experience a liberation



and a freedom never before imagine. “

**ALL**

Teach us, loving God, the way of simplicity so that we may see you and hear you more clearly in the everydayness of our lives. In this way, it is you who will form our hearts and instruct our minds to embrace life’s deeper beauty where your holy and respectful presence guides and fashions us into your disciples.

**LEADER**

Loving and gracious God, we ask you to bless our gathering. May your Holy Spirit stir our hearts and minds so that we may be able to see your mission more clearly and respond to your call more generously. We ask this in Jesus’ name. AMEN

**PETITIONS**

RESPONSE: *Lord, hear our prayer*

For each of us as we gather and meet. May God’s Good and Holy Spirit guide and direct all our deliberations. Let us pray to the Lord.

For our school community, our administration, faculty, staff, students and parents, we ask God to protect them and to inspire them with a love for learning, a reliance on faith and a heart for service to all their brothers and sisters. Let us pray to the Lord.

For peace, that God will give courage and insight to all world leaders so that new avenues may be found to nurture peace and justice in every land. Let us pray to the Lord.

For the Church and particularly for Pope Francis, that through his leadership a stronger, more vibrant Christian community may prosper in order to bring more peace, justice and compassion to our very needy world. Let us pray to the Lord.

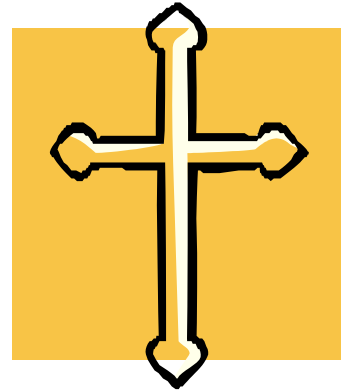
**ALL**            Our Father.....

**CLOSING PRAYER**

**ALL:**            Loving God, we commend to you our prayers, petitions and concerns both spoken and unspoken. During our time together make us ever more aware of your presence within and among us. We ask all of this in the name of Jesus, our Brother, who live and reigns forever. AMEN.

## Bread that is Broken

**Leader:** Gracious God, provider of all our needs, you have called us into your ministry. Help us to follow the example of your Son, Jesus, who in the breaking of the bread, restores us for work we carry on in God's name. Amen.



**Reading: Matthew 14:14-19**

When he disembarked and saw the vast throng, his heart was moved with pity, and he cured the sick. As evening drew on, his disciples came to him with the suggestion: "This is a deserted place and it is already late. Dismiss the crowds so that they may go to the villages and buy some food for themselves." Jesus said to them: "There is no need for them to disperse. Give them something to eat yourselves." "We have nothing here," they replied, "but five loaves and a couple of fish." "Bring them here," he said. Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. He took the five loaves and two fish, looked up to heaven, blessed and broke them and gave the loaves to the disciples, who in turn gave them to the people."

**Reflection:**

Like the bread taken by Jesus, we are chosen by God, selected for a unique role to play in God's story. And as we recognize that we have been chosen, so we also recognize the chosen-ness of all people.

Like the bread blessed by Jesus, we, too, are blessed by God. We are to claim our blessing and to bless others as we live each day.

Like the bread broken by Jesus, we are also given. Each of our lives is a gift to those close to us; family, friends, colleagues. God has given us – each one of us – as a sacred gift to the world.

Like the bread broken by Jesus, we are also called, challenged to lead a life of service to our mission. God calls us to remember those we serve in our schools, especially those students and parents whom we will never know.

**Reading:** "It is through your life of gospel witness lived in community with others

that God desires to manifest care and compassionate love to those who are separated and estranged, not only from their neighbors, but also from their own uniqueness; to those who suffer from want, neglect, and injustice: the poor, the weak, and the oppressed of this world.

They too are called to experience, express, and share the love of God with the world through their own giftedness.

In this life of following Christ, allow yourself, therefore, to be given away, together with your sisters and brothers, as nourishment for others, as bread that is broken.”

*Fundamental Principles of the Xaverian Brothers*

**Closing Prayer:**

**All:** God, who calls us, blesses us, and sends us into the world as gifts, we thank you. Help us always to remember the teaching of your son, Jesus. Help us, also, to remember the example of our founder, Theodore James Ryken, who continues to challenge us to remember that our role is to be of service. May we be aware of the need to support each other in this work. We offer this prayer in gratitude. Amen.

