

## A HERITAGE FOR MISSION

### *Father Basil Moreau's Perspective on Education*

## RESPONSE TO THE GOSPEL



At the end of his gospel, Saint Matthew describes what could be called the Christian educational mandate. In his final instructions to his followers, Jesus says: "Go, and make disciples of all nations... Teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. Remember, I am with you always, to the end of the ages" (28: 19- 20). Jesus' mandate assigns a task, gives the means for completing that task, and offers support to complete it.

The *task*: Go and make disciples.

The *means*: Teach what Jesus taught.

The *support*: Jesus' continuing presence.

The response to that mandate over twenty centuries has shaped our Catholic Christian educational heritage. That same response has shaped the heritage of Holy Cross as a religious congregation within the Church and as a community involved in education. And, through mission statements and local traditions and practices, it has shaped the heritage of the schools associated with Holy Cross.

More than one and one-half centuries have passed since the foundation of the first school associated with the Congregation of Holy Cross (1836). The heritage of Holy Cross traces its roots to nineteenth-century post-revolutionary France in general, and to a priest of the Diocese of Le Mans, Basil Moreau, in particular. In founding Holy Cross as a community of brothers, priests, and sisters, Father Moreau emphasized three areas of ministry: education, parish assistance, and foreign missions. Holy Cross has continued to minister in those fields throughout its history and has expanded into other ministries.

Reflecting on this heritage with a focus on education is particularly interesting and challenging because it has been communicated as an oral tradition. Father Moreau did not develop a universal set of guidelines to be implemented in a standardized way for all time. Particular situations and settings needed to be the focus since Holy Cross was involved in education on an international scale very early in its history.

## BASIL MOREAU

Basil Moreau knew the ministry of education by experience. The first twelve years of his priesthood were spent as a professor in the diocesan seminary, teaching successively philosophy, theology, and scripture. During that time he

was asked by the bishop to help the Christian Brothers with some organizational matters, and to assist an elderly priest of the diocese, Jacques Dujarie, in organizing the Brothers of St. Joseph, a community founded in 1820, in Ruillé, France.

As an educator, Moreau placed a high priority on an integrated education. He believed studying the classics and the catechism should not be isolated from the discoveries of modern science and developments within the arts. In 1835, he convinced seminary administrators to introduce a significant innovation in the curriculum: the requirement to study the physical sciences with the study of philosophy.

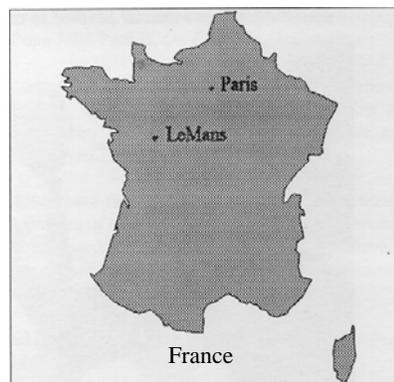
Moreau was convinced that if future priests were to be effective ministers, then they had to be prepared for the developments and realities of the modern world. That conviction and his concern for the condition of the Church and society in the wake of the French Revolution, led him to found a group of priests to serve schools and parishes disrupted by years of persecution.

In 1828, Father Moreau proposed to the bishop of Le Mans a plan for the foundation of a society of priests who would be well educated and who would work to raise the teaching standards in the diocesan colleges and seminaries. Later he combined the idea of priest-educator with that of priest-missionary to found the "Auxiliary Priests" who would later become members of the Congregation of Holy Cross.

These priests were to be knowledgeable in philosophy, but also in physics — in theology, but also in political science — in church and sacraments, but also in economics. In 1833, preparing for the future of this group, Moreau sent three priests to study at the Sorbonne in Paris, reflecting his commitment to academic excellence.

Two years later, in 1835, he became the chief administrator for the Brothers of St. Joseph — they were to receive a similar education. In 1837 he merged the priests and brothers into a single community, settling them in the section of Le Mans known as Sainte-Croix, Holy Cross. Thus, this group came to be known as the Congregation *from* or *of* Holy Cross. The Sisters were founded in 1841 they, too, were to be well prepared for their work.

