

“The Religious Family of Holy Cross”

Excerpt from: Kevin Grove and Andrew Gawrych, eds. *Basil Moreau: Essential Writings, An Introduction to the Life and Thought of the Founder of the Congregation of Holy Cross*. Notre Dame, Indiana: Christian Classics, 2014, p. 27-29.

Moreau always maintained that the joining of the Brothers of St. Joseph with his Auxiliary Priests was in conformity with Dujarié’s intentions for the brothers.”¹ Dujarié had envisioned a society of priests to lead the Brothers of St. Joseph and the Sisters of Providence. That said, it would be inaccurate to conclude that Moreau’s contribution was simply to bring to fruition what Dujarié never could. The association that Moreau formed at Holy Cross bore his unique stamp, particularly when it came to being an expressly religious community, living the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience.² Although the Brothers of St. Joseph had an annual promise of obedience, which not all took, Dujarié never permitted them to profess religious vows.³ Moreau had encouraged the brothers to profess vows since 1832 because he saw religious life as a means not only of stabilizing, but also energizing their community.⁴ Once having assumed leadership in 1835, Moreau moved quickly to have them profess religious vows, with the first brothers professing perpetual vows at their 1836 retreat.⁵ Moreau had more obstacles to overcome in gaining permission for the priests and sisters to profess vows, yet on August 15, 1840, Bishop Bouvier received Moreau’s own perpetual profession. Later that evening, four Auxiliary Priests, including Fr. Edward Sorin, made their profession.⁶ The first profession of vows by the sisters came in 1843.⁷

The religious life, with its communal living of the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, was central to Moreau’s vision for Holy Cross. It marks two other significant

¹ Etienne Catta and Tony Catta, *Basil Anthony Mary Moreau*, trans. Edward L. Heston (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Company, 1955), 1:323-324; and Tony Catta, *Father Dujarié: Pastor of Ruillé-sur-Loir, Canon of Le Mans, Founder of the Communities of the Sisters of Providence, and the Brothers of St. Joseph, now the Brothers of Holy Cross*, trans. Edward L. Heston (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Company, 1960), 179.

² As Catta writes, “It is above all in this sense [of the religious life] that M. Moreau is definitely a founder.” Catta and Catta, *Moreau*, 1:367-8. See also: Thomas Barrosse, *Moreau: Portrait of a Founder* (Notre Dame: Fides Publishers, 1969), 85-87.

³ Although obedience is one of the three religious vows, apostolic (non-monastic) religious life consists in the profession of poverty, chastity, and obedience.

⁴ Catta, *Father Dujarié*, 168-182, 232-235, 247-248.; Catta and Catta, *Moreau*, 1:303-306, 367-368; Ephrem O’Dwyer, *The Curé of Ruillé: A Sketch of The Very Reverend James Francis Dujarié, Founder of the Sisters of Providence and the Brothers of Saint Joseph of Ruillé* (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 1941), 176-177; and James Connelly, *Basile Moreau and the Congregation of Holy Cross* (Portland: Garaventa Center for Catholic Intellectual Life and American Culture, 2007), 36.

⁵ Twelve brothers total, including Brother André Mottais, professed perpetual (lifelong) vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience that August. Catta, *Father Dujarié*, 274-275; and Catta and Catta, *Moreau*, 1:354-356.

⁶ Moreau announced his intention to profess perpetual vows in his circular letter to open 1840. “Similarly, to acquit myself of my personal debt of gratitude to our Lord for His inestimable favors, and while awaiting the day of my complete offering through the solemn pronouncement of the vows of religion, as several of your number have already so generously done, I have vowed to live and die in Holy Cross, unless obedience calls me elsewhere.” He had to overcome the opposition of both Bishop Bouvier, who was hesitant to have diocesan priests profess religious vows, as well as of some of his own Auxiliary Priests, who, while zealous for the work of Holy Cross, were hesitant about the structures and demands of religious life. The other priests to profess that evening were: Pierre Chappé, Paul Celier, and Augustin Suanier. CL 9, January 1, 1840, 1:21; Catta and Catta, *Moreau*, 1:406-415; Connelly, *Basile Moreau*, 37; and Catta, *Father Dujarié*, 274-275.

⁷ Moreau’s plans for the sisters were held up by Bishop Bouvier, whose reluctance stemmed in part from the wider proliferation of women’s communities in the diocese. After assigning them to Holy Cross’ new foundation in the United States, Moreau allowed two sisters, Mary of Calvary and Mary of the Heart of Jesus, to pronounce vows, albeit addressed to a “future superioress” as their constitutions had yet to be approved by a legitimate ecclesiastical authority. Connelly, *Basile Moreau*, 41-42; Etienne Catta and Tony Catta, *Mother Mary of the Seven Dolors and the Early Origins of the Marianites of Holy Cross (1818-1900)*, trans. Edward L. Heston, (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Company, 1959), 60-61; and Catta and Catta, *Moreau*, 1:432-441.

departures in his vision from that of Dujarié. First, whereas Dujarié's vision of the mission field remained local, responding to the immediate and immense needs that pressed upon him in the wake of the French Revolution, Moreau's vision, like his understanding of the Church, was international. Although, at the time, Holy Cross was an association of diocesan right and thus subject to the authority of the local bishop, Moreau began sending his priests and brothers to missions outside of France in 1840, a short three years after the Fundamental Act of Union.⁸ The first sisters sent on international mission left to the United States in 1843.⁹

Second, as previously mentioned, Dujarié had envisioned a society of priests to govern the Brothers of St. Joseph and the Sisters of Providence. At this time in the Church in France, such a vision was not uncommon. There were other associations that were comprised, at least loosely, of societies of priests, brothers and sisters.¹⁰ Moreau's contribution was to envision, notwithstanding the role of the priests as ecclesiastical superiors, a common dignity among the members of the institute—an equality rooted not only in their shared religious life, but also in the models of the Holy Trinity and the Holy Family that Moreau held up for his association and its union. Accordingly, for Moreau, the priests, brothers, and sisters, in different, yet complementary ways, were all to share in the work entrusted to the association.¹¹

⁸ In 1839, three bishops of foreign mission dioceses—the Bishop-elect of the Diocese of Vincennes, Indiana, the Bishop of Montreal, Canada, and the Bishop of Algiers—all approached Moreau to send members of Holy Cross to their lands. The first offer Moreau accepted was from Bishop Dupuch of Algiers. On April 28, 1840, four brothers and two priests left from Sainte-Croix for Algeria. They were to work in schools, orphanages, and an envisioned preparatory seminary. Catta and Catta, *Moreau*, 1:458, 464-472.

⁹ Catta and Catta, *Mary of the Seven Dolors*, 51-65.

¹⁰ The Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, which had societies of priests, brothers, and sisters, is one example. Catta and Catta, *Moreau*, 448-451; and Catta, *Father Dujarié*, 176.

¹¹ See below: VI. Moreau's Leadership and Development of Holy Cross, 1. Circular Letter 14 and the Association of Holy Cross.