



# HOLY CROSS AND CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

**BY REV. JAMES B. KING, C.S.C.**



Photo: Carolyn Pirtle;  
Ave Crux, Spes Unica  
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Basilica of the Sacred  
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Dear Friends,

This booklet is an attempt to distill the essential elements that typically characterize Holy Cross' educational ministries across the globe, including at the University of Notre Dame. As noted in the text, while the concept of the "Notre Dame Family" has seeped deeply into the fabric of the University, the bonds that students, faculty, staff, and alumni experience here are ultimately the product of Blessed Basil Moreau's original vision for Holy Cross education. That familial atmosphere first manifested itself at Notre Dame de Sainte-Croix, the first school Moreau founded in 1838 in LeMans, France, and though sometimes difficult to define, it is easily perceived wherever one encounters the community in the world today.

Virtually all religious orders have at some point needed to "rediscover" their founders, and in the last several decades, the legacy and writings of Moreau have been mined ever more effectively to reveal his practical pastoral genius and far-sighted educational philosophy. To some extent, Moreau's influence has not been sufficiently appreciated because he left behind no lengthy, systematic treatment of his thoughts on Catholic education. Nevertheless, the charism he entrusted to the Congregation continues to strongly influence its own members and make the educational ministries where it serves distinctive.

We are deeply indebted to a number of people, both members of the Congregation and lay co-workers, who have reviewed and commented upon the text. We also hope these pages help others to better appreciate the legacy of Holy Cross' founder and enrich their understanding of how our ministry is inevitably shaped by it at Our Lady's University.

Yours in Notre Dame,

Rev. James B. King, C.S.C., Director of Campus Ministry

July 13, 2013, Anniversary of the Cause of Blessed Basil Moreau

# INTRODUCTION

Blessed Basil Anthony Moreau, the founder of the Congregation of Holy Cross, was born in Laigné-en-Belin, a small village about nine miles southeast of Le Mans, France on February 11, 1799, nine months before Napoleon Bonaparte took power and put an end to the French Revolution. The revolution began when King Louis XVI was forced to abdicate in 1789 amid popular discontent with a bloated and ineffective regime. Nobles gorged themselves at the public trough, oblivious to the growing wealth gap between rich and poor, and commoners grew increasingly restless as their taxes were raised to support royals' lavish lifestyles. At the same time, historical notions that kings' authority came from God and their personages were inherently divine in nature had been undermined by Enlightenment ideas that promoted individual rights, self-government, and skepticism about religion.

While many priests were themselves impoverished, the Catholic Church collectively owned a tenth of France's land and enjoyed a host of legal and financial privileges accumulated over centuries, including freedom from taxation. Some clergy, especially among the lower ranks, initially supported the Revolution, hoping it would redress legitimate grievances, but the anti-clerical extremists who soon gained control went on the attack against the Church. Within a decade most of its property was confiscated, monasteries and convents closed, religious orders outlawed, and clergy required to take an oath of allegiance to the state. After assuming power at the end of the century, Napoleon permitted the Church to be reconstituted, though under more restrictive norms than had existed previously.

Many Catholics during that decade, particularly in rural areas, remained loyal to underground clergy who refused to take the oath. Small networks of peasants risked their own lives to shield and hide priests on farms and in forests where they lived under threat of arrest, deportation, beatings, and even the guillotine. They would gather together, sometimes in barns or cellars with friends standing watch, to celebrate the Eucharist and other sacraments clandestinely with clergy who surfaced at irregular intervals. With France's government wracked by chronic instability and its people's loyalties divided, the degree of religious persecution varied over time and region depending upon the sympathies of local authorities and whims of their superiors in Paris.

Basil was the ninth of fourteen children born to Louise and Louis Moreau, owners of a small wine shop. They were simple folk and pious Catholics, both likely illiterate. They ensured that their son was baptized by a priest who had refused to take the oath. The French educational system, administered almost wholly by the Church prior to the Revolution, including 321 schools in the Diocese of LeMans alone, had been virtually destroyed by the time Napoleon took power. While persecution against the Church generally abated as Moreau was growing up, resentments still simmered below the surface and occasionally spiked.

When he was ordained a priest a full generation later in 1821, his homeland and the Church were slowly recovering. Religious schools began to open again along with new secular ones, but his was virtually a lost generation. Young people of his age were left mostly uneducated and largely uncatechized. French civil servants well into the 19th century tended to be anti-clerical and used a variety of quasi-legal and bureaucratic means to impede the Church's educational ministry. Instead of permanently settling the relationship between Church and state, the Napoleonic reforms continued to provoke difficulties for decades afterward, especially for Catholic religious orders still prohibited from directly owning land or property.

