

The Work of Resurrection

-November 2022-

"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

Here is a list of situations they don't teach you about in teacher-school, yet the Holy Cross charism supplies us with the courage and grace to handle each of them as they arise:

5. *How to get a bee out of your classroom.*

If you minister in a non-air-conditioned school, you know how these little buzzing visitors like to join class at unexpected and often inconvenient times. As Holy Cross Educators, who strive to be practical, however, we know that it is no use to try to insist on the students' attention when a bee is doing figure-eights around the classroom. We learn instead to have fun and make a kind of show of it: teacher vs. bee. There may be some yelling and screaming, and the bee almost always flies out of the room of its own volition, but the class will remember how human and playful we were in that moment.

4. *How to administer a test in a way that does not induce anxiety.*

In the movies, the teacher comes into the classroom with a stack of tests, tells the students to be quiet, passes out the tests, and everyone gets to work. This would be an ideal situation but we know that young people today generally suffer from lots of anxiety and need a softer touch in this moment. After taking attendance and settling the class, consider passing out the tests to students individually as they feel ready. Instead of sitting at our desks working intently on something, we can walk around the classroom and check in on students, making them feel connected, answering questions and encouraging them. Maybe there is a piece of candy and some small assignment when the tests are turned in so as to maintain a relaxed and quiet environment for the students still taking the test.

3. *How to confront a student who has broken a rule.*

Whether we realize it or not, we are wired by our culture and society to have a "gotcha" mentality. How easy it is, indeed, to come down hard on a student who appears to have broken a rule. Often, without even inquiring as to what actually happened or questioning how relevant or well-articulated the rule is in the first place, we simply default to the action-reaction method of dealing with things. In time, however, we learn that justice is most durable when it is complemented by mercy. Try this: Next time you suspect a student has cheated, investigate and prepare a case that can easily be passed along to the dean of students. After inviting the students involved into a conversation, in which they are made aware that a case has in fact been prepared, but nevertheless have the opportunity to explain themselves, give them a second chance. This act of obvious and gratuitous [mercy](#) will have more [power](#) for conversion than a hundred punishments.

2. *How to apologize to a student.*

Life can be stressful, confusing and complicated. Sometimes we lose our balance, misunderstand a situation, and say things that we should not say to our students. When this happens, it is awkward and embarrassing and we just wish to forget about it and move on. Nevertheless, we know intuitively that the relationship will only be repaired with an amends (and aren't we, as educators, in the relationship business?). Here is a way to do this: find out where a student's locker is or when she or he has a study hall. Make a surprise visit and say something like, "I just want to apologize for yelling at you yesterday. I was stressed out about something else, and even though I do want you to pay better attention in class, I should not have yelled at you like that. I'm sorry." Our vulnerability in that moment will endear us to our students and help to build trusting relationships.

1. *How to love the students who have been entrusted to us.*

The point of schools and hallways and cafeterias and gymnasiums is love. Being negative and angry and resentful are easy traps for anyone who is tasked with developing so many human relationships as teachers. To love another person, or in our case as Holy Cross Educators, a group of other people, is to make *the decision to love*. And what does love look like in real time? Getting to school early to get our classrooms set up and to review our lessons for the day. Greeting students by name as they enter our classrooms. Actually listening when our students are stressed out and need a change of pace. Providing a treat to the whole class to celebrate the end of a good week or quarter of school. Praying with our students and following up with them when they have shared intentions with us. In a word, we must learn to give of ourselves and give ourselves away in this "work of resurrection" (*Christian Education*, "The Formation of Students to the Christian Life").