

**From the Writings of Father Basil Anthony Moreau,
Founder of the Congregation of Holy Cross**

Working Together

✠ What is true of a palace whose foundations have been laid and which is rising gradually to completion is verified, likewise, in a great work of charity. It is not one person alone who builds; nor it is one stone, or one single beam of wood that forms it. Each worker contributes something from his own trade; each stone is cut to fit into its one appointed place; and each piece of wood is arranged and placed so as to enhance the general effect of the entire building. Union, then is a powerful lever with which we could move, direct, and sanctify the whole world, if the spirit of evil, who has been allowed to exercise his power over this earth, did not set himself up against the wondrous effects of this moral force. **(Circular Letter 14 – 1841)**

Ideals of Education

✠ Consequently, we may henceforth take our beloved students from the elementary courses through the profound studies of philosophy which complete their education and which, if well directed, can exercise such a great influence on the rest of life. We can state in a word the kind of teaching we hope to impart ... Even though we base our philosophy course on the data of faith, no one need fear that we shall confine our teaching within narrow and unscientific boundaries. No; we wish to accept 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. To this end, we shall shrink from no sacrifice. But we shall never forget that virtue, as Bacon puts it, is the “spice that preserves science.” We shall 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.

... It is God’s own hand that has guided everything, and He it is whom we must thank above all. Hence, my dear sons and daughters in Jesus Christ, I beg you to unite your thanks with ours in order that we may draw down more abundant blessings from heaven upon our work, and above all, not stop their flow by a want of gratitude. St. Bernard says: “Ingratitude is like a scorching wind that dries up the rivers of grace.”

The best way to show God our gratitude and love, St. Gregory tells us, is to express them by deeds, by the practice of good works. ... **(Circular Letter 36 – 1849)**

☞ Let us join to truly religious conduct a love of work and, especially, of study. This point is of fundamental importance for our educational establishments. **(Circular Letter 77 – 1856)**

☞ We will practice this spirit of penance also if we are faithful to our rule and take care that the ten thousand children confided to our care are educated according to its norms ... Our rules certainly insure the necessary training for the mind, but their first and foremost concern is with the formation of the heart through the development of those religious dispositions that alone can make a good person and a Christian. Thus, our sublime, but difficult, mission should be fulfilled with that happy blending of gentleness and firmness, prudence and vigilance, which is the secret of all successful education. **(Circular Letter 79 – 1857)**

☞ May all of us understand that ordinary virtue is no longer sufficient either to save us or the youth entrusted to us! If education was ever a difficult work from the Christian viewpoint, it is assuredly so today, when parents almost seem leagued together to ruin our young people by raising them in the school of a world wrapped up in materialism. Oh, who will grant us the grace to inspire these young souls with the spirit of renunciation and sacrifice and thus to save them from the corruption that threatens people of every age and condition of life. To this end let us pray and work, let us be on our guard and sacrifice ourselves, and fix our eyes on our Divine Model, without ever allowing the grace of our vocation to grow weak within us. **(Circular Letter 137 – 1861)**

☞ I hear that in some of our schools, in spite of our rules and the provisions of civil law, students are still being subjected to corporal punishment. As this practice could gravely compromise the congregation, I forbid it in virtue of holy obedience. Those who forget themselves in this way should take the following incident to heart:

An Abbot who had a reputation for piety, complained one day to St. Anselm about the students educated in his monastery. He said: “We whip them continually and they only become worse.”

“And when they grow up, how are they?” asked St. Anselm. “Stupid as beasts,” the Abbot replied.

St. Anselm remarked: “Behold, a fine education it is that changes humans into beasts. But tell me, Lord Abbot, if after you planted a tree in your garden, you proceeded to close it up on all sides so it could not spread its branches, would it ever be anything but a crooked, stunted, useless tree? In thus repressing these poor children, and depriving them of all freedom, you make them harbor crooked, twisted puzzled thoughts that grow so strong that they revolt at all your corrections. Thus they find in you neither charity nor mildness; they have no confidence in you and believe

that you are acting out of envy and hatred. These sentiments increase with the years, and as their souls are bent and inclined to vice, and have not been brought up in charity, they regard everybody with suspicion. “Tell me, are they not human like yourself and would you wish to be treated thus if you were in their place? When he models a fine figure in gold or silver, is the artist satisfied with wielding only heavy blows with the hammer? Feed a nursing babe bread and you will choke it. A strong soul is pleased with afflictions and humiliations, and prays for his enemies; a weak soul, however, needs to be led by mildness, joyfully invited to virtue, and charitably borne with in his defects.”

