

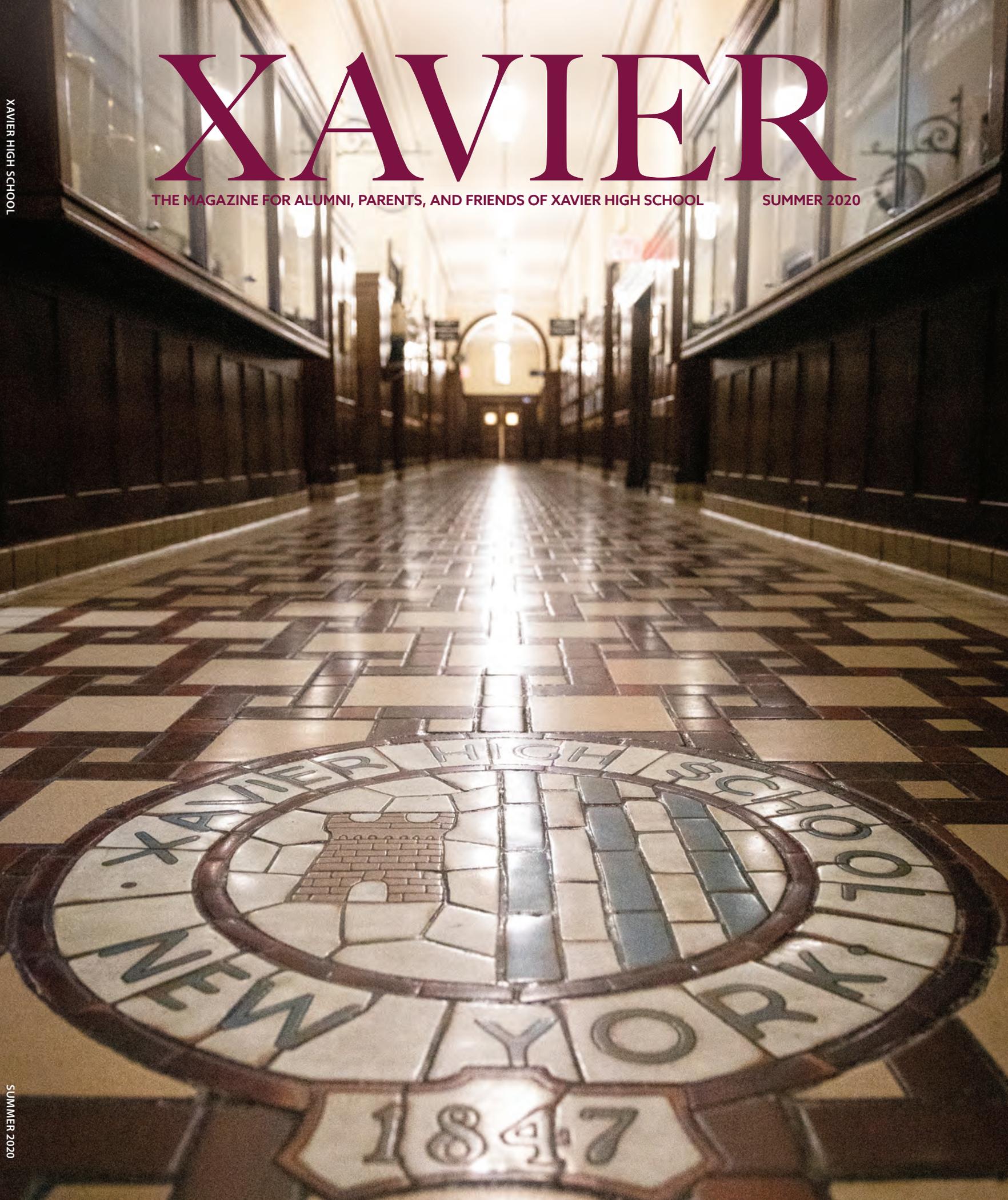
# XAVIER

THE MAGAZINE FOR ALUMNI, PARENTS, AND FRIENDS OF XAVIER HIGH SCHOOL

SUMMER 2020

XAVIER HIGH SCHOOL

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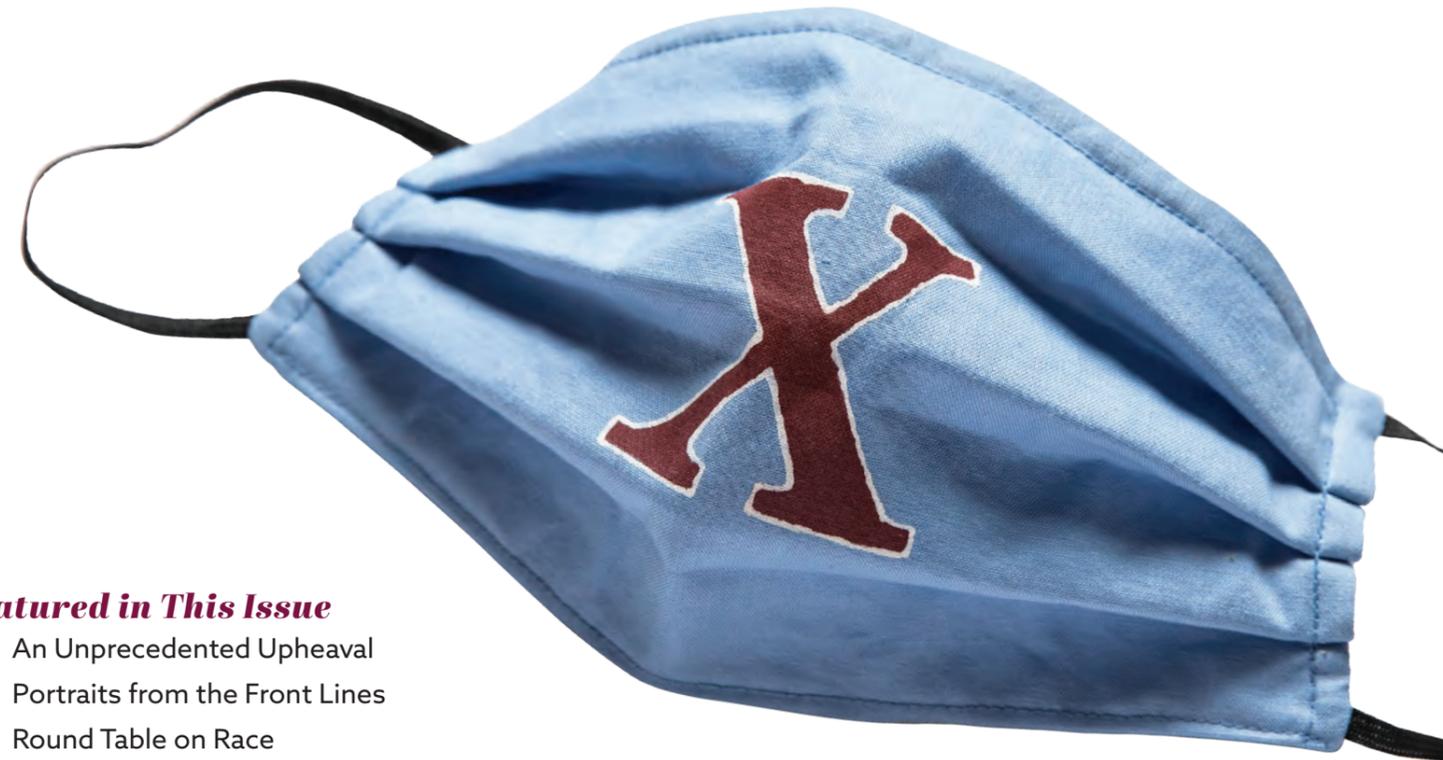


### Sons of Xavier, Keep Marching

On July 31, the Feast of St. Ignatius Loyola, the Class of 2020 graduated at St. Patrick's Cathedral. The event served as a testament to Xavier's resilience, an embodiment of the proud refrain uttered countless times in recent months: "Keep marching."

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Summer 2020



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#### Xavier's Mission

Founded in 1847, Xavier High School is an academically rigorous, Catholic, Jesuit, college preparatory school in New York City that educates intelligent, motivated young men of diverse backgrounds and means. Xavier teaches students to take responsibility for their lives, to lead with integrity, to act justly in service of others, to pursue excellence in every endeavor and to deepen their relationship with God. Ultimately, Xavier forms young men who will go forth to transform the world for God's greater glory.

#### On the Cover

After Xavier announced its transition to distance learning on March 12, the hallways suddenly fell silent. One thousand fifty students and the majority of Xavier's 147 employees quickly adjusted to learning and working from home. Within these pages, we tell their stories.

## XAVIER

SUMMER 2020

#### Xavier High School

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President

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Dear Parents, Friends and Sons of Xavier,

COVID-19 and our call to make real the work for racial justice following the unjust killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery and the protests that ensued call forth from us new ways of being. This magazine attempts to capture glimpses of that new way of being. Xavier stories form the tapestry of this institution through the years. The stories connect us, teach us and draw us forward.

The story of COVID-19 continues to be written. As an institution, we can be very proud of our part in writing the early chapters. The work of Xavier alumni, parents and friends on the front lines was nothing short of outstanding. They made real the words of Ignatius: “To give and not to count the cost.”

We continue to write, as well, the story of our response to this national reckoning on race and racism. **Eric Krebs ’17** returned to us from Yale to write for the summer magazine. As a sophomore, Eric joined

his classmates **Isaiah Blake ’17** (Williams ’21) and **Charlie Lambert ’15** (UVA ’19) to found Spectrum, a student-led organization that deliberately engages the work of racial justice. It was because of the work of Spectrum, the Community Life and Inclusion Council, the Maroon, Blue and Black initiative, alumni outreach, and other programs in recent years that we are in a position to respond more effectively to the “signs of the times” and fully engage the work of equity and inclusion, the work to dismantle racism both personal and structural.

One essential component of this work is to listen deliberately to the voices in our community, especially those that have not always been heard. This summer we gathered students, alumni, parents and faculty of color to listen to their experiences. In this magazine, **Zane Massey ’96 P’22** joined with **Dr. Franklin Caesar ’72 P’00**, **Segun Akande ’03** and **Israel Pierre ’20** for a conversation about race and racism. **Hans Augustave ’01** enters the conversation with his powerful poem, *Before I Knew*. I am grateful to Franklin, Segun, Israel, Zane and Hans for their honesty and commitment. Conversation about race is work: Listening, reflection, evaluation and action. Some will find the words and images in this magazine deeply challenging, including, or especially, the use of the N-word in *Before I Knew*. The words and images speak to authentic experiences of Xavier’s sons. I hope we can all accept the invitation to consider more deeply the experiences of others and how we better make real the call of the Church to recognize in all the image and likeness of God and God’s commandment to love one another. This is the work that lies ahead for all of us.

I recently received word of the deaths of **Faith Corcoran†** and **Bill Boyan ’45†**. To know each of them was the greatest of gifts. Faith was the wife of **Peter Corcoran ’46†**. Whether in Florida, New York City or Point O’Woods, I never left Faith without feeling blessed. On the anniversary of Peter’s death in 2017, I called Faith from Haiti. I was traveling with **Dr. Jim Morgan ’82 P’12** visiting the Lamp for Haiti clinic in Cité Soleil. As I was trying to put my complicated experience of Haiti into words, Faith made wonderful connections to a novel she was reading and helped me make meaning of my experience. She was insightful, bright, engaged, generous and strong. Faith gave powerful witness to the fact that the Xavier experience is at its best a family experience. She modeled the best of Xavier and called me to do the same. A few weeks before Faith passed, Bill Boyan was called home to the Lord. Seeing Bill and his wife Tia was always the highlight of my time in Naples. Whenever Bill spoke, his words were filled with gratitude, wisdom and love. I can close my eyes and see Mr. **James Nash†**, Bill’s geometry teacher, greeting Bill at the Pearly Gates and both saying, “Work the given.” Bill worked it very well and we are all better for it.

May Faith, Bill and all those we’ve lost rest in God’s peace. Be assured of my prayers.

Jack Raslowsky P’16  
President

# News from 16th Street



**AFTER HERCULEAN PLANNING** by the Xavier administration, the 178th Commencement returned to St. Patrick’s Cathedral on July 31—the Feast of St. Ignatius Loyola, founder of the Society of Jesus. Mandatory precautions abounded, from masks to staggered entry and exit times. Rather than processing in and out of the Cathedral, graduates entered and exited with a maximum of two guests, with whom they were seated. But while it looked different, the magic of a St. Patrick’s graduation remained. “I want to thank all those who made this night possible, against all odds. Here we are, in person, face to face—well, mask to mask—celebrating our graduation,” salutorian **Timothee Kambouris ’20**, bound for the University of Virginia, said in his welcome address. Echoed CalTech-bound valedictorian **Michael Manta ’20**: “I’m sure I speak for many of you when I say how grateful I am that we are under this hallowed roof tonight.”

# 100 DAYS IN New York City

After an outbreak of an acute respiratory illness caused by a novel coronavirus emerged in Wuhan, China, last December, the winds of history whipped furiously. By January 20, the first confirmed case of the virus in the U.S. was identified in Washington State; 10 days later, the World Health Organization declared a global health emergency. The next day, January 31, President Donald Trump restricted travel from China.

Just weeks later, the virus ravaged New York City, shuttering Xavier's doors and upending daily life. Then in May, the eyes of the world focused on America's reckoning with racism, adding another complex layer to a momentous year.

- MARCH 1** New York announces its **first coronavirus case**, a Manhattan woman who had traveled internationally.
- MARCH 8** Mayor Bill de Blasio encourages New Yorkers to **avoid densely packed subways, buses, and trains**.
- MARCH 10** Governor Andrew Cuomo orders the **nation's first coronavirus containment area**, a one-mile radius in New Rochelle.
- MARCH 11** **The World Health Organization declares COVID-19 a global pandemic.**  
President Trump announces sweeping **travel restrictions on visitors from Europe.**  
**The New York City St. Patrick's Day Parade is postponed** for the first time since its founding in 1762.  
That evening, President **Jack Raslowsky P'16** and Headmaster **Michael LiVigni P'21** decide to suspend in-person learning.
- MARCH 12** At an assembly in the gym, Raslowsky and LiVigni announce that Xavier will temporarily transition to **distance learning** to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19.  
**Broadway goes dark** at 5 p.m.
- MARCH 14** Governor Cuomo announces New York's **first two coronavirus deaths**.
- MARCH 15** Governor Cuomo and Mayor de Blasio announce that New York City **public schools will close**.
- MARCH 19** **Remote classes** at Xavier begin.
- MARCH 20** With his **New York State on PAUSE** executive order, Governor Cuomo orders all nonessential businesses to close. Nonessential gatherings of any size are also banned, effectively shutting down the state.

- MARCH 30** **The USNS Comfort**, a Navy hospital ship, arrives in New York Harbor.
- MARCH 31** New York City surpasses **1,000 recorded COVID-19 deaths**.
- APRIL 1** A **Central Park field hospital** begins treating coronavirus patients.
- APRIL 3** Twenty-four percent of New York City EMS workers, 17% of the FDNY, and 18.5% of uniformed members of the NYPD are **out sick**.
- APRIL 10** **New York State records more COVID-19 cases** than any country in the world.
- APRIL 12** On **Easter Sunday**, New York State surpasses 10,000 COVID-19 deaths.
- APRIL 15** **Governor Cuomo requires face masks** or coverings in public whenever social distancing is not possible.
- APRIL 28** Raslowsky and LiVigni announce **Xavier will remain closed** through the end of the academic year.
- MAY 1** Governor Cuomo announces **all New York schools will remain closed** for the rest of the academic year.
- MAY 25** **George Floyd is killed** during an arrest in Minneapolis, Minnesota, unleashing widespread global protests.
- MAY 27** **COVID-19 deaths in the U.S. pass 100,000.**
- MAY 28** **Protests for racial justice begin in New York City**, with demonstrations across the five boroughs. Later that weekend, chaotic scenes unfold in Union Square.
- JUNE 8** One hundred days after New York's first confirmed case of COVID-19, **New York City begins Phase 1 reopening**.

## Celebrating Faculty Milestones



Raslowsky, Young, Kennedy-Orlando, LiVigni, and Chiafulio at Commencement.

The long tenures so often evidenced in members of the Xavier faculty and staff stand witness to the school's strength. Each year at Commencement, Xavier celebrates those veterans marking 20 years of service with the *Bene Merenti* Medal. On July 31, Headmaster **Michael LiVigni P'21**, computer science and technology department chair **Michael Chiafulio P'23**, English teacher **Jennifer Kennedy-Orlando P'21**, and history department chair **Ed Young P'22** were recognized at St. Patrick's Cathedral for their two decades on 16th Street. Also receiving medals this year are **Randy Fernandez '99** and **Marcelino Luna**, both members of the maintenance staff, and **Freddy Nowbath**, a member of the technology department.



Randy Fernandez      Marcelino Luna      Freddy Nowbath



Donald Gross      Julio Mercado      Jack Replogle, S.J.      Ken Sidlowski

Math teacher **Donald Gross '72 P'03**, alumni chaplain and assistant to the president **Jack Replogle, S.J. '51**, and business administrator **Ken Sidlowski '71 P'05** were honored with the Robert Bellarmine Medal in absentia at Commencement. The Bellarmine Medal is awarded to long-serving members of the faculty upon their retirement from Xavier. At a separate event on July 22, **Julio Mercado**, a member of the maintenance staff, was fêted as he retired after 34 years of service on 16th Street.

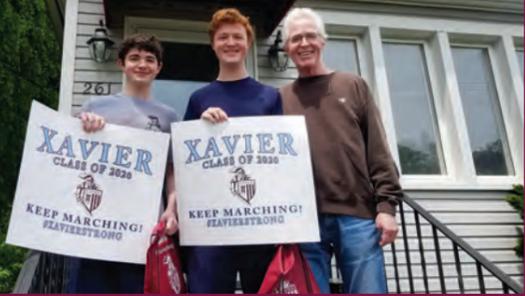
## Virtual Gala Breaks Records

When Xavier transitioned to distance learning in March, fundraising efforts were also thrown into flux. What would happen to the 9th Annual Celebrate Xavier Scholarship Gala, scheduled to return to Gotham Hall on April 3? The Advancement Office originally postponed the event until May 29, but as COVID-19 spread rapidly and New York State shut down completely, it became evident that the event would have to be held online.

When May 29 arrived, nearly 200 viewers watched the gala live from their homes as Director of Special Events **Claudia Tierney P'20** orchestrated the event from Keenan Commons. Student speaker **Chris Maruffi '20**, bound for Vanderbilt University, recorded his remarks from his living room on Staten Island. Auctioneer Eugene Flinn encouraged those at home to give generously, including to the Fund-a-Student drive, which raised a record \$128,075. In total, the event raised more than \$445,000 for student scholarships—another gala record at a moment Xavier students needed it most.

"It was a remarkable testament to the generosity of the Xavier community," Tierney said. "Xavier made a commitment that no student would be asked to leave because of financial hardships related to COVID-19, and our alumni and friends helped us honor that commitment. We are so grateful."





# Screen Time

In the absence of face-to-face interaction, videos became a primary mode of communication for the Xavier community. On March 18, the day before remote classes began, President **Jack Raslowsky P'16** shared the first in a series of weekly video messages that became known as his "fireside chats." The messages informed and reassured students, parents, faculty and staff, and alumni. "Wherever the journey takes us in the days and weeks and months ahead, God is with us—and when we come to the end of this part of the journey, God will be waiting there, inviting us into a future of life and love and goodness. Those are real consolations," he said in his first fireside chat.

Two weeks later, faculty and staff members began sharing their own series of videos for students. In entertaining and moving messages edited by computer science and technology department chair **Michael Chiafulio P'23**, they detailed their own lives in quarantine and encouraged students to persevere—to keep marching.

"This disease is awful—but we've been through awful times before, New York City and Xavier," **Joe Sweeney '85 P'23** remarked in the history department submission. "We've been through the draft riots in the Civil War, the 1918 flu epidemic, the Great Depression, 9/11, every Jets season since 1969. But New York City always gets through it. Every generation gets knocked down, and we always rise up. Why? Because we're New Yorkers."



# Maroon and Blue, We'll See You Through

As it became clear that COVID-19 would keep New York schools closed for the duration of the academic year, faculty members swept into action to ensure the Class of 2020's final days as Xavier students were memorable. Teachers hosted virtual activities for seniors, ranging from trivia to making churros to cooking steak in an apartment or dorm setting. The traditional Block X Awards were held online, and a recent tradition, the Senior-Faculty Dinner, was rebranded as Senior Knight and streamed live over Zoom on what would have been the Class of 2020's prom night.

In mid-May, an ambitious effort spearheaded by Director of Student Activities **Alicia Psillos** and Director of Guidance **Jean Sherman P'20** took 55 faculty and staff members across the five boroughs and to Long Island, New Jersey, Connecticut, Upstate New York, Maryland, and Virginia to deliver gifts and morale boosts to 228 out of 237 seniors. Nine packages were mailed to students quarantined farther afield.