Moreau spent his childhood years watching the Church struggle to regain its footing and sustain itself against lingering discrimination that ranged from selective and subtle to nakedly overt. Those childhood memories left an indelible imprint upon him. He came to see his major purposes as a priest and educator: first, to re-evangelize adult Catholics so they understood the basic principles of their faith and, even more importantly, to provide the young with a first-rate

liberal arts education that would enable them to surmount anti-religious prejudice and so slowly transform civil society in the decades ahead.

As Moreau grew into his teens both very bright and exceedingly pious, his pastor keenly perceived within him a potential vocation to the priesthood. He quickly grasped complex subjects, whatever may have been lacking in his own early education, eventually becoming an excellent student in philosophy and theology. Yet as Moreau navigated his way through seminary studies, he increasingly saw possibilities beyond the needs and circumstances of his native region and petitioned his bishop to send him to a seminary for foreign missionaries. At this early age, he merely wanted to be sent, like the first apostles, to spread faith in Jesus Christ and his good news wherever he might be most useful. However, his superiors had already slated him for advanced studies and training as a seminary professor. Moreau dedicated himself to serving obediently in this role and became a popular instructor, respected not only for the clarity of his lectures but also for his personal piety and pastoral energy. He quickly developed a reputation throughout the diocese of LeMans as an excellent preacher, frequently called upon to assist at parishes and give retreats. Sixteen years after he was ordained a priest, Moreau became the founder of Holy Cross, whose members he sent out across France and as missionaries around the world.

The Congregation was provisionally formed through an “Act of Union” on March 1, 1837, essentially an informal agreement that sparked varying degrees of enthusiasm—and skepticism—among the signers. Holy Cross only gradually evolved into a full-fledged religious community in which everyone took the same vows. By this pact, Moreau succeeded in combining into a single association a small number of auxiliary priests he had founded two years earlier from among the diocesan ranks to preach parish missions and instruct youth with the Brothers of St. Joseph, a loose confederation of teaching brothers founded by Rev. Jacques Dujarié in 1820. Dujarié had nearly become a martyr during the height of the Revolution’s terror. He traveled in disguise to be ordained secretly in Paris, was protected by an underground network when a warrant was issued for his arrest, and spent several years moving stealthily from one rural hiding spot to another. But by the early 1830s, his health was failing, and the number of brothers had declined by almost half. He turned to Moreau for guidance and after several years demonstrated his trust in the younger man by relinquishing control of the brothers to him. Dujarié gave his blessing to Moreau’s proposal to merge the two associations into one and died a year later in 1838. One biographer states that as Moreau himself matured, “there burned within him an ardor which was ceaselessly aflame along with a compelling necessity to undertake and to resurrect projects lying on the verge of ruin and to bring into existence others which were destined to live.” (Catta, *Basil Anthony Mary Moreau*, Vol. 1, 142) The Association of Holy Cross, as it was originally named, was the ultimate manifestation of both tendencies.

He purchased land from a friend and located the entire enterprise in an area known as Sainte-Croix, which then lay on the outskirts of LeMans. It is rare for a religious community to be named after a neighborhood, and Moreau would have certainly chosen otherwise had it not been so entirely appropriate for his association to be closely identified with the cross of Jesus. Notre Dame de Sainte-Croix, the Congregation's first school, was established there in 1838. A few years later, in 1841, Moreau founded a community of religious women named the Marianites, one of three sisters' congregations that would eventually bear the name of Holy Cross. He might have become a prominent theologian had he focused upon developing his scholarship. Instead, he spent many years as a student and professor formulating a rich spirituality based upon imitating the person of Jesus that he ended up applying practically in the communities and ministries he established. As his vision of religious life evolved, it is no surprise that he dedicated each branch to a particular person in the Holy Family, whose virtues were to be imitated: the brothers to St. Joseph, the priests to Christ, and the sisters to Mary. Nevertheless, the ultimate purpose of his religious family was rooted in a commitment to evangelization and education, whether that meant leading former parishioners back to the Church in France or bringing them to the faith for the first time in foreign lands.

In 1857, Moreau published a short work entitled *Christian Education* that focuses upon the essential qualities of teachers and provides practical advice about how they should manage their classes and relationships with students. Although it may not be given the treatment Moreau may have originally envisioned, over the last several decades it has increasingly become a seminal source for understanding the educational charism that he bequeathed to Holy Cross, rendering a distinctive character to its educational ministries, which have grown to include more advanced and complex institutions of higher learning. The first sentence of Moreau's small booklet states, "[Education] is the art of helping young people to completeness. For the Christian, this means that education is helping a young person to be more like Christ, the model for all Christians." Moreau believed that life was essentially a personal, daily struggle for union with God, in which the Christian modeled himself after the Son's example of fidelity. While none of us can be so perfect, the aim for the Christian was twofold: to reach one's fullest potential in this world while remaining focused upon the ultimate goal of fullness in the life to come. Moreau's experience as a theology professor taught him how to succeed in the classroom, but upon establishing Sainte-Croix he wanted it to be an institution where people also strove to imitate the ideal of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph and would be a sign of the true communion possible with God. As the years have unfolded and Holy Cross has delved deeper into the writings of its founder, a pedagogy emerges that accurately reflects the process by which a child gradually evolves into an adult.

