

The Work of Resurrection

-December 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

We should not romanticize community life in the residences of the Brothers of Holy Cross. Can you imagine living in the same place where you work? Can you imagine the stresses and pressure of always having to be "on" with kids knocking on the door at all hours of the day and night for gym keys, academic support or counseling? Or, of sitting across from your boss at dinner every night? Plus, there were those alcoholic members of the community, the personality conflicts, the passive-aggressive behaviors, the screaming matches and the politics. Nevertheless, for decades these communities of men persisted and built up wildly successful institutions, schools with a strong identity, a palpable sense of community and an enduring legacy.

The secret to the success of the Brothers of Holy Cross was *commitment to the mission*. These men had each, individually and personally, felt a call to make God known, loved and served in the tradition of Blessed Basil Moreau and so decided to put their lot in with a group of strangers. When the storms of life - which are inevitable - would sweep through the residence and schoolhouse, that commitment kept the ship intact.

We each have a different story as to how we became Holy Cross Educators: for some, it was a conscious choice related to our own secondary or college experience in a Holy Cross school; for others, it was related to a feeling that we experienced when we walked into the school building for the first time, and still for others, it was simply God's providence that we happened to end up securing employment in a Holy Cross school. We also each have different living situations: on our own, with our parents, with our families, in a religious community, associated with a parish, in an apartment, in a neighborhood, etc. Whatever the case, the mission is a powerful lever for cooperation, understanding, collaboration and unity in the schoolhouse. Indeed, when the grinding and friction of different personalities trying to conduct the business of teaching, cleaning, coaching, chaperoning, moderating, running meetings, or making decisions arises, we can remember that generations of Brothers were sustained on a steady diet of "crossing borders of every sort" to make God known, loved and served (cf. *Constitutions*, 17).

My own experience is that school communities experience both highs and lows. Some years it seems like all of the various parts are syncing and that the educational, spiritual, and social product of the school is extremely good. But there are those other years that can be tense and fragile when members of the school community are faced with all sorts of temptations: to engage in gossip, to play politics, or to look out for one's own interests in the midst of institutional confusion and instability. I can remember my own struggle to keep my head above water as I found myself in the crossfires of a power-struggle between two colleagues or swimming in the anxiety of absent leadership. Holy Cross Educators are nevertheless called to return, again and again, to the mission as the singular and trustworthy guide to stay on the right path! Like the Brothers of Holy Cross in days of old, if we each make the small decision to keep the mission in mind amidst the drama, our institutions themselves will become resurrectional spaces and signs of God's kingdom for a world that will marvel, "See how they love one another!" (*Constitutions*, 42).