Groups of faculty and staff members arrived at seniors' homes honking, cheering, and singing "Sons of Xavier." They brought T-shirts featuring art by **Billy Maloney '01** and a message from Headmaster **Michael LiVigni P'21**, X masks created by Lisa Jacobsen, the mother of Dean of Students **Kevin Jacobsen**, personal letters from faculty and staff members, pens, chocolate, and other gifts. "We are Xavier strong and we keep on marching," Psillos said. "Always have and always will."



“  
*I never thought I would miss waking up at 6 a.m. when it's still dark to ride on a crowded subway with an empty stomach, or rushing to a packed day without any free periods, or standing around in the locker room after school with friends doing absolutely nothing. And I really never thought I would miss carrying a 50-lb. backpack home with my math, science, and history textbooks just to stay up all night studying for exams. Wonderful memories that ended on March 12. But whether we were together in person or not, I am so thankful for the community we found here—the bonds and friendships that will last our entire lives.*”

**TIMOTHEE KAMBOURIS '20**  
**SALUTATORY ADDRESS AT COMMENCEMENT, JULY 31**

# Recommended Reading, Listening, and Viewing

from the Community Life and Inclusion Council

Since its 2017 founding, Xavier's Community Life and Inclusion Council has worked to encourage meaningful conversations about diversity, equity, and inclusion on 16th Street and beyond. Below, members of the Council share resources they have found informative and illuminating.



**1 Kim Lancial P'20**

*Sellout: The Politics of Racial Betrayal*, by Randall L. Kennedy

“It’s not a current read, but what Kennedy has written is still valuable. In this incisive and unflinching study, he tackles another stigma of America’s racial discourse: ‘selling out.’ He explains the origins of the concept and shows how fear of this label has haunted prominent members of the Black community. Kennedy is a law professor and author at Harvard University.”

**2 Joëlle Duffy P'21 '23**

*Black, White & Us*  
 (Amazon Prime documentary)

“*Black, White & Us* depicts white parents who were very excited about adopting Black children—and how they were completely unprepared to face the racism they and their children encountered. Some never thought of themselves as racist, but they were incredibly unprepared for the consequences of adopting a Black child in white America. Some lost family members and friends as a result of their defending their children against racist acts. In

the end, they came to the same realizations that many Black parents face every day and began to understand what it was like being Black in a white world.”

**3 James Costa '02**  
**History Teacher**

*Flying Coach with Steve Kerr and Pete Carroll*  
 (Podcast), Episode 8

“Two championship coaches discuss race in America from the perspective of white coaches who work almost exclusively with Black and brown players. In this episode, they speak with NBA coach Greg Popovic about concepts such as white privilege, white fragility, and the role that white people need to play in order to help bring effective change to the country.”

**4 Zane Massey '96 P'22**  
**Director of Alumni Relations**

*Notes of a Native Son*, by James Baldwin  
 “Baldwin’s memoir explores themes of inheritance and white privilege, dehumanization in the role of racism, social progress versus stagnation, and many other

themes through his early life in Harlem and subsequent travel to France.”

**5 Deena Sellers**  
**French, Spanish, and English Teacher**  
**Chair, Community Life & Inclusion Council**  
*Quincy* (Netflix documentary)

“I have been watching a lot of documentaries lately, particularly on Black culture. One that stands out to me—that I have actually watched three times—is *Quincy*, about the life, music, and career of the incomparable Quincy Jones, produced and directed by his daughter, actress Rashida Jones. As a composer, arranger, songwriter, and musician, Quincy Jones’ career has been legendary and an inspiration to thousands, as he has paved the way on so many levels, all while creating some of the most timeless and artistically beautiful music and film scores of the 20th century. He is truly a man who can do it all, from bebop to hip-hop, a cornerstone of African-American history and musicianship, and a true crown jewel in Black culture and American music.”



# A Prayer for Xavier

After transitioning to distance learning, faculty and staff members gathered for virtual meetings each Tuesday and Friday morning at 8:30 a.m. On May 5, nearly eight weeks after the transition, Director of Campus Ministry Kaija DeWitt-Allen began that day's meeting with the following prayer—a reminder to choose gratitude in a turbulent world.

*We arrive today from different geographical and emotional places. Though we are called to accompany those in our community whose experiences are more difficult, we can gather in gratitude for all that is good.*

**Gratitude for students** who are capable of thoughtful, discerning, and creative work in spite of the circumstance. Students who carry on being fun, ridiculous, reserved, quirky, and beyond everything else, teenage boys.

**Gratitude for teachers, administrators, and staff** whose hours may be longer and more complicated than they've ever been, yet have income and safety that many do not.

**Gratitude for parents and guardians** who manage laptops and WiFi and care and meals and siblings and their own careers to ensure

*another day of learning and growing for their children.*

**Gratitude to be able to see beyond** our own small discomforts to a city, a country, and a world navigating a crisis that requires all of us to do our part.

**Gratitude for those who treat the sick,** accompany the dying, serve the meals, staff the shops, clean the buildings, drive the subways and buses, celebrate the Eucharist, and pray the prayers.

*May we never lose sight of the infinite daily graces we receive. As Easter people, we continue to proclaim that life is changed, not ended. Alleluia!*

**St. Francis Xavier, pray for us.**

# Processing a Pandemic



Throughout Xavier's foray into distance learning, fine arts department chair **Denise Iacovone** shared weekly virtual art galleries filled with student assignments. AP Studio Art students led the way with their submissions.

*Above:* **1.** Aidan Long '20 illustrated one of Iacovone's "pearls of wisdom." **2.** "A Day in Quarantine," a collage and drawing by Jeremy Lao '20. **3.** During the first week of distance learning, Liam Rayder '20 created a timely concentration in ink. **4.** "Loving Community for Mr. Ventrella," an architectural drawing by Aristotle Mirones '20, depicted "Tribute," the 5L art installation that emerged after the October 2018 death of former fine arts department chair Renzo Ventrella '92†. **5.** Mateo Pagkalinawan '20 rendered another of Iacovone's pearls of wisdom.

# New York City, 2020



Statue of Prometheus  
Rockefeller Center



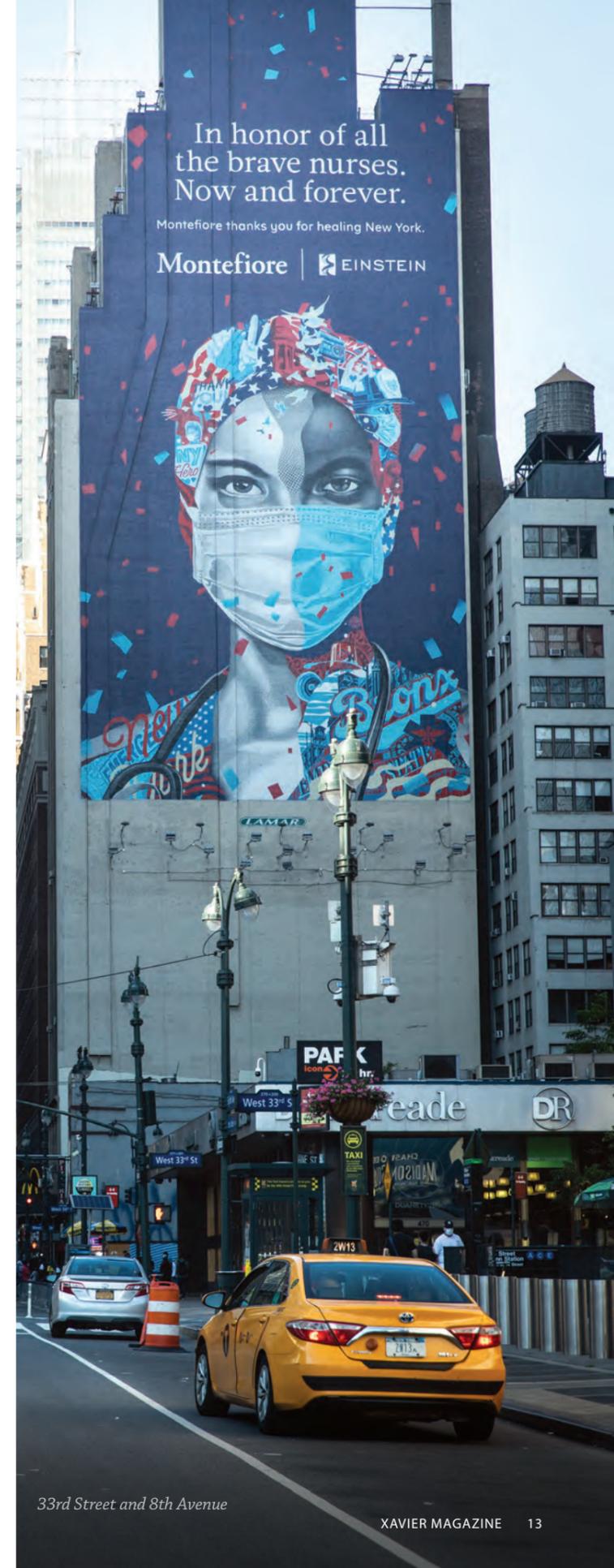
34th Street and  
7th Avenue



Statue of Atlas  
Rockefeller Center



Fortitude, the Library Lion  
New York Public Library





1. A screen shot from Xavier’s 4th annual Goldman Sachs-sponsored Shark Tank Challenge, held via Zoom on May 6. 2. This Chagall-inspired image created by Art 3 student Marcel Dunat '21 appeared in the virtual art gallery at the 30th Annual Festival of the Arts. 3. Members of the NYU Langone nursing staff receiving a donation from Xavier freshman basketball moms. 4. A screen shot from the July 1 virtual town hall about the film *Just Mercy*.

## News and Notes

On May 6, the 4th annual Goldman Sachs-sponsored Shark Tank Challenge returned via Zoom. **Michael Mattioli '11** once again organized the Goldman Sachs team and worked with computer science and technology department chair **Michael Chiafulio P'23** to host the event. Twenty-five Xavier students competed this year alongside nine volunteers from Goldman Sachs Community Works. “Teams were given two random objects at the beginning of the day. The goal was to create a new product or service based on a fusion of those two objects,” Chiafulio said. The winning team—**Giuseppe Quatela '22**, **Mark Faust '22**, **James McGillick '22**, and **Jack McGillick '22**, representing the Entrepreneurial Society—developed a product called the Pro Paddler, a paddleboard with a retractable motor controlled by a remote in the paddle.

Undeterred by continued stay-at-home orders, Xavier’s Department of Fine Arts hosted the 30th Annual Festival of the Arts via Zoom on June 8. To view the virtual art gallery from the event, visit <https://tinyurl.com/yckzlsr2>. Immediately following the Festival of the Arts, the annual Student Film Festival entertained viewers. **Chirag Chadha '21** won the Xavier Oscar for his short film, *Mirrors*,

while the People’s Choice Award went to *Hail to the Hand* by **Giorgio Calado '21**.

In early June, Xavier’s freshman basketball moms sent food from Mary O’s, the Lower East Side restaurant owned by **Mary O’Halloran P’21 '23**, to members of the NYU Langone nursing staff to show their support and gratitude. **Gail Geraghty P’23**, mother of **Jack Geraghty '23**, is a nurse at the hospital.

On July 1, 40 members of the Xavier community participated in a virtual town hall about the film *Just Mercy*, based on the book by public interest lawyer Bryan Stevenson. The film depicts the true story of Stevenson and the case of Walter McMillian, who was convicted and sentenced to death for a crime he did not commit. Sponsored by Campus Ministry and Spectrum, the town hall featured a guest speaker from the Equal Justice Initiative, a nonprofit organization founded by Stevenson.

Members of the Xavier faculty and staff offered 17 free enrichment courses to rising sophomores, juniors, and seniors staying at home this summer. More than 130 students registered for at least one of the 17 course offerings, which ranged from The History of Economics and Investing

with retiring math teacher (and former Wall Street banker) **Donald Gross '72 P'03** to Cadet Leadership Development and Planning Sessions with Senior Army Instructor **LTC Jacob Kelly, USA (Ret.)** to Pasta Cooking with Athletic Director **Andrew Gheraldi**. All courses were conducted on Google Meet.

Assistant Director of Athletics **Dominic DeFalco '10** graduated from New York University’s School of Professional Studies with a master of science degree in sports business this spring.

**Dr. Stephen Haller '05** was named a Fellow of the Academy for Teachers last fall. The Academy for Teachers offers regular professional development opportunities, which Dr. Haller enjoyed during quarantine.

In May, history teacher **Patrick Mahon '04** received a University of Chicago Outstanding Educator Award. **Israel Pierre '20**, bound for UChicago, nominated Mahon for the honor. Each year, newly admitted UChicago students have the opportunity to nominate educators who go beyond everyday teaching and leave an impression that lasts a lifetime.

Religion teacher **Dr. James Nagle** recently

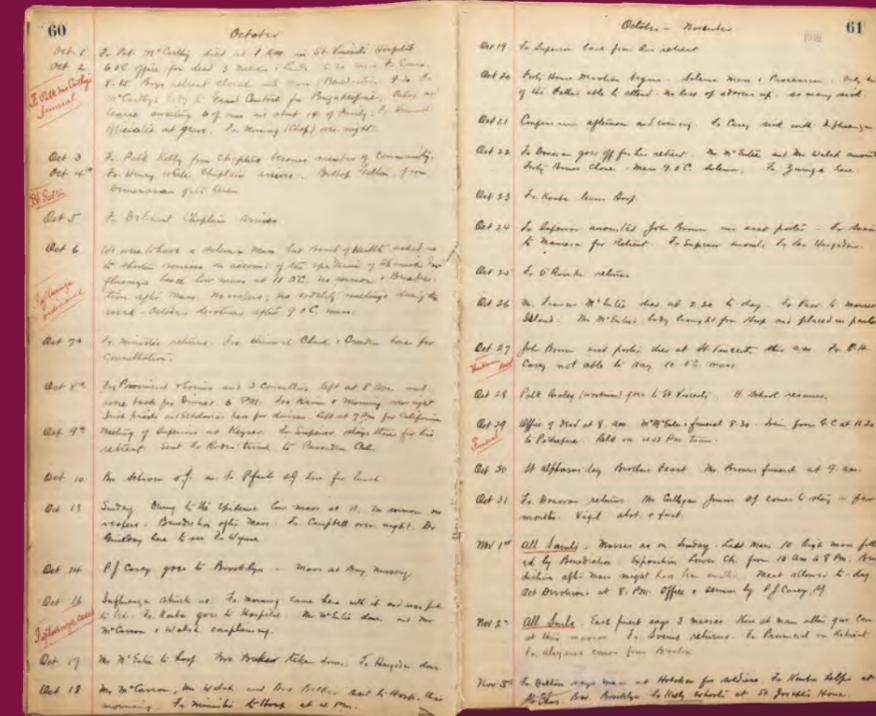
published his first book, *Out on Waters: The Religious Life and Learning of Young Catholics Beyond the Church*.

Last fall, Dean of Educational Systems **Lindsay Willert** became a faculty member for the Jesuit Schools Network’s Seminars in Ignatian Leadership. Designed with adult learning theory in mind, the Seminars offer a curriculum of leadership development within the context of St. Ignatius Loyola and the spiritual and vocational growth he experienced throughout his life.

Science teacher **Mary Anne Woody** is partnering with the NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies for a fourth year by participating in the Climate Change Research Initiative (CCRI). CCRI is a program that places educators on research teams as associate researchers. From this work, they design STEM curriculum to bring cutting-edge research to science classrooms of all levels. Woody is currently working on a project titled “Characterizing the Urban Land Surface Temperature via an Innovative, Multi-Platformed Suite of Satellite and Ground-Based Remote Sensing Technologies.” The aim of this project is to study the Urban Heat Island Effect and specifically how to mitigate its effect in Brooklyn’s Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood.



On July 31, Xavier’s student journalists published a historically significant edition of the *Xavier Review*. Edited and designed by **McAllister Whiting '21**, the issue featured America’s reckoning with racism, student views on COVID-19, reflections about this year’s *Bene Merenti* recipients, and other timely news.



# 1918

## From the Archives

### Influenza Descends on Xavier

The spread of the 1918 influenza pandemic is noted several times in the Ministers’ Diary, a repository of Jesuit community history. The diary records the opening of school and the Mass of the Holy Spirit on September 16, followed by an apparent (though undated) school closing that lasted until October 28, when an entry noted “H school resumes.” Most New York City schools did not close at the time—given the squalid living conditions many young people experienced in tenements, schools were thought to be safer.

On the pages above, the Ministers’ Diary records the effects of the pandemic on the Jesuit community that October. “We were to have a solemn Mass, but Board of Health asked us to shorten services on account of the epidemic of Spanish influenza,” the diarist wrote on October 6. Ten days later, the disease hit the Jesuits: “Influenza struck us. Fr. Morning came here with it and was put to bed. Fr. Koula goes to hospital. Mr. McEulice down and Mr. McCurran and Walsh complaining.” In the ensuing weeks, the disease swept through the community, claiming lives. “So many sick,” an October 20 entry noted.



From its near two-century-deep roots in Lower Manhattan to its commitment to two millennia of Christian teaching, Xavier High School has a long history of holding fast as the world outside its windows changes. But even the most steadfast institutions must, from time to time, change. This spring, with the outbreak of COVID-19, Xavier underwent a change unlike any other in its history—Xavier went digital.

**Caedmon Deem '22** completed his first two days of online learning in Pittsburgh, where his family had traveled to move his older brother **Christian Deem '19** out of his Carnegie Mellon University dorm.

**McAllister Whiting '21** listens as **Mary-Grace Gannon P'03 '07** leads a discussion about *Death of a Salesman*, Act I in AP English Language and Composition.

**Billy Bissell '21** listens to a history lesson recorded by **Chris Stevens '83**.

# An Unprecedented Upheaval

By Eric Krebs '17

**O**n Sunday, March 8, New York City reported 21 new cases of COVID-19, about the population of an average classroom at Xavier. By Thursday, March 12, there were 357 new cases per day, more than an entire class year. By the 15th, new daily cases outnumbered the entire student body.

“On the night of March 11, Mr. Raslowsky and I had a conversation, and both of us decided that this was far more serious than we had been led to believe. We began to worry about our families and the safety of our kids, so we made the decision to close,” Headmaster **Michael LiVigni P'21** recalled. The next day, Thursday, March 12, would be Xavier’s last day of in-person instruction. On Friday, March 13, members of the faculty and staff came to Xavier for intensive, collaborative preparation to transition to distance learning. “In our minds, we’d be back after Easter break...but that’s not what happened,” LiVigni said.

This is the story of what *did* happen, how administrators, teachers, faculty, and students

adapted to—and made the most of—a truly unprecedented upheaval.

**O**nce it became clear that closing was a real possibility, [Dean of Faculty] **Brian McCabe P'23**, [Dean of Academics]

**Lou Lovallo**, and I began really hammering out what the daily, weekly plan would look like...and it wasn’t the logistics that came first. What came first was a discussion of our priorities,” Dean of Educational Systems **Lindsay Willert** told *Xavier Magazine*. Early meetings between the three deans lasted hours, covering different possible scenarios and how the school might adapt to each. Existing models for online learning, said Willert, mostly catered to the university level. Xavier, thus, had both the opportunity to learn from best practices and innovate its own.

As it turned out, innovation that has been going on at Xavier for a decade helped prepare them to do exactly that. “We’ve been working on a different paradigm at Xavier,” McCabe

said. “Teachers typically become teachers because they fall in love with a subject and want to share that love.” Designing curriculum typically starts from there, as teachers select the topics and lessons they want to teach. The paradigm Xavier works from, McCabe noted, is the opposite of the typical “input” method. Instead, teachers work backwards from desired outcomes, and decisions about testing, essays, and content are all downstream from those essential questions. “Of all the things we have to teach, [we ask] ‘what are the most important things for these students to learn right now?’ And this situation really forced us more than ever before to ask those questions,” said McCabe.

“We had to assess the needs of our community,” said LiVigni. “We had to make sure that whatever we did was accessible to students with different access to technology... and, you know, it’s New York. We have kids living five or six people in two-bedroom apartments, with not a lot of space, sometimes younger siblings around, and who knew if

mom or dad would be around?” Concerns over the varied needs and situations of students guided the school’s decision to adopt an asynchronous model of learning, where teachers would pre-record lessons available for students to watch at their convenience, with face-to-face office hours and assignments built into the schedule. Even then, teachers would have only a fraction of the classroom time they normally have, so lessons had to be pared down and reshaped to fit the new constraints.

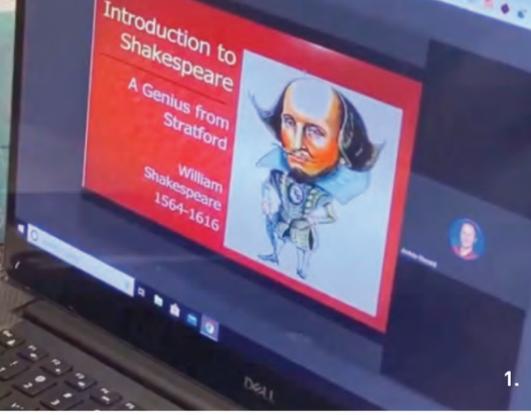
A new medium, a new environment, and new lessons—all in two weeks of planning. Despite the monumental challenge, teachers rose to the occasion. “When I think about how far we’ve come, I get a tremendous sense of consolation. It’s been amazing,” said McCabe.

