In 1864, Brother Paul Van Gerwen and a group of pioneer Xaverians opened St. Xavier Institute in Louisville, Kentucky. St. Xavier High School has been celebrating this significant anniversary all year beginning with the Feast of St. Francis Xavier December 3rd and concluding with another Feast Day Mass and brunch later this year on December 3, 2014. In between these bookend events, the St. Xavier Community will mark the anniversary with many other activities, including a dedication of a newly commissioned statue of Theodore James Ryken, the Founder of the Xaverian Brothers, and the inaugural of the “Grisanti Lecture Series” in November 2014, when many Xaverian educators and board members from across the US will attend this event and celebrate 150 years of Xaverian secondary school education in the US as part of the bi-annual XBSS Board Forum.

St. Xavier, Louisville is not the only Xaverian school in the US to celebrate a significant anniversary this year. Xaverian Brothers High School in Westwood, Massachusetts and Xavier High School, Middletown, Connecticut are celebrating their 50th Anniversary, and Lowell Catholic High School in Lowell, Massachusetts (a successor school to Keith Academy which the Brothers first opened in 1926), is celebrating its 25th Anniversary. All three schools have been celebrating these milestone events this year, while Nazareth (Brooklyn) celebrated the 50th anniversary of its founding last year.

These anniversaries give us the opportunity to reflect on and celebrate 150 years of Xaverian education in the United States on the sec-
Secondary school level. Cardinal Seán O’Malley, the Archbishop of Boston, was the principal celebrant of the liturgies marking the anniversaries for Lowell Catholic and Xaverian Brothers High School. In his blog, after celebrating at Xaverian Brothers High School, he wrote, “We are very grateful to the Xaverian Brothers for their commitment to Catholic education. They have a very proud tradition. The order was founded in Belgium with a missionary thrust, particularly to work among Native Americans. However, when the founder, Theodore Ryken, came to the United States, he realized the need was to educate the children of immigrants. That is a mission that the Xaverian Brothers here have dedicated themselves to ever since.” Cardinal Seán’s words are a reminder that part of the charism, the giftedness, of the Xaverian Brothers has been the Brothers ability to read the signs of the times and to adapt to the changing needs of the Church and society. The Brothers do this however, rooted in a deep sense of mission and a commitment to implant the vision and values that have been part of the history of the Congregation from its foundation into the needs of Catholic education today. (See Brother Edward’s accompanying article on the gift and challenges for Xaverian education today.) St. Xavier senior Andrew Willett captured this sense when he said at the St. X celebration on December 3rd, “When I see St. X, I see brotherhood, education, respect, humility, caring and selflessness. These qualities that we so carefully carry out are qualities that have been bestowed upon us from God. It’s important to take what God has given to us and to help others.” At the September celebration at Xaverian Brothers High School, school Headmaster Brother Daniel Skala said, “The Cardinal’s visit reminds us that Xaverian’s mission goes beyond Westwood. We are part of something bigger than ourselves and have a wider responsibility to live our school motto—Veritatum, Fratribus, Testari—to give witness to the truth to our brothers and sisters.”
“Catholic schools must stay true to their roots or they are finished.”
Sister Clare Fitzgerald, SSND said at a convocation of Catholic school teachers. I had the privilege a few years ago to hear Sister Clare at a similar convocation in Louisville. She is an inspirational Catholic educator long associated with Boston College’s Catholic School Leadership Program. To write about the gift and challenges facing Xaverian education on the high school level today, I want to return to our roots. Therein lays the deep and vibrant story of our mission embedded in the lives and events of the pioneer Brothers. Therein we find the gift we have received and the inspiration to give it as a gift to others today and tomorrow.

