

The Work of Resurrection

-December 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

As the holiday season approaches, we will once again become aware of the pressure points and dysfunction which many of our students experience on a daily basis: for some it is the drama of living between the households of divorced parents, for others it is financial insecurity, and for others it is addiction rearing its ugly face as the stress mounts. It can be difficult to witness such burdens unfolding before our very eyes, but as Holy Cross Educators we have a special opportunity to minister in the midst of it all. Indeed, if we remain rooted in our deep faith in God, we will be able to "move without awkwardness around those who suffer" (*Constitutions*, 118). Here are some practical suggestions for being a loving presence for those who struggle during this time of year:

- *We can be consistent.* Yes, we have our own hardships that we are trying to navigate behind the scenes and perhaps we might be tempted to complain, shut down or lash out when our students are causing us problems. Nevertheless, a little patience, a deep breath and the decision to remain calm will give students a point of reference and some much needed stability.
- *We can be flexible.* This could mean cutting a student a break on an assignment due date or changing the date of a test to accommodate our students' schedules. These little acts have the potential to make a big difference in the life of an adolescent who normally experiences adults as only imposing things on them.
- *We can be attentive.* Kids often speak with their actions and their body language. If a student is withdrawn all of a sudden, let's take note and when the time is right, strike up a conversation, "What's up? You seem to be more low key today than usual - is everything okay?"
- *We can be generous.* The painful reality is that for many students home life is complicated and the spirit of giving takes on a transactional quality or doesn't exist at all. Passing out stickers, candy, or an end-of-quarter treat are good ways to make kids feel the love that is so essential for their growth and development as human beings.
- *We can be interested.* By asking students where they plan to go during the break or how they plan to celebrate Christmas, we give them an opportunity to take ownership of their narratives and invite choices that could bring a deeper sense of dignity and meaning to their lives.
- *We can be compassionate.* When students do reveal a personal problem, we can listen with a non-judgmental heart, direct them to whatever help or support they might need, and follow up in an appropriate way at an appropriate time.

I had a student who just pushed me and pushed me and pushed me. He broke every rule multiple times and I felt like I would be justified if I simply started to give him detentions or kicked him out of class. Nevertheless, the words of the *Constitutions* resonated in some deep place in my soul, "We must be people with hope to bring. There is no failure the Lord's love cannot reverse, no humiliation He cannot exchange for blessing, no anger He cannot dissolve, no routine He cannot transfigure" (118), and so I hung with this student. Once he felt like he could trust me, he finally disclosed that his dad had been arrested, was in prison and might not come home for a long time. This conversation humbled me and helped him to feel connected which allowed the both of us to journey into the frantic holiday season together as allies.

Our consistency, flexibility, attentiveness, generosity, genuine interest and compassion are all great gifts that we can offer our students at Christmas time. Indeed, we shall form our students as young women and men in the Holy Cross tradition by showing them, through our own example, that "even the cross can be borne as a gift" (*Constitutions*, 118).