

Milwaukee Mission Appeal 2020: Xaverian Missionaries

My name is Fr. Alejandro Rodriguez and as a missionary, I spent 6 and a half years in the Philippines. I am a member of the Saint Francis Xavier Foreign Mission Society, also known as The Xaverians. We are an international community of priests, brothers and sisters, working in 21 countries, trying to extend the Good News of Salvation.

When first I was sent to the Philippines as a missionary, I had all these ideas about missions: baptisms, development, education ... you name it.

However, I was not expecting the mission to teach me what mission is really about: to walk with the people of God. Let me explain: a few months after we opened a new parish in Marikina, a city on the periphery of the capital, we got hit by a hurricane. I remember that I was driving to the center of the capital, to celebrate a baptism, I got stuck on one overpass because everything got flooded in a matter of minutes. I stayed there from around 10:30 am to 11:00 pm. Finally, when the water went down, I was able to reach the seminary of the Xaverians. The next day, around 5:00am, I decided to go and find some supplies before heading back to my parish, where there were two other priests. When I arrived at the community, the only thing I could see was destruction and death. The words of the prophet Jeremiah came to my mind: "If I go out to the country, I see those slain by the sword; if I enter the city, I see those ravaged by famine! For both prophet and priest travel to a land they do not know." I got impatient with God and started questioning Him. I could not understand how such devastation could happen. People were walking aimless and as without soul. It took me some days of work and prayer to get an answer from God. Weeks later, as we celebrated Mass, the first reading read: "Comfort, comfort my people, says your God." Then it all made sense. I was not there as a missionary who could bring prosperity, social development, or education ... I was there on a mission, the mission of God: "to comfort God's people." I was in the mission to bring hope and good news. Of course, medical aid, food supplies, and education go hand in hand with the preaching of the Good News.

This new understanding of mission: "to be the messenger of the care of God for His people," helped me to redefine my work as a missionary. It renewed my desire to work for the missions. That is the reason I am here today, and I want to ask from you three things:

1. Pray for missionaries: because it is difficult to understand the ways of God, and there are many reasons to go astray in the missionary journey.
2. Pray for Vocations: we need new men and women who desire to leave everything behind for the good of God's people.
3. Your economic support, because without your help we cannot be in the missions, and we cannot help the people with whom we work. There are many projects around our missions, but today I want to focus on a project we are working on in the town of Kilomoni, extension of the city of Uvira, in Congo, central Africa.

The project is called: The Kilomoni Center for Young People.

- This project is an enterprise of the Xaverians in Congo, which aims to educate, form, and train young people, as well as to prevent drugs, prostitution, gangs, and criminal affiliation.
- Special attention is given to girls in this center, since they could be more vulnerable to fall into prostitution or even abortion.

I ask you do to what you can, for as Saint Mother Theresa says: "what matters is how much love you put into whatever you are called to do..."

I want to thank in a special way your Bishop, your Pastor, and the director for the Mission office for the opportunity given to me and my community to be here today, to speak about the missions. Thank you for your generosity and may God continue to bless you always.