

The Work of Resurrection

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"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 is no secret that we live in an evolving society where people don't associate with the Catholic Church as readily or as strongly as they once did. We know that Mass attendance has dropped off sharply, that many parishes and schools have had to close, and that the institutional Church's reputation has suffered greatly over the past two decades. Nevertheless, the nature of belief is that instead of wallowing in the negativity and grief of losing the glory days, we can choose to look forward with hope and deep trust that God is still at work! Indeed, the fifteen Holy Cross high schools across the country are a great example of the paschal nature of Christ's mission: While there was a time when the schools were populated by thousands of boys and run by a group of habit-clad religious brothers, they have been transformed into communities of boys and girls, lay and ordained, consecrated and secular, men and women, not to mention people of various ethnicities and religious faiths. The possibilities are truly endless when our hearts are open to the mystery of God.

For those of us who have been called through our baptisms to the Lord's Table and participate explicitly in the sacramental life of the Church, perhaps we are being invited to image Christ anew for those around us. What if we attended Mass and received communion in such an authentic way that we were able to bring the pattern of dying and rising into all of our relationships, including those in the schoolhouse? What if the only Bible our colleagues ever read was us? What if the only Mass our students ever attended was in our classroom? What if the only preaching they ever heard was the way we treated them? What if their only familiarity with the Body of Christ was our effort to reach out to them in a spirit of good will amid a world that is constantly fluctuating? When we approach life with this resurrection kind of mindset, our vocations have the potential to be much more far-reaching and the Church much more expansive.

I am reminded of the many iterations my classroom has gone through: desks in straight rows / desks facing each other, student work confined to a bulletin board / student work plastered all over the room, chalk board / dry erase board, projector / smartboard, desktop / laptop, etc. Nevertheless, as I have grown in my faith, what I have discovered is the progressively liturgical nature of our learning space and classroom routines. In the middle of the room is a large round table. The student desks are organized around it. We begin our time together each period, every day in the exact same way: "Hello, good morning and welcome to class today. I hope you're having a positive day today. Today is.... The Psalm of the day is.... We have a good program planned for today." As I communicate directions, facilitate conversations, and walk up and down the rows, I can't help but feel that we are sharing in a learning liturgy where the Spirit is being invited into the open space of the classroom to consecrate our words and actions - it is a space that feels both predictable and life-giving and is a palpable experience of Church. If, indeed, we, as Holy Cross Educators, are open to this Spirit in our personal lives, "God will clasp us more firmly to himself and use our hands and wits to do the work that only he can do;" then, "our work itself will become a prayer: a service that speaks to the Lord who works through us" (*Constitutions*, 20).