# Call to Service

**Leader:** Loving God, as we look to add our stories to your story, help us to make them stories worth telling by filling us with your word of hope and life. We ask this in Jesus' name.  
Amen.

**Reading** 1 Corinthians 12:4-11

There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit. To one is given through the Spirit the expression of wisdom; to another the expression of knowledge according to the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit; to another mighty deeds; to another prophecy; to another discernment of spirits; to another varieties of tongues; to another interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit produces all of these, distributing them individually to each person as he wishes.

**Reading** 2 Corinthians 9: 6-15

Consider this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each must do as already determined, without sadness or compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. Moreover, God is able to make every grace abundant for you, so that in all things, always having all you need, you may have an abundance for every good work. As it is written: "He scatters abroad, he gives to the poor; his righteousness endures forever."

The one who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You are being enriched in every way for all generosity, which through us produces thanksgiving to God, for the administration of this public service is not only supplying the needs of the holy ones but is also overflowing in many acts of thanksgiving to God.

**Reading**

Theodore Ryken looked upon his original vocation as being a conversion through which he "fell in love with the service of God." Yet, he too, came to the understanding that a continual conversion is needed. Be patient, therefore, with yourself and with God. If you allow yourself to be formed by God through the common, ordinary, unspectacular flow of everyday life, you will gradually experience a liberation and a freedom never before imagined.

*Fundamental Principles of the Xaverian Brothers*

**All**

Lord, teach us to be Generous, to serve you as you deserve, to give and not to count the cost, to fight and not to heed the wounds, to toil and not to seek for rest, to labor and not to ask for any reward, save that of knowing that we do your will.  
Amen.

*St. Ignatius Loyola*



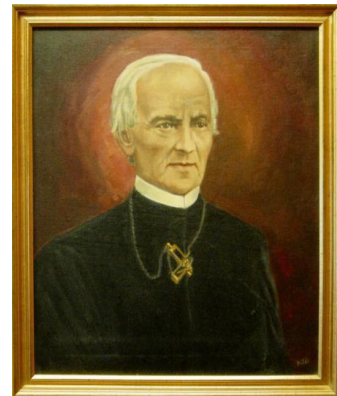


# Community and Affirmation

**Leader** We gather today conscious that the Spirit of Wisdom moves in each of us. May we be wise in our sharing, ready to listen, and open to learning.

**All** We pray that we may use our gifts for the good our school community and for the common good. Amen.

**Reader** You are called to be of one heart and one mind with your brothers and sisters so that you can participate in the building up of the reign of God. This was the vision Theodore James Ryken had in view when he founded the congregation:



A band of Brothers who mutually help, encourage and edify one another, and who work together.

You are called then by your Founder to enter into a true mutual sharing with your brothers and sisters. This sharing will demand of you an opening and a giving of yourself to them at many levels, and a ready acceptance of each of them in all their sinful and graced humanity.

Cultivate a sincere friendship and a warm affection for your sisters and brothers, for it is in the manifestation of honest concern and love for each other that you and they will show you are daughters and sons of Ryken and disciples of Jesus.

Listen to your brothers and sisters, be compassionate with them in their difficulties, bear with them in their weaknesses, encourage and support them.

Affirm your brothers and sisters in their gifts, for by doing so you enable them to realize the gifts that God has given them for service. In turn, allow them to affirm you and call you forth to even greater service of God.

*Fundamental Principles of the Xaverian Brothers*

**Reflection/Discussion** How are we challenged to “mutually help, encourage, and edify” each other and the staff of our school?

## **Prayer of Intercession**

*Response: Gracious God, hear our prayer.*

We pray that we, like Brother Ryken, may be faithful in

living out God's call in our lives. Let us pray to the Lord.

We remember the needs of our school community,  
may God hear and answer these needs. Let us pray to  
the Lord.

We pray that God's Spirit will guide us so that we  
might make prudent decisions. Let us pray to the Lord.

We pray that we can continue to "manifest honest concern  
and love for each other." Let us pray to the Lord.

We pray in thanksgiving for all those in our school  
community who give of themselves so that our students might  
learn and grow. Let us pray to the Lord.

