

FOREWORD



Dear Friends,

This booklet is an attempt to distill the essential elements that typically characterize Holy Cross's educational ministries across the globe, including at the University of Notre Dame, the University of Portland, Stonehill College, King's College, St. Edward's University, Holy Cross College, and the many Holy Cross secondary schools around the world. As noted in the text, the bonds that students, faculty, staff, and alumni experience at these schools 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 1836 in Le Mans, 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 Fr. Moreau have been mined ever more effectively to reveal his practical pastoral genius and farsighted 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.

As proud as we are of Holy Cross sisters, brothers, and priests who have devoted their lives to the educational ministry, we are also indebted to so many of our lay collaborators who carry on the spirit of Fr. Moreau in Holy Cross schools throughout the world. Together, as his sons and daughters, we continue the tradition of “educating the mind while cultivating the heart,” the true holistic model of a Holy Cross education.

Yours in Holy Cross,
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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 south of Le Mans, France, on February 11, 1799. He was the ninth of fourteen children born to Louise and Louis Moreau, owners of a small wine shop. They were simple folk, most likely illiterate, and pious Catholics. Though their children had to work from a young age in the shop and in fields the family tended, the Moreaus, uncharacteristically for the times, forswore corporal punishment; exclusion from family prayer was the ultimate punishment in their household. Moreau's parents were the most formative influence upon his faith and character, and he remained extraordinarily devoted to them and to his siblings throughout his life.

Nine months after Moreau's birth, Napoleon Bonaparte took power and put an end to the French Revolution, which had begun in 1789 when King Louis XVI was forced to abdicate amid popular discontent with his bloated regime. Nobles gorged themselves at the public trough, oblivious to the growing wealth gap between rich and poor. Commoners grew increasingly restless as their taxes were raised to support a series of costly wars and to maintain the inefficient state bureaucracy. 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 about one-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 anticlerical extremists soon gained control. Within a decade most of the Church's property was confiscated, monasteries and convents were closed, religious orders were outlawed, and all clergy were 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 the 1790s, 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 secretly 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 the whims of their superiors in Paris.

Nevertheless, Moreau's parents ensured that their son was baptized by a priest who had refused to take the oath. After Napoleon assumed power, the new pastor of the parish adjoining the Moreau home was also one of those who had exercised his ministry clandestinely for years. By that time the French educational system, which had been administered almost wholly by the Church, including 321 schools in the Diocese of Le Mans alone, was virtually destroyed. 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 in many parts of France were left mostly uneducated and largely uncatechized as literacy rates plunged. Civil servants well into the nineteenth century tended to be anticlerical and used a variety of quasi-legal and bureaucratic means to impede the Church's educational ministry during the recovery. 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 later came to see that his major purposes as a priest and educator were to evangelize adult Catholics so they understood the basic principles of their faith and to provide the young with a first-rate liberal arts education that would enable them to surmount antireligious prejudice and so gain the capacity to 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. Whatever may have been lacking in his own early education, he quickly grasped complex subjects, 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 wanted to be sent, like the first apostles, to spread faith in Jesus Christ and his Good News where he was most needed.

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 Le Mans as an excellent preacher and was frequently called upon to assist at parishes and give retreats.

Moreau 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 predominantly upon imitating the person of Jesus that he ended up applying practically in the communities and ministries he established.

Sixteen years after he was ordained a priest, Moreau became the founder of the Congregation of Holy Cross, whose members he sent out across France and as missionaries around the world. The Congregation was provisionally formed through the “Fundamental Act of Union” signed on March 1, 1837. Through this pact, Moreau succeeded in combining into a single association two groups of religious: a small number of auxiliary priests he had gathered two years earlier from among the diocesan ranks to preach parish missions and instruct youth; and 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 and, like Moreau’s childhood pastor, was protected by an underground network of loyal Catholics when a warrant was issued for his arrest. He spent his first years as a priest moving stealthily from one rural hiding spot to another. In the early 1800s he became a pastor and founded the Sisters of Providence in the western region of Ruillé-sur-Loir; more than a decade later, he founded the Brothers of St. Joseph, 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 authority over 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 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."¹ The Association of Holy Cross, as Moreau's new organization was originally named, was the ultimate manifestation of both tendencies. Under Dujarié only a few brothers had taken religious vows and then only for a year at a time. Many brothers and priests were initially skeptical of joining together into a common association and some of the brothers left after Moreau undertook his reforms. It took another decade for all of the members to commit themselves to lifelong poverty, chastity, and obedience.

In 1836, Moreau purchased land from a friend and moved his enterprise to an area known as Sainte-Croix (Holy Cross), which then lay on the outskirts of Le Mans. The community is, in fact, named after this neighborhood, though many people understandably though incorrectly add an article and refer to the Congregation of *the* Holy Cross. Moreau certainly did not object that his association was inevitably identified closely with the Cross of Jesus. Notre Dame de Sainte-Croix, the Congregation's first primary school, was established there, and a secondary school or "college"

added in 1838. Moreau also founded a community of religious women at Sainte-Croix, the Marianites, one of three sisters' congregations that would eventually bear the name of Holy Cross.

As his vision of religious life evolved, it is no surprise that he dedicated each branch of his community 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 the Blessed Virgin Mary. Moreau wrote a good deal about the importance for all religious of imitating the example of Jesus, and he constantly exhorted them to remain united with one another like the original disciples as reported in the Acts of the Apostles. 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 people to the faith for the first time in foreign lands.

In 1856, Moreau published a short work titled *Christian Education* that addresses the purposes of Catholic schools, discusses the essential qualities needed by teachers, and provides practical advice about how teachers should manage their classes and relationships with students. Although it lay virtually neglected even within the Congregation for a century after Moreau's death, over the last several decades it has increasingly become a seminal source for understanding the distinctive educational charism that he bequeathed to Holy Cross. The first sentence of Moreau's small booklet states, "[Education] is the art of forming youth—that is to

say, for a Christian, to make of youth people who are conformed to Jesus Christ, their model."² 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 quite 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 wanted Sainte-Croix to be an institution that excelled academically but was also spiritually formative in the Catholic faith, one where students consciously strove, much like members of his religious community, to imitate the ideal of the Holy Family and be a sign of the true communion possible with God. As the years have unfolded and Holy Cross has delved deeper into *Christian Education* and other writings of its founder, a form of 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 through formation in faith and values 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, wherever they are located throughout the world:

Mind

seeking understanding
through the integration of
faith and reason

Heart

discerning one's personal
vocation in service to the
Church and world

Zeal

enkindling the desire to
use one's gifts to boldly
proclaim God's Word

Family

embracing Christian
community as the context
for lifelong formation

Hope

trusting in the Cross and
God's promise of the
kingdom