Father Moreau founded a primary boarding school in 1836 and a secondary boarding school in 1838. As the community of Holy Cross grew and expanded in numbers and in geography, educational excellence remained a consistent standard for the training both received and given.



The first requests which came from the missions outside France were for teachers for schools and seminaries. As a result, the first vocations to Holy Cross outside France came through the congregation's commitment to education. The ministry of education was a dominant characteristic of Holy Cross during the first years of its existence.

## **THE HOLY CROSS SCHOOL**

Basil Moreau passed on to Holy Cross a heritage of education that is essentially Catholic Christian. The primary aim of the school is to prepare students to be members of society and people of God. To accomplish that, there must be correspondence between academic study and Christian faith. The school must provide whatever is necessary for students to live productively in society and to live faithfully as Christians.

Providing those necessities must be the concern of every department and dimension of the school's life; it cannot be relegated solely to theology or religious studies or campus ministry personnel. Everyone associated with the school shares the responsibility of creating an environment in which students learn to be competent citizens and committed Christians.

Father Moreau wrote to the members of Holy Cross:

*We can state the kind of teaching we hope to give Even though we base our philosophy on faith, no one need fear that we will confine our teaching within narrow and unscientific boundaries. We will accept the discoveries of science without prejudice, and in a manner adapted to the needs of our times. We do not want our students to be ignorant of anything they should know. ...We will always place education side by side with instruction; the mind will not be cultivated at the expense of the heart. While we prepare useful citizens for society, we shall likewise do our utmost to prepare citizens for heaven. (Circular Letter 36- 1849)*

Three points are particularly striking in this text.

1. ***"We will not confine our teaching within narrow and unscientific boundaries."*** An integrated Catholic education does not redefine reality by faith, it strives to see reality with faith. Catholic education tries not so much to rearrange the world, as to transform it through the teaching and example given by Jesus of Nazareth. To redefine reality by faith, rearranging the world rather than dealing with it, reflects a fundamentalism which is inconsistent with Catholic tradition.
2. ***"We do not want our students to be ignorant of anything they should know."*** This is simply and directly the moral duty and social

responsibility of the school. Negligence in this responsibility causes an injustice to the students served by the school.

3. ***"We will always place education side by side with instruction."*** This distinction is not merely semantic for Moreau. *Instruction* transmits particular knowledge and skills. *Education* fosters the values, attitudes, and behaviors, which will use that knowledge and those skills appropriately and productively.

These same three points can be found, implicitly or explicitly, in statements on education from the United States' bishops: in 1972, *To Teach as Jesus Did*; in 1990, *In Support of Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools*; and in a 1990 text from Pope John-Paul II, *On Catholic Universities*.

Instruction is essential to the work of a school, but its meaning and direction are rooted in education. The instructor must also and always be the educator; without the blend of both, teaching is incomplete and students are not served as fully as possible. This blend is necessary to prepare, as Moreau says, "citizens for society" and "citizens for heaven."

Instruction and education flourish in an environment where family spirit is evident and dominant. From the beginning, family spirit was to mark the members of Holy Cross as well as the institutions with which they would be associated. This was among Father Moreau's deepest desires. He believed that things would be successfully accomplished once people were and remained united in the cause of good.

The school, therefore, in the Holy Cross educational heritage, is a place of broad academic learning *and* of socialization to values inherent in the gospel.

## **THE FACULTY AND STAFF**

The school cannot provide learning and socialization as an insensitive monolith, an assembly-line production center. Faculty and staff, administrators, and board members give life and personality to the school, much as a family has life and personality. Brochures and catalogues and profiles may give some substance for students and potential students to consider; but the faculty and staff give breath to the ideals and goals and to the mission of the school.

The ways in which a school formulates its self-identity — through its heritage, current mission statement, the efforts of administrators, and the workings of the board — will shape the ways in which the faculty and staff understand and articulate their roles.