**All:** Loving God, nothing is beyond our reach if we reach out together. Help us to build our  
dreams with faith –  
Faith in ourselves  
Faith in our community  
And faith in you, our God.  
Amen.

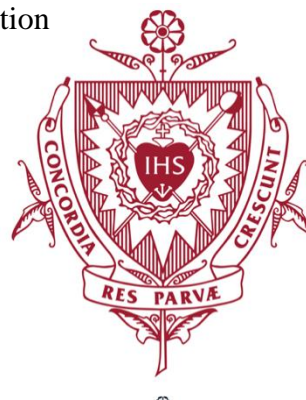
# God's Service

**Leader** Blessed is the God of wisdom, whose presence is here and now and forever.

**All** Loving God, we meet to enrich our understanding of your call to serve.  
Strengthen our faith, hope and love, our sharing of thoughts and prayers for the future. We give thanks for the gift of the wisdom of one another. Amen.

**Reader** “Theodore Ryken looked upon his original vocation  
as being a conversion  
through which he

*fell in love  
with the service of God.*



Yet, he too, came to the understanding  
that a continual conversion is needed.

Be patient, therefore, with yourself and with God.

If you allow yourself to be formed by God through the common, ordinary,  
unspectacular flow of everyday life, you will gradually experience a liberation  
and freedom never before imagined.”

*Fundamental Principles of the Xaverian Brothers*

**Reader** Psalm 8

O God, our God, Your greatness is seen in all the world! Your praise reaches up to  
the heavens; It is sung by children and babies... When I look at the sky, which you  
have made, at the moon and the stars, which you set in their places; Who are we  
that you should be mindful of us? Mere ones, that you should care for us?

You made us inferior only to yourself; You crowned us with glory and honor.  
You appointed us over all creation; Sheep and cattle, and wild animals, too; The  
birds and the fish and the creatures in the seas.

O God, our God, How glorious is your name over all the earth!

**Leader** We ask for the eyes of God ...

**All** That we may see the signs of the spirit all around us.

**Leader** We ask for the Ears of God ...

**All** That we may hear the calling of our mission in all that we do.

**Leader** We ask for the Heart of God ...

**All** That we may have compassion for all those who suffer.

**Leader** We ask for the Mind of God...

**All** That we may center all that we do in the knowledge of God's love.

**Leader** We ask for the Strength of God ...

**All** That we may be steadfast in our commitment to fulfill our mission.  
Amen.

# Personal Gifts

**Leader** God of our longing, you are ever faithful and ever patient, waiting always for us to welcome you into our lives. May we learn to see you in all we do.

**All** Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

**Reading:** “At times you will discover that God’s ways are not your ways, and God’s thoughts are not your thoughts. When this happens, try to surrender yourself trustingly into the arms of your Parent God, who knows you, understands you, and loves you.

It is this communion with the living God which is at the heart of your life as a child of God, disciple of Jesus, witness of God's spirit, quickened member of God's Body, and brother or sister to the world.

Gradually, you will realize that the cost of your discipleship is your very life, freely consecrated to God and offered to the world as a sign of God's love and care.

*The gift you have received give as a gift.”*

*Fundamental Principles of the Xaverian Brothers*

**Reading** Luke 11: 9-13.

“So I say to you, ask and you shall receive; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. For whoever asks, receives; whoever seeks, finds; whoever knocks, is admitted. What parent among you will give their child a snake if she asks for an egg? If you, with all your sins, know how to give your children good things, how much more will your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?”

**Leader** Loving God, today we thank you for the many gifts we have received for your service. We ask you to help us use these gifts wisely so that we might help in building up the Kingdom of God.

**All** For these, and all God’s gifts, we give thanks.  
Amen.

# Created by the God of Love

**Leader** Come to our aid, God of Wisdom.

**All** Open our eyes that we may clearly see your works,  
our hearts that we may understand your vision for  
us, and our ears that we may hear your call to  
ministry.



**Reading** “You have freely chosen to respond to the call of God to live a life of love in faith and trust, as a disciple of God's Son, Jesus Christ, in a Xaverian Brothers Sponsored School.

