

Rome, 12.3.2023

LETTER FOR CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR 2024

"Our God is goodness and mercy: He will come to us from above as a rising light. He will shine in the darkness of death and will guide our feet into the way of peace" (Luke 1:78-79).

Dear Family and Friends of the Xaverian Missionaries,

Here we are again to celebrate the great mystery of our Christian faith: *The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we saw, his glory, the glory as of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth (John 1:14).* The God who created humanity, journeys and lives with us in the joys and sorrows, hopes and uncertainties, serenity and restlessness. He is Emmanuel, **"God with us"** (Mt 1:23). This is the mystery we celebrate at Christmas, a special time when we feel closer to each other, when more than ever our humanity and fraternity is shared more openly, where, in a particular way, we feel invited and encouraged to keep alive the dream of a world where every human being is acknowledged and appreciated in their (genuine) true dignity, *made in the image and likeness of God*, our Father and Creator (Gn 1:26-27).

Christmas is also a privileged moment to feel united in a special way as a Xaverian Family, committed to the mission that Jesus, the Hebrew baby born in Palestine, entrusted to the Church: *Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature (Mk 16:15), aware that He is always with us, all days, till the end of the world (Mt 28:20).*

As part of the same Missionary Family, I wish to share with you some of the most meaningful events we have lived in 2023.

Celebration of the XVIII General Chapter last July in our Xaverian Community of Bukavu (Democratic Republic of Congo). The theme of the gathering was: *Loving Our Xaverian Vocation* today and wherever we are. A new General Council was elected for the next six years with the peculiarity that the four Councilors come from and represent the four Continents where we serve. For the very first time there is a Councilor from Indonesia, Fr. Franciscus Xaverius Sudarmanto.

Candidates in Formation. We give thanks to the Lord for all the young men who are journeying with our Xaverian Family in view of consecrating their lives totally to the same. Seventeen of them made their First Religious Profession, twelve took Final Vows, and six were ordained priests.

Fr. Paolo Andreolli was named Auxiliary Bishop of Belém (Pará), in Brazil and was ordained a Bishop on April 15th, 2023.

70 Years of our Presence in Brazil. Our Confreres in Brazil are celebrating their 70th in that country (1953-2023) since the arrival of the first Xaverians. They closed the Anniversary year with a large Family gathering at the Marian Shrine of Aparecida.

Mexico. Our Xaverian Region of Mexico just celebrated the 50th Anniversary since the closing of the first year of Novitiate (1973-2023). Our Confreres, Frs. José de Jesús Romero Vera, Gerardo Custodio López, and Juan Antonio Flores Osuna were part of that first group. Since then, a good number of Confreres followed in their footsteps. We give thanks to the Lord for such a great blessing for our Xaverian Family.

Thailand. It was exactly a year ago that a new church was blessed at Umphang (Tak Province), near the Myanmar border, where the Karen people live. Dedicated to St. Francis Xavier, it's the first Catholic Church to be built in this region with a very small number of Catholics. About three years ago the Xaverians opened here the third community in Thailand with Frs. Reynaldo Tardelly Fulgentio and Alessio Crippa.

DRCongo. Kinshasa. In October, around our Xaverian Community of Kinshasa came to life the first LAMIX Group (Laity of the Xaverian Missionaries). This is how they introduced themselves: *Identifying ourselves with the Xaverian Charism, our sole mission is to witness, at every moment and everywhere, our faith and God's merciful love, by showing in concrete ways our Christian missionary vocation (baptized and sent), and by making our personal charisms bear fruit for God's glory. We contribute to the first proclamation and walk with the Xaverian missionaries in some of their ministries, by evangelizing people and socio-cultural contexts where Christ is not yet known.*

Special Benefactors. This year two people were honored with a special mention within the Xaverian Family: **Mrs. Emilia Bacuzzi Bonfanti**, who was President of the GAMS (Group Friends of the Xaverian Missionaries) of Parma for many years, and **Mr. Dieudonné Kasangandjo Kilundu**, at Bukavu (Dem. Rep. of Congo), who accompanies our Confreres in the Congo as a brother and friend and has been helping them out in various activities for almost 50 years.

The Cause of the Martyrs in Burundi. The Diocesan Phase on the martyrdom of the Servants of God Michel Kayoya and 43 other companions is closed. Now the Roman Phase opened. Our Confreres Frs. Aldo Marchiol and Ottorino Maule are among the 43, together with the lay missionary Catina Gubert.

Our Deceased Confreres. In 2023 the Lord called to himself the following Xaverians: Bro. Angelo Fumagalli and Frs. Giulio Simoncelli, Romano Didoné, Giovanni Battista Pedrotti, Carlo Pozzobon, Pierluigi Felotti, Fernando Abis and Raimondo Sommacal. We give thanks to God for the gift of their lives at the service of His Mission in the Xaverian Family. *Eternal rest grant onto them, O Lord!*

Dear members of our Families and Friends, I wish you all a grace-filled and Merry Christmas. Let us ask the Lord that the New Year 2024 be a time filled with His blessings for each of you and your loved ones.

May the Lord Jesus Christ be known and loved by all!

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Fernando García, s.x." with a stylized flourish underneath.

Fr. Fernando García Rodríguez, s.x.

Superior General