ADVENT 2026

Waiting in the Ordinary

A Xaverian Journey Through Advent



XAVERIAN BROTHERS

IN HARMONY SMALL THINGS GROW

INTRODUCTION

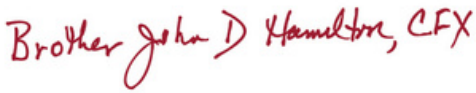
The authentic and pure values — truth, beauty and goodness — in the activity of a human being are the result of one and the same act, a certain application of the full attention to the object.
–Simone Weil

We have heard from early in our lives of faith that Advent is the season of waiting. But it is not primarily an act of imagination as if we live before the Lord's incarnation or a passing of time before we see God face to face after death, but it is rather a waiting for the Lord who is always loving us in every common, ordinary, unspectacular moment of our lives.

The 20th century mystic Simone Weil understood that waiting becomes prayer when it is the practice of full attention. In Xaverian spirituality, we trust that we are being formed by God, that our encounter with God lies in our allowing ourselves to be formed by the actual reality of our lives. Waiting with our full attention on the ordinary moments of our daily lives is disposing ourselves to be formed by God through them.

In these daily reflections on the liturgical texts of the season, members of our Xaverian family share with us what emerges for them as they attentively dialogue the words of the scriptures with the flow of their own everyday experience. May their careful attention to their own reality serve your own reflection and attention during these Advent days and in all the days to follow.

May you and all you love have a most blessed and joyous Advent and Christmas Season.



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Week 1

Nov. 29 - Dec. 5



"At Forest's Edge"
by Brother Edward Rice, C.F.X.

November 29

"Be watchful! Be alert! You do not know when the time will come." — Mark 13:33

Today's Gospel from Mark focuses on being watchful and alert. Many of us live by notifications, alerts, and calendar invitations. We rely on them to keep us informed and on schedule. Do you have your notifications set to display a banner, play a loud sound to get your attention, or arrive quietly in the background?

The most important messages from God often come to us quietly in the ordinary moments of daily life. As we begin this Advent season, we are called to prepare for Christ's coming by opening our eyes to people and opportunities God places before us. Yet, how often do we miss God's notifications? They rarely arrive with flashing lights or a recognizable ringtone. Instead, God speaks through a conversation with a friend, a student who needs encouragement, a family member seeking our help and attention, or a moment of stillness in a busy day.

Advent invites us to slow down and pay attention to these holy "notifications" from God. If our lives are filled with constant noise and distractions, we may overlook the ways Christ is being born into our hearts and our world. Being watchful is more than simply paying attention; it is cultivating a spirit of mindfulness and awareness of God's presence.

Just as we regularly check our devices for important notifications, Advent challenges us to check our hearts. Are we making time for quiet? Are we creating space for prayer and reflection? Are we attentive to the needs of those around us? Are we recognizing God's presence in the ordinary moments of our lives?

This season calls us to be alert, attentive, and ready. May we prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ by listening carefully for God's voice and responding faithfully to the invitations God places before us each day.

Lord, during this Advent season, help us adjust our spiritual notification settings so that the noise and busyness of life do not drown out Your voice. Open our hearts to be watchful and alert, listening for Your gentle presence and responding faithfully to the messages You place before us each day. Amen.

Rosanna Vessels

November 30

Feast of Saint Andrew, Apostle

"For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. But how can they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how can they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone to preach? — Romans 10:13-14

He [Jesus] said to them, "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men." At once they left their nets and followed him. — Matthew 4:19-20

I can picture Peter and Andrew walking on the beach just steps behind Jesus, a man they had only just met, with the words "fishers of men" ringing in their ears. At that moment, did they feel ready to be "fishers of men"? Could they imagine journeying to the farthest corners of the Roman Empire with the Gospel, ready to die for their faith? Were they prepared to change the world? Or at that moment were they worried about what was to happen to their fishing nets and boat? Were they nervous about what their friends were going to think about their decision to leave behind their jobs and families?

While there is no way to know what was racing through Andrew's mind that day on the beach, I learn quite a lot from him about responding to Jesus' call. I only need to give Jesus a chance to transform me. Hearing Jesus' call, perhaps my response should be just that simple: put down the net, step onto the shore, and start walking.

Would Andrew have so willingly died for Christ within those first few minutes on the beach that day? Romans 10:13-14 reminds me that the world needs to be evangelized, and the Church needs people to do the evangelizing. Focusing on the gravity of what's being asked (and ultimately what's at stake) could be enough to paralyze us into remaining in our boats and tending to our nets. I hear the call, but do I feel worthy? Do I think I'll be successful at what Jesus is asking of me?

Hear the call and put down those nets. That's step one. He will handle the rest.

Lord, put trust in my heart so I may readily follow you. Saint Andrew, pray for us.

Paul Servideo

December 1

"But a shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse, and from his roots a bud shall blossom…There shall be no harm or ruin on all my holy mountain…" — Isaiah 11:1-10

Over the past years, the world has been scarred by a number of existential "anxieties". Consequently, many now seek to reconnect with their cultural identities and to find deep personal meaning outside conventional secular frameworks. This experience of renewal and hope stems from a heart that deeply longs for that which the world or any human being cannot satisfy: God: *"You have made us for Yourself, Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You" (St. Augustine).*

In the first reading, Isaiah uses ordinary imagery which does not defy nature. He alludes to important values: transformative healing, patience, rootedness, hope. Significantly, this points to how God works when human power fails, bringing extraordinary grace to small, overlooked, or barren places; the stump that shoots branches, or roots that bud (Is. 11:1). It raises a crucial question about how one handles life when in challenging situations, which is inevitable. I am reminded of our Xaverian Constitution: being formed by God through the common, ordinary, unspectacular flow of everyday life that brings liberation and freedom never before imagined. The greatest pillar is communal living which does not require grand corporate structures. It starts with humble fidelity in ordinary moments with fellow Brothers as it sprouts outwards. Thomas Merton writes in *No Man Is an Island* "True solitude is the home of personhood…but it opens outward into the deep solidarity of a community rooted in Christ's quiet grace." To be rooted in this grace is to possess His qualities (wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of God). In living in solidarity with the vulnerable, as our Constitution encourages, we manifest God's compassionate love to those who are estranged, to those who suffer from want, neglect, and injustice, and the oppressed of the world (Fundamental Principles of the Xaverian Brothers). Then a peaceable Kingdom of God will be manifested.

