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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Xavier University of Louisiana Celebrates Founders' Day with a ceremony and conversation with Former U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder

New Orleans, La. -- In commemoration of St. Katharine's and the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament's vision of a sacred place of learning rooted in faith and scholarship, Xavier is hosting its annual Founders' Day Convocation Ceremony on Tuesday, October 4, in the University's Convocation Center at 12:15 p.m. In addition to celebrating Xavier's founding and the class of 2023, the ceremony will also recognize the accomplishments and milestones of Xavier's faculty and staff.

"Founders' Day is a celebration and recognition of the great achievement of St. Katharine Drexel and the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, which is Xavier. We recognize the struggle to establish an institution bringing quality education where it is needed, especially to the descendants of the enslaved," said **Dr. Reynold Verret, President of Xavier University of Louisiana**. "The Founders' Day Convocation recognizes the hard work of our faculty and staff who are dedicated to educating our students. It is a time when we come together collectively and reflect on the vision that we have built the legacy of Xavier upon- to create a more just and humane society by teaching the leaders of the next generation."

Eric H. Holder Jr., J.D., the first African American to hold the position of United States attorney general, is the University's special guest who will be participating in a "Convocation Conversation" about his book "Our Unfinished March" with President Verret. Holder served as the 82nd attorney general of the United States from February 2009 until April 2015, making him the third longest-serving attorney general in the nation's history. Time magazine named Holder to its list of 100 Most Influential People in 2014, noting that he had "worked tirelessly to ensure equal justice." Holder has served in government for over thirty years, having been appointed to various positions requiring U.S. Senate confirmation by Presidents Obama, Clinton and Reagan.

"Our Unfinished March" emphasizes the importance and power of the right to vote for Americans. Following the gutting, landmark *Shelby County v. Holder* case in 2013, many states have passed laws restricting the vote. In 2021, 19 states enacted voting restrictions. These laws disproportionately affect people of color. Holder will speak with President Verret about his vision for reversing the tide of voter suppression and make America "... a true democracy where every voice is heard and every vote is counted."

Just as St. Katharine and the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament fought all those decades ago to ensure the historically marginalized Black population had access to higher education, Holder embodies their vision by fighting for all citizens to overcome barriers to their right to vote. Holder, who received an honorary degree from Xavier University of Louisiana in 2015, is a great example of the legacy all Xavierites honor with their actions in pursuit of a more just and humane society.

“We are excited to be able to celebrate this year’s Founder’s Day in person and to welcome former United States Attorney General Eric Holder, Jr.,” said **Curtis Wright, Xavier University of Louisiana’s Vice President of Student Affairs**. “It is important to recognize the nurture and care that our faculty and staff gift to our Xavierites to help them grow and develop to succeed in their future endeavors. We also recognize that without the efforts of our foundress’, we would not be able to execute the vision of a better and more just society for all.”

Xavier’s foundress Katharine Drexel was born in 1858 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to an extraordinarily wealthy and devout catholic family. Ahead of her time, St. Katharine believed that all deserved an education as a means of empowerment and self-determination, especially those who were excluded from opportunities and made voiceless due to the sin of racism. Born into great privilege, she chose to lead by example and use her vast familial wealth to build schools throughout the United States for African Americans and Native Americans. To support her vision of a more just and humane society, she also founded the religious congregation that is the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament.

In 1915, Saint Katharine Drexel, then Mother Katharine, conducted a series of secret business negotiations to buy the former Southern University campus in New Orleans. White homeowners had petitioned previously for the “relocation” of the Historically Black Southern University the year before. Still, the beliefs of St. Katharine and the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament that all deserved a quality education, no matter their race, persevered as they fought racist ideals to establish a new Black university on the site. By no means an easy task, in 1925, Xavier University of Louisiana’s College of Arts and Sciences was established, marking it as the first and only Black and Catholic university in the United States.

“I’m thrilled to join Xavier’s students, faculty, and staff for this year’s Founder’s Day Convocation Ceremony,” said **former U.S. Attorney General, Eric Holder**. “The story of the University’s founding is at once a sobering reminder of our country’s shameful racist past, and a remarkable expression of the progress that is possible when we persevere to create a society that works for all. I am enormously inspired by the bravery of Xavier’s founders, the dedication of its leaders to student success, and the intellectual vibrancy of a campus community striving together to shape a better future in New Orleans and beyond.”

Holder, an internationally recognized leader across a broad range of regulatory enforcement, criminal justice and national security issues, was a partner at Covington & Burling LLP from 2001 to 2009 and rejoined the firm after he served as attorney general. Before his tenure as attorney general, Holder maintained a wide-ranging investigation and litigation practice at Covington. He graduated from Columbia University, earning his undergraduate and law degrees at the institution.

Livestream the event [here](#).

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About Xavier University of Louisiana

Xavier University of Louisiana, America's only historically Black and Catholic University, is ranked among the top three HBCUs (historically Black colleges and universities) in the nation. Recognized as a national leader in STEM and health sciences, Xavier produces more African American students who graduate from medical schools each year than any other university in the United States. Additionally, Xavier's College of Pharmacy is also among the top producers of African American pharmacists in the country.

Established in 1925, by Saint Katharine Drexel and the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament as a place for African American and Native Americans to receive quality education, Xavier has since expanded its programs in art, business, education, biological sciences, chemistry, pharmacy and political science. More recent additions in robotics, bioinformatics, engineering, data science, neuroscience and genetics, in addition to new STEM-based master's programs, have provided Xavier students (2815 undergraduates and 787 graduates) an unbeatable combination of traditional classroom study, hands-on research, service-learning opportunities and life experiences. Xavier students collaborate with world-renowned faculty, who are experts in their fields, to produce award-winning research and notable work. The winning Xavier formula is to provide students with a well-balanced curriculum and an environment that nurtures their intellect and feeds their souls, thereby facilitating a more just and humane society for all. For more information about Xavier University of Louisiana, visit us online at www.xula.edu or contact Regi Reyes at (504) 520-5240 or rreyes@xula.edu.



SAVE *the* DATE
OCTOBER 4, 2022

XAVIER UNIVERSITY OF LA
Founders' Day
CONVOCAATION

12:15 p.m. • McCaffrey Ballroom
University Center • 3rd floor

*This event will also be livestreamed via the
University's YouTube channel.*



Speaker:
ERIC H. HOLDER, JR.
Former United States Attorney General
Partner, Covington & Burling LLP
Author, "Our Unfinished March"