**Nativity of Mary – Xaverian Missionaries**

So, we celebrate this 75th Anniversary of the establishment of the Xaverian missionaries here in our nation. Gathered here is the entire US community, from the three states: Massachusetts, New Jersey, and Wisconsin.

They know, you might not, that the Xaverian Community of the United States was born from China. In early 1941, Father Henry Frassineti was on his way to Italy from China via the USA, accompanying a sick brother home to Italy. The patient continued to Italy. Father Henry stayed, and the rest is 75 years of history we honor this day.

Today the missionaries have communities here in Holliston, in Franklin, Wisconsin and Wayne, New Jersey. They maintain relationships with those who support their global mission, and over these 75 years, more than 350 Xaverian Missionaries have studied in the US and then sent in proclaim the Gospel in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Seventy-three Xavierians were ordained on this soil and two of the men were appointed Bishops in the Missions.

The Xaverian mission, is our mission, our mission as the Church. And in all our personal struggles, and our corporate struggle, to be faithful to the mandate of the Lord to baptize and teach, we need the help of the Blessed Woman who knows our friend, Jesus the best.

Today, we commend the past, the present and the future of the Xaverian community and mission into the hands of Holy Mary, whose birth we honor today with the Universal Church. She is a woman beautiful not only in appearance (which has been confirmed by the seers of Fatima, and other apparitions), but Mary is MOST beautiful in the way God prepared her from the moment of her conception, and then, in her birth, God used her for His wonderful purpose. And she, who we honor today, she gave herself over to God's will in a most extraordinary way. Her beautiful life is seductive, in a most holy way.

Real beauty is seductive. For example, I recall the first time I attended the Holy Thursday Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper. I was perhaps 7 or 8 years old. As a boy, I was so taken by the procession with the Blessed Sacrament to the repository, with all of its solemnity, clouds of incense and haunting chant of the Tantum Ergo, I started crying.

Beauty catches your attention, and then...it draws you in. True beauty is so appealing that our souls recognize something very good being communicated through it – something True.

A starry night sky, a late summer Sunset, being with one's spouse with whom you've shared the good times and bad, our children and grandchildren: the face of a little baby: these communicate a profound Truth – that God is here. When we really look, we see the beauty of God's plan.

Mary has only one desire – to lead us to Her Son. And so, asking for her intercession on your missionary activity is sensible, in these days that you remember the past and plan for the future. In leading us to Jesus, she lights the way to our ultimate destination in heaven, much like the lights in the night sky that led sailors through the darkness. She is the true Morning Star who accompanies us through the valley of the shadow of death.

On May 13, 1917, three children named Lucia, Francisco and Jacinta were grazing their family’s flock of sheep when the beautiful Virgin Mary appeared to them atop a small oak tree. She came to them with a message, and it was basically this: their prayers and sacrifices could help stop a world war, and also help to rescue people suffering because of their own sins.

We live in a time of war and tremendous confusion and division. Sin wages war on us. Sin causes us to turn our back on our dear friend, Jesus. Yes, we turn our back on the Son of God, the Son of Mary!

These apparitions of the Blessed Mother at Fatima continued for six months and at one point the Mary asked the three shepherd children, “Will you offer yourselves to God, and bear the sufferings He sends you…for the conversion of sinners?” The three children responded, “Oh, we will, we will!”

Their passionate response, in my mind echoes the enthusiasm of the early Church and should inspire us at this moment of global challenge.

I would call this: ***taking up the mission.*** And taking up this mission is something every one of us should do…but, as we know, it’s rarely easy and we would be naïve to think it so. In a particular way, for all these 75 years, the Xaverian missionaries have been taking up that mission on our soil, and from here to many missions.

My guess (and it's more than a guess) is that Mary’s deepest desire for us and for the whole world, is only that the world come to know her Son and His mercy. Like a good mother, Mary wants us to place our hope in Him alone. Jesus is our only hope.

Today’s Gospel tells us the name of our hope is Jesus, a name which means one who saves. Jesus is our only hope. And He carries the tittle ***Emmanuel*** because, in Jesus, God is truly with us.

But to be certain that we do not fall into despair, Jesus gave us His own mother - from the cross - to be our refuge and our advocate.

In our mission as "the Church," in all our struggles, we need the help of the Blessed Lady who knows our friend, Jesus, the best.

***As we honor your birth, Holy Mary, beautiful Lady of Fatima, pray for us!***

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