Lord Jesus, a bud from the roots of Jesse, even out of our dead stumps, we ask that you sprout renewed hope and guide us into your promised peace. Fill our weary hearts with the comfort of your justice, restoring our trust that harmony will heal our broken world. Amen.

Brother Kevin Masese, C.F.X.

December 2

"Behold our God, to whom we looked to save us!" — Isaiah 25:6-10a

The Advent season has always been my favorite of the Church's liturgical year. As I reflect, I think it is because it enables my type A personality, always wanting to prepare and be ready. Today's scripture reassures me that God will provide and he will destroy death forever, something I know and believe yet appreciate the reassurance nonetheless. It speaks to HOPE.

Even as an adult, the weeks leading up to Christmas still fill me with excitement and anticipation. After raising our four children the magic now is not quite the same as it was, but Virginia and I are blessed to have a new magic in our granddaughter. That aspect of innocent HOPE is rekindled once again and I am once again renewed.

In my journey as a Xaverian Associate I have at times questioned living out my commitment. Am I doing enough? Do I have a strong enough connection to the greater Congregation? Is my service adequate? In today's scripture I am reminded that "the LORD of hosts will provide for all peoples" and I am comforted. Once again HOPE is renewed.

The God I look to is constantly saving me, constantly renewing my HOPE, and for that I am forever grateful.

God of hope, grant that this Advent season be one of becoming aware of your presence in everything.

Bill Gorman

December 3

Feast of St. Francis Xavier

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the Kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven." — Matthew 7:21

Today we celebrate the Feast of St. Francis Xavier, the patron saint of the Xaverian family. As a young man of great academic promise at the University of Paris, Francis heard, from the mouth of Ignatius, the words of the Mark 8:36: "What does it profit a person to gain the whole world and lose their soul in the process?" These words entered deeply into his consciousness and led him to leave everything and to join Ignatius in the creating the Company of Jesus, and soon thereafter to undertake his many missionary journeys in service to the word of the Gospel.

We live in a world with many sources of information. We often confuse information for thought and thought for action. We consider posting on social media as communication and mistake political opinion for political action. Similarly, we may misinterpret the accumulated data offered by AI for the kind of action-oriented thought that comes from distinctively human reflection and contemplation. However, the human spirit, in its communion with God's Spirit, is endlessly creative and capable of action that is loving service, action that in its own small way makes a difference in the world.

Today, especially in the western world, we suffer from an epidemic of loneliness and powerlessness. The more we find ourselves inundated with superficial words, the more unsubstantial and impotent we feel. When Ignatius challenged Francis, he received the word into his mind and heart, and it moved him to action. Frequently, we fail to do God's will not by making a mistake but by inaction and passivity. As we hear God's word today, may we deeply receive it and then act on it.

God, as St. Francis Xavier spent each moment of his life as a servant of your word and your people, give us the strength and courage to act on your word that it may not return to you empty but rather having fulfilled the purpose for which you sent it. We ask you this through Jesus, your eternal Word. Amen.

Brother John Hamilton, C.F.X.

December 4

"But a very little while, and Lebanon shall be changed into an orchard, and the orchard be regarded as a forest!" — Isaiah 29:17-24

We began one of my classes last Spring as usual. I asked my students if they had anyone they wanted us to pray for as a community. "I'd like to pray for my family in Lebanon," one of my students said, "that they will stay safe during all the bombing going on there."

I have been thinking about this prayer request since I first read the first reading for today, with Isaiah's mention of the forests of Lebanon. Hearing my student's petition was a bit of an "aha" moment for me. I had never registered, or maybe had forgotten, that he was Lebanese. How had I missed this? Did he tell me at the beginning of the semester? Had he mentioned it during class? To reference today's gospel, I was indeed blind to seeing this whole student.

The season of Advent can remind us that a physical time of darkness can apply to our spiritual lives as well. I know; I can stumble through my days missing God in so many places. Then, a student prays for his family under risk in a war zone, and the light goes on and God is found in the quiet young man sitting near the window who has bigger things on his mind than whatever I planned to address in the next fifty minutes of Modern Church.

For all of us who are blessed to work in Xaverian Brothers Sponsored Schools, here's hoping we walk into the light during this dark period of the Advent season. Our schools are filled with students, parents, faculty, staff, and alums who carry the light of Christ within them. Perhaps in the common, ordinary unspectacular flow of everyday life (Fundamental Principles of the Xaverian Brothers) we can take a moment and encourage God's light to shine forth from them, brightening our lives and our school community.

Loving God, in the darkness of these Advent days, help us to see your divine light shining forth in those we are blessed to be with every day.

Steve Ruemenapp

December 5

"No longer will your Teacher hide himself, but with your own eyes you shall see your Teacher." – Isaiah 30:20

As a little girl, my Christmas began the day after Thanksgiving. My mom would pull out the little Christmas tree she and my dad purchased as newlyweds from Woolworth's (yes, I am dating myself!) and set it up in the living room of our Brooklyn apartment. Barely four feet tall, it glimmered more beautifully than Rockefeller Center. In school we read our daily Advent readings and Sister Mary Martin would ask us what each meant to us. Many seasons have passed since then, yet the beauty and wonder of Advent still stirs that excitement, that glimmer of our little artificial Christmas tree.

The first week of Advent, we reflect on the hope that God promised – that of a Saviour, of unconditional love, of redemption, and of salvation. The first reading reminds us of those promises, of providing us what we need. Isaiah's reading is a promise of redemption and healing after confronting and overcoming challenges. "On the day the Lord binds up the wounds of his people, he will heal the bruises left by his blows."