It is a vision that takes young people from their earliest days of grappling with ideas and making sense of the world around them to preparing them for lifelong discipleship in a supportive environment that nourishes their gifts and fuels their desire for God. The five principles described here capture the recurring themes in Moreau's writings that continue to shape the lives of students in Holy Cross educational institutions today, whether they are located in India or Indiana:

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## MIND

*Seeking understanding through the integration of faith and reason*



## FAMILY

*Embracing Christian community as the context for lifelong formation*



## HEART

*Discerning our personal vocation in service to the Church and world*



## HOPE

*Trusting in the cross and God's promise of the kingdom*



## ZEAL

*Enkindling the desire to use our gifts to boldly proclaim God's Word*

**Dove designed by Bruno Gätjens González from The Noun Project**

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## MIND

“Even though we base our philosophy course on the data of faith, no one need fear that we shall confine our teaching within narrow and unscientific boundaries. No, we wish to accept science without prejudice and in a manner adapted to the needs of our times. We do not want our students to be ignorant of anything they should know. To this end, we shall shrink from no sacrifice.”

*(Circular Letters of Father Basil Moreau, 36)*

A Holy Cross education begins with a rigorous and full development of the mind. Moreau himself was a committed student who took his studies seriously and engaged energetically in intellectual controversies and debates. While a student and young priest, he was disciplined in his studies and motivated to do extra reading and linguistic studies in addition to assigned course work. He took the initiative to correspond with leading intellectuals, seeking both insights and opportunities for dialogue with them.

Moreau perceived early on that it was detrimental to both the Church and society if Catholics were to disengage from the scholarly questions and controversies of the age. He was a contemporary of John Henry Cardinal Newman and may have been familiar with his writings. Moreau would certainly have appreciated the cardinal’s observation that “Nature pursues its course, now coincident with that

of grace, now parallel to it, now across, now divergent, now counter, in proportion to its own imperfection and to the attraction and influence which grace exerts over it” (Newman, *The Idea of a University*, 71). Both Moreau and Newman fully believed that grace and nature are complementary sources of God’s revelation and integral to human understanding. However, as the Industrial and Scientific Revolutions advanced, they recognized that the tension between the dogmas and interests of the Church and society were increasingly straining the traditional understanding that ultimate truth emanates from the Creator. While neither of their beliefs was shaken by new discoveries like the scientific theory of natural selection that caused others to doubt the very existence of God, they each recognized the danger of the trend since the onset of the Enlightenment to compartmentalize theology and rely solely upon human knowledge.

Consequently, Moreau, like Newman, intensified his efforts to promote the kind of Christian education that would more authentically and convincingly assert the Church's conviction that true knowledge and understanding inevitably rested upon the integration of reason with faith. Moreau was known for quoting Bacon and Cicero alongside Aquinas and other theologians, and he added the first science course—a class in physics—to the seminary curriculum in LeMans in 1835. More than a decade before Charles Darwin published *On the Origin of Species*, Moreau welcomed the positive contributions of scientific learning to an extent that would still be provoking controversy within some quarters of the Church decades later, and nearly seventy years before the outbreak of World War I, Moreau foresaw that the tumults periodically rocking post-revolutionary France were but a prelude of worse things to come. “It is not hard to foresee an imminent and radical change in the destinies of all Europe, and even of the entire human race” (*CL*, 33). This need to prepare young people with the capacity to understand and deal with the societal conflicts that simmered below the surface of post-Enlightenment European culture and would eventually lead to World War I was integral to Moreau's vision of Christian education.

As he fought for Holy Cross schools to gain acceptance and credibility, Moreau realized the students who graduated from them would need to be theologically articulate, intellectually proficient, highly skilled scholars and debaters who could hold their ground on others' turf. It was simply essential for the next generation of Christians, including teachers and religious, to be conversant with modern theories and philosophies, even those they opposed. In fact, Sainte-Croix quickly evolved into a premier school for both primary and high school-aged pupils. Less than a decade after its founding, independent state inspectors ranked it ahead of its primary secular competitor,

the Royal College of LeMans. This was despite local authorities' persistent attempts to deny Moreau permission to teach subjects that would permit it to be accredited on an equal footing. He had witnessed the same battle throughout his childhood—a struggle which continues to this day in the Church's attempts to refute a variety of ideologies fueled by secularism. In striving for academic excellence, a Holy Cross education seeks to develop students' intellectual capacities within the context of a broad curriculum. Today, when the prevailing trend in higher education is toward reducing core requirements, the Congregation's colleges and universities remain committed to providing a strong liberal arts foundation with philosophy and theology courses required for all students in order to equip them for wide, generous engagement with society and culture. That kind of intellectual formation also creates possibilities for more interdisciplinary study and integrative research, in contrast to a movement within many academic disciplines toward increasing specialization and fragmentation of knowledge.