**I**t was never easy, however. One week after announcing Xavier’s transition to distance learning, classes resumed online on March 19 as students and teachers alike adapted to a classroom unlike any other they had ever experienced. That day,

Director of Campus Ministry **Kaija DeWitt-Allen** sent out the first in a series of daily prayers, with an excerpt from St. Paul’s letter to the Hebrews:

*“And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching. Do not, therefore, abandon that confidence of yours; it brings a great reward. For you need endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised.”*

Confidence and endurance, as it turned out, were certainly needed. “Distance learning was a challenge for everyone in the faculty, from fledgling to veteran,” **Vicente Vargas** told *Xavier Magazine*. Vargas, an instructor in the modern and classical languages department, is Xavier’s most senior teacher, having first arrived on 16th Street in 1982. “I have been in the classroom for almost 40 years, and the thought of having to teach into a screen filled



1.



2.

1. Andrew Gheraldi narrates a lesson about William Shakespeare.

2. Vicente Vargas presents a live lecture about the classic film *The Searchers*, a John Ford-directed Western starring John Wayne, Jeffrey Hunter, and Natalie Wood.

with digitized images of my students put me right back to the first time I stepped into a classroom,” he said.

But for as much as the new environment was daunting, it also presented an opportunity for teachers to experiment. “We have a pretty senior department,” noted **Ed Young P’22**, chair of Xavier’s history department. (The four most senior members of that department—Young, **Chris Stevens ’83**, **Patrick Dormer P’17**, and **Joe Sweeney ’85 P’23**—have 107 years at Xavier between them, but year 108 evidently wasn’t too late to start again.) “From the beginning, the conversation was, ‘This is an opportunity to do stuff that we wouldn’t normally be able to do.’ We asked, ‘What stuff is interesting? How do we offer a worthwhile online learning experience?’”

**Mary-Grace Gannon P’03 ’07**, a teacher in the English department, echoed Young’s sentiment. From Google Classroom to Adobe Spark, Flipgrid, PowerPoint, and beyond, online learning provided a new—albeit daunting—set of tools to augment the classroom. “It hurts a bit because we are in that liminal space where things are uncertain,

uncomfortable, and we feel unsure. Yet this is the place where we do our best growing. The exciting part of the whole endeavor has been learning new ways to teach, reach, and engage our students.”

For students and parents alike, adapting to new ways of connection didn’t come immediately.

“In the beginning, there was an adjustment period of being physically away from the building and not in the presence of the community,” Director of Alumni Relations **Zane Massey ’96 P’22** reflected on his son **Zane Massey II ’22**’s learning experience. “Ultimately, he got into a good rhythm and it actually had some positive outcomes as well. It was an exercise in him being more accountable for his work. In a negative situation, it presented a real opportunity.”

The adaptation of each course, whether math, religion, or English, varied greatly with each teacher and class finding their unique equilibrium. In the case of **Matthieu Forgeas ’20**, it helped him feel both excited by the new and comforted by the familiar: “[My AP European History teacher] **Mr. James Costa ’02** did not try to adapt traditional in-class learning to remote learning. Instead he utilized the full potential of the technology at his disposal to create an entirely new way to learn,” Forgeas told *Xavier Magazine*. In contrast, Forgeas’ Christian Ethics on War and Peace teacher, Brian McCabe, sought to recreate a more traditional class experience, which, to Forgeas, “brought a sense of normality to the confusion of societal lockdown.”

It was that sense of normality, however, that continued to elude many teachers and faculty, for whom no amount of pixels could replicate the energy and community of a classroom full of students. “I miss them. I miss the group dynamic,” admitted LiVigni, who in addition to his role as headmaster teaches a course on journalism. “I love our guys, and I miss being around them. I miss the interactions they have with each other, and trying to capture that is somewhat impossible,” he confessed.

As LiVigni attested, he’s not alone in feeling so. “Universally, [the teachers] miss the kids. That doesn’t surprise me, but the depths of how much they miss the kids is not only heartwarming but it’s surprising. It’s all they really talk about,” he added. The sense of communal loss was not only between teachers and students, but within the faculty itself. Many teachers have set up their own video calls, virtual breakrooms, and opportunities to connect with each other, like LiVigni’s 10 a.m. “coffee clubs,” a weekly Rosary led by **Jim Hederman, S.J.** each Thursday on Google Meet, and online meetups organized by the faculty “Sunshine Committee.”

**T**hat sense of community was kindled beyond the (digital) classroom, as well.

Over the course of the spring, the guidance department made sure to call and check in with every student, and, to help give the senior class a proper sendoff, 55 faculty and staff members hand-delivered gift bags to nearly every member of the graduating class, even across state lines.

With physical togetherness out of the picture, Xavier’s renowned athletics programs have been hit particularly hard by remote learning. But that hasn’t stopped the community from finding new ways to stay fit and stay connected.

“The coaches and I moved very quickly. We had a couple of meetings and decided we had to put *something* together to keep the guys active and engaged,” recalled **Andrew Gheraldi**, Director of Athletics. “What we came up with was the Xavier Athletics Color Wars.” Athletes were split into teams by their age group, and each team could earn points by the quantity and quality of workout videos they submitted. In addition, a specific workout was featured on the Knights Knation Instagram page each day. The competition lasted from March to the end of the year, with the Maroon Baseball team winning the title in a showdown against the Blue Tennis team. “I’m extremely thankful for our dedicated coaches who really gave the boys something to strive

for and kept them active and engaged along the way,” Gheraldi added. “I’m proud of how engaged our student body was.”

Students’ engagement didn’t go unnoticed back in the classroom, either. “The continued effort that the guys put in blew me away,” Ed Young noted. “I mean, they never stopped working.” And safe to say, at least to **Israel Pierre ’20**, the feeling was mutual. “The key aspect isn’t just the academic rigor or the classes, but also the social interaction. Teachers tried to replicate some semblance of community—and I could see the effort put in. Online learning emphasized how much Xavier makes the work feel more manageable, and the spirit of that makes it easier to do work in collaboration with others.”

**For faculty, staff, and students alike, Xavier’s great leap into the digital unknown has brought about a singular realization—in a pandemic, everyone is a student.**

**R**eflection was a key theme for everyone at Xavier this spring. For students like Pierre, online learning illuminated just how crucial the Xavier community is to their academic success. For students like Forgeas, online learning—above all—reminded him just how much he missed his friends.

For teachers across Xavier, many found the transition to be an opportunity to reflect on what it means to be a teacher in the first place. “We are finding that our new role, more than ever before, is to curate the class experience in new and creative ways so that students aren’t floating around on the web feeling lost or simply ‘doing homework’ to get it done and get a grade. There is so much available now online that it is more important than ever that the

students have a guide and curator so they can access the best tools, materials, and content for their development as thinkers, writers, and creators,” Gannon noted.

An integral part of LiVigni’s reflections on the spring, especially looking forward to a hybrid learning model this fall, is recognizing what simply cannot be recreated online. “I think online learning is more than a mutation of the in-person,” he said. “I really think it’s two separate ways of teaching. It’s a different skill set.”

For faculty, staff, and students alike, Xavier’s great leap into the digital unknown has brought about a singular realization—in a pandemic, everyone is a student. “As a teacher, you don’t have the luxury of saying, ‘I can’t do this,’” Young reflected. “It’s been a good reminder of how important it is to model to kids yourself as a learner. How do you demonstrate resilience? How do you adapt?”

Whether learning how to share a screen, how to keep up relationships over Google Meet or Zoom, how to deal with unprecedented hardship, or, ultimately, how to maintain the hope and drive to keep going in a time as dark as this, Xavier’s transition to online learning brought together every member of the community in a concerted effort to make the best of a trying time and, ultimately, to learn.

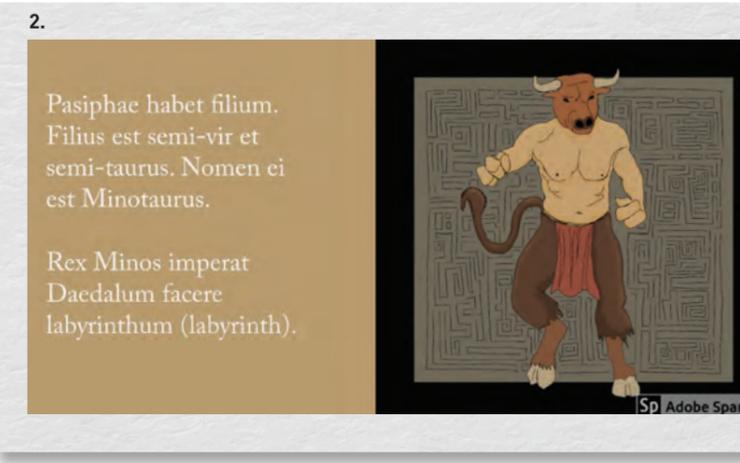
As Gannon put it, “When we are pushed into the deep end, we have to learn to swim.”



1.

1. Students in Colleen Rober’s Spanish 4 class created front pages of imaginary newspapers depicting their lives in quarantine. Examples written and designed by Adam D’Souza ’20 and Thomas McGinn ’20 are featured above.

2. For their final project, students in Andrew Bodo’s Latin 3 class researched a Greek or Roman myth to adapt and rewrite in comprehensible Latin, then created a storybook version in Adobe Spark. Ryan Wong ’21 created the example below.



2.

# Portraits FROM THE FRONT LINES

By Shawna Gallagher Vega



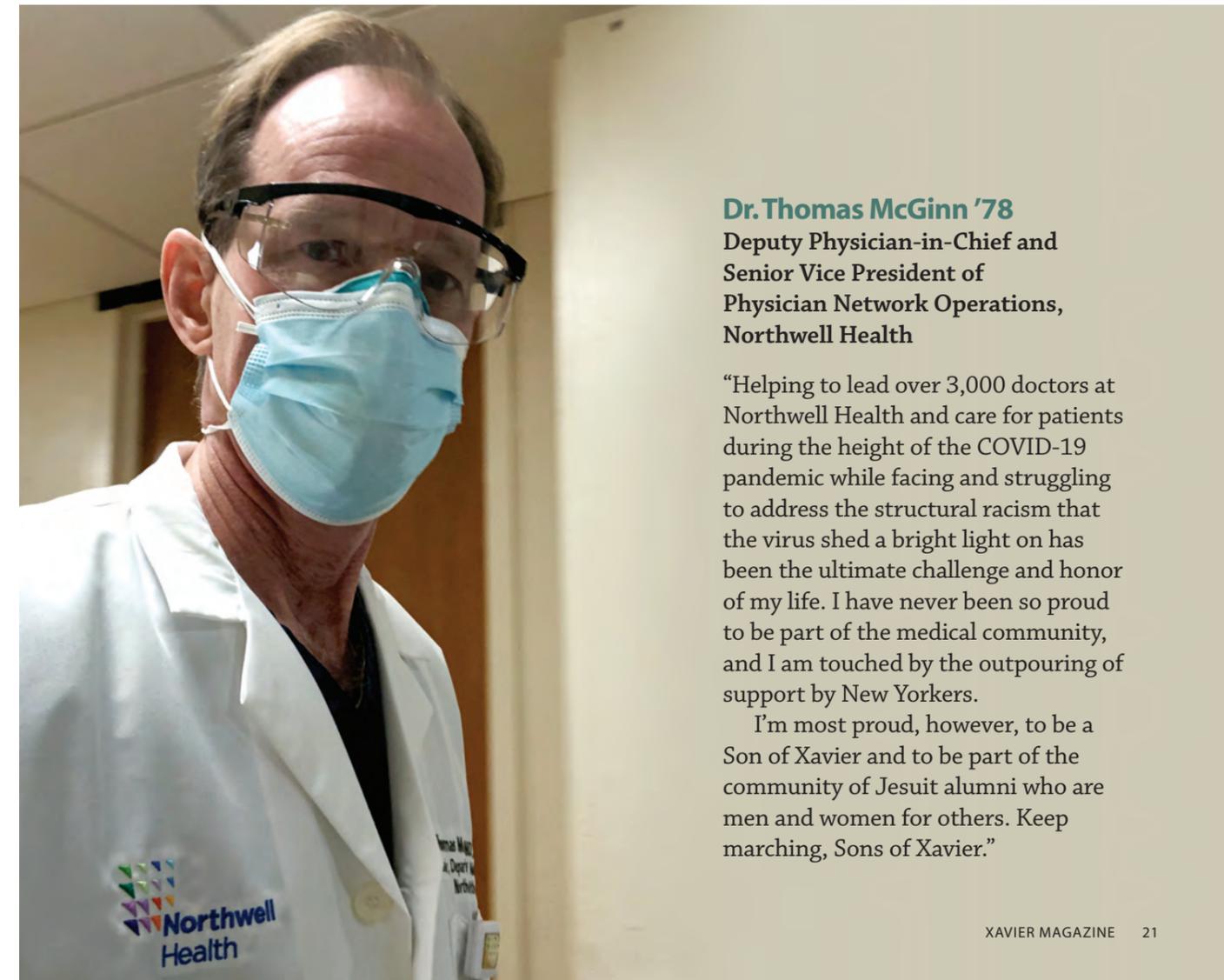
An installation of gratitude  
outside Elmhurst Hospital, Queens

On Holy Thursday, April 9, sirens wailed relentlessly through desolate New York City streets as millions sheltered in place. New York and New Jersey reported record single-day death tolls, soon to be exceeded, eclipsing the rest of the United States combined.

On that dreary, overcast day, The City That Never Sleeps stirred just once, at 7 p.m., as raucous, resounding cheers for front-line workers coincided with hospital shift changes. New Yorkers shouted in gratitude from their windows, stoops, rooftops, and fire escapes. Sounds of clanging pots and pans and Frank Sinatra's *New York, New York* reverberated through the five boroughs.

Late that afternoon, Xavier launched a social media series to thank our own front-line workers—our version of those nightly 7 p.m. cheers. On Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, photos bearing the #PortraitsfromtheFrontLines hashtag appeared several times a week, and friends and Sons of Xavier responded in characteristic fashion. Some clamored to share photos of spouses, children, and friends. Most responded to posts with two simple words for those featured: *Thank you*.

On the pages that follow, we asked Xavier's front-line workers to reflect on their service during the pandemic.



**Dr. Thomas McGinn '78**  
Deputy Physician-in-Chief and  
Senior Vice President of  
Physician Network Operations,  
Northwell Health

"Helping to lead over 3,000 doctors at Northwell Health and care for patients during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic while facing and struggling to address the structural racism that the virus shed a bright light on has been the ultimate challenge and honor of my life. I have never been so proud to be part of the medical community, and I am touched by the outpouring of support by New Yorkers.

I'm most proud, however, to be a Son of Xavier and to be part of the community of Jesuit alumni who are men and women for others. Keep marching, Sons of Xavier."



**Liz Halbert P'18**

Nurse Case Manager,  
New York-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell Medical Center

“I am a nurse case manager working on a medical team with social workers, doctors, physician assistants, and nurses. April was a difficult and scary time for all of us, but the support and compassion shown not only to the patients but also to one another was what

kept us going.

As a nurse case manager, my role is to work with patients and their families to formulate safe discharge plans. During the COVID crisis, most of my usual conversations with families took place by phone, as hospitals were not allowing visitors. COVID-19 impacted immigrant families in New York in particular. I often would call a patient’s home and learn that the only person in the home who spoke fluent English was a teenager. As a mother myself, I was so worried about my boys’ homeschooling, but found myself on the phone with children even younger than my sons. These children were not only homeschooling but serving as translators and liaisons helping their parents and grandparents navigate a complex health system during a crisis. I was deeply humbled by this experience and became acutely aware of the things I take for granted every day, like the ability to communicate with health care workers in my native language.

I believe the true heroes of this crisis are the young people of immigrant families who stepped up and took on a new role within their families, while also navigating their own upside down lives. I am grateful for what I learned about people and families who are different than me, and I am grateful for the Jesuit education my children have shared with me, especially the ability to find God in all things. As we continue to reopen I pray for all of our safety. This crisis brought me back to daily prayer and a deeper understanding of my role to put God’s work into action.”

**Dr. Robert Jongco '02**

Anesthesiologist, Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital  
New Brunswick, New Jersey

“During the coronavirus pandemic, amidst all the suffering and chaos, on July 1, 2020, my wife, Giselle, and I welcomed our first-born, Wesley Xavier. Battling the virus head-on was scary enough; doing so while becoming a first-time father added a whole new dimension. As a new dad, the Jesuit adage of being a man for others that I learned during my time on 16th Street took on a greater meaning. Never before has someone been so dependent on me for the most basic of things as my newborn son. At the same time, so too are my patients dependent on me to continue providing the care that they need. While we in the Tri-State area are now seeing our numbers as a fraction of what they were months ago, our brothers and sisters elsewhere across the nation continue to suffer. Hopefully the sacrifices that we made months ago and continue to make now can serve as examples of how we can march forward as we continue to fight against this and many other diseases in all shapes and forms.”



**Dr. Daniel Duque and Deanna Giangreco Duque P'23**  
ER Attending Physician, Elmhurst Hospital; Physician Assistant, CityMD

**Daniel Duque**

“It has always felt like a privilege to work at the Elmhurst Hospital Emergency Department. I grew up just five blocks away and giving back to my community has always been extremely rewarding.

This same attachment made the COVID pandemic especially difficult to bear. The disease was ravaging this vulnerable community and there was rampant death. I can still see my patients’ eyes full of fear. They all silently asked the same question: Am I going to die? This was a question I could not answer. Unlike other emergencies that I was used to treating regularly, this was a disease process we knew little about.

As quickly as the pandemic began, the shutdown made everything stop. The ER was empty. There were no patients to be found. The providers were shocked and trying to process what had just happened. We finally began to think about our own lives and families. One burning question remained: Will there be a second wave?

Work is finally getting back to a new normal and the community is healing. Shops are opening and patients are returning. Everyone’s eyes look different now. Their eyes say thank you, and I am thankful in return.”

**Deanna Giangreco Duque**

“It’s difficult for me to look back and reflect on my experiences during the height of the COVID pandemic. Honestly, I think I am still not

ready to process all of it. Life at work and home changed so quickly. My safe and happy life suddenly became filled with so much fear and anxiety. My biggest fear was that my husband and I would both get ill at the same time and there would be no one to take care of our kids. Or maybe we would both end up in the hospital. Or maybe we would both die. These thoughts kept me up every night.

My husband moved out to his own apartment in order to avoid making these fears a reality. My son ended up taking care of his little sister while trying to complete his online classes. Then my father-in-law died of COVID-19. The effects of all of these changes eventually became very overwhelming for all of us. Especially for the kids.

I remember the day I realized that I needed to help with the anxiety and sadness at home. My kids needed more of me. They needed more of their dad. We all needed more of each other. I recalled saving a card that I received from a good friend. She is one of the most resilient people

I know and is still able to inspire people even after experiencing the tragic loss of her two young children years ago. I dug it out from the drawer and hung it over my dining table. It reads “See the possibility in every moment.”



These words gave me strength to be present with my kids when I was home. (Even after a terrible day.) It helped me refocus and remember that even during these tough times the possibilities of creating new happy memories are endless. This card still hangs over my dining table. I know our family will continue to need this reminder often, as we are still not done fighting this battle.”



**Bettina Rogers P'19 '22**  
Senior Ultrasound Technologist, NYU Langone Cobble Hill ER

“At the beginning of the pandemic, we all struggled with uncertainty about who had COVID-19 because test results took days to come back. Protocols were constantly changing to best treat this unknown virus

and to protect ourselves in the ER.

The most difficult part was managing the emotional toll of the unknown. When the rest of the world stopped, we kept on going. My co-workers were getting sick, and I was always worried about bringing COVID-19 home to my family. The elderly and vulnerable population in the ER affected and moved me the most. We were the first health care providers to be involved in their care. They were alone and frightened. I am the advocate for my mother and know the importance of being with her throughout her medical care for the past five years. The experience really validated the importance of patients having loved ones at their sides, whether as part of their recovery or end of life.

It was difficult to balance work and being a parent. I was gone early in the morning, and when I came home I had to change, shower, eat, and get ready for the next day. I avoided contact with my family, which was emotionally draining. I was unable to see or be in contact with my mom and aunt, who live downstairs. They would wave from the window and place a list of necessities they needed in the mailbox.

My husband, also in health care, was unable to work for the first two months of the pandemic. I would not have been able to continue to work without him home holding down the fort. I am also so proud of my sons for their resiliency. My son, Andrew, was in his second semester of his freshman year at college, which he had to finish remotely. Our younger son, Matthew, was a sophomore at Xavier this spring. Once Xavier initiated the plan to teach remotely, he adjusted to the new normal and did an amazing job.

New Yorkers rose to the challenge. My friends and family always checked in, and that was the push to keep going. We all worked together to stop the spread and protect the vulnerable.”

### Stephen Stark '08

Emergency Department Nurse Manager,  
NYU Langone Hospital-Brooklyn

“The early months of this pandemic tested us to our very core. But it also granted us an opportunity to look inside ourselves and learn about our true selves. We discovered so much about the clinicians we are, the professionals in the trenches, the friends, the family members, and so on. We came to know what we were truly made of and saw with great clarity that we could power through the situation at hand.