Pioneers:
Paul, Vincent, Ignatius,
Francis, Peter, Philip

The gift: a clear and impelling mission. It started with a spark. The spark kindled a flame. The flame ignited in the pioneers a deep burning desire to teach youth and thus to help build the Church in America. We received the gift of mission from very ordinary, faith-filled men. Many challenges were theirs. A culture hostile to foreigners, especially to Catholic immigrants, greeted them in Louisville. Poor living conditions, insufficient financial support forced the now seven Brothers, with Stephen’s late arrival, to fast on weekends and take scant lunches. Philip lightheartedly would quip, “We are not obliged to fast by the Rule, but we got very little to eat!” Eventually, the Brothers were recalled to Bruges. Only four could return, however, due to finances. Philip had died, leaving this gift of mission in the hands of Francis and Stephen. These two Brothers were deemed more expendable, not because they lacked talent or skills to teach, but because they did not speak French which at the time was the language of instruction in Belgium. The flame, their deep burning desire, however, fueled the courage, faith and perseverance, needed to keep the mission alive. They did not let the flame go out.

What can you two do?

Francis and Stephen preserved the gift we have received. Often the local clergy pressured the two Brothers to become priests asking them, “What can you two do? It’s folly to waste your time.” Stephen was a very simple man, genuinely God-loving and expressing from youth a deep longing to do something significant with his life. Many of his contemporaries described Stephen as an “inspiration.” In a similar way Francis’ personal gifts and trust helped preserve the mission. Francis is described as generous, persistent, and a superb religion teacher who taught by personal example. Francis was a man of faith who always sought to do God’s work in God’s way.

Both showed us how to embrace our mission through their life stance. The stance was not about them, their needs or wants or personal desires. Rather it was about God’s work being done in God’s way in the common and ordinary of their lives. These Brothers gave us this gift often at great cost to themselves. Through their isolation and deprivations, Francis and Stephen added great trust in God to the deep story of Xaverian education. The same flame that ignited their desire to serve God’s Church also purified this gift as gold in a crucible is purified in fire. They must have been elated on July 1, 1860 when the second colony of Brothers arrived.

St. Xavier Pioneers:
Paul, Stanislaus, Benedict, Hubert, Basil, Bernardine, Clement and Innocent

With the arrival of more pioneers, the flame grew bigger and burned even more brightly. The desire to serve God, the Church, its families and youth, despite the social and economic hardships facing immigrant Catholics and the perils resulting from the War Between the States, burned in the hearts of these pioneer Brothers. Their mis-
mission was impelling. In the language of the day, the Xaverian mission was: teach the students their faith; tend to their spiritual and moral development so that they would have a deeper understanding of life grounded in the love of God; provide the education needed to assimilate into the mainstream of the society. By 1872, Americans had been admitted to the Congregation, the Brothers conducted eleven grade schools for the Archdiocese and opened their first secondary school, Saint Xavier College which is celebrating its 150th Anniversary this year. These are our roots. As Sister Clare said, “If we do not water these roots, we are finished.”

Today’s school leaders: Brother Dan Skala, Mary Joy Hurlburt, Perry Sangalli, Michael Welch, Bro. Brian Davis, Edward Hardiman

We not only have to water our roots, but remain true to them, as Sister Clare noted in her presentation. But there are great challenges in doing so. Pope Francis notes in Evangelii Gaudium (64) that the students we teach today are often disoriented and vulnerable due to secularization that reduces faith to something private, often rejects the transcendent and makes ethics relative. Francis points to the Gospel and invites us to respond to the God of love who saves us, to see God in others, to go out of ourselves and to seek the good of others. Recently I was privileged to be at the XBSS Student Retreat and saw and heard evidence of Francis’ exhortation. Our young people spoke of God’s love and committed themselves to God’s service. Our students are hearing our deep story from someone. That someone is the group of women and men, who head our schools and, like Francis, are pointing their faculties, students, parents and alumni in the right direction.

Today’s school leaders: Providencia Quiles, Robert Alesi, Maryellen De Marco, Thomas Doherty, Ed Tyrell, George Andrews, Paul Barker.

Our mission is still very impelling. It is responding to the needs of today’s students. Committed to helping them find God in everything at all times, our schools’ leadership provides something very special to the students—a place where feel they are accepted, a place where they know they belong, a place that encourages them to know themselves and put their talents at the service of others.