In calling you God too was completely free. Your Founder, Theodore James Ryken, was most conscious of this, since he wrote about his own vocation:

*God is not obliged to give an account to anybody,  
even if God wants to use a sinner.*

You were created by the God of love in God's image and according to God's likeness, to be a unique expression of that love. It is through you that God desires to manifest love to the peoples of the world in these times, and to offer them the freedom of the children of God.”

*Fundamental Principles of the Xaverian Brothers*

**Reading:** Together with everything that has ever existed in this universe, we exist in God. God is never absent. God is everywhere, involved in the unfolding of matter and life wherever this happens. We acknowledge this awesome mystery embodied in every human person aware that each give God a unique and personal expression.”

*Praying a New Story by Michael Morwood*

**All:** God who is Father, you created us in your image and called us good. God who is Son, you revealed the depth of divine love and invited us to eternal life. God who is Spirit, you guide us today and fill us with your truth. Let us pray that we recognize God in each person. Amen.



## Contemplation and Action – Mary and Martha

...the members will have the privilege of following both the lives of Martha and Mary. Through prayer and meditation, they follow Mary in the contemplative life, while by catechizing children and older people, they follow Martha in the active life.

*from the Plan by Theodore James Ryken (ca.1837-38)*

**Leader** O God, send us your Spirit  
**All** Kindle in us the fire of your love.  
**Leader** O God, love of us all,  
**All** Make our hearts like yours

**Reader:** Luke 10:38-42

In the course of their journey Jesus came to a village, and a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. She had a sister called Mary, who sat down at the Lord's feet and listened to him speaking. Now Martha, who was distracted with all the serving, came to him, and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister is leaving me to do the serving all by myself? Please tell her to help me." But the Lord answered, "Martha, Martha" he said, "you worry and fret about so many things, and yet few are needed, indeed only one. It is Mary who has chosen the better part, and it is not to be taken from her."

### Reflection

Martha complained to our Lord about her sister Mary because she did not help her serve, for she thought she was performing a big and very useful service and her sister was just sitting there, idle. But our Lord passed sentence and pronounced judgment on them both. He did not criticize Martha because of the service she performed, for that service was good and useful. But he criticizes her because she was so occupied and because she was depressed and sad about several other things. And he praised Mary for her inner practice and said that only one thing was needful and that she had chosen the best part that would never be taken away from her. The one thing needful for all is divine love. The best part is the inner life that clings to God in love. That is what Mary chose. But Martha chose an honest outward active life, and that is the other part that faithful servants are still choosing for love of our Lord.

*(Rusbroec, Sparkling Stone, p.132-134)*

### Intercessions

Jesus, our brother, your love for us teaches us that even the ordinary actions of everyday life can be full of God, breathe of God, shine with God, and be fragrant of God. In that spirit, we pray that our ordinary actions may please God and be full of love.

**As we rise:**

May our hearts be filled with thanksgiving.

**As we go about the business of our lives:**

May we see you in each person we encounter.

**As we come before you in prayer:**

May we be open and responsive to your Spirit.

**As we strive to seek peace in moments of conflict:**

May we search for the guiding presence of your truth.

**As we come together to form community:**

May we refuse no kindness or mercy to one another.

**As we take time to plan for the future of our young people:**

May we share the wisdom stilled in us by You.

**As we come to each day's end:**

May we lie down to rest, trusting in your faithfulness.

**All**

Faithful God, you have revealed yourself to us in Jesus. Through the power of your Spirit, you come to us and abide with us. We stand in awe of your boundless love. May we daily come to know Jesus more fully, love Him more deeply, and follow him more closely. This we ask of you, Holy Trinity, Undivided Unity. Amen,





# The Spirituality of Ryken: A Look at the Story of Martha and Mary

Leader: God of all, we thank you and praise you for the power of your presence in our midst and for this opportunity to come together to celebrate our common work on behalf of [Name of school].

Reading: Now as they were traveling along, He entered a village; and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. She had a sister called Mary, who was seated at the Lord's feet, listening to His word. But Martha was distracted with all her preparations; and she came up to Him and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me." But the Lord answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; but only one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her."



Discussion: Be with Martha. Put yourself in her place. Can you remember a time? How does this translate to you, in your role, in your place?

Be with Mary. Put yourself in her place. Can you remember a specific time? How does this translate to you, in your role, in your place?