From Moreau's first victory at Sainte-Croix to the present day, the Congregation's schools have been renowned for forming students academically according to the convictions he espoused. The University of Notre Dame is the premier Catholic research institution in the world. The University of Portland is one of the leading regional universities in the Western United States. Notre Dame College in Dhaka, Bangladesh, a country that is only 0.3 percent Christian, is widely accepted to be the country's best college, a place where Muslim government ministers readily send their children. Even though Holy Cross College in Agartala, India was only founded in 2009, it has already earned a reputation for academic excellence, with its underprivileged students achieving success rates on a par with above-average peers at other colleges. St. George's College (a K-12 school) in Santiago, Chile has for decades ranked among the

nation's elite, and Lakeview Secondary School in Jinja, Uganda achieved a similar ranking, like Sainte-Croix, within several years of its founding in 1993.

Any fears Moreau may have had about science trumping religion in the post-Enlightenment era may seem primitive today as branches of knowledge and technological progress have mushroomed. He would naturally be surprised and shocked by the atomic bomb, moon landing, and cloning. He would probably be delighted with email and iPhones since so many of his problems with distant missions resulted from long lag times between the arrival of handwritten letters carried by clipper ships to France and America. But the speed and complexity of 21st century life would have undoubtedly given him an even greater appreciation for the need to educate and prepare Christians to resist the temptation to put ultimate faith in the promises of science. He would be just as insistent that Christians place themselves in the midst of the debate about how to use the things we produce not only for material or personal gain but ethically and spiritually, for the advancement of all people.



# HEART

“We shall never forget that virtue, as Bacon puts it, is the spice which preserves science. We shall always place education side by side with instruction; the mind will not be cultivated at the expense of the heart. While we prepare useful citizens for society, we shall likewise do our utmost to prepare citizens for heaven.” (CL, 36)

Human beings can absorb a boundless amount of knowledge and information, but if Christians fail to see themselves first as people with a vocation to open their hearts to Christ, then they cannot expect to change society. As the current *Constitutions of the Congregation of Holy Cross* state, “For the kingdom to come in this world, disciples must have the competence to see and the courage to act” (2.15). Competence can be acquired externally in many different ways, but courage is instilled over time by cultivating one’s heart and constantly directing its purposes beyond one’s self. It is a process that requires spiritual and vocational formation from devoted teachers and other role models. In discovering the truth of who we are as human creatures with social obligations, born with an innate desire to love and be loved, we are freed and empowered to become something better, more like the person of Jesus. By cultivating the heart, we develop in virtue, and acquire the steadfastness to stand in the face of opposition and derision for the sake of our most deeply held beliefs, and hew to a higher standard of justice.

Holy Cross’ founder purposefully dedicated a year of his life to work on cultivating virtue within himself at a nearby monastery. He undoubtedly felt the influence of a wise spiritual advisor who counseled him, “Our first rule must be to disregard what only tickles the ears; it is hearts that we must win.” As he progressed from being a professor and administrator to the founder of a religious community, Moreau became certain in his conviction that a Holy Cross education should enlighten the heart as well as the mind.

The unfolding of a Christian’s baptismal identity over time depends upon discovering the deepest stirrings of one’s heart. Moreau preached a sermon in 1833 in which he said, “What must we do to become perfect? Follow Jesus Christ, that is to say, imitate him; that is the commitment we made in baptism ... following Jesus is the consequence of this sacrament of faith; it is the holy and irrevocable law of our vocation to Christianity, and we renew it by our religious promises.” It is possible to intellectually grasp and appreciate Jesus’ teachings,

but they will never become the basis for our actions unless we are compelled by a desire to live and teach from the heart.

Holy Cross colleges and universities today continue to place a particular emphasis on the cultivation of students' hearts through spiritual and vocational formation that builds on the initial grace of our initiation into the Church. This formation certainly centers upon the celebration of the sacraments—especially the Eucharist, which was Moreau's lifeblood—but it is not confined to chapels and campus ministries. It also takes place in service learning centers, classrooms, and residence halls. Fr. James Connerton, C.S.C., the founding president of King's College in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, put it quite succinctly when he said its goal was to teach its students “not only how to make a living, but how to live.” Moreau perceived the essential challenge that lay ahead for the Church as the sciences became divorced from their roots in theology, and he sought to shape young people in the conviction that their thirst for eternal life must guide their learning and behavior in this one. He had benefitted personally from educational opportunities that eluded all but a few among his peers. He had developed his intellect into a powerful means for communicating the gospel to disparate audiences from seminarians to poor country folk who could not sign their names, and he believed it was his mission to do the same according to each person's abilities. He was convinced that Holy Cross schools should produce graduates who would be more than mere participants but Christian leaders and citizens wherever they found themselves later on.