I am reminded of the Xaverian virtue of Trust -- "No longer will your Teacher hide himself, but with your own eyes you shall see your Teacher." Personally, I find Trust most challenging – it is the virtue for which I pray the most. During this beautiful season of preparation, of excitement for and anticipation of the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, we are called to trust in God's plan and his promises.

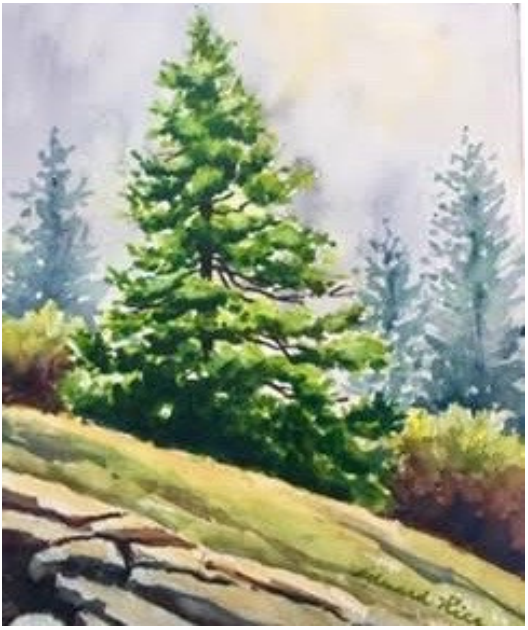
We are called to hope, to peace, to joy, and ultimately, to love. As Xaverian schools, we are called to live this mission, to serve with zeal and compassion. Jesus called his Apostles to tend to "the lost sheep of Israel," and this Advent we are called to serve and tend to others.

Loving God, thank you for the blessings you have granted During this Advent season, help us everyday to trust you will always provide what we need. Amen.

Leatha Recio-Cruz

Week 2

Dec. 6 - 12



"Hilltop Evergreens"
by Brother Edward Rice, C.F.X.

December 6

"A voice cries out: In the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord!" — Isaiah 40:3-4

The preparation that the prophet Isaiah speaks about in today's reading is not a passive waiting; it is active and requires a conscious effort at conversion on our part. Where in our lives are the valleys we must fill, the mountains or obstacles we must level, the rugged lands we must make smooth? Where are we being called to conversion?

In our modern-day wildernesses, whether it consists of loneliness, crises of meaning, or personal setbacks, paving a straight path is an act of pure faith and an openness to God's call to conversion. Our acts of faith and openness to conversion invite us to a belief that a Presence can fill our emptiness and that Life can spring forth from the barren earth. "The Lord God comes with strength, …, he shall feed his flock like a shepherd."

May God help us to properly prepare for the coming of His Son into this world full of problems and difficulties. Amen.

Brother Fabien Kabwe, C.F.X.

December 7

Memorial of St. Ambrose

"The desert and the parched land will exult; the steppe will rejoice and bloom.
They will bloom with abundant flowers, and rejoice with joyful song." — Isaiah 35:1-2

Living in New England, I am blessed to witness the movement of clearly defined seasons each year. Wild though the weather may be, we mark our time in the gradual transition from one season to the next, moving from the primary four into our regional additions like Mud, Black Fly, or Stick Season. As we begin the turn to winter, just before the first real snow falls, we find ourselves in that quiet stretch of the recently popularized Stick Season. It is a barren time where the trees have lost their leaves, the vibrant colors of fall have faded, and the landscape has turned a muted shade of brown.

It is this exact scenery I imagine when reading Isaiah's description of a parched wilderness prior to the arrival of the promised bloom. It is also the landscape that frames the Advent season for me. As we prepare for the birth of our Lord, the woods fall still; the color retreats, and the dropping temperatures drive us inward.

It is this time of year that brings both great anticipation and excitement in our students; anticipation of the looming Christmas Break, the excitement of time away from school, and all the nostalgic comfort of the holiday season. Yet, while many rush toward the noise of the Christmas season, we are encouraged to embrace this quiet, muted moment in the liturgical year, Advent Season, as a time that prepares us for great joy. For what is the joy of spring without the icy stillness of winter? The season of Advent mirrors the prophet's promise: out of the parched, barren land, grace breaks forth, and all creation rejoices with joyful song at the coming of the Lord.

Lord, help us to embrace the spirit of this season as we prepare for the joyful rejoicing of the Christmas season. Bring vibrant life to the dry, weary, or hardened places in our hearts so that we may be open to receiving the ultimate gift of your love in Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Ian Snyder

December 8

Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary

"Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous deeds." Psalm 98:1, 2-3ab, 3cd-4

Today's readings help us understand our advent journey. In the first reading from Genesis God our father confronts Adam and Eve. Their lack of faith and trust in God banishes them from Eden. Eve becomes the mother of all the living, and we are born with original sin.

Psalm 98 celebrates God's delivery of Israel from exile. "Sing to the Lord a new song…The Lord has made his salvation known…He has revealed his Justice …His kindness and his faithfulness…". Through his enduring compassion, God has given us hope for our salvation. He brings peace to our hearts with his kindness, faithfulness and forgiveness. We belong to him.

St. Paul tells us, "he chose us in him…In love he destined us for adoption to himself through Jesus Christ." With joy we know we are loved, chosen by God our father, and created in his image and likeness to be one with him through Jesus. "… for he has done marvelous deeds."

In Luke's gospel the Angel Gabriel greets Mary, "Hail full of grace…for you have found favor with God." Mary, our spiritual mother, born without sin, is our model for humility. Mary's love for God is exemplified in her great faith and trust in God's plan for her. Mary is the antithesis of Eve. Filled with love for God she replies, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord."

Mary, help us to humbly sing a new song of praise, of trust and faith as we listen each day for God's plan for us. May God's marvelous deeds fill us with hope, peace, joy and love and bring us closer to your son.