Closing: Lord, we live in a "Martha" world of many distractions, never-ending demands, and over-stimulation. Our "must get done list" isn't going to change. Lord, refresh and deepen our communion with you so we can live with a quieter, gentler, kinder heart. Help us cultivate a Mary heart in a Martha world. By the compelling wonder of your beauty, and the relentless power of your grace, we trust you for this work in our hearts. **AMEN**

# Hospitality

Leader: Spirit of God, you are here; you are now; and together we shape this moment. Our power to love... to grow... to accept... to be... shape all we do. Bless us as we begin this meeting.

Reading: Mark 10:13 -16  
And people were bringing children to him that he might touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this he became indignant and said to them, "Let the children come to me; do not prevent them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Amen, I say to you, whoever does not accept the kingdom of God like a child\* will not enter it." Then he embraced them and blessed them, placing his hands on them.

Response: Psalm 95

O come, let us bow down and give thanks, let us be humble before the Blessed One!

For the Beloved is Supreme, and we, blessed to be invited to friendship as companions along the Way?

O that today we would harken to the beloved's voice! Harden not your hearts, as in the days of old, that you be not separated from Love.

Be not like those who hear the Spirit's Voice and heed it not, thinking to be above the Teacher.

For life is but a breath in the Eternal Dance, a gift to be revered with trust, an opportunity to grow in spirit and truth.

Readings: We Xaverian Brothers and partners in mission, are a Christian community striving to fulfill the spiritual aspirations that Theodore James Ryken had for his Congregation. Following the path of our founder, we are called to live ordinary lives that give witness to God's unconditional love. We believe that the Xaverian Calling is a way of being put in our place, a place of humility and simplicity, from which we receive the grace to turn toward God, falling in love with God, and put ourselves in God's service as followers of Jesus Christ. Within each distinctive life choice, we are further invited to attentiveness, simplicity, flexibility, and openness to the common, unspectacular flow of everyday life. We unite ourselves to God through an integrated life of both contemplation and service. Through the Xaverian Way, we are awakened by the Spirit of God to our own graced potential and freely offer that giftedness in service to the gospel. Through our ministry, in particular, among the poor and the marginalized, we work to help others discover their uniqueness so they too, may "share the love of God with the world through their giftedness". In a spirit of *hospitality*, we try to be approachable and available, as

true brothers and sisters who welcome others and accompany them in the joys and sorrows of their lives.

*Partners In Mission: Understanding the Xaverian Way*

**Leader**

Let us thank God for the ways we have been gifted with love.

**Response: We thank you God.**

For the gift of Jesus, who became one with us to show us how to love...

**Response: We thank you God.**

For all the people who have tried to be faithful to Jesus' vision over the centuries and who have passed it on to us...

**Response: We thank you God.**

For those who have loved us and so shown us your face...

**Response: We thank you God.**

For the persons who come our way needing our attentive presence...

**Response: We thank you God.**

For your presence with us when we have struggles...

**Response: We thank you God.**

For the inspiration of Theodore James Ryken to be formed by God through the common, ordinary, unspectacular flow of everyday life...

**Response: We thank you God.**

**All**

Creator God, you have known us and loved us since before we were conceived, and you will know and love us forever. On the journey of our own life as part of the Xaverian Brothers Sponsored Schools Network, may we "stand ready to answer when asked if we are available for God to become more present in our lives and through us to the world." We ask this in the name of Jesus our Brother. Amen.

# Prayer for Children

**Leader** We come to this place to remember and celebrate our past, to assess our present, and to prepare our children's future. We seek your help, O God, to see your vision for the children of our world, and your guidance as we endeavor to respond to this challenge in our schools. We pledge to commit ourselves to work for your kingdom on earth by service to the least of these -- Your children.

**Reading** "When God wants an important thing done in this world or a wrong righted, He goes about it in a very singular way. He doesn't release thunderbolts or stir up earthquakes. God simply has a tiny baby born, perhaps of a very humble home, perhaps of a very humble mother. ... And then -- God waits. The great events of this world are not battles and elections and earthquakes and thunderbolts. The great events are babies, for each child comes with the message that God is not discouraged with humanity but is still expecting goodwill to become incarnate in each human life."