More than a century after Moreau's death, Pope John Paul II wrote that a Catholic university “enables [students] to acquire, or if they have already done so, to deepen a Christian way of life that is authentic. They

should realize the responsibility of their professional life, the enthusiasm of being the trained ‘leaders’ of tomorrow, of being witnesses to Christ in whatever place they may exercise the profession” (*Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, §23). A truly Catholic education today, as in Moreau's time, encourages students and faculty to see knowledge and truth as constituting a united and organic whole that is not merely an end in itself.

Moreau never turned on a computer or rode in an automobile, nor did he found a modern college or university. He would not live to see how his educational philosophy would need to be developed further for a much more complex world, and he did not attempt a more complete exposition about the essential harmony between faith and reason as did Cardinal Newman and later Pope John Paul II. However, he intuitively grasped that the empirical and theoretical knowledge acquired by brilliant minds could be applied for the benefit of the world only by citizens whose hearts incline toward God.

In *Christian Education*, Moreau wrote, “If at times you have a marked preference for certain people, it should be for the poorest, the most abandoned, the most ignorant, the least gifted by nature. If you surround them with the most assiduous attention, it is because their needs are greater and it is only justice to give more to those who have received less.” In 1844, six years after Sainte-Croix opened its doors and barely a decade after Frederic Ozanam had founded the Saint Vincent DePaul Society, Moreau encouraged his students to found one of its first local college chapters. A couple of years later when sections of LeMans were inundated by floods, he organized a relief drive and delivered supplies personally by rowboat. Moreau frequently found jobs for the unemployed and took in many of the poor children of the city at the request of city officials.

Consequently, it is not surprising that Holy Cross institutions have been known for instilling a commitment to service in their students and have been innovators in the creation of programs that provide them with multiple opportunities to engage in life-changing domestic and international opportunities. These continue to grow; some recent examples include an eleven-month extension program started in 2009 by Stonehill College for post-graduate students that quickly expanded to India, the Dominican Republic, and Honduras, as well as immersion experiences sponsored by Holy Cross College in Ghana and St. Edward's University in Peru, Uganda, and India. These initiatives are characteristic of the spirit that Moreau inculcated in his Sainte-Croix charges, confident that a society increasingly dubious about the truths of the Church could be persuaded by the examples of those trained well to defend its teachings and fashion their hearts after the person of Christ, our first and greatest teacher.



“The spirit of faith inspires and animates zeal, that is to say, the sacred fire which the Divine Master came to bring on earth.”  
(1858 *Rules*, Common Rule XVIII)

Zeal was the term Moreau used to express the virtue that actualizes the development of our minds and the cultivation of our hearts for the good of others. It is the passion to act upon what we have witnessed and learned in classrooms and in our experiences outside of them. An education of mind and heart means to enkindle within students a burning desire to act boldly, like the original disciples afire with the Holy Spirit on Pentecost who set out to preach the Good News to all the world. As Moreau sent French men and women religious to America, so too do Holy Cross colleges and universities today emulate that spirit by instilling within students a passion for service, whether by volunteering at a local Catholic Worker house or spending a summer teaching in a Ugandan grade school.

He wrote in *Christian Education*, “Zeal is the great desire to make God known, loved, and served, and thus save souls. Apostolic activity is therefore the essential character of this virtue.” Zeal is what drives and motivates Christians, beginning with their baptism, to use their gifts and talents for the betterment of others. Zeal fuels us to overcome fear and sacrifice our preferences for the needs of our brothers and sisters when mere human logic fails and we find ourselves compelled to follow the truer impulses of our hearts. As Moreau said succinctly in the mid-1850s, “We are committed by our vocation to extend the reign

of Jesus Christ in the hearts of all people” (1855 *Exercises*, “*Meditation for the Feast of the Patronage of St. Joseph*”).

While Holy Cross was young, still fledgling and uncertain of its future in France, Moreau began sending, generously and some might say recklessly, some of his most promising religious out to distant lands. Holy Cross’ first mission outside France was to Algeria in 1840, only three years after the Congregation was founded. That mission failed after a brief time; however, the first group sent to the United States arrived in 1841, established itself a year later in Northern Indiana, and became the University of Notre Dame, from which many schools, parishes, and other works would eventually be established. The same fruitfulness took hold in Canada just a few years later. Once Holy Cross religious reached Montreal, the community began to grow quickly and spread widely throughout the country. The first missionaries to East Bengal in the following decade struggled mightily, suffering numerous deaths, but eventually persevered. Today of nine Bangladeshi bishops, five are Holy Cross religious, and the community is proceeding with plans to establish a new college in the Diocese of Mymensingh.

