

# The Work of Resurrection

-March 2021-

*"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*

It's funny how often you hear an experienced teacher advising a new teacher to "not smile before Christmas." What kind of advice is that?! A classroom is not a poker table, and, though it is important to practice discretion as any other mature adult would with kids, it is not necessary to "hide" our emotions! Holy Cross Educators are instead called to be human, to be on the front lines of this kingdom-building effort, and to learn to navigate the complexities of working with other human beings. In practical terms, here are some emotional guidelines that can help our classrooms to become resurrectional spaces where the living God is truly revealed:

- We speak plainly and directly to those whom we serve and serve alongside. We say what we mean and we mean what we say!
- We never launch a personal attack on a student or a fellow teacher, and we never take personally the hard words someone may direct at us out of frustration.
- We learn to think things through before we speak, filtering out what is uncharitable, unkind or unintelligent.
- We confront what others say to us, processing each word and sentence in a way that allows us to extract a meaning, following up with clarifying questions if necessary.
- When we miscommunicate or blatantly hurt others by what we have said, we have the humility to apologize promptly.
- We recognize gossip immediately and choose to abstain from that poison!
- We laugh with our students at appropriate times.
- We show compassion toward our students and colleagues and even cry with them.
- We do not hold resentments.
- When we are unsure about another person's meaning or motives, we can give them the benefit of the doubt.
- We learn how to walk down to a colleague's office to clarify the meaning of their comments instead of giving in to the temptation of "Reply All."
- We spend our time outside of the classroom eating and sleeping well, enjoying time with people we love and not spending our emotional energy on habits or relationships that are emotionally draining.
- And most importantly, we spend time in prayer every day! If that channel of communication with God is open and flowing, then all the other channels of relationship in our lives will flow as well.

If all we know is "don't smile till Christmas," the schoolhouse will be a repressive and mechanical place where no learning will ever happen. Emotional and personal connection, indeed, is that energy that makes kids feel safe and where learning is not only possible but positively irresistible! I can remember a time when I had been emotionally beaten up by life, and I literally did not smile until Christmas. So hurt, the thought of smiling made me feel highly vulnerable, and so I just went through the motions of teaching day in and day out. After one of my colleagues, to whom a student had reported that I was not even talking in class, came to check in on me, I began working with my spiritual director and attending a support group. I was finally able to not only talk, but to smile, to be playful, and to be an emotionally healthy person with and for my students. Holy Cross Educators are tasked with making God known, loved and served, and as such we must allow our emotional lives to shine forth in a healthy and life-giving way that invites others to, themselves, become "soundly human and explicitly Christian" (*Constitutions*, 67).