



Sacred Heart of Jesus: Powerful Intercessor, Inspiring Teacher

Blessed Basil Moreau was the consummate educator, and so when looking to consecrate the priests and seminarians of Holy Cross, he searched not only for a powerful intercessor, but also an inspiring model and teacher.

Through his studies as a young priest with the Sulpicians in Paris, Moreau had become immersed in devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The French School of Spirituality, of which the Sulpicians were a part, saw the heart as the central trope of not only God's love for humans and humans' love for God, but also the encounter between those two loves. As a result, the French School championed and developed devotions to the hearts of Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

In the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Moreau found the model and teacher that he desired for his seminarians and priests, and so in 1841 he consecrated the priests and the seminarians of Holy Cross to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. It was the Sacred Heart of Jesus that was "the center of the most perfect virtues that ever existed; a veritable treasure of candor, innocence, purity, gentleness, patience, and humility; in a word, a living mirror reflecting the most admirable human perfections and the rarest gifts of grace." (*Spiritual Exercises*)

"One of the principal goals of this devotion," preached Moreau in one of his sermons, "is to present us a model for imitation. The sight of the Savior's adorable heart should say to each one of us, as in the past when Moses was given the plan for the Ark of the Covenant and the tabernacle, 'Look at this example and make a faithful copy.' This is the heart of the One given to you as master; your duty is to conform your heart to His. Study His admirable dispositions in relation to His Father, to the world and to Himself, from His incarnation to His triumphant ascension into heaven. 'Look and make a faithful copy.'"

Moreau wanted his priests to become a "faithful copy" of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, because "(Jesus) chose us priests to speak to people about His love. He called us to the remarkable and formidable honor of making Him present every day on the altar, of receiving Him every day in our heart by Holy Communion. And finally, He confided to us the care of all souls for whom He gave up His life." (*Spiritual Exercises*)

The only way that anyone could hope to imitate faithfully the love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, however, would be to plunge themselves into that very same love. For Moreau, what made the Sacred Heart the best of educators was that, unlike any other teacher, the Sacred Heart of Jesus not only provided



the lessons in virtue one needed, but it also gave the graces necessary to learn them and appropriate them in one's life.

In particular, Moreau exhorted Holy Cross seminarians and priests to the particular spiritual practice of envisioning themselves carrying out all of their religious and priestly duties within the Heart of Jesus: "Let us celebrate the holy mysteries within the heart of Jesus; let us recite our office there, let us hear the confessions of our penitents there, and let us proclaim God's word there; in a word, let us fulfill all our duties there and He will permeate the work of our ministry with the most abundant blessings." (*Sermon on the Sacred Heart*)

For Moreau, devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus was intimately and essentially tied to the Eucharist. He never wrote or preached long about the Sacred Heart without coming to the Eucharist, which Moreau saw as both the principal gift to flow out of Jesus' heart as well as the greatest manifestation of that heart's love for us.

"It is at the altar that, in order to console the sufferings of our exile, Jesus offers us a manna more appealing than that of the desert; there that He gives us His flesh to eat and His blood to drink; there that He becomes present in such a way within our soul, His heart speaking to us with all of its affection and bringing our own hearts to beat with His." (*Sermon on the Sacred Heart*)

Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on us.

Along with dedicating the priests and seminarians to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Fr. Moreau also dedicated the Holy Cross brothers to St. Joseph and the Holy Cross sisters to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. The patron of the entire Congregation of Holy Cross is Our Lady of Sorrows.