We were able to stand together, lean on each other, and support each other to form unbreakable bonds, the likes of which will be talked about for years to come. If there is one takeaway from the atrocities that transpired it is that when we stand by each other as a team, there is no obstacle that we cannot overcome and no challenge we cannot meet head on.”



Stark, left, with Dr. Thomas Snyder '10, a second-year neurology resident who served in the hospital's COVID ICU unit.



Gallagher, right, with Deputy Inspector Joseph Seminara '99. The 23rd Precinct, where Seminara works, borders Central Park.

### Captain William Gallagher '95

Commanding Officer, NYPD Central Park Precinct

“Central Park is usually a place where people come to enjoy nature, but this spring it was a place where people went to be healed from the coronavirus. It was the site of the first field hospital for coronavirus—and only coronavirus—patients. We had to be very careful any time we went near it.

It was really quite an experience to police New York City during COVID-19, and I've been a police officer for 20 years. We can't quarantine. It's difficult to socially distance when you're a police officer. We have to go out there every day and take 911 calls, take risks. There are routine things that most people wouldn't think of—when people ask for directions, when people need help. We can't stay six feet away.

The people in my precinct and the people in the entire NYPD did a fantastic job. We wouldn't have been successful without them. I want to mention two members of my precinct in particular, Lt. Jason Tejada '01 and Lt. John Sloan '94.

The department did everything humanly possible to protect us from getting COVID. They had an impossible job, but they did everything they could to do the right thing by us. Sadly, we had many people pass away in the police department.

I graduated from Xavier 25 years ago, but I think about my four years there all the time—and how much I benefited from them tremendously, especially this spring. Three teachers had a profound impact on my life. I was on the debate team in high school, and they were the co-moderators. Other than my parents, no one had a more tremendous impact on my life than John McGoldrick. I also owe so much to Fr. Vincent Butler, S.J.† and Fr. Marc Roselli, S.J. I look back with tremendous gratitude.”

### Claudio Lazo '09

Registered Nurse, Hackensack University Medical Center

“The last few months have been the most challenging I've ever endured, both as a nurse and a human being. I was tested physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually, and there was no amount of preparation that could've helped me get through what was happening. It was overwhelming, but I had to face it head on. I signed up to be a nurse because I wanted to help those in need. The same way my father was helped when he was in need many years ago. I always thought if I could repay the favor, then it would all be worth it.

I spent 12 hours and more covered in PPE from head to toe. In the beginning, I remember feeling so afraid that I was risking my own life doing what I loved the most, but in that love I found the strength to continue fighting. I spent hours on end fighting to keep my patients stable. Many of them were afraid and did not understand what was happening. I had a vast number of Spanish-speaking patients, and I made it my duty to help them understand their situation since oftentimes an interpreter was not available. I helped families say goodbye to their loved ones via FaceTime since there were no visitors allowed. I recall one FaceTime that reminded me of my own family, and I was brought to tears. I cried with them as I held their loved one's hand. In that moment, we were all family. I also helped save many lives, but I can't take all the credit. I had a great team and amazing support from family and friends.

Although things have gotten better in this region, it is important that we remain diligent and continue practicing all the measures that were put in place to keep everyone else safe. I stared at death in the face every day, and I told it, 'Not today.'”



# PORTRAITS FROM THE FRONT LINES: A Photo Essay

Xavier's call for stories about Sons, parents, and friends of Xavier on the front lines of the nation's fight against COVID-19 resulted in scores of submissions. We are grateful for these heroes in our midst.



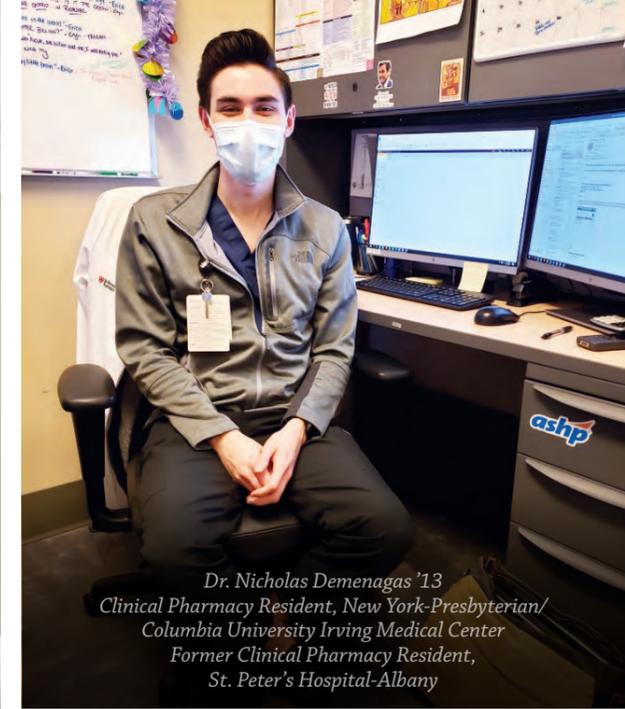
Dr. Emmanuel Demenagas '09  
Internal Medicine Resident,  
RowanSOM University Hospital  
Former EMT, NYU Langone Health



Dr. George Ferzli '05  
Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery Fellow,  
Lenox Hill Hospital



Dr. Joseph Caputo '07  
Urology Resident, New York-Presbyterian/  
Columbia University Irving Medical Center



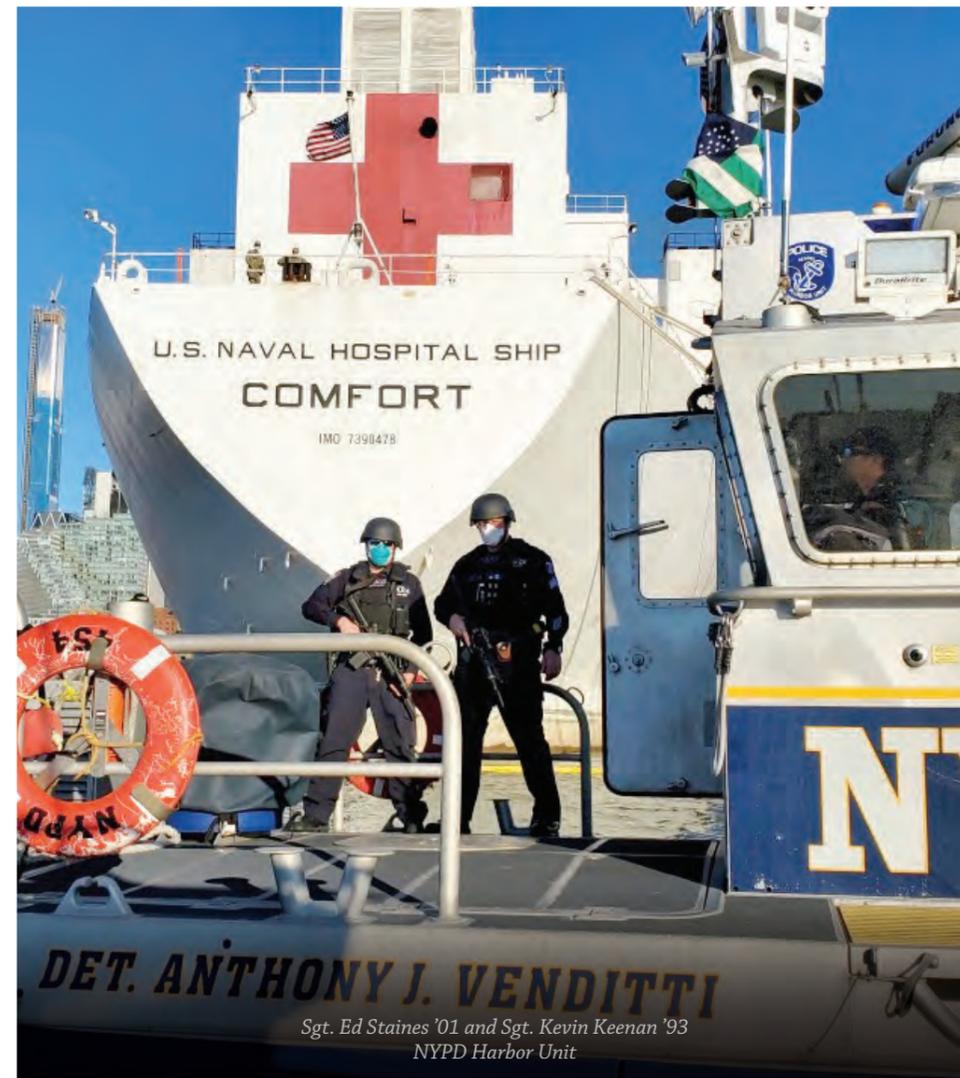
Dr. Nicholas Demenagas '13  
Clinical Pharmacy Resident, New York-Presbyterian/  
Columbia University Irving Medical Center  
Former Clinical Pharmacy Resident,  
St. Peter's Hospital-Albany



Tierney Norris, wife of science teacher Greg Norris  
NICU Nurse, St. Barnabas Medical Center  
Livingston, New Jersey



Dr. Andrew Castellano '07  
Cardiology Fellow, Albany Medical Center



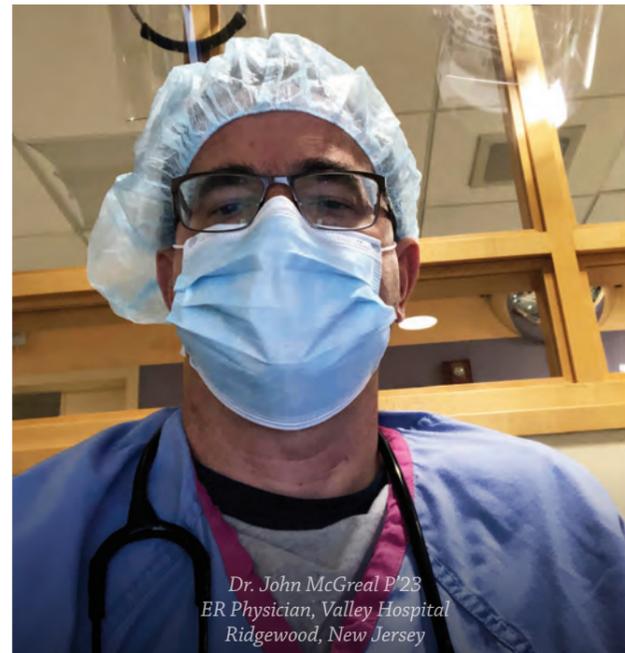
Sgt. Ed Staines '01 and Sgt. Kevin Keenan '93  
NYPD Harbor Unit



Salvador Rivas '03  
Volunteer Firefighter,  
Oceanside (Long Island) Fire Department



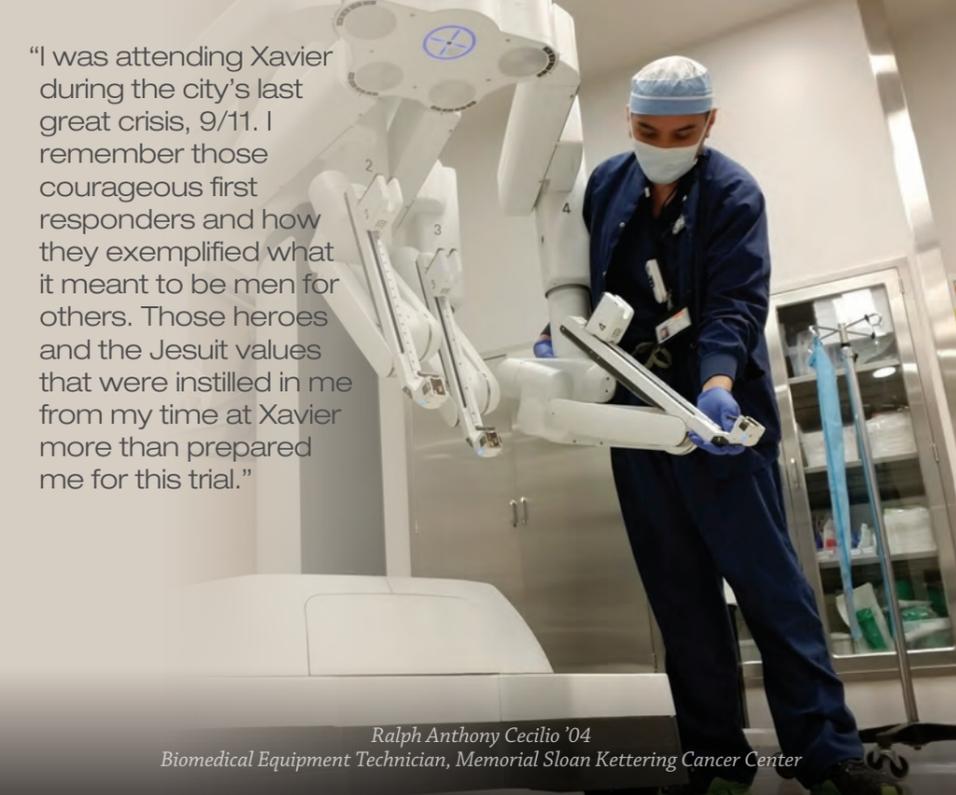
Christopher Clinton '06  
Pennsylvania State Police



Dr. John McGreal P'23  
ER Physician, Valley Hospital  
Ridgewood, New Jersey

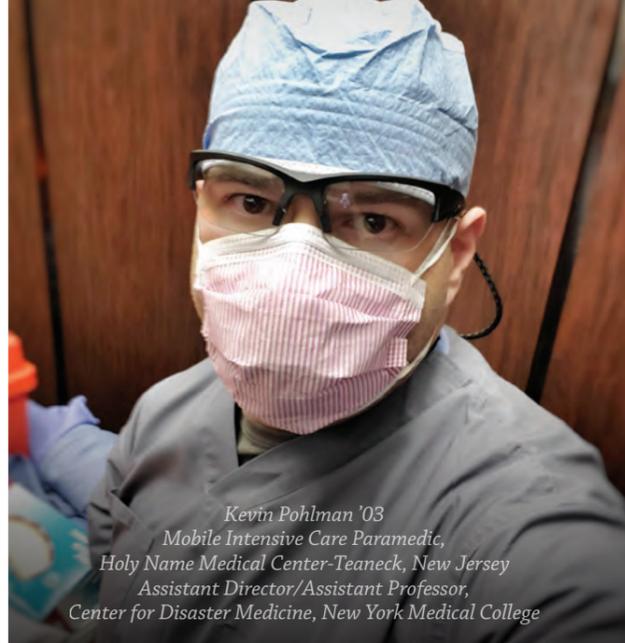


Gerry Eustace P'18  
Registered Nurse, Jamaica Hospital Medical Center



"I was attending Xavier during the city's last great crisis, 9/11. I remember those courageous first responders and how they exemplified what it meant to be men for others. Those heroes and the Jesuit values that were instilled in me from my time at Xavier more than prepared me for this trial."

Ralph Anthony Cecilio '04  
Biomedical Equipment Technician, Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center



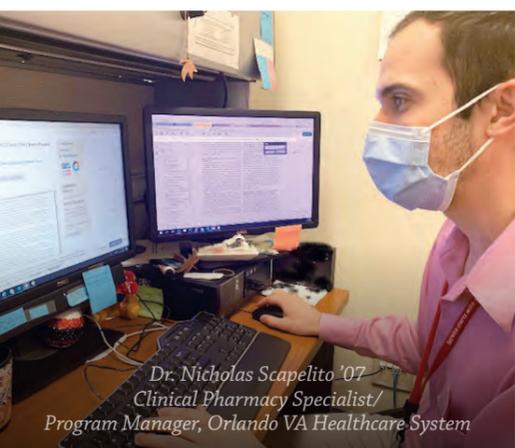
Kevin Pohlman '03  
Mobile Intensive Care Paramedic,  
Holy Name Medical Center-Teaneck, New Jersey  
Assistant Director/Assistant Professor,  
Center for Disaster Medicine, New York Medical College



Steven Vince '78  
Registered Nurse, New York-Presbyterian/Lower Manhattan Hospital



Dr. Antony Dellituri '07  
General Surgery Resident, Maimonides Medical Center



Dr. Nicholas Scapelito '07  
Clinical Pharmacy Specialist/  
Program Manager, Orlando VA Healthcare System



Dr. Angelo Mammìno '07  
Orthopedic Resident,  
Maimonides Medical Center



Martina O'Dowd P'20  
Clinical Office Coordinator,  
ColumbiaDoctors-Columbia University Irving Medical Center



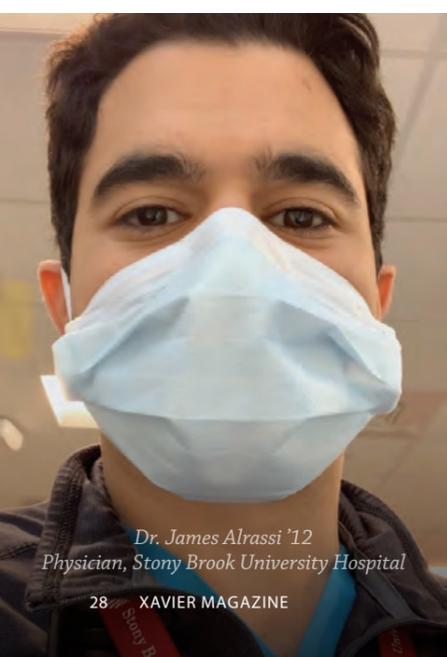
"Few of us would have ever imagined the experience of the past five months. It will live with us forever as the world has been reset."

Dr. Michael Entrup '75  
Chair, Department of Anesthesiology,  
Jersey Shore University Medical Center



## Trauma Surgical Intensive Care Unit

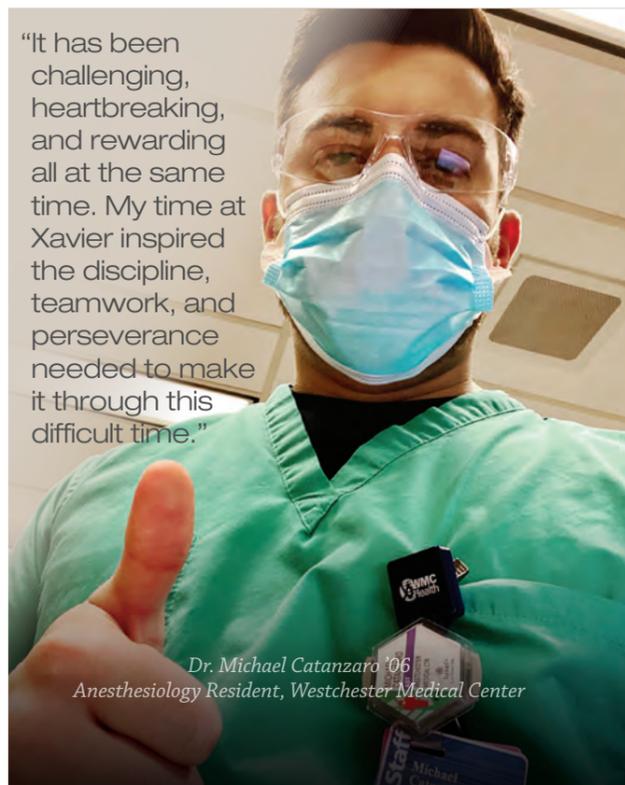
Dominic Gatta '10  
ICU Nurse Practitioner,  
Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania



Dr. James Alrassi '12  
Physician, Stony Brook University Hospital



Billy Collins '14  
Registered Nurse, New York-Presbyterian/  
Weill Cornell Medical Center



"It has been challenging, heartbreaking, and rewarding all at the same time. My time at Xavier inspired the discipline, teamwork, and perseverance needed to make it through this difficult time."

Dr. Michael Catanzaro '06  
Anesthesiology Resident, Westchester Medical Center



Santino Testani '18  
Dental Student, Adelphi University/  
New York University  
Orthodontic/Dental Assistant



Christopher DiBartolo '04  
Firefighter/Paramedic,  
District of Columbia Fire Department



Dr. Dominick Gadaleta '78 P'03  
Chief of Surgery,  
North Shore University  
Hospital



Patrick Burbano '09  
EMT, City of New York  
911 System



# ROUND TABLE ON RACE

After the world witnessed the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis on May 25, a second pandemic crystallized in the national consciousness—the pandemic of racism.

On July 10, Director of Alumni Relations **Zane Massey '96 P'22** moderated a roundtable conversation with fellow Black alumni: Xavier Hall of Famer **Dr. Franklin Caesar '72 P'00**, a former teacher and administrator on 16th Street; **Segun Akande '03**, an actor who once served as Xavier's student body president; and **Israel Pierre '20**, another Student Leadership Council president who won the Rev. Vincent Taylor, S.J. Gold X Award, the highest student honor given at Commencement, three weeks later.



Israel Pierre '20



Dr. Franklin Caesar '72 P'00

## In a wide-ranging, two-hour discussion, the four Sons of Xavier discussed their time on 16th Street and their ideas for improving the lives of young Black and brown men in our care.

**Zane Massey '96 P'22:** Thank you all for joining me during these uncertain times to have a meaningful dialogue. To start our conversation, tell our readers about your time at Xavier and how you would characterize your overall Xavier experience.

