

The Work of Resurrection

-November 2020-

“Hurry then, take up this work of resurrection, never forgetting that the special end of your institute is, before all, to sanctify youth.”

-Basil Moreau, Christian Education, 1856

There is a certain worldview that caused our blessed founder, Basil Moreau, to insist that education is “the work of resurrection.” For Fr. Moreau, and the entire Christian tradition, the world is good (Gen 1:31) and loved by God (Jn 3:16). Nevertheless, we know from our human experience that the world is also fallen, that our human nature is somehow deformed, and that the natural order of life and grace that should flow and bloom has been interrupted. We call this phenomenon of missing the mark “sin,” a powerful, baffling and cunning force in our lives. It is a word that literally means “without” (Latin *sine*), indicating a kind of division and separation imposed onto all of our relationships - with the Lord, with each other, with nature and even with ourselves. Moreau’s educational vision, therefore, is the rebuilding of the broken human person. Like building a house, the structures of schools, classrooms, cafeterias, hallways and lessons invite young people to *remember* their true identity, what it is like to walk with the Lord (Micah 6:1, Gen 3:7) and to have a foretaste of resurrected life. While structure is not the goal of Holy Cross Education per se, a robust commitment to planning, systematic thinking, intelligently designed curricula, etc. facilitates this rebuilding project that is the Resurrection.

Intelligent and conscientious lesson-planning is an obvious and practical place to begin. Do the classes we teach each have a point? Can we articulate that point in a single sentence? Have we designed units that lead up to that point? Do our units have topics that help make the point in a meaningful way? Are our lessons on target? Do they all make sense in “the big picture”? Is the unit schedule well-paced? Is the weekly schedule predictable and consistent? Is the time for each class period organized in a way that is efficient and creative? Does the timing of the assessments make sense? Do tests reflect the content of a given unit? Will students, at the end of each unit, be able to generate some new idea of their own? At the end of the course, will students be able to look back at the journey through the semester as logical and cohesive? This detailed structuring, though it may seem obsessive, is precisely the work of resurrection! Indeed, in the tightly woven circumstances of this kind of a classroom, those inner extremes and divisions, a result of the sin which plagues all of us, begin to be overcome, and a sense of order is restored to the soul. Students start feeling comfortable in their own skin; openness in communication with the teacher and other students develops; indeed, generosity, honesty, and even good humor prevail in these resurrectional spaces.

For Blessed Moreau the pedagogy employed in a teacher’s classroom is an art form, the art of leading students to completeness, which for Moreau meant educating the mind *and* the heart. The Holy Cross teacher, as an artist, systematically choreographs all that transpires in the classroom to inform and form citizens of this world and the next. In *Outliers*, Malcom Gladwell builds a case for success in any venture based upon the repetition of the skill to be learned - the so-called “10,000 Hour Rule”! The transfer of data for mind development gets easier and easier with more and more repetitions of breaking the science down into its smallest components and assisting students to embrace more and more complex understandings. The forming of hearts, however, is more daunting. An essential component of this art is conscientiously desiring to want to be a formator of the heart as one teaches English or Biology or Music or Physical Education: How do I lead young persons away from ignorance and disorder toward generosity and honesty? How do I teach what I teach so that students become increasingly aware of their own desire for resurrected life? How does the way that I carry myself and run my classroom communicate the hope I have for them in my heart? When we embrace Holy Cross Education as a vocation and take seriously the potential we have to change the lives of those souls who have been entrusted to us, Blessed Moreau will indeed be smiling upon us as our classrooms begin to resemble his vision of “teaching justice to many” so that we might all “shine like the stars for eternity” (Daniel 12:3).