Mary Joy Hurlburt

December 9

Jesus said to the crowds: "Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest."
— Matthew 11:28-30

If you ask students here at Xaverian, especially upper-class students who know me well, what my favorite time of the year is, they will say without hesitation, "the Christmas Season!" Advent has always been my favorite time of year, dating back to when I was a student at Xaverian in Brooklyn in the 70s. There is a special joy and magic felt in a building filled with young people, especially when they are surrounded by adults who work hard to keep the miracle and joy of the birth of the Christ child alive, not just during Advent, but throughout the year. It was that way for me thanks to the Xaverian Brothers and faculty who surrounded us with love and a Christmas spirit that lives with me to this day, and one I hope our current administration and faculty model as a gift to our students as well.

I know how difficult it can be to hold on to that Christmas magic. Adults are burdened with the realities of life, exhausted by responsibilities, raising children, paying bills, caring for aging parents, facing health challenges, all challenges that can understandably cause us to see Advent as less than a spiritual rebirth or a time to reflect on the greatest miracle and gift from our Father in Heaven, His Son. Matthew's Gospel is always a reminder to me that Jesus offers us a standing invitation to follow Him, and in Him, to find true joy and rest. Jesus does not deny or minimize our burdens, but rather, He reassures us that if we come to Him, if we place our worries in His hands, we will find joy and peace.

Lord Jesus, I accept Your invitation to come and find You in the common, ordinary, unspectacular flow of my life, and in so doing, keeping the miracle and the joy of Your birth alive always. May we never be too old to feel the love of Your Christmas miracle as seen through the eyes of a child. Amen.

Bob Alesi

December 10

"Do not be afraid; I am coming to your aid." — Isaiah 41:13

During Advent, the Word of God teaches us to await the Lord with confidence. In the Book of Isaiah, God addresses His people with comforting words, "Do not fear, for I am coming to your aid." Those words are also addressed to each of us. God does not distant from our frailties: He comes to meet us and takes us by the hand.

Isaiah later uses the image of a desert which becomes a place of water and life. Where humans see barrenness, God causes springs to gush forth. Thus, our moments of discouragement, loneliness, or weakness are not necessarily the end of our journey. When we trust in the Lord, he transforms our inner deserts into places of hope. This promise is at the heart of Advent as we await the One who comes to renew our lives.

In the Gospel, Jesus presents John the Baptist as the great forerunner. John invites people to welcome the newness of the Kingdom. He does not seek to draw attention to himself. His mission is directing people toward the One who is coming. His is a reminder that a true witness does not proclaim himself.

This message resonates with our Xaverian identity. Following in the footsteps of St. Francis Xavier, we are called to be available to bring the Gospel where Christ is yet to be known and loved.

Advent is an invitation to renew our missionary readiness. Our identity calls us to reach out. Like John the Baptist, we are invited to be voices that prepare the way for the Lord and direct others toward Christ.
During this time of preparation for Christmas, let us open our ears and our hearts. Let us welcome God's call with confidence.

Lord Jesus, you who come to meet us, take us by the hand and transform our deserts into springs of life. Give us watchful hearts like that of John the Baptist, so that we may prepare your way through our brotherhood, our simplicity, and our missionary witness. Amen.

Brother Claude Suse, C.F.X.

December 11

I, the LORD, your God, teach you what is for your good, and lead you on the way you should go.
— Isaiah 48:17

During Advent, we are invited to slow down, listen, and prepare for the coming of Christ. In this passage, God reminds us that he does not leave us to navigate life on our own. He walks with us, guides us, and calls us to trust in His plan.

As we journey through Advent, we are reminded that preparation is not only about anticipating the celebration of Christ's birth, but also about creating space for God to work within us. This requires humility, patience, and a willingness to listen. It challenges us to reflect on where God may be calling us to grow, how we can better serve others, and how we can recognize His presence in our daily lives. God is always in control, He always has a plan, and His plan will allow us to flourish in ways never thought possible. Remember to take a back seat and listen wisely to the path that is meant for you to travel.

Lord, during this Advent season, help us to slow down, listen for Your voice, and trust the path You have prepared for us. May we have the humility to follow Your guidance and the faith to know that Your plan will lead us where we are called to be.

Brittany Conley

December 12

Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe

"Our Lady of Guadalupe, I am coming to dwell among you, says the LORD." — Zechariah 2:14-17

Today's readings are resplendent with the good news of God's presence among us as mentioned twice: Rejoice, God is "coming to dwell among us," and we shall be God's people with the security of God's presence among us.

Luke's gospel proclaims the Son of the Most High, the Lord God, ruler of the house of Jacob forever, is made present to the human race by Mary's consent to be the mother of God. God will be present in flesh in the person of Jesus!

Today's feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, remembering Mary's appearance to Juan Diego in 1531, exemplifies the importance of and the transformative power of PRESENCE. She comforts this startled peasant by speaking his native language and enfleshing his own dark skin. Her compassionate presence is one of accompaniment, hope, and empowerment.

I had the privilege of visiting the shrine in Guadalupe and sharing a unique closeness to God along with hundreds of other pilgrims, many on their knees, everyone in silence. I felt God's presence in a unique way; humbled as I witnessed such strong faith as we all marveled at the centuries-old cloak, impeccably preserved. It was a strong reminder of Mary's miraculous presence, one of hope to an oppressed people. As witness to this miracle, Juan Diego was commissioned to be a messenger of God's presence and loving care among his people.

The invitation is clear: Fear not; be open to the mysterious ways of God appearing in our lives, allow God to be made flesh in us and proclaim his presence in our lives.

Lord, help us to be open to and courageous in proclaiming your presence to our hurting world through who we are and what we do in the "common, ordinary unspectacular flow of our everyday lives."

Brother Michael McCarthy, C.F.X.

Week 3

Dec. 13 - 19



"Red Barn - Winter"
by Brother Edward Rice, C.F.X.