When the Abbot heard these words, he threw himself at the feet of St. Anselm, acknowledged his want of discretion, and promised to amend. **(Circular Letter 175 – 1867)**

Providence

☞ Truly, we cannot sufficiently admire God’s plan in our regard. After sending us crosses and trials during the year that is closing, he now crowns us with success and consoles us with peace both within and without. It is an indubitable proof that he wishes to guide his work himself according to his own admirable designs. It is he who, up to the present, has directed all those events that appeared most contrary to the execution of his holy will. If we seek only God’s glory and are ready to make every sacrifice for the love of so good a Master, then the more trials we have to face, the better everything will succeed. It is with this confidence and spirit of abandonment that we shall see the Institute of St. Joseph expand and grow strong. **(Circular Letter 5 – 1837)**

☞ How true it is that God lovingly protects and encourages everyone who recognizes their own weakness and trustfully asks the help of his Providence. **(Circular Letter 16a – 1842)**

☞ God has done too much for the work of Holy Cross up to now, not to complete it, if we place no obstacle in the way of this work, and if we live in his spirit and place all our confidence in him. **(Letter to Father Rog rie – 27 December, 1861)**

Holy Cross is God’s Work

☞ Holy Cross is not a human work, but God’s very own. Woe to whoever would wish to change it by leading it into paths different from those followed by Divine Providence in its foundation. If each member continues to carry out his own particular obedience in a spirit of loyalty and simplicity, and with the spirit of union that is now inspiring all the members of the Association, God will bless our whole Congregation. **(Circular Letter 40 – 1850)**

☞ If I could have foreseen the development of the Congregation of Holy Cross from the outset, I could then have regulated and coordinated everything in advance. If such were the case, however, the Congregation would have been a merely human combination and not the work of Divine Providence. The fact of the matter is that it began and developed in a manner so mysterious, that I can claim for myself neither credit for its foundation nor merit for its progress. Therein lies the indubitable proof that God alone is the Founder of this Congregation, since according to St. Augustine, when we cannot find the cause of a good work, we must recognize that the Lord is its beginning and author. **(Circular Letter 94 – 1858)**

Zeal

☞ By zeal is understood that flame of burning desire that one feels to make God known, loved and served and thus save souls. Apostolic activity is therefore the essential character of this virtue, and every teacher who is animated by this virtue will fulfill the duties of his state with eagerness, affection, courage and perseverance.... He will feel that which St. Paul felt for the Galatians whom he had evangelized: “My little children for whom I am in labor until Christ Jesus be formed with you.” This is the goal of all Christian education and in order to achieve this end you ought not neglect any means...Our zeal is always guided by charity, everything is done with strength and gentleness: strength because we are courageous and unshakable in the midst of pain, difficulty and trials...and with gentleness because we have the tenderness of the Divine Model. **(Christian Education, I, art.4 – 1856)**

☞ How can you have zeal for the duties of your state, if you do not have a love for the Savior that inspires you with esteem and affection for your tasks, and dedication for the salvation of others for whom Jesus sacrificed his life? **(1855 Exercises, “On the virtues of Jesus Christ, which become, for religious, the model and the source, with the Institution of the Eucharist”)**

Living Zeal

☞ In the midst of my labors, I am mindful that one of the first duties of the charge that has been laid upon me is to work for your sanctification and, to that end, first of all, to sanctify myself. For if we are not animated by the spirit of the saints, the important work of Holy Cross will come to nothing, and our efforts for the sanctification of youth will be vain and useless. **(Circular Letter 8 - 1839)**

☞ We are committed by our vocation to extend the reign of Jesus Christ in the hearts of all people. **(1855 Exercises, “Meditation for the feast of the Patronage of St. Joseph”)**

I rejoice and thank God when I reflect on the good he has chosen to work by means of all these different elements that his Providence has put together and of the good he will yet accomplish. (**Circular Letter 45 – 1851**)

☞ If at times you have a marked preference for certain people, it should be for the poorest, the most abandoned, the most ignorant, the least gifted by nature ... If then you surround them with the most assiduous attention, it is because their needs are greater and it is only justice to give more to those who have received less. (**Christian Education, I: 1, art. 4 – 1856**)

