

The «UMBRELLA» Congress

Presentation of the «UMBRELLA» notion

A LITTLE HISTORY

- As I prepared for this gathering, it was good to return to the genesis of the association within our Holy Cross branch. I did not go as far as the original « *mighty tree* » used by Father Moreau to present the Association of Holy Cross at the very beginning... No doubt you will have other occasions to explore that notion with experts on that subject.
- At the beginning, you always find an inspiration, a gift made to somebody who, faithful to the inspiration, to the gift received, is able to share it, to make it surface, to live it and to make it bear fruit.
- If we are here this morning to talk about the evolution and the ramification of the association of Holy Cross, we need to mention the intuition shared by Ms. Andrée Painchaud, the first woman who recognized herself in the gift of Holy Cross to the world, through the Sisters of Holy Cross that she knew and met regularly; and she wanted to be transplanted there, conscious of the possibility of being able to belong to it differently, to share it, without being necessarily «a sister of Holy Cross». That was in 1972.
- Presented to the Province of Our Lady of Holy Cross in Quebec and accepted, this novelty was, little by little, also accepted by the other provinces of the Congregation. It became a proposal voted at the 1985 General Chapter; eventually, it became a common vision and general orientation for the whole congregation.
- Presently, there are groups of Associates in the 4 regions of North America, in Haiti and in Peru. It would be good to remind you the genesis of the association in Sainte-Croix in your region. Who was one or several first partners of your region?...
- It is the same for the New Forms of Consecration. A request from Ms. Marie-Hélène Chartrand and a colleague, Ms. Micheline Pottie, (since then deceased), presented to the Chapter of 2005, allowed us to transplant also to our Holy Cross tree, all those groups which we call today, the New Forms of Consecration.
- After the experiences lived since 2005, two recommendations presented to the 2011 Chapter resulted in a mandate given to the Congregational Administration, which explains the congress that we are beginning today.
- Today, there are 3 Missionaries of Holy Cross from Quebec (two coming from Haiti), 2 Companions of Holy Cross from the USA, 1 New Form of Consecration from Peru, 1 Affiliate and 2 lay consecrated women from Quebec.
- A beautiful diversity of stowage in the Holy Cross gift favored by the fact that there are no canonical standards which ask to standardize the association in the charism of a religious congregation.
- It is at the heart of this diversity that we need to understand this notion of «umbrella». It is not a question of giving a title to name this diversity. Rather, it is an image that borrows from the umbrella the pole of convergence and the rays connected to it in its particular sphere of action as

well as in their interaction. I bring this clarification before speaking of the mandate of the 2011 Chapter, where the word «umbrella» is used without questioning another image, that of the tree often used in the Founder's writings.

THE MANDATE OF THE 2011 CHAPTER

- A two-part mandate
 - ✓ Recommendation to the congregational administration to continue the journey with the sisters, the associates, the persons committed to the new forms of consecrated life, in order to maintain an ongoing process,
 - fostering ownership of **the specific identity of each group**
 - and the development of a **greater mutuality** within their groups and with the other groups dealing with this reality.
 - ✓ Recommendation to the congregational administration to **establish «a Holy Cross umbrella»** wherein different modes of expressions of our charism would be recognized: sisters, associates, new forms of consecrated life, volunteers, collaborators, benefactors and other groups that may come forth in the future.
- What is the foundation of those proposals is
 - ✓ The **recognition of the same pole of attraction and integration, the charism of Holy Cross**, God's gift to the Church for the world,
 - ◆ principle of kinship and belonging (family traits)
 - ✓ The **recognition of the different identity** of the diverse forms of belonging to the charism
 - ◆ principle of specific identity, of inner cohesion, or organicity and autonomy
 - ◆ and principle of differentiation
 - ✓ and a **requirement of communion in an interdependence responsibly assumed** which enriches the whole body (witnesses and artisans of other relationships)
 - ◆ principle of relation (community of being, community of disciples, etc.)
 - ◆ and principle of reciprocity (different from important hierarchical organization or of bonds.

THE HOLY CROSS CHARISM: A POLE OF ATTRACTION AND INTEGRATION

- All those attracted by **the charism of Holy Cross** : a way of being, a way of being together, a way of being together as Gospel at the heart of the world, following Basil Moreau's intuitions.
- Deep down, it is a way of being Holy Cross that allows us to recognize in each and everyone those family traits related to the Gospel values mentioned by Basil Moreau:
 - configuration to Jesus Christ and centrality of the pascal mystery (cross, death, resurrection, life);
 - union of hearts;
 - zeal and compassion to risk «putting our hands to the work of resurrection» in a community of efforts while trusting Divine Providence.

- All the members of the Family of Holy Cross, including our branch of the Sisters of Holy Cross and all those who came to help us bring Gospel at the heart of today's world, as Moreau did, carry those characteristics; they help one another to develop more and more those values and to implement them in line with the calls of today's world.
- This is the area of our common kinship and belonging.