By the mid-1850s, Moreau was receiving more invitations than he could possibly accept to send religious near and far. They came from Martinique, Haiti, Greece, India,

Scotland, Argentina, and Poland (where Moreau did send personnel, though the mission floundered within two decades), in addition to other French dioceses. No longer was Holy Cross such a shaky proposition. In 1857, the Congregation received its official approbation as a religious institute from Rome, and by then Moreau had clarified its threefold purpose as: 1) the perfection of its members through the practice of the evangelical counsels (the vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience); 2) the sanctification of others through preaching, particularly in rural areas and foreign missions; and 3) the Christian instruction and education of youth in schools and orphanages. Ironically, Moreau, who had sacrificed his earlier dream of becoming a missionary and gave almost half his life to expanding Holy Cross, visited the foundations he supported in Canada and the United States only once, in the same year the community received Pope Pius IX's approval. The young seminarian who burned with passion for reestablishing the Catholic faith in the parishes of Western France had grasped Holy Cross' potential as an international apostolic community and seized upon multiple opportunities to increase its reach. That spirit embedded itself within the fabric of the Congregation and led it in the 20th century, long after Moreau's death, to send religious to Haiti and to Central and South America, India, and Africa to found schools and parishes. Holy Cross religious of this era would readily grant the tension that exists to this day as a result of the missionary impulse to expand and embrace new missions even when the human and financial resources are lacking to sustain them.

Moreau was also faulted later, with some justification, for sending these brothers and priests out for teaching assignments and into parishes without adequate religious formation or supervision; however, he did not found the Congregation as an end in itself but as a means to go out and spread the gospel of Jesus Christ. He repeatedly stretched the community to the limit of its capacities because he could not bear to know that there were people uneducated and unformed in the faith. The *Constitutions* state that the "mission sends us across borders of every

sort," national, cultural, and linguistic (2.17), and the Congregation invites students, parents, parishioners, and co-workers to join in its apostolic work. Whatever the flaws in Moreau's approach, Holy Cross began as a missionary community and has continued to serve the Church as one.

Fr. Edward Sorin, C.S.C., the founder of the University of Notre Dame, captured that spirit quite well in a letter to Moreau less than two weeks after he and seven brothers first arrived in the winter of 1842 at the property located adjacent to South Bend, Indiana. Sorin and his small band had stepped ashore in New York barely a year earlier, possessing little money or knowledge of the English language. Nevertheless, he boldly predicted, "Before long [Notre Dame] will develop on a large scale ... it will be one of the most powerful means for good in this country."

Throughout his life Moreau continued to come up with new ideas and ways to spread the gospel, and he did not hesitate to send out others to carry out that mission. Some of those efforts failed, while others have endured and prospered far beyond any reasonable expectations. At Sainte-Croix his pupils used atlases to track the religious men and women who crossed the Atlantic, and they devoured the letters and tales they sent back. Today, air travel allows students to cross an ocean within a day to do good in distant countries. Moreau's zeal set an immediate example for Sorin and other missionaries, but the students currently being educated at Holy Cross institutions constitute the founder's greatest legacy. They are the living testimonies to the endurance of his charism—to fuel young people with the passion for venturing out into the world to make God known, loved, and served.



“Let us, then, stand in closely united ranks and, far from separating and scattering, let us live in such a manner that, as it sees the members of our family, the world may say of us as the Gentiles said of the first Christians: ‘See how they love one another!’” (*CL*, 170)

Zeal is the hoped-for product of Christian education in the two most influential environments of a young person’s life: home and school. These places are where they spend most of their formative years, learning not just from parents and mentors but also from siblings, other relatives, and peers, about what to think and how to act. Moreau realized that he would never have become a priest but for the influence of his family, along with his pastor, who first recognized the stirrings of a vocation and arranged for his education. His approach contrasted dramatically with the typical 19th-century school, characterized by iron discipline, including corporal punishment, and little tolerance for even minor acts of misbehavior. If people associated with Holy Cross speak frequently today about the “family-like” atmosphere they encounter in our parishes and educational institutions, that is directly traceable to the combination of Moreau’s teaching philosophy and his ideals for community life. Modeling each group within the Congregation—priests, brothers, and sisters—upon the image of the Holy Family, applied also to their interactions with students and laity. Moreau cultivated an environment at Sainte-Croix in which both religious and lay faculty were called to be “spiritual parents,” and, in an unusual step for the time, of forming a parent advisory committee and a rough form of “alumni association” for graduates who remained devoted to Sainte-Croix. In short, he wanted its

atmosphere to imitate the good Christian home in which he was raised.

In 1858, a former student who had graduated ten years earlier saw Moreau coming out of the school chapel.