December 13

"As the earth brings forth its plants, and the garden makes its growth spring up, so will the Lord God make justice and praise spring up before all nations." — Isaiah 61:11

Through the Advent season, we are called to prepare for Christ's arrival, remain attentive to God's presence in our lives, and look for ways to bring His love to others. The reading for the Third Sunday of Advent reminds us of the certainty of the Lord's presence and influence.

God's love is as certain as the advent of spring. After the dormancy of winter, we trust new life will emerge in the budding trees, blooming flowers, and flourishing gardens. In turn, those signs of life sustain and nourish all the other forms of life on this earth. In much the same way, the Lord brings life to our world through His justice, compassion, and love.

The season of Advent calls us to place our trust in God and to open our hearts more fully to Him. We trust in the coming of Spring because it is steadfast and reliable, woven into the very fabric of creation. So too is God's love. When our faith is rooted in trust and we invite Christ into our lives, we can be confident that His presence is no less certain than the turning Earth, the movement of tides, the dawning of each new day, and the changing seasons.

During this season of preparation, we are reminded that God's promises are not merely hopes for the future. They are living realities, unfolding around us each day, calling us to trust more deeply in His enduring love.

As members of a Xaverian community, this trust calls us to recognize God's presence in those around us and to serve others with confidence and hope. Whether in classrooms, offices, homes, or communities, we are invited to be instruments of Christ's compassion. Advent reminds us that we do not wait passively for the Lord's coming. Rather, we prepare for His arrival by embodying His love and extending it to those entrusted to our care. We are the shepherds of God's love.

Loving Father, as we prepare our hearts for Christ's arrival, please help us to manifest your presence through the enduring personal relationships we are called to build as Xaverian educators. Amen.

Kyle St. George

December 14

Memorial of St. John of the Cross

"Your ways, O Lord, make known to me; teach me your paths,
Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my savior." — Psalm 25

Now in the third week of our Advent journey, today's psalm calls us to a stance of humility and trust. The psalmist does not ask God simply to confirm the path already chosen. Instead, the prayer is, "Teach me your paths." There is a humble acknowledgment that we do not always know where God is leading, what God is asking, or how God is already at work in the circumstances of our lives and ministry.

Moreover, Advent reminds us that God enters our lives in ways we do not expect. Our Savior comes not with power or prominence, but as a child. God's presence is revealed not in what is extraordinary, but in the ordinary reality of human life. The path God chooses may look very different from the path we might have chosen. Yet, we are called to trust the Lord who guides us in truth and teaches us.

In the Fundamental Principles, we read of Theodore James Ryken praying with a similar humility and trust: "O Lord, I cannot understand your ways, but I must adore them." Ryken trusted that God works through small beginnings, ordinary people, and situations that do not always unfold according to our plans. His life was marked by a willingness to listen, discern, begin again, and place himself at the service of others. The Xaverian tradition calls us to do the same: to remain humbly open to where God is leading and to trust that, in harmony, even small things can grow.

As Christmas draws near, where are you being invited to let God guide and teach you? May we continue the remaining Advent journey with the humility of a learner, the openness of a disciple, and the trust of one who believes that God is guiding our way.

God of Advent, teach us your paths, open our hearts to your ways, and give us the humility and trust to follow wherever you lead. Amen.

Dr. Carolyn Herman

December 15

"I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall be always in my mouth." — Psalm 34:2

During Advent, we are frequently reminded that it is a season of hope. We are bombarded with imagery of Jesus's coming as a "light in the darkness". We are prompted through celebrations and gifts to experience gratitude, joy, and love; both human and divine. These reminders belie the fact that we are a people who need hope, precisely because many in our world, especially the poor and marginalized, experience injustice and suffering as a result of human sin, both individual and societal.

In today's readings (Zephania, Psalm 34, and Matthew's Gospel), we see the God of wrath and justice which may not "fit" our idea of Advent as a season of peace, hope, and love. Yet, in the readings, we meet a God of solidarity, who knows that it's wrong when the haughty and arrogant are in charge, and also makes God angry! Because God "hears the cries of the poor," He knows that we suffer, and when we let God into our hearts, we are consoled. At times, we sin and feel distant from God, but the God of unending love always welcomes us back.

Our Fundamental Principles remind us about the relationship between hope and need.

"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."

Quite simply, the promise of Advent is for all humanity and especially those who suffer. During Advent, as we are called to joy, let us also remember to live in solidarity with our brothers and sisters who hope for a better world.

Dear God, keep me awake during this season of hope to stand in solidarity with the poor, the marginalized, and the suffering.

Dr. John Morse

December 16

"I am the LORD, and there is no other. I form the light and create the darkness …" — Isaiah 45:6-7

Advent is a time of waiting, yet it is also a time of noticing. In today's readings, God reminds us that He is with us and Jesus shows His identity through simple acts of healing, compassion and hope.

As Xaverians, we are called to recognize God in the ordinary moments of life. We may sometimes look for God in extraordinary experiences, yet He is often present in the person who needs a listening ear, the student who needs encouragement, the colleague who is struggling, or the small act of kindness that brings someone hope.

The Gospel challenges us to ask: Do people recognize Christ through the way we live? Our Xaverian values of humility, simplicity, trust, compassion and zeal invite us to answer this question not only with our words, but also through how we treat and serve others.

This Advent, may we become more attentive to the needs around us. Like Jesus, may our presence bring healing, dignity and hope. Christmas is not simply about waiting for Christ to come; it is also about allowing Him to become visible through us.

Let us therefore wait with open hearts, trusting that God is already at work in the ordinary.

Lord Jesus, open our eyes to see you in the ordinary people and moments of our lives. Help us to bring your compassion, hope and love to those we meet. Amen.

Brother Gregory Maina, C.F.X.

December 17

"Justice shall flourish in his time, and fullness of peace for ever." — Psalm 72

When I first read today's Gospel, I found myself drawn to the long list of names in Matthew's genealogy. At first, it can feel like a difficult passage to connect with. But the more I thought about it, the more meaningful it became. Generation after generation, God was at work, ultimately leading to the birth of Jesus. The story reminds us that we are all part of something much bigger than ourselves.