**Israel Pierre '20:** I couldn't imagine myself going to another school because the experiences I've had here were unforgettable. There are ways in which my experiences could have been different, and I can always speculate as to how that could be. I don't regret my time at Xavier. I look upon it fondly, but there are probably some things I could have observed more critically in terms of the context of this meeting.

**Dr. Franklin Caesar '72 P'00:** I was an administrator, teacher, coach, mentor, and faculty member over 20 years. When I first attended Xavier back in 1968, we were in the middle of the Vietnam War. JFK, Bobby Kennedy, and Martin Luther King had been assassinated. And we were a full-day military school. Everybody in this building wore a uniform.

That perspective was something to behold. Every day after school the entire student body walked to the 23rd Street Armory and drilled for one hour, sometimes an hour and a half. Nothing happened until after we drilled. We returned to the building, and then sports and clubs began. That was the experience that I remember fondly.

At the end of my junior year, Fr. [William] Wood, S.J.†, the president at the time, called a meeting in the auditorium. The entire school was there. Rumors were flying. Fr. Wood got up, and he said Xavier is going to become a voluntary JROTC program. You had to be there to experience the moment. It took us 10 seconds before it sunk in. We had been drilling every day. We had inspections every morning and every afternoon, and now he was telling us it was going to be an optional program. The gym went crazy. I always go back to that memory when

I think about Xavier because everybody thought we weren't going to survive when we changed. Well, we did survive.

That was a defining moment. We had been an all-military school forever.\* That opened up a whole new branch of possibilities for students. In my class, the first class that graduated in an optional program, I would say 30 percent of us stayed in the military, and 70 percent of us left. I stayed in the military, and a number of my friends did not. That's how significant it was that students had the opportunity to leave. For me, when I think about Xavier and how Xavier has continued to evolve, I go back to moments like that.

**Segun Akande '03:** I was a three-sport athlete at Xavier. I played football, basketball, and rugby. My senior year I became student body president. After Xavier, I graduated from Duke University. I also played football at Duke.

When I think about my Xavier experience, I think of it as a gift and a curse. I was introduced to Xavier through the Higher Achievement Program. My brother did HAP before me, so I got to see a bit of his experience during that summer session. I had the typical HAP experience—English and math in the morning and sports in the afternoon. It was a fruitful experience that increased my focus on going to Xavier.

On day one of high school, I hit the ground running. I had never touched a football prior to Xavier, but I came into Xavier through the HAP program, made friends, and I saw that they were all going to football practice. I asked my HAP friends, "Where are you all going?" They said, "We're going to football practice. You should join the football

\*The Xavier military program dates back to the 1880s. Mandatory participation emerged in the 1890s and lasted until Fr. Wood made it optional in 1971.

team." I went home and talked to my mom. She said, "Hell no!" I had to forge the signature myself. Joining the team was a secret for a long time, but my whole personal experience of being a part of the team, as far as camaraderie goes, was positive. Also, to find myself suddenly successful at something I had never tried before felt good. Then my mom came to the first parent-teacher meeting, and all of my teachers told her she should come to some of the football games. They said, "Your son is a really good football player."

I am a first-generation Nigerian. I'll spare you the whole discussion on Nigerian generational attitudes, but the sole focus for most families is education, education, education. So I was breaking barriers at home by coming to Xavier, and I began to really find myself on these teams with Irish and Italian kids. I had teammates who came from Fiji. There was a plethora of ethnicities. We were good. We were really talented athletes. Zane, you were a pretty good athlete, too. Your name rang through the halls as a talented ball player, and your presence was felt. I imagine that was the case for all of us.

But I feel this association with Black achievement was a curse because through the years it led to this kind of notion of an exceptional, unique type of Black student that we have here in the building. Thriving in sports, making friends with everybody. When issues of race would come up, I was seen as someone who transcended that. It was as if my Blackness was overlooked because I'm better, because I'm exceptional—because I'm the model minority. That's why Black success, in society and at Xavier, is a gift and a curse. There's a notion of traveling two lines. These saint-sinner scenarios that we strive to maintain can end up as a trap to dehumanize me and other Black men. I came to this understanding outside of this building. It was an assistant coach's wife who pulled me aside, and that became a safe space for me as far as being able to have discussions in order to get a better sense of who I was, outside of the trap of being exceptional. The curse of it was that when all of a sudden I became more outspoken about racism, I was met with backlash. I would hear terrible things said about fellow Black students and other underrepresented groups, and I would speak up about it. I began to feel isolated as "the only" and psychologically it became problematic. This is when I really began to examine my identity.

I even began to think about the importance of my name at the time. At Xavier and Duke, I wasn't called by my African name, Olusegun. I was known as Segun. It was like I was two people in one. Segun was someone who excelled in sports. We can project all our good things on to him. We don't have to deal with whatever we are being confronted with, especially with Segun in front of us. It wasn't until I got to university that I met with people who had the same or similar experiences. That meeting of like-minded people who have had similar experiences, who have met with similar traps of dehumanization, was critical in order for me to work through my experiences. Black people are champions. We persevere and we are able to work through that, right? We're not going to be defeated by setbacks.

**Massey: Let's park there for a second. Have you gentlemen experienced similar struggles or witnessed similar struggles as it pertains to the Black experience at Xavier?**

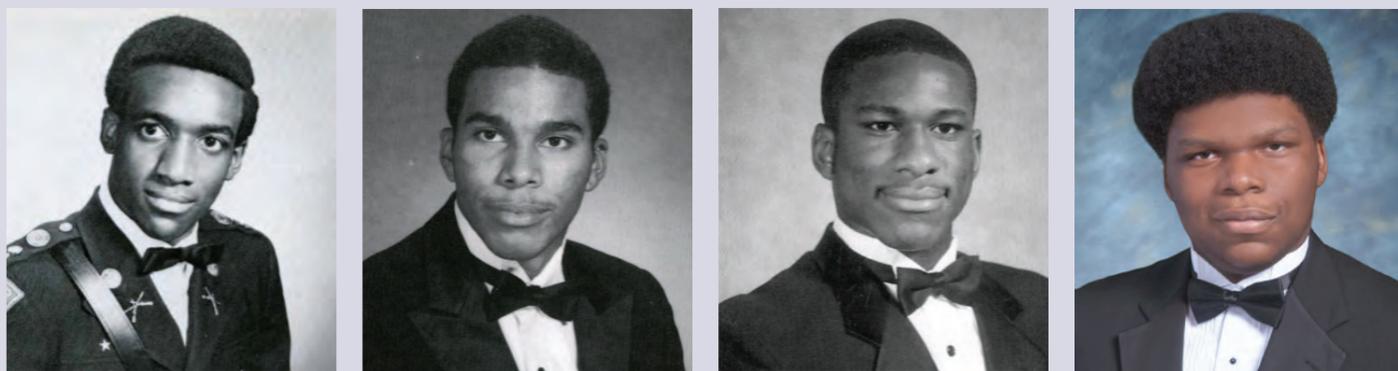
**Pierre:** I had some parallels to what Segun said, especially with the exceptionalism part. For example, in my AP classes I'd usually be the only Black kid in there. At max, there would be two others, so even at that point I'd be the only one in the classroom with a different perspective. I'd feel tension depending on the topics we were talking about. For example, we were reading *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* in one class, and there were obviously times where strong language was used. And it was just used without any input as to how I could potentially feel about that. I brushed it off at the time, saying to myself, "It's literature. It's about academic honesty, and staying true to the text." I do think, in retrospect, that me not being considered was a problem as it relates to sensitivity.

So I'm starting to wonder if that is also because of the same reasons why you felt dehumanized. You're trying to separate the fact that you were physically different from the fact that you're in an AP class. Even if you're not the same, you can do this.

**Dr. Caesar:** I think that duality that you talked about is something you learn here at Xavier because of the population. When you come in, the majority of the population is white, and you only have a few Black students. You feel this tug and pull. How do I validate my identity as a Black person? That's why there is a phenomenon that's called the Black table. The Black table is in schools where it's predominantly white, and you have a minority of students of color. What tends to happen in the lunchroom is amazing. I documented it in my doctoral dissertation, and it has been documented in other studies. What tends to happen is that as Black students, we segregate ourselves. Other people see that, and



Segun Akande '03



Above: Dr. Franklin Caesar '72 P'00, Zane Massey '96 P'22, Segun Akande '03, and Israel Pierre '20 in their senior portraits.

depending on who they are and how they know you, some of them are put off by it. Others understand it, sort of, and it's no big deal.

At the Black table, you literally can be yourself. You don't have to worry about putting on airs. You don't have to worry about what people are thinking. And you're also there to support the other brothers. You know that the person next to you has had the same experiences. We don't have to talk about it, but we know.

When I went to lunch as a student, it was at the Black table. It was, and still is, a phenomenon that basically says I feel comfortable—like you, Segun, talking about the safe space. I'm safe at the Black table. No one is going to look at me and say, "Well, you can't say that" or "Why are you thinking that?"

**Massey: Why do we feel that? We can't necessarily be safe in other spaces?**

**Dr. Caesar:** It's not that you don't feel safe in other places. It's just that you feel comfortable because there are other people who are like you.

**Pierre:** I want to comment on the Black table phenomenon you explained. I was on the speech and debate team for four years, and it is predominantly white. There were about two other people who looked like me on the team in my four years there. However, I would say that I did feel a larger degree of comfort because one of the coaches was a person of color. His name is **Don Hooper '97**. I feel like the ability to have someone there who looked like me gave me a sense of belonging. Something like that, while it doesn't decrease the necessity for a Black table, makes it easier for someone of color not to feel like they can only go to the Black table.

**Akande:** That's interesting. The Black table resonates. I can't remember exactly what I did in the cafeteria. Sometimes I would go over to the football table. I was thinking of it as a team-building exercise or as a chance to build or maintain camaraderie. But even then, issues would arise. I would be outspoken and push back. These issues would arise suddenly, and they weren't enjoyable moments. I'm over here

spending my lunchtime trying to deal with someone who was just ignorant. I'm just trying to eat my French fries, and I have to deal with this. Even in that experience, it's an exercise in survival. As I look at my time post-Xavier and now in the world, these conversations still happen. I consciously focus on decolonizing myself. I consciously say to myself, "How can I make it so that I am myself 100% of the time in whatever space I enter?" This is difficult because sometimes you feel like you have to mute who you truly are as a survival technique. I feel like truly being myself would exclude me from potential opportunities.

**Dr. Caesar:** I understand where you're going.

**Akande:** What I'm learning is that's okay, too. You know what I mean? It's actually a survival mechanism as opposed to something being wrong with me.

*Massey soon steered the conversation to the group's recollections of being among the only Black students in their respective classes. Dr. Caesar was one of just five Black students in the Class of 1972, an experience he drew upon as he wrote his doctoral dissertation, "Profiles of Graduating and Non-Graduating African-American Males in Jesuit High Schools." In it, he shared data validating Black students' feelings of isolation when they are among "the only" and how those feelings can lead to self-fulfilling prophecies of failure.*

*"It's almost like there is a culture of silence, or like you just have to not acknowledge that you're the only person," Pierre reflected about being one of the few Black students in his class. "If our school is about social justice, everyone should be thinking and talking about it. Part of the Grad at Grad is intellectual competence, and being committed to social justice, and learning more about those contextualized experiences will lead people to have more knowledge, allow them to be more empathetic, and actually seek justice."*

*The group agreed that opportunities for mentorship, already emerging from Xavier's Maroon, Blue, and Black initiative and the Community Life and Inclusion Council, are essential on 16th Street moving forward—as are institutional conversations about race.*

**Massey: Do you gentlemen think there is a greater obligation on behalf of Xavier itself, as a community, to be more responsive to the needs of its African-American population? And if so, what are some other ways we can promote equity and inclusion in our community and in our culture?**

**Dr. Caesar:** Xavier is a microcosm of the outside world. So does racism exist at Xavier? Of course it does, because Xavier is a microcosm of the outside world, and racism exists in the world. We need to begin to have those hard, deep, serious, and sometimes uncomfortable discussions. I remember when I was starting here at Xavier as a teacher. I was the only Black person around that the students saw. And it wasn't until **SGM Raymond Carney P'96†**, who became Xavier's Senior Army Instructor, that we had another Black faculty member. Before him, I was the only one. There was nobody, no coach—nobody. That's an experience I reflect on a lot. It might have been me having that ability, as you say, to "switch"—to go into this world, and go into that world. We learn how to toe the line. We know what to say, what not to say, who to say it to, and when and how. You learn that to survive. So my survival skills were good.

**Pierre:** What did that look like? Not having someone else who looks like you that you could connect with from a cultural perspective? I'm just curious as to how you, how you...survived.

**Dr. Caesar:** I think part of how I survived was my family. My oldest brother is a doctor. My other brother is an engineer. My two younger brothers are lawyers, and my youngest sister is a police officer. So I guess, for me, I didn't need that because I already saw it and experienced being "the only" through family experiences. Xavier taught me this too when I was here. I was a basketball coach. I was head of the African-American Culture Club. I started the AACC, and those meetings used to be beautiful, beautiful meetings.

**Massey:** Yes, they were. Particularly for me, the AACC was one of the only safe spaces. I credit a lot of those meetings to my success at Xavier and beyond. Had it not been for Dr. Caesar and for that group of gentlemen that I was able to connect with, I don't think I would have made it through. When you think about some of the other brothers that didn't make it, I go back to your dissertation. You cover some of the socioeconomic circumstances that a lot of Black and brown students face. Factors like a young man's family situation and overall support system and how these factors lead to different outcomes regarding success. I think about it like this: Do I want to survive at Xavier, or do I want to be in a position to thrive?

**Dr. Caesar:** Right.

**Pierre:** I want to go back to that feeling of having to be exceptional in order to be acknowledged. That is something that was put into my narrative, especially by my parents. Like you said [Segun], you are first-generation American. So am I. My parents came from Haiti, so they also focused on education. They said, "Because you're Black, the only way

you'll get anywhere at all is through education and exceptionalism." I still have some attachment to that.

For the past four months of the pandemic, a lot of these pervasive social issues that have already existed and continue to exist and are deeply rooted have now come to light. They were never gone, but we just have no choice but to see it now because we're all stuck at home. The news brings a focus to it. I think that kind of reckoning, and I don't know how to word this—moral awakening—is really showing how fragile this country is, specifically when it comes to social and racial factors. Dr. Caesar said that Xavier is reflective of society. It's a microcosm of society. So I feel like, since our mission is to strive for social justice and to send men out into the world to make positive change, what we do as an institution should be indicative of that. We need to expand the social justice aspect to acknowledge the root of our problems. Our world is grounded in race. The roots of this country are built on racism. We need to produce more graduates who actually go out and acknowledge that and try to fix institutions. This is hard to do but that doesn't mean we shouldn't focus on this aspect.

I do think we are moving in a good direction, but the institutional change is specifically and deeply rooted in racism. And regardless of how much the culture changes, if institutions remain the same nothing will actually be different.

*The group began to discuss ways to increase retention of Black students. Dr. Caesar, a Brooklyn Prep HAP alumnus who eventually directed the program at Xavier, asserted that HAP on 16th Street had veered off course from its original mission of attracting more Black and brown students to Jesuit schools. He recalled that when Fr. Michael Flynn, S.J.† passed the torch to him as HAP director, he told him, "Franklin, you have to recruit from the public schools."*

**Dr. Caesar:** He said to go out and visit those schools, form relationships with those principals, with those guidance counselors, with those teachers. He said that's where Xavier will grow in terms of



Zane Massey '96 P'22

the population of Black and Latino kids coming into Xavier. Because if you have a HAP experience that is a good experience, you are likely to apply to Xavier.

I could call a principal or guidance counselor at any grammar school in Harlem, and they would literally send me their best seventh graders—and 99% were African-American or Latino students. I created a proposal to increase the number of classes and the number of students, and it was accepted. So I had 15 classes of 15 students that worked up to 225 students. Of those 225 students, 220 of them were Black or Puerto Rican.

One of the things that has happened is that the mission of HAP somehow got lost. When I came to visit HAP a couple of summers ago, I walked into the cafeteria, and I saw a group of kids. I said to myself, “Where are the Black and Puerto Rican kids?” Back in 1967, if there were one or two white kids, that was a lot, because the vehicle of HAP was specifically designed by the Jesuits to recruit Black and Latino kids.

Your HAP experience was different from my HAP experience. It shouldn’t have been, because HAP was specifically designed for Black and brown kids from underserved communities. That was the mission—to introduce them to Jesuit education.

It was not developed just to have kids who are smart, and it was not developed to just go after the Catholic school population. Let’s be real. When you look at the African-American, Latino population, they’re not necessarily Catholic. By recruiting from the public schools, I met this young gentleman named Mr. Plummer. Mr. Plummer was a guidance counselor up in Harlem, and he was at one of the middle schools. Mr. Plummer used to call me, and he would say, “I have these eight kids. Now, they’re rough. They’re rough around the edges, but they’re smart. I call them diamonds in the rough. Will you take them?”

I said, “Of course. You know I’ll take them.”

**Pierre:** What I draw from that is how important it is to have Black people in positions of power within educational institutions because their input has the vested interest of students of color in mind. As soon as you left, you see through the decades, HAP went from being a vehicle for students of color to having a small amount of students of color. That’s direct proof as to why we need more Black administrators.

*The group continued to reflect on their experiences, eventually moving on to a discussion about sending their sons to Xavier. Dr. Caesar sent his son, Nicholas Caesar ’00, to Xavier—a decision he said he would reevaluate today. Massey’s son, Zane Massey II ’22, is a rising junior on 16th Street. Akande said he did not feel comfortable with the idea of sending a future son to Xavier. Pierre said he did.*

**Pierre:** I feel like this conversation only exists because you want Xavier to become better. So in wanting Xavier to become better I would assume, and this is myself, that it’s so I can send my son here. So I want to do it even more. And while these issues definitely exist in different

forms, I still think I would send my son here. Because I did enjoy my experience, and I want to see how generations after me can improve things. That improvement can be manifested in my son’s experience, too.

**Akande:** Israel, what do you think about a senior year BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) Kairos experience? What would that look like?

**Pierre:** If it were exclusively for people of color, I feel like that would be beneficial. Especially with Black administrators, and even possibly recent Black alumni to show the resolve and strength of the community. I also don’t know how that would affect the general culture of Xavier. Once again, you spoke about this token exceptionalism. And I think maybe that comment has actually brought up some memories of how that enters in people’s speech. One kid came up to me once and was like, “Oh, Israel, you’re white on the inside, right?” I was like, “What does that mean?” Because people see Black and studious as separate or as “acting white.” Where does that even come from? I’m sorry, I’m getting off track. I just wanted to get that thought out.

**Akande:** It’s all right. No need to be sorry.

**Pierre:** When it comes to having parallels between people of color, I think it would be beneficial. It would be a great space for Black students to share personal experiences without feeling the need to hold their tongues. I think an example of that was Maroon, Blue, and Black. We met with Black alumni and students. It was completely candid. There were no cameras or lights. And I think that was a really good bonding experience. Because after that, I felt more connected to Xavier as a whole, but specifically to the Black community within Xavier. And it made me more optimistic. So that kind of retreat could definitely be beneficial.

**Akande:** That would really be a safe space. Could that help with student retention? That might change my mind about bringing my theoretical son to Xavier. A safe retreat space for students of color would speak volumes.

**Pierre:** Those programs could be beneficial, but I think we also have to be prepared for the potential backlash that Xavier could face. There is a stigma against acknowledging that such issues need to be addressed in the first place. And secondly, on the topic of recruiting or having Black people come to Xavier in general. Some comments I’ve heard are, “They’re intentionally getting these kids who aren’t even qualified.” There is just that stigma that exists in general. Mr. Massey, why did you send your son to Xavier? Did you and your son have a conversation at all?

**Massey:** That’s a great question. First, I think the retreat experience is a huge part of the Xavier experience. I feel that the experience that we have presently is available to everyone, but I do think there needs to be a shift in thought and a shift in resources as to how we provide those

services, and particularly to kids that aren’t Catholic. Maybe we could reflect on the retreat experience and make that a more inclusive space.

To answer your question about why I sent my son to Xavier, I’m really glad you asked. I wrestled with it and ultimately my personal experience with Xavier has been largely positive. I had a very similar experience to Segun’s through sports. I think when you’re involved in certain activities there tends to be more peer acceptance within a team setting. There seems to be more overall acceptance through the sport association. I was lucky that I was able to expose some of my friends that didn’t look like me to my environment, and vice versa, so that played a lot into it. I grew up in Harlem in the ’80s and ’90s. I had never really been around white people prior to Xavier. This is when people were afraid to come past 110th Street in Harlem. I learned how to exist in that environment, and I wasn’t a fighter. But I was able to negotiate my way out of things. I was able to avoid a lot of the pitfalls that my friends succumbed to in Harlem. I think that ability to adapt really helped me get the most out of my Xavier experience.

But I do often wrestle with things that I have witnessed and things that I have seen at Xavier with classmates and also just knowing who I am, knowing what I outwardly look like. Some people may not look at me and say that I’m Black. I could pass as Latin or multiracial or biracial. I do identify as Black. My mom is Black. I was born and raised Black. I know I’m a brother.