Within the heritage of Holy Cross, the basic responsibility of faculty and staff is to create and sustain an environment which leads students to become competent

citizens and committed Christians. The first task, then, for faculty and staff is to be competent in their *profession* and committed to their *faith*. An effort must be made to integrate these two, so professionalism and faithfulness are never mutually exclusive.

In this regard, Father Moreau insisted that faculty and staff endeavor to receive the highest certification possible in their fields of expertise, and remain faithful to their obligations as Christians. Accepting the responsibility for continuing professional and personal development is not an option to be discussed, but a necessity to be implemented. Faculty and staff development programs must be integrated and whole to assure both dimensions.

It becomes clear when reflecting on a school's mission statement that to achieve what a school says it offers to students, the faculty and staff must have the capability, conviction, and competence to do the offering.

Mission statements are often written appropriately from the perspective of ideals and opportunities presented to the students. But there is another perspective: What values and qualities of life and work must the faculty and staff possess and practice to present those ideals and opportunities effectively and with integrity?

While the faculty and staff cannot pass on to students a ready-made integration of knowledge and faith, they can provide the information and insights necessary to build such an integration. Faculty and staff become the bridge for students to learn ways in which knowledge and faith converge. Serving as that bridge, faculty and staff are among the principal agents forming students' consciences. And this is the most sacred responsibility within the school environment.

Father Moreau wrote a small book on teaching and learning, entitled *Christian Education*. He writes:

*This short work on education ... has the following goals: the formation of the hearts of students and the development of a positive response toward religion within them. I have always understood education to be only this. I have always been convinced that the first duty of any teacher is to produce Christians; society today has a greater need for people of values than it has for scholars.*

This is the core of education in the heritage of Holy Cross: "the formation of the hearts of students and the development of a positive response toward religion within them." Whatever skills or values are being taught to students, they must be directed toward this "formation" and "development."

Creating and sustaining an environment which nurtures formation of the heart and development of a positive response toward religion, a faculty and staff must challenge and guide students to become people of values as well as scholars. To

be most effective, that challenge and guidance must be consistent with the personal experiences of the faculty and staff. It cannot be truly effective if it is completely theoretical.

In the Holy Cross educational heritage, the persons who make up a faculty and staff are much more than depositories and dispensers of knowledge and skills; they are ministers, mentors, and collaborators in sustaining that heritage.

## **CAMPUS MINISTERS**

Even though what was just said concerning faculty and staff includes the role of campus ministers, a special note can be added on their ministry.

A distinctive characteristic of campus ministers' role is the multi-faceted presence they have to the students, touching everything from catechesis to counseling to companionship. The presence and activity of campus ministers is a ministry of leadership and accompaniment.

As noted above, the faculty and staff serve as a bridge for students to learn ways in which knowledge and faith converge. Campus ministers are included in that. However, campus ministers have a unique opportunity to challenge students to examine their life-experiences with the perspective of faith and to learn ways in which daily life and faith converge.

Stating that campus ministers can take leadership in this does not excuse other personnel and departments from accepting that same responsibility. The point here is simply to highlight that campus ministry can take a pro-active role in developing strategies and designing opportunities to assure that the practice of faith within the school environment can and does occur regularly and naturally.

Campus ministry can provide a perspective and a framework which affirm that faith and religion are not "special events;" they are parts of everyday life.

Beyond that, campus ministers can take leadership in seeing that the school is an environment in which the practical demonstration of faith in daily life is acceptable. Faith cannot be communicated as something which is proper only to religion classes or campus ministry activities; it must infiltrate every aspect of daily life in school.

Finally, it would be a mistake to limit the resources of campus ministry solely to the students. While maintaining the priority of serving the students, campus ministry can touch and be at the service of the entire campus community. This is the ideal: for students to see that faculty and staff are also working to see and understand the bridge between faith and daily experience.

## STUDENTS

The primary beneficiaries of the efforts of everyone are the students. The school's formulation and articulation of its self-identity, and the faculty/staff understanding and practice of their roles, shape the quality of instruction and education students receive. Students must see and know they are in an environment conducive to intellectual and spiritual growth, and one which challenges them to that growth.