I think there is something particularly meaningful about that fact during Advent. We are preparing to celebrate the birth of Christ, while also being reminded of those who came before us and helped prepare the way. In our Xaverian Brothers Sponsored School communities, we are beneficiaries of a remarkable legacy built by the Brothers and by generations of educators, students, alumni, families, and benefactors who believed deeply in the power of a Catholic education.

That legacy is a gift, and it is also a responsibility. We are called to receive what has been entrusted to us with gratitude, to live out our faith through service, and to leave something meaningful for those who come after us. That does not always require great or extraordinary measures. In fact, one of the guiding principles of the Xaverian Brothers' tradition is recognizing God's presence in the common, ordinary flow of everyday life.

As we await the celebration of Christ's birth, may we be grateful for those who came before us, faithful in the responsibilities entrusted to us today, and mindful of the generations still to come.

Lord, as we prepare our hearts to celebrate the birth of Christ, help us recognize Your presence in our everyday lives. Give us grateful hearts and the humility to use our gifts in service to others. Amen.

Walter G. Capece Jr.

December 18

"All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: Behold, the virgin shall be with child and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel, which means 'God is with us.'" — Matthew 1:18-25

Everything changes with the Incarnation. In entering time and space and becoming flesh, the infinite God makes Himself present in a previously unimaginable manner. The Incarnation of Jesus Christ does not necessarily change the circumstances in which we live; "the common, ordinary, unspectacular flow of everyday life" and our suffering. Rather, He joins us in it. He is present in it. He is with us.

Like Mary, we are to allow Him to become incarnate within us. We do not simply live with an awareness of Him, but, through our baptism, our awareness of Him does not remain abstract or a notion separate from our daily actions and thoughts. He is incarnate within us and we live our awareness of Him so that He touches all that we touch.

Lord, may I live in awareness of your presence through the common, ordinary, unspectacular flow of today, and everyday. Amen.

John Olon

December 19

"The woman bore a son and named him Samson. The boy grew up and the LORD blessed him; the Spirit of the LORD stirred him." — Judges 13:24-25a

When I think about the story of Samson, what stays with me is not so much Samson himself, but the way his story begins. Before he is a hero, before he is strong, before anyone knows what his life will become, there is a promise. God is already at work in a situation that seems unlikely and uncertain.

That feels very much like Advent.

We spend weeks waiting for Christ, but Advent also reminds us that God is often at work long before we recognize it. The people of Israel were waiting for deliverance, and God began that work through a child whose story started quietly, almost invisibly. Centuries later, God did something even more unexpected; not through strength or power, but through a child born in Bethlehem. In Jesus, God enters our world with humility, simplicity, and love.

As Xaverians, we believe that God's work does not always announce itself loudly. It can begin in small acts of compassion, in a relationship restored, in a student discovering a gift, or in a person quietly choosing to serve rather than be recognized.

The Xaverian value of humility calls us to be attentive enough to notice those moments. Trust asks us to believe that something meaningful is taking shape even when we cannot yet see the outcome.

Perhaps that is one of the gifts of Advent: learning to recognize that God is already stirring among us.

We wait for Christ, yet Christ is not simply someone we are waiting to find. Christ is already present and inviting us to slow down, to pay attention, and to become part of what God brings to life in our community and in the world.

Lord, as we walk in faith and not by sight, guide us by your promise and lead us to discover the gifts within ourselves and others. May we use those gifts to serve with humility, love with compassion, and faithfully follow where you lead.

Edward Owusu

Week 4

Dec. 20 - 25



"Winter Dusk - Boston Common"
by Brother Edward Rice, C.F.X.

December 20

"For ever will I sing the goodness of the Lord." — Psalm 89:1a

The readings for today call our attention to God's plan for salvation and they call us to respond by praising "the goodness of the Lord." In reading one from 2 Samuel, God commissions Nathan the prophet to remind David of God's goodness to David and his people, Israel. God promises to raise up David's heir. "I will be a father to him and he will be a son to me. Your house and your kingdom shall endure forever." In the responsorial psalm for today, we are reminded that this covenant with David and Israel is forever. God's promise to David points us toward Christmas and the fulfillment of that promise through the birth of Jesus, the God-man and Savior. In reading 2, from Paul's letter to the Romans, Paul points to the birth of Jesus as "the revelation of the mystery kept secret for long ages but now manifested through the prophetic writings … through Jesus Christ."

The Gospel reading from Luke brings us the story of the Annunciation, a crucial event in God's plan for our salvation. The angel Gabriel appears to Mary and sets out her role in God's plan. The story would have seemed familiar to Mary; there will be born an heir of David who will be given David's throne and an eternal kingdom over the house of Jacob. Yet, Mary's role is fraught with mystery—a supernatural conception of a child, "Son of the Most High." Gabriel confronts Mary with another mystery, Elizabeth, thought to be barren, is with child. The eternal God acting in time relies on Mary to respond in faith and Mary does respond in faith and with humility and trust. "I am the handmaid of the Lord, May his will be done according to your word." Thus, Mary sang of "the goodness of the Lord."

Dear Lord, help us to sing your goodness by listening when you speak and responding with humility and trust. Amen.

Brother Timothy Hoey, C.F.X.

December 21

"Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled." — Luke 1:45

Advent is a season of waiting, preparation, hope, and joyful anticipation as we look toward the celebration of the coming of Christ. The readings remind us that this waiting is not passive; it calls us to recognize and be reassured of God's presence, and to respond with faith and elation.

Zephaniah tells us, "The LORD, your God, is in your midst," and "you have no further misfortune to fear." God is already with us, protecting and sustaining us. We need not be discouraged; we can trust that this is true and be vibrantly glad.

In the Gospel, Mary responds to God's call by traveling to Elizabeth. Mary's willingness to say yes to God already demonstrates profound humility and trust. She does not keep God's gift to herself; she allows it to become a source of grace and happiness for Elizabeth.