XBSS Leaders: Alice Hession, Sr. Pat Eils, Brother Richard Mazza

Our mission today is challenged by a culture of pragmatism. The value of the education is often equated with the school’s ability to get students into the right university. What’s in it for me? Cultural narcissism or the attitude that it’s all about me works against team work and more critically it works against building community. Our mission is about understanding and contributing to life as believers in Jesus Christ. It is not simply about making a living. Our Sponsorship Office and heads of schools are committed to assessing regularly the gift we have been given by the pioneers—our mission. We want to be able to give it as a gift to the next generation. In the name of the Congregation, I express deep gratitude for the stewardship with so many of our lay partners in mission for keeping the flame burning.
When the Xaverian Brothers held their Chapter in Rome last summer, a new General Superior (Brother Edward Driscoll) was elected, but also six General Councilors, Brothers who assist and support their new leader. This year, along with John Hamilton (Vicar General, USA), Paul Murray (USA), and Daniel Skala (USA), three African Brothers were elected to help set the direction for the Congregation in the coming years. These Brothers are Patrick Fumbisha (Congo), Raphael Wanjala (Kenya), and Placide Ngoie (Congo). We asked each to reflect on his role as a councilor and here’s what they said.

**Brother Patrick Fumbisha Kakusu, CFX**
What has made me rejoice about my election as a councilor is that my Brothers trusted me to be a congregational leader. I did not expect to be elected for two reasons: 1) I am a novice master and 2) I did not attend the general chapter. At the time it was going on, I prayed that it would come up with directives to help us root our lives more firmly in the love of God and neighbor, and I also asked the Holy Spirit to guide the election of the General Superior and his council. And so, I accepted my election—the result of my prayer!—even though it greatly surprised me. Being in a leadership position is about trying to encourage the members of the Congregation to remain faithful to the spirit of the last few General Chapters and to our Fundamental Principals (our rule of life). My primary call is to be a Xaverian Brother and being a Councilor gives me the opportunity to invite all my Brothers to an experience of Xaverian fraternal life. Being in leadership to me is a call within the call.

Brother Patrick is Novice Master at the International Novitiate in Kipushi in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

“Being in leadership to me is a call within the call to be a Brother.”

**Brother Raphael Wanjala Wanyonyi, CFX**
What gives me the most joy about being on the General Council is the opportunity to be of service to all the Brothers. My election at the 27th General Chapter reassured me that my Brothers trust me to be a good congregational leader. I hope that through the new council’s leadership, the Congregation will be able to stabilize the formation program at all levels in the countries here in Africa with active programs, so that we may continue to attract young people to respond to the call to religious life. I also hope that we will establish missionary communities centered on the core values and characteristics of the Xaverian way of life. Such communities, based on our Fundamental Principles, would help to bring stability in membership, particularly in the Eastern Africa Region.

Brother Raphael is a teacher at Tangaza College, Nairobi and Regional Coordinator for the Brothers in Kenya and South Sudan.

“My hope is that the Congregation will establish missionary communities centered on the core values of our Xaverian way of life.”

**Brother Placide Ngoie Munanga, CFX**
Often, when I’m trying to find the words to express how I live the Xaverian charism, or more than that, how to talk about falling in love with God and his service and following the example of our Founder, it quickly hits me that language is limited and full of difficulties. My words seem to diminish the truth that I am struggling to make known, which is that I have chosen to live as a Xaverian Brother because I’m inspired by the Dream and Vision of our founder Theodore James Ryken and his charism and life. I believe that African religious life today is called to cultivate even more the sense of belonging and awareness that allows community to be built, and I am honored to represent these goals as a General Councilor.

Brother Placide is Director of International Postulancy in Nairobi, Kenya.

“As a Brother and General Councilor, I have fallen in love with the service of God—in the footsteps of our founder.”