Being physically in the building gives me a certain security in knowing that I can be there for my son. There are periods of time where I do check in on him. I want to check in on his mental health. I want to know how he’s feeling. I ask him, “How are you feeling? Have you had to deal with anything out of the ordinary today? What did you have to deal with today?” I ask him questions like that. And I understand the dynamic of being a teenager—that he may not tell me everything that’s happening. Maybe he’ll tell his mom. Maybe he’ll tell one of his friends, but I find myself in a position to be—and I’m privileged and I’m honored to be—in a situation where I can be the go-to for my son if needed. But in some ways, I am also the go-to for other Black students here at Xavier. Other BIPOC faculty are also the safe space for our Black and brown students. I think it gives me as much hope and as much joy to be able to be a positive influence in their lives. When they come into my office, I light up and it gives me energy. I don’t take that lightly. None of us do.

We have a strong family dynamic, which is a plus. And I understand that not all of our students have that. I think that comes into play, too, your family life, so I think that Xavier does a lot of good. And I think that my son is learning how to adapt to new environments. He’s finding his way

at Xavier. So there is some comfort there. Ultimately, Xavier is a good place, and I think it’s a well-intentioned place. But I do think that there needs to be a shift in thought and a shift in resources to address issues for my son and for future sons.

**Pierre:** Before you said that we need to be willing to become uncomfortable. And that just reminded me how being uncomfortable is ironically not just a Jesuit idea, but a Christian idea in general. I think it was in my senior year social justice class where we talked about Fr. Arrupe, who gave a speech to a bunch of wealthy people who sent their kids to Jesuit schools. He said we aren’t doing enough. People were too comfortable. They were not tackling the issues that we need to tackle. I think that’s the core message of what the Jesuits intend to achieve or want to achieve—to take this and to go out and experience what needs to be experienced. To have radical empathy, and to gain a genuine understanding of what needs to be changed so that they can be in the same mindset to change it as well. If we continue to push through that and hire more Black administrators and have those programs like HAP in the ’80s and ’90s, I think that would increase my reasons to send my son to Xavier. And it might change your [Segun’s] perspective as well. But I’m still only 18. So maybe 10 years from now, I may

see things the way you are seeing them.

**Dr. Caesar:** For me, 2022 is going to be my 50th reunion. We talk about that all the time. God willing, if I’m alive, I expect to be here. One of the things I’ll say that’s always been positive for me are the friendships that I have made here. I don’t know of many friends I have who have that connection with people they went to high school with. It’s not the same at other schools. I still go out to dinner with friends from the basketball team. They’re white. I was the only Black guy on the basketball team. But that’s the amazing part. Even my wife doesn’t understand, and I’ve stopped trying to convince her. When I think about Xavier, in that perspective, I think in terms of friendships. We talk about people that are doing morally good things. I don’t think that I would still be friends with them if they weren’t like that.

**Massey:** I want to leave you guys with a word of thanks. I think we’ve done a great job initially confronting bias and asserting our commitment to anti-racism as a community, in part due to Mr. Raslowsky’s fireside chats a few weeks back. These chats bring light to a situation that has always been here. We can do more, and as a community, we cannot fall back into being comfortable. We have to move past that. This has to be a normal and ongoing conversation. Institutionally, things have to change, and changes must be sustainable. James Baldwin said, “Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it’s faced.” Gentlemen, I want to thank you for this time. You are all diamonds, and not in the rough.

# Finding God in All Things

By Maggie Murphy Stockson

IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA

## THE FIRST PRINCIPLE AND FOUNDATION

From the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola

*God who loves us creates us and wants to share life with us forever. Our love response takes shape in our praise and honor and service of the God of our life.*

*All the things in this world are also created because of God's love and they become a context of gifts, presented to us so that we can know God more easily and make a return of love more readily.*

*As a result, we show reverence for all the gifts of creation and collaborate with God in using them so that by being good stewards we develop as loving persons in our care of God's world and its development. But if we abuse any of these gifts of creation or, on the contrary, take them as the center of our lives, we break our relationship with God and hinder our growth as loving persons.*

*In everyday life, then, we must hold ourselves in balance before all created gifts insofar as we have a choice and are not bound by some responsibility. We should not fix our desires on health or sickness, wealth or poverty, success or failure, a long life or a short one. For everything has the potential of calling forth in us a more loving response to our life forever with God.*

*Our only desire and our one choice should be this: I want and I choose what better leads to God's deepening life in me.*

David L. Fleming, S.J., *What is Ignatian Spirituality*

One of the major tenets of Ignatian spirituality is finding God in all things. As we continue to wrestle with a viral pandemic and have a long overdue confrontation with the racial pandemic in our nation, I venture to say that many of us have struggled to find God amid so much suffering.

As I write this in late July, more than 140,000 Americans have died from the coronavirus, which has disproportionately impacted communities of color. In late May, a national reckoning with racism, our nation's original sin, burst forth after the killing of George Floyd. We are also confronting the painful realities of massive unemployment, how to educate our children while keeping them safe, and how to balance caring for our children while working from home—if we are fortunate enough to remain employed and work at home. (In my own very small corner of the world, my curly-haired 2-year-old often makes guest appearances during virtual meetings, and he enjoys throwing everything on my desk or all over our apartment if I am too focused on my computer screen or on a phone call.) Many of us are mourning the loss of experiences and long-awaited moments of joy we had been anticipating, including graduations, anniversaries, reunions, and weddings.

As students, teachers, staff members, and alumni of a Jesuit school, how does our experience affect our response?

Our Ignatian tools teach us that in times of despair or desolation, we should pray more, but this may be difficult as we continue to witness or experience unbearable suffering and feel paralyzed about how to alleviate it. While I intrinsically know that God does not want us to suffer and will always shoulder our burdens with us, I wonder how much

more we can tolerate and what we can do.

I recently found myself returning to my basic Ignatian training to try to find some guidance or nuggets of hope. St. Ignatius Loyola's First Principle and Foundation reminds us that as we encounter the realities of everyday life, we have a choice in how we use the gifts God has bestowed on us to respond and grow as loving persons.

David Fleming, S.J., explains that the First Principle and Foundation is actually a life vision: "All creation is a gift coming from God and leading toward God ... the choices we make in our daily life in this world push us away from God or draw us closer to Him. Ignatius sees God as present, not remote or detached. He is involved in the details of our life. Our daily lives in this world matter."

I saw a beautiful embodiment of this life vision in early July when student leaders of Spectrum hosted a virtual town hall for our community with Breana Lamkin of the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI) to discuss the film *Just Mercy* and the work of EJI. EJI is a non-profit organization founded by Bryan Stevenson, author of the book *Just Mercy*, in 1989. According to its website, the organization "is committed to ending mass incarceration and excessive punishment in the United States, to challenging racial and economic injustice and to protecting basic human rights for the most vulnerable people in American society."

Quite simply, our young men chose to use their great gifts to respond to suffering, injustice, and illness with love. They thoughtfully led and moderated the discussion, asking Ms. Lamkin about her work and what they could specifically do as youth leaders in their communities to help challenge racial and economic injustice and help the most vulnerable among us. They chose to engage the world around them with great faith and hope, growing closer to God in the process.

During these challenging days I have witnessed many other examples of members of our community choosing to draw closer to God by using their gifts to respond with love. Many of our alumni and parents are medical professionals who have spent countless days and hours caring for the sick, including Dr. Daniel Duque P'23, an ER doctor at Elmhurst Hospital, who grew up in the community he serves.

Xavier faculty and staff traveled all over the Tri-State area in May to personally deliver care packages (from a safe distance) to our graduates and congratulate them on their accomplishments. Midnight Chicken, a talented band composed of four Xavier seniors, organized and recorded a special remote performance for Xavier's first virtual gala, and many of you tuned in to support our scholarship fund from afar. Esteban Rivera '19, a mechanical engineering student at Johns Hopkins University, manufactured face shields in his home for front-line workers.

The devastation and chaos of illness, loss, injustice, and unemployment is real and overwhelming. It can certainly make it difficult to be consistently attentive to God's presence. My hope and my prayer for all of us during these trying days is that we are able to find those small moments to choose to respond and grow in love.



Members of the Class of 1977 catch up over Zoom.

# SONS OF XAVIER

## 1948

**Anton J. Stifter** writes, “Living in a world few of us could have imagined. From worldwide the pandemic came to us here in Minneapolis. From Minneapolis we are giving back to the world tragically—yet hopefully something that will result in a better, more humanity-oriented world for all. I am straddling both situations with a determination of life that was instilled in me during my four years at Xavier. Greetings to my 1948 classmates. God bless you and keep you well.”

## 1949

**Dr. Tom O’Brien** and his wife, Nancy, are hunkered down in Washington, North Carolina. “Our classmates mourn the loss of our very faithful ‘49er, **Gaspar ‘Chip’ Cipolla†**,” O’Brien writes. “He was a beloved New Jersey public school teacher known by the students as ‘Mr. Chips.’ He carried the Xavier virtues of respect and self-discipline to his classrooms not by threats, but rather by example. His story played a large role in the establishment of the Class of ‘49 Scholarship.”

## 1952

**Dr. Chester Schmidt** writes that he is “finally retired and looking for a way to volunteer in this tough situation.”

## 1954

**Roy Van Brunt ‘63** recently donated a memorial brick paver at Missouri’s National Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Perryville in honor of Xavier Hall of Famer **CPT Christopher O’Sullivan, USA†**. “Alumni living in the area may want to visit the Memorial,” Van Brunt writes.

## 1955

**Jim O’Connell** writes, “Our 65th anniversary of leaving 16th Street for the uncertain and unsheltered world found us sheltered again due to COVID-19. We are well and well taken care of in a great continuing care retirement community in Williamsburg, Virginia. Would love

to have another reunion while we are able to do so.”

## 1956

In July, **Charles Ferrara** moved from his home of 49 years to an Erickson Senior Residence in Pompton Plains, New Jersey. He invites his classmates to visit when they are in the neighborhood. His email address is [cferragranda@aol.com](mailto:cferragranda@aol.com).

**Dr. Frank Heelan** writes that “the kid,” **Dr. Emil Signes**, finally joined his classmates among the ranks of octogenarians on June 18. Signes graduated from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology with a degree in engineering and from Rutgers University with a Ph.D. in Spanish Language and Literature. He is an internationally acclaimed rugby coach who continues to work with the Princeton University women’s rugby team. He was inducted into the Rugby Hall of Fame in 2015.

**Frank Perroni** notes that Northeastern members of the Class of 1956, who have long met up for monthly lunches, now maintain bonds through Zoom calls that extend their reach from coast to coast. Along with Perroni, participants have included **Tony Cangemi, Lou Cumming, Anthony Cusumano, Nick D’Agostino P’79 ‘81, Dr. Ludwig Deppisch, Charles Ferrara, LTC Desmond Flanigan, USA (Ret.), Dr. Frank Heelan, Frank Kilkenny, Jack McDermott, COL Peter Novembre, USA (Ret.), Pat Rouse**, and others.

## 1957

**Joe Juhasz** is “working on several projects with colleagues and taking long walks and bike rides while trying to maintain some mental balance in these confusing and troubling times.”

## 1958

**Paul McNamara** writes, “One of the activities I engaged in during the virus shutdown was contacting friends and family to check to see if they were okay. I read in *Xavier Magazine* that **Dan Rodriguez**, my classmate and friend, was to



enter the Xavier Hall of Fame. I looked up his phone number in the Alumni Directory and called to congratulate him. Fortunately, Dan was still healthy and we talked for over half an hour as we reminisced.”

1. Tony Dente ‘59 and Andrew Pylp ‘79 in Germany.
2. Jim O’Connell ‘55.
3. Bob Scavullo ‘60 delivering a children’s homily virtually on Easter Sunday.

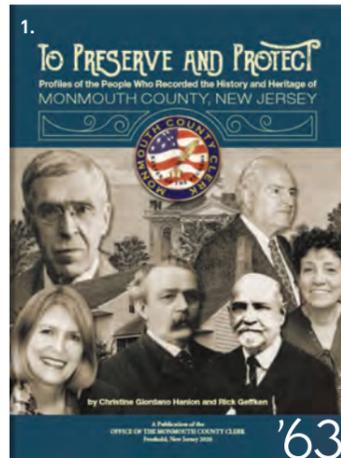
## 1959

**Tony Dente** and **Andrew Pylp ‘79** enjoyed a socially distanced reunion in Germany in May. They have been friends for 30 years. “One day in 1990, he walked into my CFO’s office to ask me a few questions pertaining to that year’s financial reporting,” Dente recalled. “When he asked for an interview, I immediately asked him, ‘What part of New York are you from?’ ‘Brooklyn.’ ‘Me, too. What university did you attend?’ ‘NYU.’ ‘Me, too. Where did you go to high school?’ ‘Xavier!’ ‘Been friends ever since.’”

## 1960

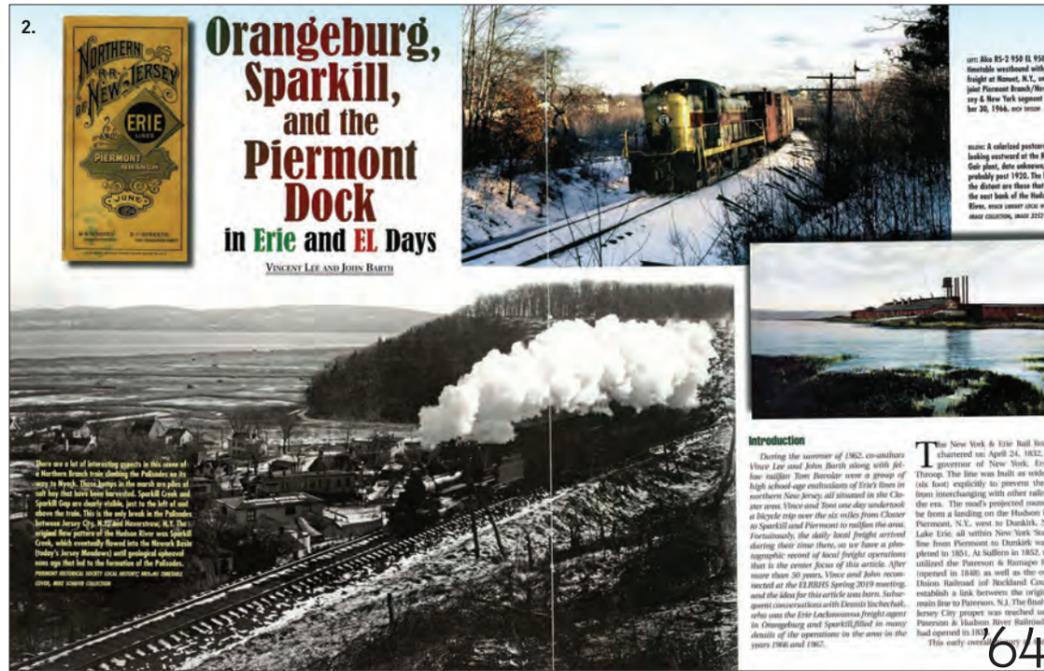
**Dr. Doug Fraser** recently retired after actively practicing ophthalmology in Springfield, Virginia, for 43 years.

On March 13, **Bob Scavullo**, his wife Barbara, their son Andrew, daughter-in-law Kelly, and grandchildren Azalea and Oscar began their quarantine at the Scavullos’ country house in Sonoma County, California. Scavullo has kept busy throughout



1. A new book written by Rick Geffken '63.

2. An article co-authored by Vincent Lee '64.



quarantine, publishing updates for friends and family in what he dubbed “The Geyserville Gazette” and giving the Easter Sunday homily for the 3- to 6-year-olds at his parish via YouTube. Scavullo’s uncle, **Stephen Duffy, S.J. '31†**, used to deliver the children’s homily at The Church of St. Ignatius Loyola on Park Avenue. Fr. Duffy’s homilies featured a fictitious boy named Willy. “My Xavier classmates **Tom Shanley, Rich Tucciarone, and Joe Cahalan** used to sit in the pews at St. Ignatius Loyola Church and listen to Stephen tell of Willy’s latest adventures,” he said. Thus Scavullo included tales of Willy in his Easter homily this year, along with a new addition, Willy’s sister, Sarah—a nod toward gender inclusivity. Scavullo also noted that when his daughter-in-law Kelly gave him his first quarantine haircut, he made sure to use a Xavier beach towel as his cover.

**1961**  
**Dr. Edward Quinn** is a cardiologist working in Lake Havasu City, Arizona. “Xavier was the best educational foundation one could ever hope for,” he writes.

**1963**  
Two new publications from **Rick Geffken** will appear in 2020: *To Preserve and Protect: Profiles of the People Who Recorded the History and Heritage of Monmouth County, New Jersey* and *Slave Stories from New Jersey*, the last Northern state to abolish slavery.

**Vincent Razzore** lives in Bellport, New York. “Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, time at the gym and triathlon training have been curtailed,” he writes. “However, having traveled to Kenya last fall and fallen in love with the children, I have teamed up with a director of a Christian school in Nairobi to assist some of the underprivileged children in getting the supplies they need.”

**1964**  
**Vincent Lee** continued his long interest in railroad history with a recently published article in the Erie Lackawanna Railroad Historical Society’s journal on the history, infrastructure, and operations of railroads in the historic Hudson River town of Piermont, New York. Lee notes that in the 1850s, Piermont—today a sleepy suburban town—had a mile-long dock jutting into the Hudson

River and served as a high-traffic gateway to the West via a combined rail and river journey. In the 20th century, it hosted a factory that was the major source for cardboard boxes used to package a multitude of everyday consumer products.

**1966**  
The American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy Substance Use Disorder Special Interest Group awarded its 2020 Distinguished Service Award to **Dr. Edward DeSimone**. In August, he began his 32nd year working with the Jesuits as a professor at Creighton University. “They definitely grow on you after more than 35 years!” he writes.

**1967**  
After 44 years in New Jersey, **George Shevchuk** moved to Newark, Delaware, in June. “It’s actually something that my wife and I’d been planning shortly before she passed away a few years ago,” Shevchuk writes. “So far I’m managing to stay healthy despite the coronavirus around all of us. The impact of the coronavirus appeared to strike quite suddenly. While attending rehearsals of the Georgian Court Chorale, one week we were discussing whether to ask

## LOVE IN ACTION

ESTEBAN RIVERA '19 / BY ERIC KREBS '17



### “XAVIER BUILDS THE MENTALITY THAT YOU WANT TO HELP OTHERS WHENEVER YOU HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY.”

As the COVID-19 pandemic first made its way through New York, overwhelming our health care system and putting the strength of our communities to the test, **Esteban Rivera '19** was ready to help. Rivera, a rising sophomore at Johns Hopkins University, where he studies mechanical engineering, began printing face shields—at the time, in high demand and higher scarcity—from his bedroom. “I felt it was the biggest thing I could do, especially at home,” Rivera told *Xavier Magazine*. “I thought, ‘You know, I have the equipment, I have family who work in health care, I have family who are doctors’—so it’s what I could do.” Using an open-source blueprint he downloaded from the internet and the

3D printer he got as a gift three years prior, Rivera began manufacturing and donating the essential equipment. By the end of April, he had donated more than 200 masks to high-need institutions like Elmhurst Hospital in Queens, nursing homes, and neighbors in New Rochelle, where he was finishing his online classes in the spring. Rivera’s efforts also served the Xavier community. He donated equipment to **Dr. Daniel Duque P’23** at Elmhurst Hospital as well as to the Newark Community Health Center, where **Alexandria Massey P’22** works as the chief nursing and compliance officer. Though Rivera remains exceedingly humble, his work has

not gone unnoticed. “I reached out to Esteban to thank him for his work and to let him know how proud of him I was. [Esteban] is an example of what we should all be doing,” **Zane Massey '96 P’22**, Alexandria’s husband and Xavier’s Director of Alumni Relations, noted. Rivera estimates that he’s invested a few hundred hours—and dollars—into the endeavor, but it’s been time well spent in the name of service. “Xavier builds the mentality that you want to help others whenever you have the opportunity,” he reflected. “Even though I knew it was going to be a lot of materials, cost, and time, I knew that I could and I wanted to help out in a time when people really needed it.”



Above: Rivera at home in New Rochelle; Dr. Daniel Duque P’23 after receiving Rivera’s delivery of face shields; and Alexandria Massey P’22 receiving face shields from Rivera.

# PAYING IT FORWARD

PEDRO DONES '00 /  
BY ERIC KREBS '17



**TEACHING, FOR DONES, IS A WAY TO INSPIRE, TO EDUCATE, AND TO CONNECT WITH HIS STUDENTS. BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN HE CAN'T ENTERTAIN THEM WHILE DOING SO.**

Teaching wasn't **Pedro Dones '00's** first plan. "The original plan was to be a sports journalist—but it didn't work out that way," recalled Dones, a 2020 recipient of the Big Apple Award, the New York City Department of Education's most prestigious award for excellence in teaching.

While a senior at Xavier, he had to receive special permission from assistant headmaster **Jay Burke P'84 '87 '91 '94** to leave early to take the qualifying test for a program at Verizon that would cover his college tuition. He was accepted, working through college at the phone company while taking night classes at Fordham University. Shortly after graduating in 2006, however, Dones knew he needed

a change. He left Verizon—taking a major pay cut—and began substitute teaching in New York City public schools. His first application to become a full-time teacher was rejected, but that didn't stop him from reapplying. "The following year, I was ready. [In my interview] I was like, 'These kids need me and I need them. I can make a difference.'"