Elizabeth, in turn, receives Mary with humility and immediately recognizes God at work through her, asking, "How does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy." Even though Elizabeth may not understand all that God is doing, she remains open to the mystery before her. Her response shows how humility can help us notice God's action in others and celebrate the blessings unfolding around us.

As Xaverians, we are called to develop that same spirit of humility and trust. The Advent readings remind us to make room for God by letting go of our need for certainty, remaining attentive to His presence and expressing our gratitude and joy. We can encounter God in people and ordinary moments placed before us.

May we be steadfast in our trust of the Lord. Let us joyfully embrace the moments in which He reveals Himself to us and witness enthusiastically the ways in which He works in others.

Dr. Patricia Thomas

December 22

"My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior." — Luke 1:46–47

Advent prepares us to welcome Christ who comes to dwell among us calling usto be signs of his presence. During this week of Advent, the Church invites us to adopt Mary's attitude of humility, trust, and gratitude. Mary focuses not on herself but on what God is accomplishing in her. Her heart becomes a place where God acts and his promise takes flesh.

The first reading tells of Hannah, who receives the gift for which she had prayed, and in gratitude, she gives it back to the Lord. Hannah and Mary show us that God's gifts are not meant to be kept. They become more fruitful when offered in the service of others.

As Brothers of Saint Francis-Xavier, this Word reminds us of our vocation and our primary purpose: to be men of faith, available for mission, especially among themost vulnerable. Following Theodore James Ryken, and according to our Fundamental Principles: "The gift you have received, give as a gift." We are called to welcome gifts from God, give them freely, placing them at the service of others. Advent becomes a time of conversion: welcoming Christ and sharing him with the congregation, the Church, and the world, while also being witnesses to his presence.

As Christmas draws near, let us ask ourselves: What has God given me, and what am I called to offer to others? May our waiting for Christ not be passive, but expressed through acts of sharing, service, and hope.

Mary's deep joy is not only in what God is accomplishing in her own life. She recognizes God sees the lowly, lifts up the humble, and acts with mercy. Her song becomes an invitation to look at our world with the eyes of God.

Lord Jesus, come dwell in our hearts and make us, like Mary, humble and willing servants. Teach us to recognize your wonders and to share them with those we encounter.

Brother Jean-Luc Kasongo, C.F.X.

December 23

"He will sit, refining and purifying silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi, Refining them like gold or like silver." — Malachi 3:3

The birth of Jesus is near. We anticipate joy, peace on earth, and glad tidings. Yet today's readings give a different picture. We hear about a "great and terrible day," about fear, and a refiner's fire. Why? Because the coming of Jesus is about more than a cute scene in Bethlehem. Jesus comes to change us.

John the Baptist is the messenger who prepares the way; his mission is to prepare hearts for Jesus. And preparing our hearts is not easy.

The prophet Malachi tells us that the Lord is like a refiner's fire. A refiner carefully purifies gold and silver, removing impurities until the metal becomes more beautiful. It requires patience and close attention. Advent asks us to allow God to do the same thing in us.

The Fundamental Principles say, "Let the developments and changes of your times be a source both of confidence and challenge." Change is certainly a challenge. We may recognize aspects of our lives in need of change; attitudes,priorities, relationships, or the way we treat others. Yet, we cannot make such changes by ourselves. We need God's grace.

How does the refiner know when his work is finished? When he sees his own reflection in the metal.

Maybe that is what Advent asks of us. When will we know we have truly allowed Christ to change us? When God can see Himself reflected in us—in our patience, forgiveness, generosity, and especially in the way we love those around us.

Dear Lord, as we prepare for Your coming, help us to open our hearts to You. Like gold refined in the fire, remove from us whatever keeps us from becoming more like You. Help us to recognize our weaknesses, let go of our pride and selfishness, and allow Your grace to transform us. Turn our hearts toward You and toward one another. May the changes You bring about in us be reflected in the way we love, forgive, serve, and care for others. May the Christmas season be one of lived change and joy for all whom we meet in our journey of life. Amen.

Clay Bonham

December 24

"In the tender compassion of our God the dawn from on high shall break upon us, to shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death." — Luke 1:78-79

When I was an eighth grade Boy Scout, my grandfather presented an exciting offer. The National Boy Scout Jamboree was the following summer. If I promised to stay with Scouting and achieve the rank of Eagle Scout, my grandfather would pay for my entire trip which included a visit to Thomas Jefferson's Monticello and sightseeing in Washington, DC.

Not realizing the weight of that promise, I quickly agreed. A few months later, I boarded a bus for two unforgettable weeks. Years later, before my eighteenth birthday, I completed all requirements for Eagle Scout. Without that oath to guide me, I may never have achieved a goal that continues to open doors for me.

Given the importance of trust, it comes as no surprise that oaths hold such power. From legal contracts to marriage vows, we rely on statements of promise. Today's readings reflect how this need for covenant is also a fundamental theme in scripture. In the first reading, the prophet Nathan reminds David of God's promise to the Hebrew people: to provide an heir who will "make his Kingdom firm." In the gospel, Zechariah's beautiful canticle proclaims that the pledge is finally being fulfilled; God has "raised up for us a mighty Savior, born of the house of his servant David."

God keeps His word, giving us the Messiah "to shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace." On the eve of the Incarnation, may we trust that "in harmony small things grow," remaining open to the tender compassion of our God, in the form of a child in the manger.

Faithful God, thank you for fulfilling your promises in surprising and beautiful ways. Like John the Baptist, may we also be empowered to "go before the Lord to prepare his way." Amen.

Stephen Murphy

December 25

The Nativity of the Lord

"All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 'Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son and they shall call him Emmanuel' which means "God is with us".” — Matthew 1:22-23

On a cold winter morning in December of 1854, Xaverian Brothers celebrated the birth of Christ in Louisville, Kentucky, the first Christmas in their new country. While little is known about the specific events of that first Louisville Christmas, it is most probable that the founder, Theodore Ryken, was still with the six Brothers living in their residence on the third floor of St. Patrick's School at 13th and Market Streets.