☞ May this little treatise on teaching, written for the schools of the Congregation, attain the end I had in mind in writing it, namely, the formation of the very heart of the child, the full development of his particular capacity and understanding of life in relation to God. For I have never understood education as other than this, convinced as I am of these two truths, the first duty of a teacher is to form Christians and that society certainly needs people of virtue more than people of learning. (**Christian Education, Preface – 1856**)

Faith

Living Faith

☞ The life of faith consists of two things: forming our judgments in conformity to the principles of the gospel, and directing our actions according to its practical counsels. First of all, forming our judgments. This is not a question of faith in the theological and speculative sense, that is to say, of firm adherence to all the beliefs of the Church. We are speaking of a profound conviction that goes deep into the heart and penetrates us with truth.

... This kind of faith makes us accept both with our hearts and with our minds, the principles of Jesus Christ, even those most opposed to the tendencies of human nature ...

... This lively faith must, in addition, establish itself in our will ... Conforming to the truths it makes us appreciate, this faith must, so to speak, pass to our hands in order to direct all their actions; it must animate our prayers to make them more efficacious ... In a word, this spirit of faith must consecrate and sanctify even the least details of our everyday life. (**Sermons, “The Sprit of Faith” – 1834**)

Practicing Faith

☞ To acquire and preserve the spirit of faith, the religious must lean not upon knowledge acquired by study, or by experience, but simply on the first truth which is God, and on the authority of his Church ... Frequently

ask Jesus Christ, the author and finisher of our faith, for this spirit of faith, saying to him for one another as his apostles did: “Lord increase our faith.” To put this virtue into practice, walk in the presence of God, fear nothing so much as to offend him and prefer to endure all the evils on earth rather than incur his judgments. God must be adored as the absolute master of all things. He must be loved as a Father. Therefore, pray to him with respect, fervor, attention, and confidence; undertake all things through obedience for his glory and the salvation of souls; have a pure intention, an ardent zeal, and a burning charity.

In a word, faith should become for each one, according to the comparison of the psalmist: “A lamp always burning in the hand to conduct and direct the steps in the path of justice.”

Act in all things after the teachings and example of Jesus Christ, as St. Vincent de Paul, who before taking any important decision always asked himself: “What would the diving Master do in my place?” **(1858, Rules, Common Rule XIII)**

Nurturing Faith

☞ Let us now look at the means of acquiring this spirit of faith. I reduce them to four principal ones. The first of these is to purify our heart of all sin. In fact, the vitality of faith is in proportion to purity of heart ...

The second means is meditation on the truths taught by faith. This holy exercise gives us a taste for them one after the other; it is like a stamp which imprints them deeply on our heart. It makes these truths a part of us ... and assimilates them into the center of our soul. Up to now have we been people of prayer? Or at least, do we want to become people of prayer for the future?

The third means of developing our life of faith is humble and fervent prayer, often asking God to give us this life of faith.

The fourth consists in setting before ourselves some motive of faith for all our actions, and in asking ourselves frequently during the day: “What spirit prompts me in this action? Under what aspect of faith am I doing this or that?” Or ... “What would Jesus do in my place?” **(Sermons, “The Spirit of Faith” – 1834)**

Effects of Faith

☞ Above all, I ask God to increase in the members of our Association the spirit of faith and devotion to work. This spirit alone can enable us to pass calmly and quietly through the storms that, for some time past, have been disturbing both the political and the religious world. Yes, my very dear

sons and daughters in Jesus Christ, it is only in the thoughts of things divine and in fidelity to the duties of our vocation that we can find rest and peace in these days of unrest and disorder. In fact, it is in meditation on the great truths of our faith that we learn to detach ourselves from the swiftly passing shadow of the world, which like a rushing torrent, carries off in its waves both people and the goods. It is in such a meditation that we train ourselves to see the hand of God in all the events of life. With the assurance of the Apostle that “to those who love God all things work together for good,” we do not allow ourselves to be disturbed or discouraged before the trials Providence sends us. **(Circular Letter 35 – 1849)**

LIVING THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

Life of Jesus

☩ Dear Fathers and well-beloved Brothers, Christianity — and with still greater reason the religious life — is nothing else than the life of Jesus Christ reproduced in our conduct. **(Circular Letter 137 - 1861)**