Within the heritage of Holy Cross, such an environment is cultivated through discipline and affirmation. *Discipline* is communicated and taught through progressive learning in class and an ordered environment in a school's regulations and procedures. Discipline provides students with standards by which to track their progress. *Affirmation* is communicated and taught through regular recognition of accomplishments. Affirmation certifies students' success in achieving and surpassing standards set by the school. These two qualities are an education in themselves: discipline teaches justice and affirmation strengthens self-esteem. In the schools he founded, Father Moreau fostered these two qualities throughout the year by developing and implementing a broad curriculum which included religion, the humanities and sciences, the literary and fine arts, vocal and instrumental music, service to the civic community, and a full sports program from simple games to sports such as fencing. The curriculum was designed so that education could be a social equalizer in response to a setting (post-revolutionary France) in which equality was a tentative concept. In this way, the Holy Cross educational process becomes prophetic by reflecting the unity and equality which must characterize God's people as the followers of Jesus.

For Father Moreau, the curriculum was always to have a practical dimension. One story can serve to illustrate this. In 1848 France experienced the overthrow of the monarchy and the proclamation of the Second Republic. These are years of tension. Institutions — especially educational institutions — as popular and well-known as Notre-Dame de Sainte-Croix were always being accused of conspiring to lead students away from allegiance to the present form of government. In early 1849, reflecting on the events of 1848, Father Moreau writes to the community:

*The most absurd and contradictory rumors have been circulated about our establishment and, especially, about myself. Because we thought it prudent to show ourselves to the public just as we were, rather than remain off by ourselves, I had our musicians appear on three or four more solemn occasions in order to make them face the workers whose threats were a source of fear. I also had them sing patriotic songs during their recreations to forestall feelings of fear aroused by conversations in which there was always some element of false rumor and of more or less alarming reports from the outside. (Circular Letter 35 -1849)*

Moreau "strikes up the band and the chorus" so to speak in the face of very tense political situations. It was a way of putting to use what students had learned,

thereby giving them a practical experience of the justice built upon discipline and the self-esteem flowing from affirmation and mutual support.

Father Moreau highlighted these same qualities particularly in an annual awards ceremony. More than something to do at the end of the academic year, the awards ceremony was a means to further educate students: 1) about the justice of completing one's responsibilities, and 2) about the self-esteem strengthened by having one's accomplishments recognized by faculty and peers.

Moreau believed that students educated in such an environment of justice and self-esteem would gain the knowledge and confidence to explore, to question, and to challenge the world around them. And that exploration and question and challenge would influence the world positively and productively. Students have the right to ask the school and faculty and staff to offer whatever programs that will enable them to discover, develop, and realize their potentials.

In the Holy Cross educational heritage, there is a direct connection between the qualities a person develops in school and the qualities lived long after the years in school. In a small book entitled *Teacher's Guide for Holy Cross*, we find this principle:

Our students are destined to live in the business and problems of the world. So, they should not be made to live a type of life which they would have to abandon when they leave our institution. They should be trained in such a way that they may be everywhere what they were in school. This principle must never be lost sight of. ("General Discipline")

That students "may be everywhere what they were in school." The heritage of Holy Cross does not negate the importance and necessity of the natural, human development which must take place for growth. The concern here is for realism in education; students must be prepared for the society and the world in which they are going to live and work. It is the right of students to expect such preparation and it is the duty of the school, faculty and staff to provide it. This is precisely why Father Moreau insisted, "We do not want our students to be ignorant of anything they should know" (Circular Letter 36- 1849). It is simply a matter of justice.

Because the future is valued, realism in education is no luxury. Students today *are* the future. During a commencement ceremony, Father Moreau told the gathering, "you hold in your hands the future of religion and society." (*Annals of Holy Cross*) In the heritage of Holy Cross, realism in education is rooted in the integration of knowledge and faith, and cultivated through an environment of justice and self-esteem.