He wrote:

My heart was all a-flutter, like one who sees his aged father once more after a long absence, and I ran toward him ... I let myself be caught up in his arms ... For me Father Moreau was not an officer of the university who had been in command of the little regiment to which I had belonged, but he was a father who had admitted me within the inner circles of his beloved family and who loved me as a child over a long period of years ... For them [priests and brothers], it is not enough simply to throw out a few lessons in literature or science like so much fodder, but they see in young men hearts to form and souls to save. (*Catta*, Vol. 1, 641-2)

Most constituents today typically identify that familial atmosphere as the distinguishing and most appealing feature of a Holy Cross apostolate. It is, however, an ephemeral quality, felt more easily by people who have experienced it than it is readily describable, even for those who have enjoyed a long association with the Congregation. Any attempt to articulate the spirit of Holy

Cross to someone who has not been educated in one of its institutions is like trying to explain the interior dynamics of one's own family to an acquaintance.

While the concept of family was central to Moreau's vision, relatively few people appreciate that the personal attention to students and close collaboration with the laity characteristic of the community's ministries today, whatever their own particular qualities, is directly traceable to his pastoral genius. Moreau referred constantly to the "family" of Sainte-Croix in his addresses and correspondence and used the same term in reference to the community at Notre Dame long before he ever laid eyes upon it. Fr. Sorin, whom Moreau correctly identified as having the best potential for leadership among his first group of young priests, imitated the founder's example and heeded Moreau's counsel that priests and brothers not only teach students, but live among them in dormitories. Not accidentally, the most unique characteristic of Notre Dame for those who have actually attended the University (and not merely experienced it vicariously through its athletic program) is the community spirit and faith life that thrives within its residence halls. This way of living in Christian community originated with Moreau.

In 1844, he wrote in a short guide for teachers, "Our students are destined to live in the business and problems of the world. So they should not be made to live a type of life that they would have to abandon when they leave our institution. *They should be trained in such a way that they may be everywhere what they were in school.*" This concept of family would come to be the primary takeaway for students at Sainte-Croix and generations of students in Holy Cross educational institutions since—the feeling that alumni instinctively pick up on and value when they return as graduates, even after absences of many years. The term "Notre Dame Family" would be a cliché were it not such a palpable reality as it once was at Sainte-Croix. It is a model that all of Holy Cross' colleges and universities have held to in some form. However, despite his fondness for students, Moreau did not encourage

excessive familiarity in his teachers. Neither did he underestimate the difficulties of dealing with young people, but he urged instructors to be patient with them. It is startling, given the standard practices of the day, to read the following excerpt in *Christian Education*:

Teachers must keep their vigilance within reasonable limits and not imitate those who are always in a state of great alarm, often over some childish prank which they are unable to evaluate correctly. Those who are too vigilant are unaware that a great talent of a good teacher is often to pretend not to notice what he or she does not want to be obliged to punish. An indulgence prudently managed is worth much more than outbursts and the punishments which follow them. Always avoid this embarrassing vigilance. It is revolting to students and unbearable for teachers.

Loving the child and sparing the rod while resisting the temptation to act like a buddy would be good ABC's for any teacher's manual or simply good advice for parents today. The language may be archaic, but the general principles are translatable to both primary schools and college classrooms and dormitories. Moreau recognized the need to maintain a deliberate balance between firmness and leniency in dealing with students. He intuitively understood the difference between being a teacher-mentor and a hovering ninny; good teachers avoid fighting small battles and liberate their students to soar rather than quashing their spirits. Ultimately, Moreau was an educational pragmatist who relished being around young people and, unlike some teachers, chose to be amused rather than irritated by their smaller follies. His generosity and kindness infused Sainte-Croix with a familial spirit that made it unusual for its era, both a school and a home. He loved students; they knew it; and it changed how they lived once they left school walls behind.



“Human life is only a long way of the cross. It is not necessary to enter the chapel or the church to run over the various stations. The way of the cross is everywhere, and we walk along it every day in spite of ourselves and often unknown to us.” (*Conference to sisters at St. Laurent, Canada, 1857*)

Next to the Chapel of Christ the Teacher at the University of Portland stands a bell tower erected in 2009. The Congregational motto, “Ave Crux Spes Unica” or “The Cross Our Only Hope” is carved across the entrance at its base. Atop its peak stands a cross with a small glass globe in the middle that causes it to cast both light and shadow simultaneously. It captures the central paradox of the cross that catapults Christians into another reality—the conviction that the Son of God died willingly, even for the sake of those who persecuted and abandoned him, in order to bring us through darkness to glory.