*Presbyterian Outlook -- Edmond McDonald*

**Reading** "In every child who is born under no matter what circumstances and of no matter what parents, the potential of the human race is born again, and in him, too, once more, and in each of us, the terrific responsibility toward human life: toward the utmost idea of goodness, of the horror of terrorism, and of God."

*Let us Now Praise Famous Men -- James Agee*

**Reading** "The entire Church ... must ensure that young people are well equipped for their special mission in the world. All our efforts to promote an active Christian discipleship and growth in Catholic identity must lead toward mission. This is our special responsibility to the young generation. We pray with the whole Church that we can meet the challenge of Vatican II in the document, *The Church in the Modern World*, '... the future of humanity lies in the hands of those who are strong enough to provide coming generations with reasons for living and hoping.'"

*Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry*

*National Conference of Catholic Bishops*

**All** O God, whose realm must be entered as a child, we live in a world that looks for results and the easy rhetoric of those who proclaim that they have the answer. In our rush for these results and answers, we forget to listen to the children, the young people. Mold our hearts and spirits that we might work together, while listening for your word in the voices of the children around us.

Refresh and sustain us with the vision of your world to come, in which all children will rest secure in your love. We ask these things on behalf of the children of today and of generations yet to come who will live to praise your name, world without end. Amen.



# Xaverian Call

## *Embrace Our Catholic Identity and Xaverian Charism*

### **What is our call?**

The call to embrace our Catholic identity and Xaverian Charism as partners in the church's mission of evangelization within its ministry of education.

The Spirit is calling us, as Xaverian Brothers Sponsored Schools, to embrace our Catholic identity, as well as the charism and the mission of the Xaverian Brothers as the vibrant dimension that distinguishes our schools' programs and community life as a means for evangelization within the church's ministry of education. We are blessed with a history and tradition that has been responsive to the signs of the times and willing to make needed changes. The challenges we are encountering provide a great opportunity for growth and a deeper understanding of Catholic identity and being a people of faith today.

“Like Ryken, foster an attitude of openness to the needs of the Church  
and our world and a willingness to follow Christ wherever He leads.”

*Fundamental Principles of the Xaverian Brothers*

**Leader** God of all good gifts, the abundance of your love overflowed in Jesus and in your Church. Help us to reach out to those who need us, and to know that what we give is not ours but yours.

**All** May the name of God be praised, for your generosity knows no bound.  
Amen

**Reading** They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple area and to breaking bread in their homes. They ate their meals with exultation and sincerity of heart, praising God and enjoying favor with all the people. And every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

*Acts 2:42-47*

**Reading** The Xaverian charism calls us to continually reflect upon our Xaverian Catholic identity to assess and evaluate our programs, procedures, and policies in light of the teachings of the Catholic Church and the ideals and practices articulated in the description of the Xaverian charism. The Congregation is grateful for the women and men who give to others the gift of the Xaverian charism that they received. Their strong commitment to the mission, charism, and Catholic identity promotes a passion which is the trademark of the Xaverian Brothers Sponsored Schools.

“The gift you have been given, give as a gift.”

*Fundamental Principles of the Xaverian Brothers*

**Reading:** We have been given eyes to see, ears to listen, and minds to interpret who we are beyond the words spoken...

We have been given tongues to speak for the innocent... to praise, encourage and support, to proclaim, in season and out of season, the News that renews.

We have been given heads to judge, ourselves not others, situations not motives, solutions not excuses, justice not expediency; to discern the essential from the desirable, the good from the less good, the less good from the bad.

We have been given hearts to comfort, to open doors, to discover the best in others, to understand, and to allow all to develop in harmony.

(Author unknown)

**All:** We have been given all we have. And we are grateful.

**Leader:** O God, you give us the example of those who have gone before us who leave a legacy to enliven and inspire our work. Give us their *humility, trust, zeal, compassion, and simplicity* so that we may articulate, once again, their vision in order to live out our mission today

**All:** For now, and for what is to come, we pray in thanksgiving. Amen.



# Xaverian Call

## *Develop Enduring Personal Relationships*

### **What is our Call?**

We are called to build diverse and inclusive communities that encourage enduring personal relationships through an understanding of culture and perspectives. The Spirit is calling us, as Xaverian Brother Sponsored Schools, to follow the example of Jesus and to encounter and dialogue with those the world may consider “other than us” or outcasts and to reach out and meet their needs of the multicultural reality of the Catholic Church. Our schools are challenged to embrace the diversity of God’s creation and welcome them into our communities.