Living the Life of Jesus

☩ What is the life of Jesus Christ? It is a poor crib and a cross of sorrow, and between this crib and this cross thirty years of abnegation and sacrifice. Living the life of Jesus Christ means struggling unto death against the flesh and sin, and warring relentlessly against the world and its vanities. **(Circular Letter 137 - 1861)**

Following Jesus - Perfection

☩ What must we do to become perfect? Follow Jesus Christ, that is to say, imitate him; that is the commitment we made in baptism ... following Jesus is the consequence of this sacrament of faith; it is the holy and irrevocable law of our vocation to Christianity, and we renew it by our religious promises. In what does this imitation of Jesus Christ consist? He himself told us that it is reduced to three things: renouncing ourselves, taking up our cross, and walking in his footsteps. **(Sermons, "The Rule," 1st sermon- 1833)**

☩ In whatever interior dispositions you may be and in whatever life situation you may find yourself, look at your Model and apply yourself to imitating him; be assured that in doing so you will be perfect and you will have a sure guarantee of your salvation; because, says the Apostle, our movement toward glory depends on our resemblance to Jesus Christ ... Walk then in his footsteps and may all your sentiments be conformed to those of the heart of your Divine Master. **(Sermons, "The Sacred Heart" - 1833)**

Ministry

☞ Your whole life should have as its aim to so well assimilate the thoughts, judgments, desires, words, and actions of Jesus Christ that you can say with the great Apostle: "I no longer live, it is Christ who lives in me." (**Sermon during Reception Ceremony of Carmelites -1856**)

Means of Support

☞ After bringing to birth, or at least having strengthened in your heart the desire to imitate Jesus Christ and to make him reign in your spirit, you no doubt wish to know the means necessary to succeed in imitating him. You can reduce these means to one that includes all the others ... that one is to study Jesus Christ; because in studying him we know him, and in knowing him we love him, in loving him we impress his spirit upon our minds that thus we come to imitate him (**1855 Exercises, "On the means to imitate Jesus Christ or to Establish his reign in self"**)

The Cross

Moreau's Experience

☞ It must be admitted that we were really inspired when we took the title of Our Lady of Holy Cross and the Seven Dolors for this foundation. Neither you nor I were expecting so many tribulations, but Providence has its own plans. Our only course now is to pray and work; the time for rest will come later. (**To Mother Mary of the Seven Dolors - 18 October, 1862**)

☞ For my own part, reverend fathers and dear brothers, I am not the least surprised by all these trials. Thanks be to God, they have only creased my confidence in him who alone has founded and maintained this Congregation. (**Circular Letter 179 – 1865**)

What is the Cross?

☞ I cannot insist too strongly that these trials are the hallmark of the works of God. I feel, however, that I am not worthy to suffer like the saintly founders of religious orders. My weakness moves our Lord to pity. For this reason his goodness always accompanies my trials with consolations. Nothing can be more encouraging than this conduct of God in our regard. He seems to be all the more intent on our Association in proportion as men are more determined or at least to stop its progress. (**Circular Letter 26 – 1847**)

☞ Jesus Christ is pleased to test his work; only a religious spirit that understands the power of his cross can sustain our courage in the midst of

trials. Happy indeed are we if we know how to profit by them and to understand the unspeakable advantage of becoming more and more conformed to the image of the Divine Christ crucified. For those who live by faith the cross is a treasure more valuable than gold and stones. If we were truly worthy of our vocation, far from dreading these crosses, we would be more eager to accept them than receive a relic of the very wood that our Savior sanctified by his blood. Let us not allow ourselves, then, to be discouraged by trials, no matter how numerous or bitter they may be. Afflictions, setbacks, loss of friends, privations of every kind, sickness, even death itself, "the evil of each day," and the sufferings of each hour, all these are but so many relics of the sacred wood of the true cross which we must love and venerate. We must enclose these priceless souvenirs in a reliquary made of charity that is patient, resigned, and generous and which, in the Divine Master, suffers all things and supports all things. **(Circular Letter 34 - 1848)**

How Do We Respond?

☞ Try, then, to become perfect copies of the Divine Model, and nothing will ever shake your vocation. Not only will you carry whatever crosses you encounter in accomplishing the duties of your holy state, but you will love these crosses. Yes, you will even desire them and, after the example of our Lord, will choose them in preference to everything else. **(Circular Letter 11 - 1841)**

☞ Do not forget that Christianity is above all a practical religion. Admire its poetry, for it is sublime; but study its Ten Commandments, for they lead to heaven. Rejoice in the splendors of Tabor, but do not run away from the sufferings of Calvary. **(Etrennes Spirituelles -1851)**

What Does the Cross Do?

