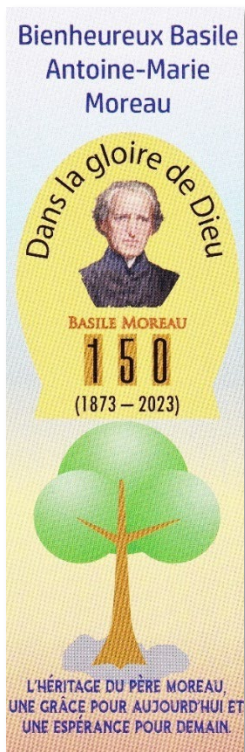


Homily on January 20, 2023



Dear Sisters and Brothers,

The Holy Cross family, fathers, brothers, sisters, associates, and members of new forms of consecration, are gathered today to remember together a certain January 20, 1873, a fateful date that marks the 150th anniversary of the death of our brother and founder, Blessed Basil-Antoine-Marie Moreau, who passed away at the age of 74. Today we celebrate his entry into the Glory of God and the precious heritage he left us: a message of life and courage so that we may be, in his footsteps, a leaven in our world and in the Church.

Today's Gospel places us at the very heart of Blessed Basil Moreau's life: his life centered on Jesus Christ. The evangelist Matthew reminds us of that crucial moment when Jesus announces to his disciples his Passion and death to prepare them for what they will have to experience. Very soon they will see their Master suffer and die. As disciples, they will be called to accept the cross, to follow Jesus, and to risk their lives for the cause of Jesus and the Gospel.

And how can we respond to this invitation of the suffering and glorious Son? How can we follow in the footsteps of our Blessed Founder Basil Moreau who took this obligatory path that leads to the cross? How can we take this path of love and gift if not by accepting our own cross, and by standing close to the cross of our sisters and brothers who weep, suffer, are persecuted, and die around us? Yes, to do "the work of the Resurrection" in our present world, this is the call of our founder. God placed Basil's heart at the heart of the Paschal Mystery, a mystery that we have to discover together, side by side, in the mission. Father Moreau has placed us in the school of the Crucified and Risen Christ. Since the foundation, we are invited to attach ourselves to Jesus, to "put on Jesus Christ every day", to "become another Christ" (as the title of Sister Cécile Perreault's book, published in 1988, indicates.)

How can we, like the apostle Paul, present Jesus crucified with vigor? Indeed, the Crucified One is the center of his life and preaching. To the Galatians, he declares

emphatically: "I live, but it is no longer I, but Christ who lives in me" (Galatians 2:20). In his letter written in prison and dedicated to the people of Ephesus, Paul reminds the new holy people how to live daily with all the members of the community. To be faithful to God's gift in Jesus Christ, he recommends living in humility, gentleness, and patience. Paul has the courage to exhort Jews and Gentiles "to unity of mind in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3). This unity is fundamental for the building of the Body of Christ. At this very hour, it is a question of entering together into this process of growth for the formation of one Body, one Spirit, one Hope, one Faith, one Baptism.

Father Moreau explicitly proposed this same call to unity at the beginning of the Congregation. In 1841, he wrote:

"The work of Holy Cross is rooted in that unity which the Saviour shows us in his Gospel. That is why the same spirit must animate almost all the members, namely: zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, by a community of efforts tending more and more to the union of hearts which is the link and the strength of it" (Circular Letters, no 14, 1er September 1841).

In the same Circular Letter, Father Moreau states that union "is a powerful lever with which to move, direct and sanctify the whole world.

In Psalm 15, which we prayed together, the author, who is surely from the tribe of Levi, responsible for service in the Temple in Jerusalem, did not receive his share of the inheritance like his brothers from the other eleven tribes of Israel. The psalmist declares that 'the Lord is his inheritance', as recorded in Deuteronomy, chapter 10, verses 8 and 9. We are invited to seek refuge in the peace and joy that comes from our ongoing intimacy with God. When we reread Father Moreau's spiritual testament, written on June 13, 1867 and completed on August 3, 1871, we can perceive that he drew his great strength of soul from God and was thus able to forgive in all truth.

"I heartily forgive and most respectfully beg divine mercy, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph, to forgive all those who have wronged me in my reputation or in the goods of which I was a trustee, blessing God for having found me worthy of suffering something on the occasion of undertakings made for his glory" (CATTA, 111, p. 420).

What a grace lived in the person of Basil Moreau and bequeathed to the Holy Cross family. It is this grace that we are invited to offer to our world. How can we do this? Sister Graziella Lalande clearly shows us the path we must take. She states that it is "Through a loving interiorization of the Word that reveals Jesus [...], a contemplative look at the Jesus of the Gospels. A prolonged gaze, an adoring gaze. A gaze that seeks to penetrate more deeply into his thought, more deeply into his way of doing things, more deeply into the mystery of his person" (LALANDE, Graziella, Qui êtes-vous Basile Moreau? p. 186) that we will reach our goal. Certainly, it is this intimacy that our Blessed Founder Basil Moreau sought throughout his life, and it is in it that we will draw, as he did, the courage to forgive and even to forgive ourselves. Then all traces of grudge, resentment, or desire for revenge will disappear. "Be what you should be", Basil Moreau's urgent invitation. Thus, we will become more and more artisans of forgiveness and reconciliation in our 21st-century society.

During this Eucharist, let us thank and praise God for the person of Basil Moreau, for his charisma, and for the Holy Cross family which is called to unfold this grace and to pursue with zeal the mission of Jesus in the world and in the Church.

Let us become more and more identified with Christ-like Father Moreau was, people united and led by the Spirit, men, and women of forgiveness and reconciliation in our fractured and suffering world.

Let us confidently pray to our God that the Church will accept to proclaim the holiness of our brother and founder, Blessed Basil-Antoine-Marie Moreau, and that she will recognize the example of fidelity and the apostolic model that he was until his death. This is the precious heritage he left us, a grace for today and a hope for tomorrow!

Amen

Sr. Denise Desrochers, C.S.C.

20 January 2023