**Leader:** We were created by the God of love in God’s image and according to God’s likeness, to be a unique expression of that love. It is through us that God desires to manifest love to the peoples of the world in these times and to offer them the freedom to recognize and develop their God given gifts as children of God.

**All:** Loving God, inspire us with your love and compassionate presence so that we may be persons who generously share our unique gifts and talents in order to promote and support life-giving ways of living, learning and serving others.

**Leader:** Today we gather, meeting together to consider where we stand and who we are.

**All:** **Open our hearts to your inspiration and kindness so that we may influence others through the Spirit of your love.**

**Leader:** Gracious God, be with us in this space and time as we shape the changes in our understanding of your wisdom.

**All:** **Open our minds to your understanding and caring so that we may influence others through the Spirit of your wisdom.**

**Leader:** We work in prayer and dialogue in going back to see where we have been, we steady our perspective for the journey forward today.

**All:** **Open our eyes to your mercy and compassion so that we may influence others through the Spirit of your understanding.**

**Reading:** Follow the example of Jesus and encounter and dialogue with those the world may consider “other than us” or outcasts and to reach out to meet their needs in a multicultural reality of the Catholic Church. We are challenged to embrace the diversity of God’s creation and welcome them into our communities.



“You are created by the God of love in God’s image and according to God’s likeness, to be a unique expression of that love. It is through you that God desires to manifest love to the peoples of the world in these times, and to offer them the freedom of the children of God in your journey of life.”

*Fundamental Principles of the Xaverian Brothers*

**Leader:** Gracious God, giver of all good things, we stand confident of your support in our lives, and we ask for gifts to help us on the way.

For the gift of humility, to see ourselves as you see us with loving and honest eyes.

**All:** **Give us your vision.**

**Leader:** For the gift of trust, to believe wholeheartedly in your Gospel message of peace, hope and love.

**All:** **Give us your conviction.**

**Leader:** For the gift of zeal, to be willing to work and to serve others generously and willingly.

**All:** **Give us your fidelity.**

**Leader:** For the gift of compassion, to treat all whom we meet and care for as our brothers and sisters.

**All:** **Give us your charity.**

**Leader:** For the gift of simplicity, to let go of those things that clutter our vision of you.

**All:** **Give us your spirit of freedom**

**Leader:** Creator God, we pray now and always for a deepening of these gifts in our lives so that we may serve our school communities as ministers of your healing touch of love through word and deed. Bless us with your love and support us with your wisdom. We pray this prayer through Christ Jesus our Brother. Amen.

**All:** May our Loving God bless and keep us. May Jesus Christ, our Friend and Brother, graciously inspire us. May the Holy Spirit, the Giver of Life, grant us peace. Amen.

# Xaverian Call

## *Respond to Justice, Peace and Relationships*

### **What is our call?**

The Spirit is calling us, as Xaverian Brothers Sponsored Schools, to be communities living the gospel as a life-giving commitment to others. Inspired by the example of Christ's care and compassion for those in need and on the periphery, we are called to work toward building a just and peaceful society and world.

**Leader:** Let us praise God, the Almighty One.

**All:** We thank you for your many blessings

**Leader:** Glory to the Father, to the Son and to the Holy Spirit

**All:** As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

**Reading:** At the heart of a Xaverian education is our commitment to the full development of each person. We begin with an understanding that each student arrives with a unique set of gifts and experiences. The Xaverian focus on building enduring relationships allows us to encourage the development of talents in our students. By taking time to know each student and guide him/her in making the most of such talents despite disappointments and setbacks, the student will find a true sense of accomplishment and satisfaction and such God given talents are brought to fulfillment.

**Reading:** Education comes from two Greek words – that for child and that for learning. From its roots, education can mean to lead a young person away from ignorance and disorder. This idea is founded upon the principles of Catholicism; this idea makes education truly the art of the arts. With the eyes of faith, consider the greatness of your mission and the wonderful amount of good you can accomplish.

*From Christian Education, by Basil Anthony Moreau founder of the Congregation of the Holy Cross*

**Reading:** There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit. To one is given through the Spirit the expression of wisdom; to another the expression of knowledge according to the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit; to another mighty deeds; to another prophecy; to another discernment of spirits; to

another varieties of tongues; to another interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit produces all of these, distributing them individually to each person as he wishes.

