

The Work of Resurrection

-October 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

When a young man made the decision to join the Brothers of Holy Cross, he would have to pass through a trial called "the novitiate" in order to be formally accepted into the community. The novitiate was a training ground in religious life: learning how to be obedient to a superior, how to accept various assignments, how to ask for permission to do things, how to offer the prayer of the Church, how to live according to the particular rule of the community, etc. It was during this one year novitiate that these young men would most seriously discern their vocation: some chose to remain as members of the community, while others realized that the novitiate experience did not resonate with how God was calling them personally and so they left. So much of one's experience during this intense period, however, depended upon the novice master. If the novice master was a spiritual and loving man, then not only would many choose to persevere, but would go on to become happy and faithful religious. If the novice master, however, was not a healthy man and acted punitively, many would choose to leave and those who stayed would go on to exhibit some of the same harsh tendencies as the novice master.

The same is true in the schools that have been handed on to us as part of the legacy of the Brothers of Holy Cross. We constantly have young women and men joining our local school communities as fellow Holy Cross Educators. The first year of teaching, or even the first year of ministering in a new institution, is, like the novitiate, a great trial and so much of the perseverance of new faculty and staff members depends on the mentorship that they receive from their local superiors, that is, their peers in the schoolhouse. If we really do care about the welfare and development of our new community members, we will go out of our way to accompany them through that first year. We will show them by example what it means to be an "educator in the faith" (*Constitutions*, 12) and, like a good novice master, we will set them up to succeed by our gentleness, patience and listening heart.

During my first year as a Holy Cross Educator, I felt completely overwhelmed by all of the daily tasks of the school day and at the end of the year, I seriously considered applying for other teaching jobs that did not have such high expectations or so many demands. Nevertheless, the Spirit insisted that I keep moving forward in my vocation as a Holy Cross Educator and slowly my eyes were opened to the many good and faithful mentors who were already there! One mentor taught me the proper way to ask students questions during a class discussion, another taught me how to properly plan and pace my units, another taught me how to calm a rowdy class at the beginning of the period, another taught me how to speak to students with dignity and respect, another taught me the importance of planning creative and engaging activities, still another taught me how humor and a playful personality can help kids to in the learning process. I am grateful for such consistent and concrete support during a time of great professional vulnerability in my life.

While our schools do not have novice masters like the Brothers of Holy Cross in days of old, the need for a positive formation for our new teachers and staff members remains, as they must be "challenged and helped to open their hearts to the gospel, to minister under the same roof as one another, and to form a community of disciples" (*Constitutions*, 62).