And he has. Twelve years later, Dones is a math teacher at M.S. 363 in the same Bronx district where he attended school. He relishes the fact that his students have a teacher who looks and sounds like them.

This spring, he was honored for his decades-long persistence as an educator. The Big Apple teaching

award is given to 19 teachers per year, selected from a pool of thousands of applicants.

Teaching, for Dones, is a way to inspire, to educate, and to connect with his students. But that doesn't mean he can't entertain them while doing so. When his school moved online this spring, he created a YouTube channel, "Mr. Dones' Awesome Math Network," to broadcast lessons to his students. In each video, he showcases his finest fashion, his teaching abilities, and even his alter ego, "Big Action." While Dones has attained a slew of press for his award, he remains, first and foremost, a bit of a celebrity to his students, whose exclamation point-laden affirmations fill his YouTube comment sections.

Amidst the praise, Dones knows that he only has more work ahead of him. "I plan on using this platform to push the needle, to see through some changes that will benefit our high-needs communities," he said. In his recent video "Basic Arithmetic," he illustrated his vision of change to his students through a simple math problem. First, 382 (the length of the Montgomery Bus Boycott in days), plus 180 (the Greensboro sit-ins in days), plus 210 (the Freedom Rides in days), and, finally, 37 (the number of days in the Birmingham movement). In sum, 809 days of forging a better world. For Pedro Dones, there are many more to come.

members who'd traveled abroad to quarantine for two weeks; the next week there were no more rehearsals. Probably the biggest personal impact is the disruption and lack of clear plans related to four weddings I was expecting to attend this year, two of which have already been rescheduled from the spring."

## 1968

**Dr. David McGroarty** is a gastroenterology specialist with 43 years of service to the greater Richmond, Virginia area. A 1976 graduate of the Georgetown University School of Medicine, he will retire from Richmond Gastroenterology Associates on October 31.

## 1969

**Dr. Greg Belli** lives in Merritt Island, Florida. He and his brothers, **Charles Belli '71** and **William Belli '73**, are in good health and good spirits. In mid-January, "before the corona-chaos," Greg writes, "the Belli boys got together on the Florida Space Coast with our two sisters and significant others for an extended weekend of visiting, reminiscing, eating, and general catching up."

## 1970

**Herb Quinde** recently retired from Microsoft. In January, he started his dream retirement gig as associate director of Catholic Theological Union (CTU), a seminary for 24 religious orders and lay ministers in Chicago founded in 1968 to spread the Gospel and ethos of Vatican II. He graduated with a master's degree in theology from CTU in May.

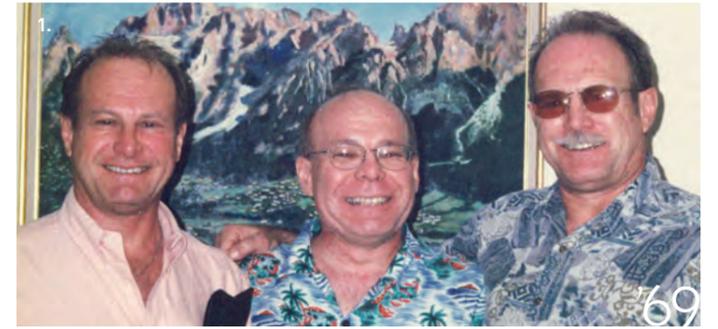
**Peter Hart** writes, "With a great sense of timing, I retired in September of 2019, just in time for the lockdown. A fall trip to France was the first event, and now my wife Pam and I are doing lockdown in Sonoma. Please reach out if you are going to be in California wine country. We'd love to see anyone traveling, although we don't think this will happen until 2021." Hart can be reached at [pmhart06@icloud.com](mailto:pmhart06@icloud.com).

**S.W. O'Connell** recently leveraged his 30 years of intelligence experience to craft a new spy novel. His third novel in the Yankee Doodle Spies series is scheduled for release this summer. *The Winter Spy* is another tale of action and intrigue as George Washington's small band of agents go behind British lines during the 1776 retreat of the Continental Army across the Jerseys.

## 1971

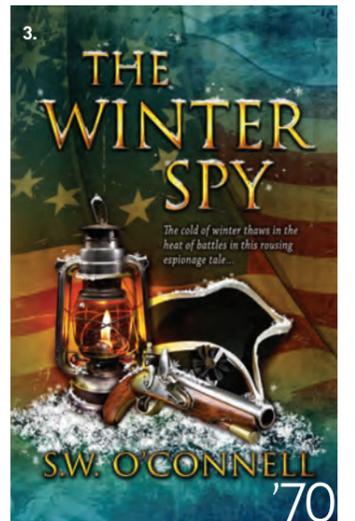
**John N. Frank** recently started writing a new play titled *Damn It, I'm Old!* It tells the story of a man confined to his home by the COVID-19 pandemic looking back at the major events of his life, wondering what he has accomplished—if anything—and what he can still do. The pandemic forced Frank and his wife, Carolyn, to shutter their theater, the 2nd Act Players, and cancel their planned new play festival in May. "We had thought we could reopen in November but now are seriously thinking our next show may not be until next year," he writes. "Having my second career pulled out from under me has been very, very difficult. So, after some grieving for that, I've now turned my attention to reviving the Mended Hearts support group for heart patients I began three years ago. We had been having monthly support meetings and several of us were visiting heart patients after their surgeries each week. All that has been canceled because of the pandemic, so I switched us to virtual meetings in June and we are hoping to begin virtual visits with new heart patients sometime this summer. That will be difficult but I need to do something to feel I am still contributing to society in some way."

**Dr. Ralph F. Józefowicz**, professor of neurology and medicine and associate chair for education in the neurology department at the University of Rochester, is the recipient of a Fulbright Teaching Scholar Award for 2021. This award will allow him to spend five months in Kraków, Poland, teaching neurosciences and clinical neurology at Jagiellonian University Medical College (JUMC).

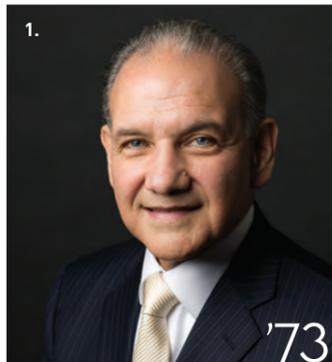


In addition, Dr. Józefowicz will also assist the JUMC administration with curricular reform and enhancement of clinical teaching at JUMC in light of the recent opening of a new 900+ bed university hospital outside Kraków. This is the second Fulbright Teaching Scholar Award for Dr. Józefowicz, who received his first award in 1992. That Award, also spent at JUMC, resulted in his establishing a medical exchange program between JUMC and the University of Rochester School of Medicine. Since the program's inception in 1995, 162 Rochester medical students and 94 Rochester neurology residents have taught neurology in Kraków, and 198 Jagiellonian University students have participated in clinical electives at Rochester. In addition, 12 medical exchange conferences between these institutions have taken place in both Rochester and Kraków. Jagiellonian University is the second oldest university in central Europe, having been founded in 1364. Its most famous alumni include Copernicus and Pope John Paul II. In 2003, Dr. Józefowicz was made an honorary professor of Jagiellonian University, and in 2014, he received the Merentibus Medal from Jagiellonian University "for great services rendered to the Jagiellonian University to a person or institution from both Poland and abroad."

On April 7, **Brian O'Connell** was elected to his second three-year term on the board of the Racine, Wisconsin Unified School District. On April 27, his fellow board members re-elected him board president. He continues to reside in Racine with his wife, Linda. In August, they celebrated the 44th



1. William Belli '73, Dr. Greg Belli '69, and Charles Belli '71.
2. Dr. Ralph F. Józefowicz '71.
3. A new novel written by S.W. O'Connell '70.



1. Michael Montelongo '73.

2. Mark Mooney '75.

3. Michael Gargiulo '77 with Jim Keenan, S.J. in Breezy Point on July 4.

headquartered in Florham Park, New Jersey, on May 19. Conduent is a business process services company delivering mission-critical services and solutions for businesses and governments. "I am excited to return to the Tri-State area and join the Conduent team as a board director. Having spent a lifetime of service in business, government, and the civic sector, I believe Conduent's purpose-driven focus is essential in today's marketplace," Montelongo writes. "I am eager to contribute to the company's future success by applying my experience and cross-industry background in board governance, strategy, financial and risk management, and operational excellence."

**1974**  
**Kevin McLaughlin** recently completed his three-year term as president of the Boston College Alumni Association. Under his leadership, the Alumni Association launched two new affinity groups and Eagle Exchange, an online mentoring platform that facilitates career-related conversations between BC students and alumni.

**1972**  
**Dr. Franklin Caesar P'00** writes, "I am speaking for all my classmates as we wish our class leader and good friend, **Donald Gross P'03**, congratulations on his 30 years of service as a faculty member, coach, and mentor at our alma mater, Xavier High School. Enjoy your retirement, Don."

**1973**  
For the third time in three years, **Scott Cameron** is acting as an assistant secretary at the U.S. Department of the Interior—this time as the acting assistant secretary for policy, management, and budget. "I oversee the \$14 billion budget of this Cabinet agency, which manages our national parks, national wildlife refuges, U.S. Geological Survey, and Indian reservations, among other things," he writes.

**1975**  
**Jim DeMartino** is a Republican candidate for U.S. Senate in Delaware. A graduate of The

Citadel, he is a Marine veteran and an attorney.

**Joe Fama** lives in Tinton Falls, New Jersey. For the past 24 years, he has served on the Board of Directors of the Dr. Theodore Atlas Foundation alongside boxing trainer and ESPN personality Teddy Atlas. The foundation has been providing PPE to transit workers and nursing homes during the pandemic and delivering meals to hundreds of seniors isolated due to the virus.

**Mark Mooney** sends best virtual wishes to the Class of 1975 on its 45th graduation anniversary. He is an adjunct professor at Florida International University, where he teaches national security and foreign policy. In 2019, he joined **Steve Fontana** and **Joe Savarese** for a mini-reunion in Miami.

**1976**  
**Francis Apicella** recently published a book, *Victory at Lepanto: Don Juan's Campaign to Save Christendom*, under his pen name, Francisco Nervantes. He hopes to have the book adapted into a screenplay. "Proceeds are being donated to Good Counsel, which is the charity for expectant mothers and their unborn babies in need," he writes.

Last year, **CAPT Pete Sciabarra, USN (Ret.)** completed an 11-year executive career at Vistage Worldwide. In June, he started a new role as a senior business coach for the DSP program at Amazon. Sciabarra, his wife Carol, and their family still reside in San Diego, California, where he continues to play ice hockey in the adult league at the San Diego Ice Arena.

**1977**  
On July 4, **Michael Gargiulo** enjoyed a welcome surprise when he ran into **Jim Keenan, S.J.**, in Breezy Point. "He reminded me

## BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE

LEON HAMPTON '06 / BY ERIC KREBS '17



It took a village for **Leon Hampton '06** to get to—and through—Xavier High School.

"My family had to crowdfund my education at Xavier," Hampton recalled. "I'm a child of a strong village and support system. It gave me an innate sense of 'I need to give back to do the same for someone else.'" Now a corporate lawyer at Dinsmore & Shohl LLP in Cincinnati, Ohio and the president of Xavier University's Black Alumni Association (BAA), Hampton is committed to doing just that.

To Hampton, opportunity and mentorship are stepping stones to a better, more just future for Black students—two things he has prioritized as BAA president since his term began in 2018. As president, he has increased retention for alumni of color within the Xavier University community and created specific programming to connect alumni both to the institution and to current students of color.

His belief in the power of mentorship stems in no small part

from his time on 16th Street and the teachers—**Steven Noga** (himself a Xavier University alumnus), **Chris Stevens '83**, and **Lou Lovallo**, to name a few—who kept him "on the straight and narrow" and helped him become the first in his family to attend college. Through his education, Hampton realized not only the opportunities he had been afforded, but the disparities in who is afforded opportunity in the first place.

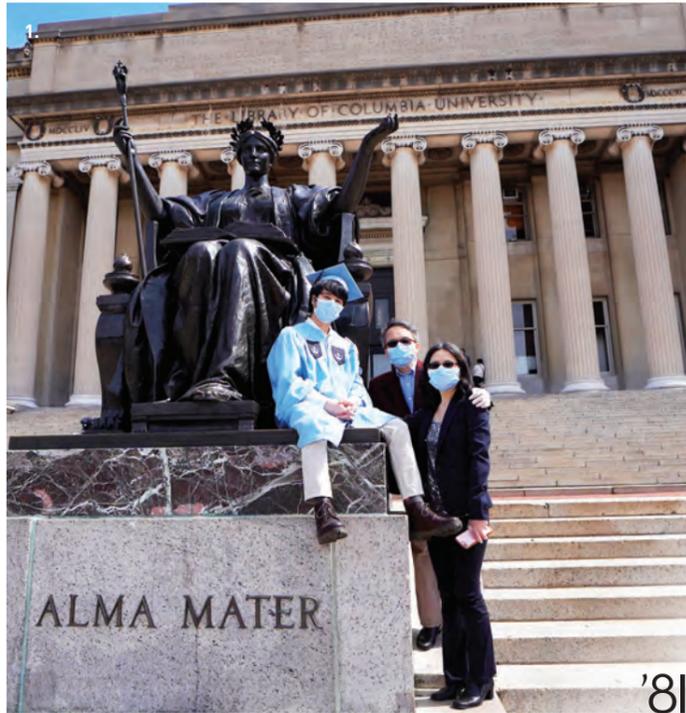
"A place like Xavier is a big equalizer," Hampton told *Xavier Magazine*. "[But] a lot of Black students don't have access to a [place like] Xavier High School, not because they lack the educational fortitude, but because they can't afford it," he added. (To note, according to the nonpartisan Tax Policy Center, in 2016 the average white family in America was worth around \$170,000, while the average Black family had around \$17,000 in assets.)

But to Hampton, justice for Black students is more than helping them get in the door—it's about connecting

them to resources and mentors who will guide them through it, who understand them, and who can help them carve their own path. "We need to create spaces for alumni of color to connect with students of color," said Hampton, who is working with Director of Alumni Relations **Zane Massey '96 P'22** to expand Xavier High School's Maroon, Blue and Black initiative—a rebranding of what was once known as the Minority Alumni Council.

Hampton said another important step, especially for predominantly white institutions, is recognizing why alumni of color might be reluctant to return. "There are people like myself who understand the value...we're willing to contribute, we're willing to help. Institutions just have to have open arms and understand what we need, and what the students need," he said. "We [need to] create a structure where students [of color] can see people who look like them succeeding—and helping them along the journey."

THROUGH HIS EDUCATION, HAMPTON REALIZED NOT ONLY THE OPPORTUNITIES HE HAD BEEN AFFORDED, BUT THE DISPARITIES IN WHO IS AFFORDED OPPORTUNITY IN THE FIRST PLACE.



1. Paul Chiu '81 with his wife, Laiyan, and son, William, at Columbia University.

2. Michael Walter '84 with his late father, John Walter P'84.

3. Michael Bongiorno '86.

what a pleasure it was to have me as a student," Gargiulo shared with his Twitter followers.

📷 **Luis Morales** reports that he and other members of the Class of 1977 (including **Randy Caruso, Ed Crocoll, Mike Del Terzo, John Esposito, Michael Gargiulo, Tony Listrom, Rene Mack, Nevio Murljacic, Frank Piscitelli, and Jack Young**) have been meeting regularly via Zoom. Classmates interested in joining them should contact Morales at [lmorales425@gmail.com](mailto:lmorales425@gmail.com).

**Eduardo Sanduy** lives in Milton, Delaware. He works in the private sector with the Department of Homeland Security. His daughter is getting married this year.

**1979**  
**Charles Caruth** owns Executive Exotic Limos and Executive Security Protection.

**Mike Wickman** will retire from federal service on October 1. He has served 22 years in positions worldwide, including deployments from platoon leader through battalion commander, and in 2005 transitioned to serve as



a counterintelligence agent/supervisory special agent.

## 1980

**Mike Barbieri P'10** is a principal partner in TRUE Premium Vodka. TRUE recently signed a three-year contract to become the official vodka of the New York Mets and Citi Field. The new lounge at Citi Field will be called the Mike Piazza 31 Club, sponsored by TRUE Premium Vodka.

**James Zerilli** writes that his son, James Paul Zerilli, graduated summa cum laude from Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers University with a bachelor of fine arts degree in graphic design.

## 1981

📷 **Paul Chiu** reports that his son, William, graduated from Columbia University in May. While Columbia's graduation was held via web broadcast, Chiu, his wife Laiyan, and William marked the occasion together on the Columbia campus.

## 1982

**James Sullivan** lives in Veracruz, Mexico.

## 1984

📷 **Michael Walter** writes, "My beloved dad, **John Walter P'84**, passed away in May from COVID-19. He was very proud of my experience at Xavier and always boasted to people that I was a graduate."

## 1986

📷 **Michael Bongiorno** lives in Columbus, Ohio, with his wife, Sarah, and three daughters,



Alessandra, Juliana, and Elenora. An award-winning architect, Bongiorno is the managing principal and design director of the Columbus Office of AECOM, a global design services firm. He dedicates his time outside of work to the community, chairing the Board of Trustees of the Greater Columbus Arts Council and serving on the Board of Trustees of the Columbus College of Art and Design.

After the passing of his father, **Luis Rivera, Jr.** found comfort in a February memorial Mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral celebrated by **Rev. Andrew King**.

**Robert Suarez** was recently appointed director of his law firm's low income tax clinic. Since 2017, he has served as a staff attorney for Florida Rural Legal Services, a non-profit organization assisting the underprivileged and indigent in the community. In addition to practicing tax law, he represents clients in U.S. Immigration Court and the Veterans Appeals Court.

## 1987

Kristin and **James McHugh P'24** are very proud that their son, Sean, will attend Xavier this fall as a member of the Class of 2024.

**Stephan Silich** published his second book of collected poems, *tonight will be the longest night of them all*, with Brooklyn Writers Press in July. His first book of collected poems, *the silence between what i think and what i say*, was published in December 2018, also with Brooklyn Writers Press. He welcomes classmates to connect with him on Instagram [@stephan\\_silich](https://www.instagram.com/stephan_silich).



**Chris Thompson** and his three brothers, **Michael Thompson '79, Stephen Thompson '84, and Kenneth Thompson '85**, are sad to announce that their father, **Matthew Thompson P'79 '84 '85 '87**, died on May 2 from complications related to COVID-19.

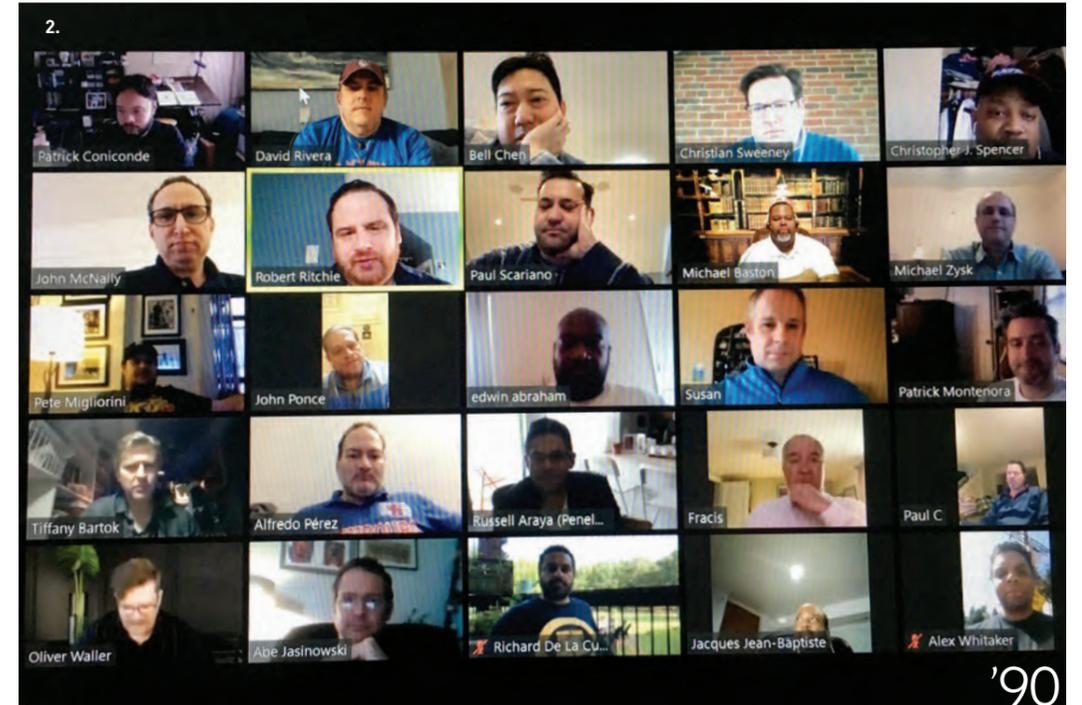
## 1989

📷 **Chris Spataro** won the Elkhart County, Indiana Republican primary for Judge of Elkhart Superior Court No. 5. He is currently slated to run unopposed in the November general election and expects to take the bench on January 1, 2021.