1 Corinthians 12

Reading: A Prayer of the Saints

We give thanks for all the saints, signs of hope for us in a time when hope is often difficult to discern.

We give thanks for the communion of saints, our communities of faith that support us when we lag behind. When we let go of our neighbors' hand.

We give thanks for our own call to sainthood, that challenge of baptism, that creative, disruptive grace, that instinctive turning toward the human family.

We are images of each other, we are a ruckus chorus announcing the kingdom of God: Hear it and know it calls us home.

*by Jane Deren, Education for Justice*

**All:** God who is Father, you created us in your image and called us good. God who is Son, you revealed the depth of divine love and invite us to eternal life. God who is Spirit, guide us and fill us with your truth. All praise to you, eternal Triune God, forever and ever. Amen.



# Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest

**Leader:** Good and Gracious God, afford us opportunities to rejuvenate our hearts, minds, and souls. Bless and guide us in our response to the challenges ahead. Give us patience and perseverance in our work. Grace us with fellowship and community. Help us to remember that you are our rest and refreshment.

**Reading 1:** Simplicity frees the heart, the mind, and the soul for the work of evangelization and education. The Xaverian Brothers Sponsored School community encourages us to live and work in ways that respect our vocation to be stewards of God's creation.

“Through simplicity, and in imitation of Theodore James Ryken, we adopt a way of living with less rather than more, in a spirit of appreciation and gratitude, acknowledging that ‘through the common, ordinary, unspectacular flow of everyday life, [we] will experience a liberation and a freedom never before imagined.’”

*Partners in Mission: Understanding the Xaverian Way*

**Reading 2:** Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light.

*Matthew 11:28-30*

**Reading 3:** This common rule is not meant to be a burden to you. *My yoke is easy and my burden is light.* It is presented to you in the hope that through reflection on it you may strengthen your courage to follow Christ as a follower of Theodore James Ryken. By faithfulness to it may you discover in God's own time ways to incarnate anew the vision of Theodore James Ryken and the charism of the Brothers of Saint Francis Xavier in the life of the world.

*Fundamental Principles*

## Reflection/Sharing

What speaks to you in these readings?

What keeps you from putting trust in God? Giving your challenges up to God?

Do you have an appreciation for the “common, ordinary, unspectacular flow of everyday life? What does that mean to you?

**Closing:** Slow us down, God. Ease the pounding of our hearts by the quieting of our minds. Steady our hurried pace with a vision of the eternal reach of time. Give us, amid the confusion of our schedules, the calmness of the everlasting hills. Break the tension of our nerves and muscles with the soothing music of the

singing streams that live in our memories. Help us know the magical, restoring power of sleep. Teach us the art of taking minute vacations—of slowing down to look at a flower, to chat with a friend, to pat a dog, to read a few lines from a good book. Remind us each of the fable of the hare and the tortoise, that we might know that the race is not always to the swift—that there is more to life than increasing its speed. AMEN.

*Richard Cardinal Cushing, "Prayer to Achieve Inner Peace"*

## Guide Us In Our Work

**Leader:** Good and Gracious God, bless and guide us in our work.

In this conversation today, and in our response to come, walk with us as we deal with complex issues. Help us to find the right words and actions.

Give us patience and perseverance in our work. Grace us with fellowship and community. Help us to remember that you are our rest and refreshment.

**Reading:** As a disciple of Jesus Christ, you are called to follow in His footsteps and minister God's healing touch of love, through word and deed, to all whom you meet in your journey of life. You have responded to the invitation: Come follow me. Day by day you will need to renew your response. Do not become discouraged over the difficulties you encounter in your life of evangelical service. Knowing that difficulties would be your share, your Founder judged: that nothing special is achieved without much labor, effort and zeal. Remember, Jesus, your brother, has walked this path before you. In you, as Risen Lord, He wants to walk this path again, and His Spirit, the Spirit of God, now guides you.

### *Fundamental Principles*

**Leader:** God of Justice, You open our eyes to the needs of our sisters and brothers. Help us to see Christ in every person and in all of creation. We ask this in Jesus' name.  
Amen.