SPECIFIC IDENTITY

We need to embrace the project of living the Gospel according to Father Moreau, but in a different way:

- for the sisters, the priests and the brothers, by living our consecration in community, «*united by the bonds of fraternal charity and the three vows of religion*» (Basil Moreau), according to what is foreseen in Canon Law;
- for the other lay people, being totally inserted in the daily life of their family, both ecclesial and social,
 - **following their personal choice of commitment** (through prayer, mission, promise or private consecration, renewable or perpetual, etc.);
in this sense, we need to distinguish **the promise and the private consecration** which is a personal commitment toward God, **different from all other contract** that the person (in a link of association to the charism) may sign **with the community, the region or the congregation** (professional job, housing, different services, etc.)
 - **in relation with the sisters**, regarding the needs expressed (in having a community or a contact person, in sharing life and/or the apostolic commitment of a community, in participating to specific activities in the region or by inviting the sisters to join some of her/their initiatives, etc.) and by evolving toward greater autonomy and reciprocity;
 - in relation with people or a group supporting the same project and the same type of commitment (associates, lay Holy Cross, Holy Cross missionaries, companions of Holy Cross, etc.);

FROM DEPENDENCE TO GREATER RECIPROCITY AND INTERDEPENDENCE

- At the beginning, it was a question for the sisters of openness to the novelty of associates, of recognizing, welcoming and accompanying a specific call coming from persons and groups who recognize themselves in the Holy Cross gift, in its capacity to give meaning to their lives and to nourish their being and their commitment as baptized Christians, witnessing to the world. The responsibility of recognizing, welcoming and accompanying those people was given to the sisters.
- Little by little, better organized and mature groups became more capable of recognizing, welcoming and accompanying other lay people attracted by the Holy Cross charism for one part, and also capable of reciprocity (relationships among peers) with the sisters and among themselves, for a mutual enrichment.

This is but one characteristic that we are looking for in the «umbrella».

LOOKING FOR ORGANICITY AND COMMUNION : « THE UMBRELLA »

- To be totally evangelical, belonging to the charism should not leave anybody «isolated» in his/her quest for Christ, in his/her desire and efforts to fully live the Gospel, to «put his/her hand to the work of resurrection».
- To be in relationship of reciprocity, the different groups should work at building a structure and an inner mode of functioning, as well as means to develop more mutuality within the group and among the groups (communication, sharing, helping one another, etc.)
- While having sometimes the same name, the groups function differently from one region to the other, and we need to respect that.
- The umbrella also aims at a larger integration to the whole body, while respecting the respective identity of the other groups. This integration is far from being complete. It remains to be built.
- In the East Region, the Evangelical Family of Holy Cross goes even further: it has become a joint platform with the Priests and Brothers, as well as all the lay groups of men and women who are inspired in their being and their actions by Father Moreau's evangelical values.
- Beyond boundaries...
 - The international, intercultural and intergenerational characteristic of our congregation follows another intuition of Father Moreau who, at the very beginning, sent members of his religious family to foreign countries and cultures (Bengal, Poland, Algeria, etc). He thus exhorted the priests, brothers and sisters : « Let us not limit our interest to the narrow confines of a particular house, a province or our own country. This would be egoism and self-seeking. Rather let us be one with all our houses, and regard none as a stranger to the one in which we live. » (Circular Letter # 174).
 - There are already efforts to help one another that exist from groups of associates in the North regarding works and initiatives of the South Regions.
 - Can we dream that one day, we will see associates, New Forms of Consecration, affiliates, sisters, etc.
 - succeed in breaking boundaries that separate them within their own regional groups, between different groups of the same region or from one region to another?...
 - succeed, with the same zeal, the same compassion, to embrace « the work of resurrection » so precious to Father Moreau, wherever we are, whatever we do?
 - Of course... **in interdependence** and reciprocity. This newness needs to be invented, TOGETHER, witnessing at the heart of the world that fruitful communion which others believe to be impossible.

CONCLUSION

- The word « umbrella » is an incomplete image of the reality of a dynamic communion that we would like to inaugurate in Holy Cross at the level of a wider belonging to the charism. It is worth for the idea of organicity that it signifies, in our joint efforts towards a common project to reach the unique result that we are looking for. As for us, the common project is to prepare the world for

better times by embracing, in our being and in our action, the great gospel values that Moreau taught us.

- If we recapture the more dynamic image of the Holy Cross tree according to Moreau's language, we would be like an important branch «of the mighty tree that constantly shoot forth new limbs and new branches which will be nourished by the same sap and endowed with the same life». (Circular Letter # 65).
- Nevertheless, « **the tree** » remains an ideal of unity and communion where our different « **Holy Cross branches** » would be just as well organized and united as in the harmonious and interdependent branches of one single tree. It is « already there » in Basil Moreau's vision and dream, according to Jesus' project, but it is also « not there yet ». We need to be aware of this ideal of communion, to welcome it, embrace it and make it happen with God, in the line of our projects (to be and acted upon) daily.
- May our different shoots and branches remain welded to one another and well grafted to the tree and together, produce fruits of resurrection, of liberation and life, fruits that we might celebrate all together in 5 years... Why not ?

Pierrefonds

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