

*Fundamental Principles  
of the Brothers of  
Saint Francis Xavier*



*Adapted for use in Xaverian Brothers Sponsored Schools*

Friend,

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.

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 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.

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.

Perhaps you can repeat  
with your Founder  
this simple prayer  
which he cherished:

*O Lord, I cannot understand your ways,  
but I must adore them.*

Above all else remember  
that your God is forever faithful.  
In the words of the prophet God says:

*Can a mother forget her infant  
or be without tenderness  
for the child of her womb?  
I will never forget you.  
I have branded you  
on the palms of my hands.*

For your part,  
God asks you in return  
to make the word of God your home.

To do this  
you must be willing to spend time each day  
in solitude and prayer,  
opening yourself to God's living word.

Your Founder, too,  
insisted that his brothers  
enter into an intimate relationship with God,  
and therefore  
he pointed to the example of Jesus Himself:

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

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,  
quicken 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.*

You have promised  
to follow Christ, the poor man,  
totally given in love to God  
and for all people everywhere,  
and whose loving obedience led Him  
to death on the cross.

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.

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

Like Mary,  
may you willingly respond:

*Let what you have said be done to me!*

Friend,

*I give you a new commandment:  
Love one another.  
Just as I have loved you,  
you also must love one another.  
By this love you have for one another,  
everyone will know that you are my disciples.*

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.*

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.

Above all,  
enter into an ever deeper sharing  
of faith and prayer with your sisters and brothers;

reflect with them on how you find God  
in your lived experience.

In this way  
the community searches out  
the needs of the times  
and the desires of God  
in their regard.



In this shared faith of the community  
you will experience  
the ongoing revelation of Jesus.

*I no longer call you slaves,  
for a master does not confide in his slaves;  
now I call you friends.*

You will find  
your love and friendship  
within the community  
one of the chief joys  
with which God blesses you,  
and a most powerful means of evangelization.

As a follower of Jesus,  
and in relationship with one another,  
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 reign of God will grow to completeness.

Friend,

*Go, then, to all peoples everywhere,  
and make them my disciples.*

These words of the gospel  
stand at the heart of the vision  
of your Founder.  
Within them is contained  
the mission and the ministry  
of your school community.  
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.*

Your Founder's vision was unique.  
He originally intended to form a community of laymen  
who as religious brothers  
would be sent as missionaries to the world.  
As vowed members of the people of God,  
sealed in baptism and confirmed by the Holy Spirit,  
they would participate  
in the Church's mission of evangelization  
through a life of gospel service  
lived in solidarity and availability  
among the people.

Now this understanding of mission  
has been expanded to include  
the many women and men  
who collaborate with the Brothers in  
Xaverian education.

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.

As a follower of Theodore James Ryken,  
it is essential for you  
to be familiar with his vision and his spirit,  
especially as these are manifested in his writings.

As you immerse yourself  
in the foundation documents of the congregation,  
you will perceive  
the evolution of the Founder's thought  
and his readiness to adapt his vision  
to the changing needs of the times.

Study and reflect also  
upon the history of the congregation,  
for this history  
is the actual  
lived  
expression and development  
of your Founder's charism.  
It will reveal to you  
the mysterious ways of God  
in the cycle of death and rebirth  
that has been the life of the congregation.

Through your study  
you will begin to appreciate, too,  
how the ministry of Christian education  
became the most prevalent one among the brothers.

As you prayerfully reflect on the past,  
assess the present,  
and ponder the future with one another,  
be considerate of this history  
and of this ministry.

Yet, like Ryken,  
foster an attitude of openness  
to the needs of the Church and your world,  
and a willingness to follow Christ  
wherever He leads.

You are called  
to a life of constant searching.  
Let the developments and changes  
of your times  
be a source both of confidence and challenge to you.  
For as your Founder wrote:

*The Holy Spirit  
does not let Himself be bound  
by rules and models  
but works where and as He wills.*

Friend,

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.