## 1990

**Alfredo Perez** lives in Madrid, Spain, where he serves as COO of a logistics startup. He welcomes Xavier graduates in the area to contact him at [perezperdez@gmail.com](mailto:perezperdez@gmail.com).

📷 After COVID-19 postponed their 30th reunion, 26 members of the Class of 1990 gathered virtually via Zoom on April 20. "Some guys hadn't seen each other



since graduation," **David Rivera** writes.

## 1991

**Derick Spaulding** recently became CEO of the AECI Charter Network in the Bronx. "After years of being a teacher, principal, and leadership developer, I realized that my educational foundation was unconsciously built through my experiences as a Xavier student," he writes. "I have a newfound respect for the groundwork Xavier instilled in me as a scholar and a person and now wish to renew my connection to this fantastic institution of learning and influence on my life. Thank you!"

**Michael Zayas** recently launched a new website, [thebestofeverythingnewyork.com](http://thebestofeverythingnewyork.com), that promotes things to do in New York. "The focus is on the people who power the unique experiences here," he writes. Xavier alumni who would like to be featured are welcome to email him at [bklynmaz@gmail.com](mailto:bklynmaz@gmail.com).

## 1993

In July, **CAPT Christian Lee, USCG (Ret.)** retired from the U.S. Coast Guard after 23 years of service. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, his retirement ceremony was streamed live via Zoom.

## 1994

In April 2020, **John Georges** began his role as the Director of Dedman College Records and Academic Services at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas. He also works as a part-time education consultant at Collin College in Frisco, Texas. This fall, he will begin doctoral studies in higher education administration at the University of South Mississippi in conjunction with the University of North Texas.

## 1996

**Alexander Anastasiades P'24** recently entered his 17th year as a police officer. He and his wife have three children. The oldest, Alexander Jr., will attend Xavier this fall. "Good luck to all the incoming freshmen," Anastasiades

1. Chris Spataro '89.

2. Members of the Class of 1990 celebrated their 30th reunion virtually.



1. AJ and Giovanni, the sons of Joe Valentino '98, in Ridgefield, Connecticut.

2. John Khinda '00.

3. Steve Elman '05 with his daughter.

4. Eric Saa '05 and his wife, Sarah, in northwest China.

writes. "May they become men for others."

## 1998

📷 **Joe Valentino**, his wife Marie, and two sons, AJ (age 9) and Giovanni (age 2), moved to Ridgefield, Connecticut, in August 2019. They are "so blessed and thankful," Valentino writes. "Go Knights!"

## 1999

**Anthony Read** is in his 11th year with the U.S. Department of State, where he works as a foreign service officer. He recently completed a two-year assignment in China and began a four-year assignment in Japan.

## 2000

📷 Actor **John Khinda** recently created a YouTube channel, [youtube.com/johnkhinda](https://www.youtube.com/johnkhinda), which at the time of this writing had 700 subscribers and counting. In 2019, he appeared in the film *Oh,*

*What a Day...*, co-starred in an ad for Yalber Investments, delivered standout performances in *Vampire's Heartbreak* and *Stakes*, played a major role in his first virtual reality series *VR-Y funny*, had one of the main speaking roles in an ensemble commercial for Arthur Cantina, and ended the year starring in *The Fog*. Earlier this year, he began work on a commercial for Jinro Soju before production had to be halted due to COVID-19. Season one of *Clown Town*, in which he played a supporting role, can now be seen on Amazon Prime. Khinda welcomes classmates to follow him on all social media platforms @JohnKhinda.

## 2002

**Francis Valenzona** was recently promoted to data systems manager within the nursing administration at Englewood Health in Englewood, New Jersey.

## 2003

**Segun Akande** has been cast in an upcoming pilot for ABC. Principal photography was set for mid-March in Puerto Rico but has been postponed until production resumes with no definitive date yet. The one-hour drama is helmed by director Marc Webb.

**Kevin Pohlman**, assistant director of the Center for Disaster Medicine and assistant professor of public health at New York Medical College, has been selected as one of this year's 40 Under 40 by the Business Council of Westchester.

## 2004

**Dr. Jonathan DePierro** was recently appointed clinical director of Mount Sinai's Center for Stress, Resilience and Personal Growth, which provides supportive services to health care workers in the hospital system affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

## 2005

📷 **Steve Elman** just completed his fourth year at the Marine Corps Intelligence School in Virginia Beach, Virginia, where he works as the Deputy Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance Subject Matter Expert (SME). He is in his third year of service with the Virginia Army National Guard, where he serves as a Senior Field Artillery Firefinder Radar Operator. He is also one semester away from completing secondary double bachelor's degrees in cybercrime and cybersecurity from Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia. On June 1, Elman celebrated his daughter's fourth birthday.

**CAPT Stefan Fagan-Kelly, USAF** is currently stationed in Montgomery, Alabama, at Maxwell Air Force Base, where he serves as Officer-in-Charge, Program Assessments, in the Education Support Squadron (ESS) as part of the Air War College. The ESS supports all Officer Professional Military Education Schools in the Air University. Along with his wife, Sarah, and children, Jude, Fiona, and Naomi, he will move to Fort Belvoir, Virginia, this fall to serve at the Defense Threat Reduction



Agency. "I will return to my core Air Force career field of nuclear engineering/physics and counter-WMD in a joint environment," he writes.

**Greg McGovern** recently became executive director of The Pressure Players, a theatrical production company in New York City.

📷 **Eric Saa** and his wife, Sarah, moved to Suzhou, China in November 2018. They are both English teachers. In December 2019, they took a one-month trip across China, visiting 10 cities along the way.

## 2007

📷 **CPT Michael R. Nilsen, USA** recently returned from Afghanistan, where he served as captain of the headquarters company for the 82nd Airborne, 3rd Brigade Combat Team. He deployed in June 2019 and worked directly for the general and colonel in charge. His wife, Christina, delivered their first child, Faith Marie, in February; Nilsen "attended" the delivery via FaceTime from Bagram Airbase. Among the well-wishers at his homecoming ceremony were SFC Townsend Williams, USA and his wife, Amy, who attended the 2020 State of the Union Address after Nilsen helped orchestrate their participation.

## 2008

**Rev. Nicholas M. Colalella** graduated from The Catholic University of America with a master's degree in Semitic Languages, specializing in Hebrew and Aramaic, this spring. He is the parochial vicar of St. Luke Parish in Whitestone, Queens. In addition, he teaches part-time as an adjunct faculty member at St. Joseph's Seminary, Dunwoodie. He celebrated his fifth anniversary as a priest on June 27.

## 2009

**Thomas Nugent** graduated from Fordham University School of Law in May.

## 2010

**Jesse Fuller** has worked as a special education social studies high school teacher with the New York City Department of Education for three years. He and his fiancé, Danisha, recently purchased an apartment in Sunset Park, Brooklyn, and plan to start a family within the year.

## 2011

**CPT Thomas O'Keefe, USA** deployed to the Middle East in March 2020 to support Operation Inherent Resolve. He is scheduled to return to the States this fall.



## 2013

**Braham Berg** recently launched an advisory-consultancy group, o-DADA, where he works with real estate developers, investors, and faith-based institutions around mission-driven projects. He joined the Xavier Facilities Committee late last year.

## 2014

**Felipe Deihle** recently graduated from Kansas State University with a bachelor's degree in psychology and a minor in kinesiology. He plans to volunteer in a laboratory at the Universidad de Chile investigating visual pathways in schizophrenia. He is also applying to neuroscience internships at the National Institutes of Health.

**James Lavelle** recently earned his master's degree in history from SUNY Binghamton. He was approved to continue his studies in the history Ph.D. program and will begin working on his dissertation on revolutionary pedagogy during the French Revolution in August.

## 2019

📷 In February, **Will Rugai** earned the top prize at the 2020 ROUGH CUT Student Film Festival hosted by the Lycée Francais de New York. His short film, *Camden U*, also won the top prize at the 2019 Xavier Student Film Festival.

1. CPT Michael R. Nilsen, USA '07, second from left, with Amy Williams, SFC Townsend Williams, USA, and Nilsen's mother, Dr. Diana Nilsen P'07.

2. Michael Chiafulio P'23, Julian Navarro '19, and Will Rugai '19.

# Milestones



Jesse Fuller '10 and Danisha Espinal



Abigail Gotter-Nugent and Thomas Nugent '09



Eugenio Cristiano Scalerchio



Jack and James Shea

## ENGAGEMENTS

📷 **Jesse Fuller '10** is engaged to Danisha Espinal. Their original April wedding date was delayed due to COVID-19.

## WEDDINGS

📷 **Thomas Nugent '09** married Abigail Gotter-Nugent in Rye, New York, on February 8.

**Billy Malewich '12** married Kate Jones in Greenville, South Carolina, on January 25.

## BIRTHS

**Thomas Bonomo '53** and his wife, Lorrie, recently welcomed their first two great-grandchildren, Ezekiel John O'Brien and Charles Thomas Hook.

📷 **Bob McMahon '64** and his wife, Lynn, welcomed their sixth grandchild and fourth granddaughter, Sloane Jagger Pradas, on March 24.

**Michael Tighe '71** welcomed his fourth grandchild, a girl named Emerie, on May 18.

**Daniel Santos '92** welcomed his second son, Owen Daniel Santos, on February 12.

📷 **Christian Delgado-Scalerchio '96** and his wife, Nina, welcomed their first child, a son named Eugenio Cristiano Scalerchio, on March 28.

📷 **John Shea '97** and his wife, Bridget, welcomed their second son, James O'Meara Shea, on April 16. James joins his big brother, Jack.



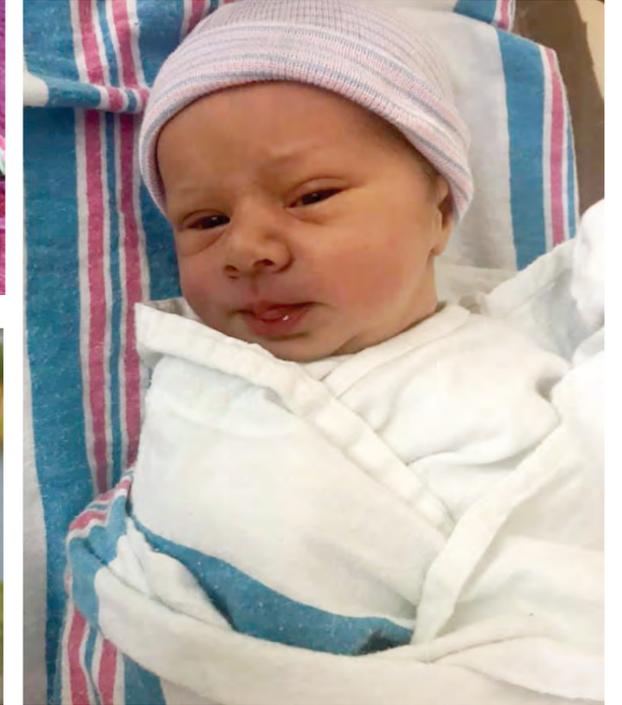
Naomi Katherine Fagan-Kelly



Jude Avery Colin Fagan-Kelly



Fiona Ann Fagan-Kelly



Henry Xavier Roche



Reid Sessa '06 and family



Dr. Stephen Haller '05 and family



CPT Michael R. Nilsen, USA '07 and family

📷📷📷 **CAPT Stefan Fagan-Kelly, USAF '05** and his wife, Sarah, welcomed their third child, Naomi Katherine, on June 21. Naomi joins her older siblings Fiona Ann, 18 months, and Jude Avery Colin, 6.

📷 **Dr. Stephen Haller '05** and his wife, Elyse, welcomed their second daughter, Kathryn Rose, on April 14. Kathryn joins her older sister, Abigail.

📷 **Reid Sessa '06**, his wife Caitlin, and son William welcomed Colin Francis in June 2019.

📷 **CPT Michael R. Nilsen, USA '07** and his wife, Christina, welcomed their first child, Faith Marie, on February 2.

📷 **Brendan Roche '08** and his wife, Mary, welcomed their first child, Henry Xavier Roche, on May 28.



## In Memoriam

### Alumni

**John F. Walsh '39**, 3/16/20  
**Mario L. Mazzeo '41**, 3/21/20  
**Robert Vilece '43**, 7/4/05  
**Hon. William Boyan '45**, son of William Boyan 1905† and brother of Gerard Boyan '48†, 5/5/20  
**Thomas Ryan '46**, 2/24/20  
**Albert Melzl '47**, 2/5/20  
**John A. Wolfteich '48**, 10/17/19  
**Paul Becker '49**, 1/17/20  
**Gaspar "Chip" Cipolla '49**, 5/27/20  
**Charles Walsh, Jr. '49**, 1/8/20  
**Joseph R. Brostek '50**, 3/25/20  
**Joseph Grabler, Esq. '50**, 4/14/20  
**John Lannig '51**, 4/18/20  
**Edward Hawkins '52**, 7/4/20  
**John P. Young '52**, 4/6/20  
**John Handscomb '54**, 6/27/20  
**Roger Hogan '54**, 10/19  
**Leonard Schneider, Jr. '54**, 5/14/20  
**Stephen Carney '56**, 12/14/19  
**John Kane '56**, 2/2/20  
**Thomas King '57**, 6/9/20  
**Robert Curtis '58**, 5/17/20  
**Robert Finnegan, Jr. '58**, 12/23/19  
**Lawrence Gubas '59**, 2/9/20  
**Richard Mingoia '59**, 4/16/19  
**Joseph Mazziotta '60**, 12/13/19  
**Brian Kavanagh '64**, brother of James Kavanagh '62†, 5/6/20  
**Otto Heil '66**, 4/23/20  
**Michael Miskell '68**, 5/11/20  
**Jack Foley '69**, brother of Eugene Foley '71 and Bill Foley '72, 8/4/20  
**Robert Vogel III '69**, 3/4/20  
**James Feeley '70**, 4/11/20  
**Ed Sepko '70**, 7/7/20  
**Fred Baca '71**, brother of Marcello Baca '67, 6/19/20  
**James E. Fish '71**, 9/6/19  
**Donald G. Lindsay '72**, 3/21/20  
**Richard Downes '73**, 6/4/20  
**James Visser '76**, brother of Edwin "Ned" Visser '71 and John Visser '74, 5/6/20  
**Joseph Ferreri '80**, 4/15/20  
**Fred Phelan, Jr. Esq. '81**, 4/12/20

### Parents

**Rose Iacovone P'62**, mother of Rocco Iacovone '62 and mother-in-law of fine arts chair Denise Iacovone, 5/27/20  
**Edith Denihan Tomlin P'65**, mother of Dan Denihan '65 and widow of Daniel J. Denihan '36 P'65†, 4/4/20  
**Beatrice Kenney P'75**, mother of James Kenney '75, 2/21/20  
**Louis Oliva P'75**, father of Jack Oliva '75, 10/19  
**Alice Bertolotti P'78**, mother of Fr. David Bertolotti '78, 2/26/20  
**Matthew Thompson P'79 '84 '85 '87**, father of Michael Thompson '79, Kenneth Thompson '84, Stephen Thompson '85, and Christopher Thompson '87, 5/2/20  
**Henry Lamour P'82**, father of Henry Lamour '82 and husband of Grace Lamour P'82†, 6/23/20  
**Joseph LaRoche P'83**, father of Joseph LaRoche '83, 1/6/20  
**Ann O'Farrell P'83 '89**, mother of John O'Farrell '83 and Andrew O'Farrell '89, aunt of Joseph Murphy '84 P'23, and great-aunt of Michael Murphy '23, 3/29/20  
**Thomas Moogan P'84**, father of Thomas Moogan '84†, 4/17/20  
**John Walter P'84**, father of Michael Walter '84, 5/10/20  
**Frank La Ferlita P'86 '92 '94**, father of Frank La Ferlita '86 P'16 '18, Joseph La Ferlita '92, and Michael La Ferlita '94 and grandfather of Dominic La Ferlita '16 and Frank La Ferlita '18, 7/31/20  
**Arcangel Rodriguez P'86**, father of Luis Rivera, Jr. '86, 11/27/19  
**Stanley Orlovski P'88**, father of Richard Orlovski '88 and grandfather of Peter Orlovski '18 and John Orlovski '22, 6/6/20  
**Richard Teahan P'91**, father of Jay Teahan '91, 4/20/20  
**Elizabeth Ahern P'92 '96**, mother of Robert Ahern '92 and Christopher Ahern '96, 2/27/20  
**Teresa Turbides P'95**, mother of Geraldo Turbides '95, 4/26/20  
**Andrzej Jaworski P'05**, father of Bartosz Jaworski '05, 6/10/20  
**Rodrigue E. Laquinte P'06**, father of Rudy Laquinte '06, 5/7/20  
**Erica Swammy P'15 '23**, mother of Daniel Swammy '15 and Philip Swammy '23, 6/1/20  
**Teresa Long P'10 '15 '20**, mother of Stephen Long '10, Eric Long '15, and Aidan Long '20 and sister-in-law of English teacher Margaret Gonzalez, 5/4/20  
**Nino Brusco P'23**, father of Brian Brusco '23, 6/14/20

### Spouses

**Faith Corcoran**, widow of Peter Corcoran '46†, 7/10/20  
**Mary Grace Dirks**, wife of Eugene Dirks '97, 4/23/20  
**Dorothy Gibson**, wife of George Gibson '54, 4/26/20  
**Karen Sorlie**, wife of John Sorlie '70, 11/15/18

### Children

**Cathy Schlapman**, daughter of COL Mark A. Delaney, USAF (Ret.) '53, 5/21/20

### Faculty/Family

**Adolphus Childs**, father-in-law of Zane Massey '96 P'22 and grandfather of Zane Massey '22, 4/9/20  
**Eugene DeRose**, father-in-law of math teacher Cindy DeRose, 5/29/20  
**Rev. Joseph A. O'Hare, S.J.**, former Xavier trustee and former president of Fordham University, 3/29/20  
**Rev. Thomas Sheridan, S.J.**, Xavier faculty member from 1951-1954, 2/13/20  
**Vicente Vargas**, father of Spanish and film teacher Vicente Vargas, 3/26/20

# Before I Knew

By Hans Augustave '01

This was before I knew about the world

Before I realized that Band-Aids were meant to be skin-toned

Before I learned that “Flesh” in the Crayola box was a reference to a normalcy and not an actual color

Before I found out that tall, dark, and handsome didn’t apply to me

This was before my first job as a busboy  
Where the local chief of police would eat for free with his buddies  
And yell out: “Watch your wallets” when I walked over to clean their table

This was before my trip to Ivory Coast  
When, after 17 years of life on Earth  
My shoulders relaxed  
And I felt at home not only in the world but finally in my skin

This was before I felt the need  
To make up for my imposing stature and hue  
By developing an overly gentle and inviting persona

This was before I was referred to as “White”  
Because being Black meant baggy jeans and gang signs

This was before I was considered  
“One of the good ones”  
Because of my education and politeness

This was before Sabrina’s parents told her in Spanish  
She’d be ruining their race by having children with me  
...not realizing I understood every word

This was before my Mother would yell at me  
For living only a second as carefree as my White friends did

This was before anyone had ever called me a “nigger”

This was before George Floyd. Tony McDade. Breonna Taylor. Ahmaud Arbery.  
Botham Jean. Philando Castile. Sandra Bland. Trayvon Martin. Eric Garner.  
Alton Sterling. Tamir Rice. Mike Brown. Samuel DuBose. Amadou Diallo. Sean Bell.  
Abner Louima. Ousmane Zongo. Timothy Stansbury. Ramarley Graham.  
Tony Robinson and Freddie Gray  
...just to name a few

This was before that moment of clarity  
When I realized I was seen as less than Human

This was before I hated myself  
For something I was born to be  
Something I didn’t ask to be  
But now wear with pride

This was the last time I felt like I belonged  
...and I have no memory of the picture being taken

This was before I knew I was Black.



Hans Augustave '01 is a writer, filmmaker, DJ, and the founder of Reprieve, a popular sober dance party in Brooklyn. He is the co-producer of an upcoming documentary, *The Forgotten Occupation*, about the U.S. occupation of Haiti from 1915-34.

After the 2014 death of Eric Garner, Augustave found a childhood photo of himself (shown above) and became inspired to write *Before I Knew*, which he shared on Facebook at the time.

Earlier this year, after the deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd, he updated the poem and filmed a visual version that garnered emotional, poignant reviews.

“A lot of times, when I am moved enough, whether it’s by anger or emotion, my instinct is to write it down as poetry,” said Augustave. “I’m not good at being angry for very long. I need a way to let that emotion out, and for me it’s through art.”

To view Augustave’s visual poem, visit [vimeo.com/HansAugustave/BeforeIKnew](https://vimeo.com/HansAugustave/BeforeIKnew).



From National Archives-Identifier 45499301

# 1918

From the National Archives

In this photo dated October 16, 1918, a New York City traffic cop wears a gauze mask to protect himself and others from the influenza pandemic. Commonly known as the Spanish flu despite lacking origins in Spain, the virus killed tens of millions of people worldwide, including an estimated 675,000 Americans—195,000 that October alone. The following month, the end of World War I spurred an influenza resurgence as war-weary Americans publicly celebrated Armistice Day.

