

The Work of Resurrection

-April 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

I knew of a woman who had eleven children. My friend once asked her, "How do you do it?!" The woman replied, "You just learn to work 'em in." This simple exchange provides an excellent explanation for how Holy Cross Education works, namely, that we learn to integrate each and every one of the students who has been entrusted to us into the community of our classrooms, hallways, cafeterias and gymnasiums. While it is true that we might initially be tempted to roll our eyes when we see the numbers on our class rosters or let out a deep sigh when the guidance counselor transfers a student into our class in the middle of a semester, we can choose to remember that we are in the business of the resurrection and that the point of reference for our vocation is not the promise of an easy income or a cushy job, but the love we have for these kids! We got into teaching because we care about young people and we are willing to share time and space with them in this work of transformation. Like the mother who is nursing a baby while cooking and making sure her teens are in fact doing their homework and setting up a game for the toddlers and checking to see that the other infant is still asleep, we can be educators who find creative and life-giving ways to multitask. Indeed, motivated by our desire to build up the Kingdom of God right here and now, we will discover a very simple pattern - that of creating circumstances where learning and growth are really possible - into which new minds and hearts can be incorporated as the weeks of a given semester unfold. Here are some practical ideas for the establishment of such circumstances:

- We can let our students know from the start of the semester that we are on an eighteen week journey together, then at the beginning of each week we can announce, "This is week one of eighteen" etc., going over all of the pertinent due dates and announcements for that week. When we break things down into smaller parts like this, we are putting ourselves in a position to clearly and concretely explain where we are on this semester-long journey instead of feeling perpetually lost in a mess of random syllabus bullet points and the list of dates on the school calendar.
- At the end of each week, we can consider updating our gradebooks - entering the week's participation grade, uploading late and make up work, sending reminder emails about missing assignments, entering 'zeroes' when necessary, etc. This simple fifteen minute weekly routine will help kids to understand exactly where they stand in your class, and trust will be built up through such consistency and concern.
- We can introduce the class each and every day the same way, "Good morning ladies and gentlemen, welcome to class today! Today is Wednesday April 21, 2021. As you can see, we have a very good program today and I am looking forward to spending the period with you!" Though such a thing may seem quirky, grounding the classroom experience in this way creates a predictable baseline and extra structure that makes for an environment where students feel safe and at ease.
- Four or five simple classroom rules go a long way. Teachers sometimes err on the side of having too many rules on the syllabus (we can surely hear that cartoon teacher voice reciting such a list, "Whaw Whaw Whaw Whaw Whaw..."), or, in the name of wanting to cultivate positive relationships with students, having no rules at all and then having to learn the hard way that all relationships in life will simply collapse if they are not mediated by some guiding principle. Carefully discerning the four or five rules that will govern our learning spaces well is one of the hallmarks of an effective educator.

Holy Cross Educators embrace the call to "work in" every soul that walks through their doors. In this way, they become mothers who not only offer their kids an opportunity to grow within the lifegiving circumstances of their classrooms, but in doing so give birth to the very disciples "of the coming kingdom" (*Constitutions* 2:12).