When Moreau wrote in 1849 that “Jesus Christ should be our model since our likeness to the Divine Master is the foundation of our journey to eternal glory” (*CL*, 36), he expressed simply the heart of the Christian’s call. Striving for completeness means spending one’s life as a citizen of this world, imitating the person of Christ as the gateway to citizenship in heaven. On this bedrock principle, all faith and thus all human hope rests. A Christian is compelled, then, to be zealous for union with God and direct his or her thoughts and actions accordingly. While anyone can navigate his own path

without formal or substantial instruction in the faith, as was true of Moreau’s parents, some leaders, lay, religious, and clergy must be capable of articulating and teaching the message. The work of education is essential to the life of the Church and its apostolic mission of going out to all the nations proclaiming the gospel as Jesus instructed his disciples to do in his final commission.

Eighteen hundred years later, Moreau looked upon the spiritual wreckage of his native France and felt called to become an educator in the faith. As his vision and heart expanded, he followed the apostolic example of sending out missionaries to give their lives over to the founding of parishes and schools. He expected instructors, whether religious or lay, to cultivate excellence in the classroom, be models of zealous virtue, and fashion a second home for their charges. He wanted those young people, as would any Catholic educator, to carry their formation with them and be battle-ready for the challenges to their faith that they would inevitably face in the wider world.

Still, the first four principles of mind, heart, zeal, and family, important though they are, would have little

distinctive Christian purpose apart from hope in the cross of Christ. They constitute the foundation of an education in the faith, but a person's capacity for lifelong discipleship is hard to predicate from exam results or résumés, no matter how well formed he or she may be. Moreau prayed that students would remember what they were at Sainte-Croix—and other Holy Cross schools—and live the same everywhere, but ultimately, he could only hope that they would persevere in faith once they graduated and entered upon their long journeys back to the Father.

One does not have to be a Christian to believe that adversity does, or at least can, make people stronger and prepare them for harder challenges in the future, but no education in the faith is complete without an understanding of how the cross is much more than a burden once carried by Jesus. It was for Moreau “a treasure more valuable than gold and precious stones” (*CL*, 34). In both light and shadow, the cross is Christ's gift to us, our only hope. Moreau's trust the cross is the essential component of his legacy, and its influence can be found in the final section of the Congregation's *Constitutions*, written more than a century after his death:

We must be men with hope to bring. There is no failure the Lord's love cannot reverse, no humiliation He cannot exchange for blessing, no anger He cannot dissolve, no routine He cannot transfigure. All is swallowed up in victory. He has nothing but gifts to offer. It remains only for us to find how even the cross can be borne as a gift. (8:118)

From its foundation in 1837, the Congregation has faced a litany of crosses—financial crises, political unrest, religious persecution, deaths of religious from disease, natural disasters and violence, and the waywardness of others. As the father of Holy Cross, Moreau experienced many of these trials personally, but through them all, both congregational and personal, he always encouraged the community to see the hand of Divine Providence. He firmly believed the Lord's choicest blessings come through the crosses we bear out of love for him and love for others. The paradox of the cross is a hard truth to accept but even more necessary to model and teach.

Yet none of us does that alone, including those whose mission lies in Christian education. A line in Holy Cross' *Constitutions* reads, “And, as in every work of our mission, we find that we ourselves stand to learn much from those whom we are called to teach” (2.16). Christians spread hope, and religious, like those in Holy Cross, have a special obligation to embolden others to pick up their crosses. Yet we, too, draw strength from the family spirit in our institutions and are better disciples when humble enough to admit that we have a lot to learn from students and co-workers of all ages. For all our learning, we seek a deeper wisdom. We yearn to look out upon the world like the awestruck shepherds who gazed in wonder at Mary's newborn son and, during more difficult times, to emulate the friends who stood by her decades later as she stared at his cross, willing herself to trust in God's promise.

The educational process itself requires a particular type of dying to self. Whenever we have to shed old ways of thinking, viewing, or perceiving the world around us and ourselves, a conversion of both heart and mind must take place. The contemplation of new ideas and needs beyond our comfort zones requires a sacrificial willingness to put at risk everything that we think we already know. We need to have hope in that process to stick with it, to believe that what is born of questioning beliefs previously taken for granted will lead us to a new and better understanding of our vocation as citizens in this world and for the next. The charism of education in the faith that the Holy Spirit entrusted to the Congregation of Holy Cross through Blessed Basil Moreau combines a form of pedagogy that mirrors a person's natural human development and moral formation with the call to Christian discipleship. It encourages believers to embrace the cross of Jesus while progressing through this world toward the light of God's kingdom. Whether through the recognition that time is always shorter than we think or the lasting effects of Moreau's own missionary impulses, Holy Cross religious today are still formed with the sense of urgency found in *Christian Education*: "Hurry then; take up this work of resurrection, never forgetting that the special end of your institute is, before all, to sanctify youth. It is by this that you will contribute to preparing the world for better times than ours."

Mind. Heart. Zeal. Family. Hope.  
*Ave Crux Spes Unica!*



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