Do you tweet? The Twitter page for the Xaverian Brothers “re-tweeted” a post recently by a Campus Minister at St. John’s Preparatory school seeking to see if any of the students were heading down campus to visit the Brothers’ Retirement Community, affectionately known as the “Brother Barn” since the building actually was an old stone barn that was refurbished in the 1980’s for the Brothers’ residence and later expanded into a “senior friendly” building to accommodate the needs of aged and infirm Xaverian Brothers. Today, under the direction of Brother Robert Green, the Brothers regularly welcome visitors to the “Brother Barn.” Weekly, students from St. John’s Preparatory school spend an afternoon with the Brothers. Periodically, students from Malden Catholic also make the short 20-minute commute from Malden to visit the Brothers at Xaverian House. A similar phenomenon occurs at Ryken House, Louisville when students from St. Xavier visit the Brothers there. In addition, as part of a senior religion course at St. Xavier, students do one on one interviews with the Brothers. These visits are a wonderful way to “keep the flame burning” for students and Brothers alike.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are opening the curtain on the celebration of Women’s Month.” This is how Brother Vital Mwenge, CFX introduced the “celebration of women” at Tutazamie College, the Xaverian Brothers school in Likasi, DR Congo. The celebration of women during the month of March was organized at different cities and institutions in the DRC. It was in this context that the Brothers at Tutazamie College came up with the idea of organizing celebratory activities centering on its female teachers and its female students. The Brothers organized a conference on March 23, 2014. This conference included four women speakers speaking on themes focusing on the education of young women, the independence and self-direction of women, and abuse inflicted on women. Numerous pieces of advice were put forth for young women, the woman of tomorrow, so that they might be capable of taking charge of their lives, of fighting against the violence to which they are subjected, and in denouncing the many ways in which it occurs.

Celebrating Women at Tutazamie College in the Democratic Republic of Congo
On the Feast of St. Francis Xavier, Director of Xaverian Brothers Sponsored Schools Alice Hession announced this year’s recipients of the Theodore James Ryken Award. This award is given annually to members of a Xaverian Brothers Sponsored School community who are committed and dedicated individuals who proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They also spiritually nurture members of the school community; are committed to academic excellence; recognize the talents of individuals; know the importance of educating the whole person; and strive to fulfill the gospel call to peace and justice. Kudos to all of you!

**Ryken Award Honorees**

Christina McLaughlin – Nazareth Regional, Brooklyn, NY

John Nott – Malden Catholic, Malden, MA

George Stewart – St. Mary’s Ryken High School, Leonardtown, MD

Richard Monroe – St. John’s High School, Shrewsbury, MA

Ruth Kilburn – St. Bernard, Uncasville, CT

Tom Kolar – Our Lady of Good Counsel, Olney, MD

Pat Yanchus – St. John’s Preparatory School, Danvers, MA

Joseph Verde – Xaverian High School, Brooklyn, NY

Richard Monroe – St. John’s High School, Shrewsbury, MA

Alan Huelsman – St. Xavier, Louisville, KY

Clay Bonham – Mount Saint Joseph High School, Baltimore, MD

Nicholas Cerrata – Xavier High School, Middletown, CT

Alexander Salachi – Xaverian Brothers High School, Westwood, MA

William Tucker – Lowell Catholic, Lowell, MA
Concordia Society

Mr. Robert Edelen, a 1942 graduate of St. Joseph Prep in Bardstown, KY is our latest member of the Concordia Society. Bob knew the Xaverian Brothers while growing up in Kentucky, was taught by them at St. Joe’s and eventually became a Brother where his teaching and other assignments took him from Kentucky to Virginia, Maryland, New York and back to Kentucky.

Bob shared, “I have known many Xaverian Brothers and have many lasting memories; first, in Bardstown, KY, Phoebus, VA, Silver Spring, MD, Brooklyn, NY and Louisville, KY. I have remembered the Brothers in my will so that they may continue to find and teach the love of Christ in one another and their students.”

All Are Welcome

Those of you who have been faithful and generous supporters of the Xaverian Brothers over the years are invited to join the Xaverian Brothers Concordia Society. This Society and its benefits acknowledge those who have remembered the Brothers in their estate plans. When you remember the Brothers in this way, you automatically become a member of the Concordia Society.

Your generous bequest will help us defray some of these escalating costs:
- Care and support for our growing number of aged and infirm Brothers
- Our educational efforts through our Xaverian Brothers Sponsored Schools Office
- Our missionary activities and the growth of the Congregation in some of the poorest areas of our world.

For a list of benefits and other information, contact Ray Alcaraz at the Xaverian Brothers Development Office: ralcaraz@xaverianbrothers.org