We know that Louisville in 1854 was a rapidly growing port city, a bustling hub for the steamboat trade along the Ohio River which drew merchants, immigrants and laborers, however, most of this activity was up the river around the original Galt House Hotel at 2nd and Main Streets, a mile or so from where the Brothers lived. For the Brothers and the people of Louisville, Christmas was not the festival of lights that it is today, but was celebrated quietly in the churches and in the family homes around St. Patrick's.

In the Brother's Manual of Customs and Advice, a note to Brothers in Foreign Missions reads, "Brothers should be indifferent as to locality, this really meaning little, since the fundamentals of their lives are the same anywhere." So, of course, the day began with prayer, celebrating Mass and sharing a meal. The Brothers celebrated Christ's birth simply, far from their home in Belgium, but in a spirit of community with the inspiration that Jesus is "Emmanuel, God is with us." Uplifted by those pioneering Brothers in America, may our Christmas this year be celebrated with that same simple inspiration.

Let us pray that Jesus will be with us in a simple way this Christmas as we celebrate the gift of the Xaverian Way. Amen.

Alice Hession

About the Authors

Bob Alesi
Bob is in his 44th year at Xaverian in Brooklyn, serving as a teacher, coach, and for the past 17 years, as the school's President. Bob lives in Staten Island with his wife Jeanne, daughter Jamie, son-in-law Ken, and their two grandchildren, Luke and Julia.

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Clay is Campus Minister/Teacher at Mount Saint Joseph High School in Baltimore, MD. He is entering his 26th year with MSJ and daily strives to manifest God's love to the peoples of the world.

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Walter is Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer to the Board of Trustees at Xaverian High School, Brooklyn, NY. A 1997 Xaverian graduate, he has served the school for more than 20 years and remains deeply committed to Catholic education and the mission and charism of the Xaverian Brothers.

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Brittany is the Principal of Lowell Catholic's 7–12 Division. She is passionate about creating a faith-filled community where students and educators are known, supported, and challenged to grow.

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Bill is a former teacher who retired from Xaverian High School (Brooklyn) after 31 wonderful years. He currently enjoys being a husband, dad and grandpa.

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Alice is the former Executive Director of the Xaverian Brothers Sponsored Schools. She began teaching for the Brothers in Louisville in 1977.

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Brother Timothy does volunteer work at nursing homes and assisted living facilities. He taught Social Studies at St. John's Prep and Malden Catholic.

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Mary Joy served from 1985 through 2019 as an educator, Administrator and the last 14 years as President of St. Mary's Ryken in Leonardtown, Md. She is currently a member of Xavier High School Board of Directors and a Corporate Member.

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Brother Gregory is currently in his fourth year at The Catholic University of Eastern Africa in Nairobi studying counseling and psychology. He also earned a degree in social work and community development from Kibabii University in 2023.

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John is an Assistant Principal for Academics and Religious Studies Teacher, beginning his 25th year at his alma mater, Saint John's High School (Shrewsbury). John is both a graduate of Saint John's (Class of 1989) and a proud SJ parent (Class of 2022).

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Stephen is the Coordinator of Campus Ministry at St. Xavier High School where he has also taught Theology for the last 20 years. He lives in Louisville, KY with his wife Faith and their three children.

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John lives a common, ordinary, unspectacular life in Leonardtown, Maryland, where he is in his 25th year of teaching at St. Mary's Ryken.

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Rosanna is a Theology teacher and Instructional Technology Resource at Saint Xavier High School in Louisville, Kentucky. She and her husband, Dennis (St. X class of '71) are Xaverian Associates. They are parents to Ross (St. X class of '14).



Project Contributors

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Kevin is the Formation Director for the XBSS network, and a graduate of Mount Saint Joseph '07. He lives in the Baltimore area with his wife, Mary, and daughter Eliora.

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Gail is a Xaverian Associate, and served as English teacher at St. John's Prep for 20 years, and Department Co-chair for six years.

Brother Edward Driscoll, C.F.X.

Brother Edward has served the educational ministry of the Congregation both in the U.S. and Bolivia. After his term as General Superior, he dedicated himself to teaching immigrants English, to the ministry of spiritual direction and to the promotion of racial justice.

Brother John D. Hamilton, C.F.X.

Brother John was elected to serve as General Superior in July 2025. He had served as Vicar 2013-2019 and on the General Council in previous years. Prior to his Congregational leadership roles, he was a teacher, retreat leader and religion department chair at Xavier High School, Middletown, CT.

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Brother Larry currently serves as the Vicar for the Congregation and is on the leadership team at the Generalate. He had served previously as General Superior and a member of the leadership council, as well as Director of Xaverian Brothers Sponsored Schools.

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Brother Edward is a professional watercolorist who taught at St. John's High School in Shrewsbury MA, at St. John's Preparatory School in Danvers, MA and is currently an art instructor at the Melrose Senior Center. He resides in the Brothers Residence in Malden, MA.

Stephanie Stricker

Stephanie has served the mission of the Xaverian Brothers for 23 years in various advancement roles. She currently serves as the Executive Director of Advancement and Director of Planned Giving.

Notes

About the Xaverian Brothers



The Xaverian Brothers are a community of consecrated laymen who as religious Brothers participate in the Roman Catholic Church's mission of evangelization. Founded in Belgium by Theodore James Ryken in 1839 to be missionaries, the Brothers have been educators in the U.S. since 1854. The ministry in the U.S. includes 13 Xaverian Brothers Sponsored Schools, as well as many activities of the Brothers in direct service to refugees, prisoners, adult education, and the homeless. Xaverian Brothers have expanded their ministry work among the poor in Kenya, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Haiti, while continuing their historic connection with schools in Belgium and the U.K. The Xaverian mission touches the lives of the most vulnerable wherever the Brothers serve.



May your Advent journey give you hope, and help prepare you for the real meaning of Christmas, and may the coming of Jesus give you peace.

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