From the perspective of the Holy Cross educational heritage, students are embodiments of the future. They must understand themselves as such and they

must be served as such by educators.

## **FORMING THE FUTURE**

The future of religion and society is truly in the hands of everyone involved in the ministry of a Holy Cross school. The education given today determines the quality of life tomorrow. The following points summarize the profile of a Holy Cross education.

1. Holy Cross education is concerned primarily with leading students to understand and to live Christianity.
2. Holy Cross education enables students to become informed and active citizens.
3. Holy Cross education nurtures an environment of collaboration, supported by a family spirit which touches and includes everyone associated with the school.
4. Holy Cross education teaches respect for personal, social, racial, political, religious, gender, and linguistic diversity.
5. Holy Cross education fosters participation in the life of the Church and promotes dialogue between faith and knowledge, faith and daily experience, faith and culture
6. Holy Cross education maintains standards of excellence established by local, state, federal, and diocesan accreditation procedures and requirements.
7. Holy Cross education maintains a global perspective.

These seven points provide the substance of an educational process of information at the service of formation directed toward transformation.

**INFORMATION.** The knowledge and skills communicated to students aim at preparing them for life and work in the future. However, information is not an end in itself; it is ever at the service of

**FORMATION.** The intellectual, social, and spiritual development of students must be the priority for every aspect of school life. Even formation is not an end itself; it is directed toward

**TRANSFORMATION.** The values and quality of life which students are taught and encouraged to embrace will shape the world around them, determining the future. Thus, they become agents of transformation.

These three are inseparable within the heritage of Holy Cross. *Information* takes on an ethical dimension once it is put to use. *Formation* guides students in determining how they will use the information, the knowledge and skills, at their disposal. *Transformation* becomes a reality within and around students' lives as they use knowledge and skills with personal integrity and consistency to the gospel.

These three components of the Holy Cross educational process are usually expressed — implicitly or explicitly — in the school's mission statement. And, it is with them in mind that the school's mission statement can be read and reflected upon. Specifically, in terms of *information*, how does the mission statement reflect the priority of providing students with all that is needed for a complete academic development? As for *formation*, how does the mission statement emphasize the school's concern for the students' quality of life and the values-based context for the instruction provided? In terms of *transformation*, how does the mission statement recognize that students must and will have an impact on the world during and after their years in school? How does it express that these students will become agents of transformation?

The importance and usefulness of the school's mission statement should not be underestimated. Whoever and whatever comes into contact with the lives and works of the students — faculty and staff, administration, structures, procedures — must be driven by the mission. In fact, originally, the position of Prefect of Discipline within Holy Cross schools was not designed to be a "police" function. Rather, the Prefect was to oversee that the mission was accomplished consistently and effectively in all dimensions of the school's life and activities. The challenge for any mission statement has less to do with how well it could be or should be written than with whether or not it is actually used and referred to during the decision-making processes on any level, in any segment of school life.

This educational process of placing information at the service of formation directed toward transformation reflects Father Moreau's conviction that education is, essentially, a "work of resurrection" (*Christian Pedagogy*). He asks educators to "put their hand to this work of resurrection" (*ibid.*). This resurrection will have nothing less than the effect of Jesus' own: a personal transformation which reaches far beyond itself to touch immediately our neighbors and eventually our world. Thus, the educational mandate established by Jesus continues through the heritage of Holy Cross.

The work of education, this work of resurrection, places the school, the faculty and staff, and students at the very birthplace of the future. It is not surprising, then, to hear Father Moreau recommend:

*Let all of us understand that ordinary virtue is no longer sufficient to save us or the students entrusted to us! If education was ever difficult from the*

*Christian viewpoint, it is definitely so today ... Therefore, let us pray and work, let us focus our attention on the Lord. (Circular Letter 137- 1860)*

Holy Cross has been involved in education for more than 150 years. Those involved in the work of Holy Cross education are responsible collaboratively for the future. Their efforts and accomplishments in the educational process of a Holy Cross school not only give an opportunity to choose the quality of the future, but the opportunity to create it.