

## *A Description of the Xaverian Charism*

### *Preamble*

We, Xaverian Brothers, associates, and collaborators are a true religious family, striving to fulfill the spiritual aspirations that Theodore James Ryken had for his Congregation<sup>i</sup>. 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 in the world, 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 own uniqueness so they, too, may "share the love of God with the world through their own giftedness." In a spirit of hospitality, we try our utmost to be approachable and available, as true brothers and sisters who welcome others and accompany them in the joys and sorrows of their lives.

### *A Description of the Charism as lived by Collaborators*

As collaborators, we freely respond to the call to minister in a Xaverian Brothers Sponsored School.<sup>ii</sup> We commit ourselves to ongoing personal and communal formation that fosters the orientation of ourselves and of our students toward God. We live that orientation without privilege or entitlement, seeking to find God and to be formed by the "common, ordinary, unspectacular flow of everyday life."<sup>iii</sup> Motivated by the lofty purpose proposed for the Congregation by the Founder, we give witness to the values passed on to us from the Brothers and that currently animate our school communities: the values of humility, trust, compassion, simplicity and zeal.

In collaboration with the Founder's vision, we endeavor to "mutually help, encourage, and edify one another, and to work together."<sup>iv</sup> 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."<sup>v</sup> We believe that the profession of teaching "has an extraordinary moral depth" and it is one of humanity's "most excellent and creative activities."<sup>vi</sup> We believe that in our ministry we are called to educate the whole person – spirit, mind and body. 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.

As teachers, staff, administrators and trustees our ministry is one of reflective practice, striving to emulate the lives of both Martha and Mary.<sup>vii</sup> Like Mary in the presence of Jesus, we choose the "better part" by turning toward and falling in love with God. Like Martha, we are transformed by God's love and are impelled to place ourselves in humble service to Jesus, through our service to others.<sup>viii</sup> We seek to create school cultures that foster contemplation in the midst of action. As ministers of education we are called to turn towards God and place ourselves in the service of God. We integrate prayer and contemplation with ongoing professional formation as we seek to form communities of learning, faith and service.

As Xaverian educators, we seek to establish inclusive communities of faith in our schools and we embrace the challenges and opportunities of dialog between cultures.<sup>ix</sup> We are called to live the teachings of Jesus Christ in communion with the Roman Catholic Church and we recognize our place is in solidarity and availability among the people.

As ministers in Xaverian education, we are called to be participants and stewards in the 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."<sup>x</sup>

As heirs to the legacy of Xaverian education, we are committed to the Brothers' tradition of fostering excellence. As individuals and communities, we seek to empower students to achieve beyond their expectations and "give the gift they have received as gift" to a world in need.

With the Congregation of the Xaverian Brothers, we seek to continue to "enter into an ever deeper sharing of faith and prayer"<sup>xi</sup> as we search "the needs of the times and the desires of God in their regard."<sup>xii</sup> We affirm our commitment to "prayerfully reflect on the past, assess the present, and ponder the future with one another"<sup>xiii</sup> as we respond to our call to minister in a Xaverian Brothers Sponsored School.

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<sup>i</sup> An allusion to Ryken's *Apologia* addressed to Bishop Jan Baptist Malou, 1864. CFXGA, 3.5.1.4: "Consequently, what I established in 1839 must remain an authentic religious society.... The spirit that the Xaverian Congregation must have is the Religious spirit. This is the whole community's calling as intended by the founder for himself and all those who wish to associate with him. Therefore it is and should be the calling for all and nobody should dare to enter the congregation without primarily striving after the same religious spirit...."

<sup>ii</sup> Cf. *Lay Catholics in schools: Witnesses to faith* (1982): "The Lay Catholic educator is a person who exercises a specific mission within the Church by living, in faith, a secular vocation in the communitarian structure of the school: with the best possible professional qualifications, with an apostolic intention inspired by faith, for the integral formation of the human person." (#24)

<sup>iii</sup> Cf. Fundamental Principles

<sup>iv</sup> Cf. Fundamental Principles:

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.*

<sup>v</sup> Cf. Fundamental Principles

<sup>vi</sup> Cf. *The Catholic school on the threshold of the third millennium* (1997): Teaching has an extraordinary moral depth and is one of man's (sic) most excellent and creative activities, for the teacher does not write on inanimate material, but on the very spirits of human beings. (#25)

<sup>vii</sup> Cf. Working Paper Conclusion, p.93: "Brother Ryken came to an awareness of a life direction for him (and his followers) – the non-dichotomized life of Martha and Mary, the *ghemeyne leven* – and aspired to achieve that lofty purpose. Incarnating that aspiration occurred, however, within the ground of his graced humanity. It was an "ordinary" graced humanity in two ways: (1) self-determined to be without privilege and entitlement, and (2) open to the constant yet quiet irruptions of God in the unspectacular flow of daily life.

<sup>viii</sup> Service for Ryken was not done for humanistic reasons, but rather is understood as done in relation to placing oneself in service to "His Majesty," thus the importance for the Xaverian Brother to see ministry not simply as service to others, but as flowing from one's union with God in contemplation. See the Working Paper on Xaverian Spirituality, p.22ff.

<sup>ix</sup> Cf. Xaverian Brothers International Assembly 2012: sentiment taken from review of notes summarizing the large group discussion that followed the reflection by Br. Placide, CFX.

<sup>x</sup> Cf. Fundamental Principles

<sup>xi</sup> Cf. Fundamental Principles

<sup>xii</sup> Cf. Fundamental Principles

<sup>xiii</sup> Cf. Fundamental Principles