



**Mission Statement:** To provide the Word of God, and the best of Roman Catholic teaching and literature, spiritual and inspirational material, to blind or visually impaired persons of any faith in whatever format best meets their needs at no charge and to continually explore ways to make that material more accessible and available to the widest possible audience of those in need. To offer opportunities for volunteer service for those who wish to help in this work through their donation of time, talent or financial support.

Since 1900, Xavier Society for the Blind has provided all reading materials to the blind and visually impaired community of faithful free of charge. Our mission was originally envisioned by a blind teacher of blind children, Margaret Coffey, and Fr. Joseph Stadelman, SJ. For years and years Margaret had prayed "that God would inspire some one to take pity on the Catholic blind of the country for whom there was no Catholic book to be had." In addition to providing inspiration for Xavier Society, Margaret provided \$350 of her own resources, which was the amount of money necessary to purchase a recently developed stereograph machine which would allow the production of a larger volume of books and magazines in 'raised print', e.g. braille. While not considered a significant sum today, in 1900 \$350 was a very large investment for a young blind woman. Thanks to Margaret Coffey's generosity Xavier Society for the Blind acquired this 'new technology', and soon produced its first book, *The Baltimore Catechism*.

While there have been many changes in the Catholic Church and the world around us since our founding in 1900, Xavier Society for the Blind remains faithful to its mission. We continue to serve many clients in many ways:

- transcribing and producing the Mass Propers in braille for our clients who overcome daily challenges to actively participate in Mass and in many instances serve as lectors
- fulfilling custom requests for faith formation textbooks for children and study guides for adults in braille when these resources might not be available from other sources
- annually creating audio books and books in braille while maintaining over 1,800 titles in braille and audio related to the Catholic Church, religion, and spiritual and inspirational themes for blind and visually impaired people of all faiths seeking to deepen their faith and spirituality

- transcribing and producing *The Xavier Review* (newsletter sent to 800 patrons detailing new additions to our braille and audio libraries) and *The Catholic Review* (compendium of articles of interest from religious periodicals sent to 650 patrons) in braille three times each year

Our wide selection of offerings in braille remains at the heart of our mission. The Mass Propers in braille are provided monthly to approximately 800 blind Catholics in the United States and 20 other countries, totaling 750,000 pages of braille each year! Publication and distribution of the Mass Propers in braille is not available from any other source.

In addition to The Propers, Xavier Society provides a wide array of titles in braille on religious, spiritual and inspirational topics, primarily in the Catholic tradition. We offer biographies on the saints; the Bible; novenas and other devotional prayers; textbooks for children in catechetical classes; papal encyclicals; and materials for prayer and study groups. Our certified braille transcriber completes many special projects for patrons who often request a special book or prayer pamphlet. In 2019, we added 97 new titles in braille and 81 new titles in audio to our catalogue. We fulfilled nearly 3,300 requests from patrons for materials and over 104 new clients were registered in 2019. Many of the books we produce are requested by our patrons while others are selected by our staff. We try to anticipate what books will have wide appeal. More recently we have been choosing award winning titles and recommendations from the Association of Catholic Publishers, the Catholic Press Association, CatholicLink.org and the Catholic Book Club (***America Magazine***).

Xavier Society has completed the transition to digital Talking Book format. This enables our patrons to listen to our books on the talking book machines provided for free by the National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled (NLS). Digital Talking Books are produced on cartridges, a format that is very accessible and user-friendly for people with sight loss. Our staff has worked diligently to get many of our most popular audio books converted to digital Talking Book, and any new titles we produce will be in digital Talking Book format. We hope that the combination of more appealing titles and the digital Talking Book format will allow us to reach many more people. Of course, we will remain faithful to our mission and focus on books related to Catholicism, religion, faith, spirituality, prayer, and inspiration. Adding titles in Spanish is a key objective as well.

Our pilot program for creating audio books commenced in 2019. In order to create audio books that are more listenable with improved dramatic effect, we've recruited several volunteer readers who are working in New York City as professional actors, through **Fordham University's Theater Department** and St. Malachy's Church, The Actors' Chapel. In the past our audio books were recorded remotely by volunteers using a variety of recording equipment and software. Consequently, the quality of recording was inconsistent. Last year we began working with several paid freelance audio engineers who are recent graduates of the School of Audio Engineering (SAE) here in New York City. Our ultimate goal is to achieve the standards of production that will qualify our audio books for inclusion in the NLS catalogue and its BARD (Braille and Audio Reading Download) application, further expanding our reach. Currently we have thirteen audio books in production working with ten volunteer readers and seven paid freelance audio engineers. This is an important initiative for the future.

All of these efforts are aimed at reaching greater numbers of blind and visually impaired people who would benefit from our reading materials. We continue with several strategies to increase awareness of our mission in order to reach more people including:

- a combination of mailings to Catholic parishes in large dioceses across the United States, personal outreach to diocesan ministries for the disabled, and article placement in multiple diocesan newspapers
- feature segments in local and national media (NET-TV's *Currents News*, Diocese of Brooklyn and Queens, NY, *Just Love Radio Show* (Catholic Charities of New York) on SiriusXM, Catholic TV's *This is the Day* with Bishop Robert Reed)
- redesigned website and a new phone system menu option which allows our patrons to hear about recent additions to our catalogue
- social media (Facebook and Twitter), electronic newsletter and notifications, and live-streaming (YouTube and Facebook) and televising (Catholic Faith Network) our annual St. Lucy Mass for which the main celebrant and participants used our Mass Propers in braille

**The Current Board of Directors Members and Officers:**

Fr. Francis Hilton, President and Board Member  
Richard Kenney, Treasurer and Board Member  
Carolyn Marino, Secretary and Board Member  
Beata Harvin, Board Member  
Dan Morrison, Board Member  
Mike Robinson, Board Member  
Breandan Ward, Board Member  
Kitty Wynne, Board Member

**Income and Expenses in 2019**

Total Income in 2019: \$608,716  
Expenses in Program in 2019: \$731,319  
Expenses in Fundraising in 2019: \$221,758  
Expenses in Administration in 2019: \$150,784  
Ending Net Assets: \$14,976,665