



Foreword

In the closing chapter of his sympathetic and appreciative 1962 biography of Father Basil Moreau, Gary MacEoin leaves off eagerly anticipating the conclusion of the second stage of the canonization process for the long-suffering founder of the Congregation of Holy Cross.

In 1955 the Cause of Father Moreau had been formally opened; by 1957 he was declared “Servant of God,” the first of four stages leading to canonization. On May 10, 1961, the Promoter of the Faith for the Cause submitted to the Congregation of Rites within the Vatican Curia the required supporting documents testifying to Father Moreau’s heroic virtues, which would award him the title Venerable. All was progressing well. It is clear that MacEoin awaited a positive decision.

However a year later, on October 11, 1962, Pope John XXIII convened the Second Vatican Council initiating a period of unprecedented change within the Catholic Church and thereby within the Congregation of Holy Cross. All levels of ecclesial life, including religious communities, experienced dramatic shifts in priorities as the vision of the Council was implemented. Religious congregations were urged to renew themselves in accord with the founding charism of their respective orders.

The Congregation of Holy Cross embraced the Council’s called-for period of experimentation with great enthusiasm. In the process, attention shifted away from pursuing the formalities of



Father Moreau's Cause in favor of undertaking a vibrant renewal within the founding charism.

With the Vatican Council's emphasis on liturgical renewal Pope Paul VI, in 1969, divided the Congregation of Rites into two separate entities: the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Congregation for the Causes of Saints. The agenda for liturgical renewal was immense; the agenda for the Causes of Saints continued its careful yet laborious study of the relatively few causes it received.

It was not until many years later when Pope John Paul II encouraged a focused emphasis on growth in holiness among God's people that the work of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints assumed greater prominence in the Church's consciousness. Following the exhortation to sanctity, the Congregation of Holy Cross once again took up the Cause of Father Moreau where it had been left off in 1961.

On April 12, 2003, the Prefect of the Vatican Congregation for the Causes of Saints promulgated, in the presence of Pope John Paul II, the decree testifying that the Servant of God Basil Moreau practiced the theological and cardinal virtues to a heroic degree. The Holy Father declared the founder of Holy Cross Venerable.



Readers of McEoin's biography will find the milieu of Father Moreau's experience useful for meditation and reflection at the start of this new millennium. Many social commentators call this the postmodern age. While there are many variations to this designation, Gary MacEoin's work can help focus our attention on what is needed to live lives of unstinting hope in God's love, a love seemingly dismissed as foolish and self-defeating in a highly secular milieu.

The Congregation of Holy Cross was founded in the Age of Enlightenment, the start of the modern age. The French Revolution gave rise to a new and lasting era of de-Christianization. A



European philosophy of humanism replaced faith as the central paradigm for embodying meaning. The ideals of humanism, expressed through the French doctrine of liberty, equality, and fraternity, were actually born of Christian principles embedded in European culture, but they were not recognized as such.

Over these past two centuries these humanistic principles have slowly given way to an age of secularism. While humanism seeks the common good, secularism often serves the self, striving to amass power, wealth, and pleasure in a world of limited resources. Consumer demand for material satisfaction forges barriers between those who have and those who have not.

MacEoin's biography of Father Moreau gives us insight into the destructive web of what we might call the "social individualism" of a secular culture. We could think of this term as describing a phenomenon whereby the parts of a social system strive to become greater than the whole of that system. In striving for dominance these parts become systems unto themselves while maintaining their allegiance to the whole. Eventually the system of the common good, which had been greater than the parts, is left in ruin.

Secular ideologies tend to create division over equality, oppression over liberty, individualism over fraternity. A culture of greed is apt to dominate human consciousness. Avarice almost always employs violent strategies both to protect and amass life's temporalities.

Just as humanism can usurp faith and secularism can usurp humanism in a given culture, it is clear that these same competitive human dynamics can and do play out within the Church and religious communities, including Father Moreau's new Congregation of Holy Cross. Human beings are human beings. We are capable of great dignity and great deceit as well. Ultimately, we trust that through God's grace all things will work toward the good.

MacEoin traces the inter-relational dynamics of the key figures involved in the establishment and growth of the Congregation. It is filled with intrigue. One can almost be scandalized in reading



the seemingly petty wars of will fought between the religious personalities, whether they be cardinals, bishops or religious. Even the Pope was shaken by the infighting among the religious of Holy Cross. It seemed at one moment it would be necessary for the Pope to suppress the new foundation since no intervention from the Vatican could bring a cessation to the squabbles and deceits running rampart among the members of the Congregation.

Father Moreau suffered mightily in his efforts to hold the Congregation of Holy Cross together, not as his own work but as God's. It was his hope in the cross that allowed him to suffer the torment of his soul in loving abandonment to God's Providence. His is a spirituality for our time.



Father Moreau's motto for the Congregation, "The Cross, Our Only Hope," carries within it the fundamental spirituality and mission of Holy Cross.

The cross entailed in sacrificing one's self for the good of another is always difficult to carry. To live primarily for others and not for the self is a seemingly foolish approach to life and love in any age, and perhaps particularly in our own postmodern times.

The consecrated life is a gift for the human family since it is an icon of community. Our common vocation demands more than one another's forbearance; it demands self-emptying love.

Father Moreau teaches us to hope in this kind of cross. Love must endure. Embracing the cross for the sake of enduring love leads us to salvation. Pope Benedict XVI expresses simply and well the core of hope's virtue:

Hope is practiced through the virtue of patience, which continues to do good even in the face of apparent failure, and through the virtue of humility, which accepts God's mystery and trusts him even at times of darkness (*Deus Caritas Est.*, part II, 39).



It is the hope that Father Moreau lived and the hope that will sustain us all.



In celebration of Father Moreau's extraordinary life this new edition of Gary MacEoin's biography commemorates Pope Benedict XVI's April 28, 2006, promulgation of an authorized miracle attributed to the intercession of Father Moreau. This promulgation completes the beatification process. On September 15, 2007, Venerable Basile-Antoine Marie Moreau will be beatified in LeMans, France, the city where he lived and died, the home of the Congregation's Mother Church, and the sacred place where he is buried. After the Liturgy of Beatification, Father Moreau will be called Blessed, completing the third stage of the process leading to canonization.

The religious of the Congregation of Holy Cross are very grateful to Ave Maria Press for republishing this very fine and engaging biography of Father Moreau during a time of great significance. We have embarked on a year of rejoicing and renewal leading up to Venerable Moreau's beatification. We pray it will be a holy year of grace for us.

We are especially grateful that this new publication of Father Moreau's biography will not only assist Holy Cross religious in our renewal but that it will encourage and inspire our lay colleagues and collaborators in fulfilling our essential mission: bringing hope to a world so bereft of this precious gift. All who engage Father Moreau in this book will surely find inspiration to live their own lives with hope in enduring love.

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Christmas 2006