☞ May these cruel trials turn to our advantage, by detaching us from this life that is so brief and full of bitterness. May these crosses serve to alert us to the imminent coming of our Heavenly Spouse, so that at his arrival he may find us ready to receive him, our lamps filled with the oil of good works. In the meantime, let us with tireless energy trade with the talent entrusted to us; let us store up for ourselves in the granaries of heaven those treasures which neither rust nor moth will ever take from us; with the shield of faith and the sword of prayer let us do battle against our three mortal enemies: the world, the flesh, and the devil. **(Circular Letter 70 - 1855)**

Ministry

☞ I sympathize with your sufferings, my dear daughter. But do not lose sight of the fact that this is now the omen of a future full of blessings, and that the cross alone can sanctify us, save us, and make us useful for the

salvation of others. **(To Mother Mary of the Seven Dolors - 16 February, 1855)**

☞ With great satisfaction, I hear that the tree of the cross is planted where you live, sometimes by sickness and sometimes by setbacks. Let us eat the fruits of life which it bears, and we will never death, at least we will not taste it ... There are not many who want to nourish themselves with its fruits! But there are also very few who may have true life! All the saints have had this life because all have known the mystery of the cross. These people of faith knew that as the allotted portion of Jesus, they knew that all his mortal life was nothing but cross and martyrdom ... and they wanted to become perfect copies of the Divine Model. We are the children and the successors of these saints. Let Jesus crucified be our mirror, our book. **(To religious in Algeria - undated)**

Prayers Composed by Father Moreau

☞ What am I doing on this earth far from you, my Savior?
A cruel war is ignited in my heart.
Without holding back, I want to love you forever!
And I feel that at any age life has appeal

If I come out of myself to do a little good,
At that very moment I experience that
I can do nothing alone.
The world is unleashed, the devil roars;
I do nothing without effort,
Where all comes to nothing.

Be then my light, the only author of all good;
Direct my career, show yourself to be my sustenance.
Assisted by your grace,
I will brave the hell, the disgrace of the world
And the irons of its persecutors.

I consent, for you work,
To suffer each day the infernal scheme
Which I experience;
And if I must disappear to protect its outcome,
I will sacrifice myself until the day of my death.

To the one who loves you
All is simple and gentle;
One loves even the pain endured for you.
Let suffering come,
Let all evil come,
In spite of my repugnance

There will be my rest.

Your cross is my glory,
It is my happiness;
I hope in victory in spite of its weight.
I long for the cross, always, evermore,
Certain that if I die on it,
I am there with Jesus.

Yes, O Good Father,
I wish to live and to die for you,
Without ever displeasing you;
This is the sweetest sentence.
But to be faithful I need your help.
Come, I call you, both day and night.

(---Untitled, August 1866)

☞ I see Jesus in the depths of the tabernacle,
Made prisoner by the key of love.
Yes, my Savior, it is there that, miraculously,
You reside night and day.

There the ungrateful leave you alone,
Refusing you both their hearts and their desires;
And yet you fervent prayer in their favor
Is lifted heavenward.

Forgive them, you repeat again,
God of goodness, have pity on sinners;
It is your son who implores you for them,
Show yourself a Father and speak to their hearts.

Since, without ceasing, they obstinately flee from you,
Divine Captive, I will make the place for:
Allow me, in spite of my lowliness
To establish my dwelling in your sanctuary.

I will go there all the days of my life,
To spend at least a few moments;
And overwhelmed by you presence within me,
You will become heavenly food.

Here I am then, in your sanctuary, O my Jesus!
Yes, I am with you.
You are there, my Savior and my Father,

Was there ever a sweeter exile?

I adore, you, O saving host!
Where through faith I discover my God!
I hope in you, and offer you my life
Which I would like to end in this place.

You smiled at me and called me without ceasing,
I feel my heart burning with your love.
Ah! If only I could die of tenderness,
And fly to the heavenly dwelling place.

Angels of heaven, grant that I might die,
So that, finally my voice might join your concerts:
To celebrate in the same dwelling, with ecstasy,
The love of the King of Kings.

(“Visit to the Blessed Sacrament,” – August 1866)