

EDUCATION • PARISH • MISSION

Ave CruX



Volume 2 Issue 1 | What We Do and Who We Are

Office of Vocations, Congregation of Holy Cross



Ave Crux, Spes Unica – Hail the Cross, Our Only Hope!

We in the Congregation of Holy Cross profess this truth as the center of our spiritual tradition, and for 175 years, we have worked to bring the hope of the Cross to schools, universities, parishes and other ministries on five continents.

We are men with hope to bring, yet discerning God's will and taking this step in our lives was not entered into lightly or on our own – finding the right next step often comes by reaching out to a vocations director. Our role is to help you hear and answer God's call. Drop us a line and we will help you discover where God's call is leading you.

CONGREGATION of HOLY CROSS
UNITED STATES PROVINCE
OF PRIESTS AND BROTHERS

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The Gift of Hope

Where are you staying? Who do you say that I am? What do you do? Well, the third question may not come directly from the Gospels, but it's a question that we are often asked regarding the Congregation of Holy Cross. People are curious about our charism, about our ministries, and about our community life. Several years ago we summed up "what we do" in three simple words: parish, mission, and education. In those three words, there are many different ministries and apostolates where Holy Cross priests and brothers serve the people of God. So just picking three men of Holy Cross to tell their stories in this issue of *Ave Crux* was a bit daunting, but they are great representatives of what we do in many parts of the country and the world.

When we have vocation guests come to Moreau Seminary or Old College, I always tell them to take the time to talk with the current seminarians, to hear about their stories and see if those stories resonate in some way. There's no better way to find out about a religious community than to spend time with them, to see if there is a brotherhood there that is attractive. Often, guys are surprised that the stories they hear don't usually start with someone destined from birth to be a brother or a priest. Instead, they hear from men who are in the midst of discerning God's will, not certain of where they will end up, but certain that God has called them to take these steps in initial formation.

What DO we do? We help to educate minds and hearts wherever we serve, preparing citizens of earth to be citizens of heaven. That's something that Blessed Basil Moreau instilled in our religious community from the very beginning, and no matter where we serve, we continue the mission to make God known, loved, and served. Thank you for reading these stories, and for considering our life. We in the Office of Vocations are here to help you learn more about prayer, discernment, and the Congregation of Holy Cross. Take time to listen in your prayer, and God will surely bring consolation and peace in your discernment. Blessings to you in the new year!

In Holy Cross,

Rev. Neil Wack, C.S.C.
vocations@holycrossusa.org

Rev. Neil Wack, C.S.C., is director of vocations for the U.S. Province of the Congregation of Holy Cross. After earning a degree in computer science, Fr. Neil entered the seminary at the University of Notre Dame in 1997 and was ordained a priest at the Basilica of the Sacred Heart in 2004. He was assigned to a parish in Colorado, and then transferred to his home parish of Christ the King in South Bend, Indiana, in 2005, and served there for ten years. As director of vocations, Fr. Neil coordinates vocation promotion efforts at Holy Cross campuses, parishes and other apostolates across the United States.





Rev. Gregory Haake, C.S.C.

Ordained April 14, 2007
Currently serving as an Assistant
Professor of French at the
University of Notre Dame

Education

“Father, what parish do you serve in?” It always begins with that question, usually after Mass, when all the people are greeting me after I have been a guest presider at my home parish in Leawood, Kansas, or when presiding at the wedding of a friend, away from the University of Notre Dame, where I serve. At first, I typically stumble a bit, trying to explain that I am not a parish priest and that I am just visiting. The inevitable second question follows: “Well, then, what do you do?” When I tell these welcoming parishioners that I am a professor at Notre Dame, nodding and expressions of understanding begin to move across their faces. “Oh, okay! So, you teach theology, then.” Actually, no, I teach French literature in the Department of Romance Languages. The expressions of understanding almost turn at that moment to confusion, then fright, and perhaps even a slow creep toward the door. “Oh, Father, I used to study French in high school, but I can

only say a couple of words now...” In other words, please don’t speak French to me, and have a nice day!

I don’t blame them, really. It is indeed difficult to understand the value of a priest teaching French literature at a university, especially when there seem to be so many other pressing needs in the Church and in the world. At the same time, the tradition of the priest-professor is a long and distinguished one: St. Albert the Great, St. Thomas Aquinas, and the founder of the Congregation of Holy Cross, Blessed Basil Moreau, just to name a few. The priest-professor fulfills a great need in the Church for knowledge, wisdom, and beauty. Having a deeper understanding of God, the world, and the human experience helps to spread the Gospel and bring people closer to Christ. The parish priest already acts in this role, as he exemplifies the natural relationship between the priesthood and teaching. One of his

Fr. Gregory Haake, C.S.C., addresses his class at the University of Notre Dame.



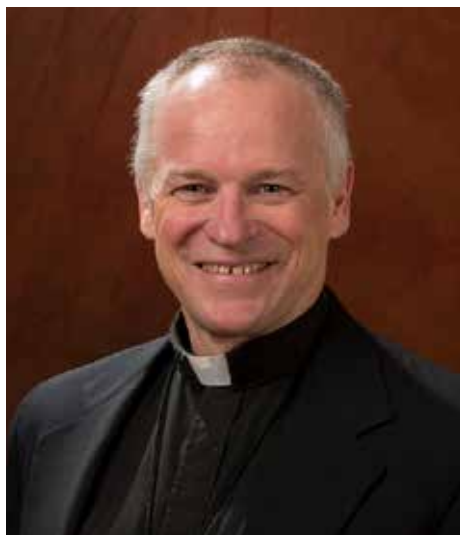
great responsibilities to his flock is to teach them about God and about our faith. Jesus, in His public ministry was constantly teaching. We even have a particular image of Jesus in prayer and in art for this aspect of the life of our Lord: Christ the Teacher. He is our model and our guide to lead others by the charism of instruction, mentorship, and accompaniment as people grow in their faith. Moreover, when people are learning, it can be a difficult time fraught with many questions, and on a practical level, being in the classroom puts the priest-professor close to his students as an instrument of the Lord's presence as they gain knowledge and wisdom.

While in my role as a teacher, the connection to my priesthood might be easy to grasp, the connection between my priesthood and the study of French literature is often a harder one to explain. The field of literature is a study of words, ideas, and images; it is an exploration of how poets and writers have grappled with the world, with their fellow men and women, with love, conflict, despair, joy, and all of the ups and downs that

come with this life. Literature has been a means through the centuries for human beings to experiment, to empathize, to argue, and to wonder, all while creating language that in turn brings us to wonder at the beauty the gift of language can create. This allows us to discover the truth of who we are and who God is. These small beauties lead to an appreciation of beauty itself, of God and His wondrous creation; discovering these little truths about the human experience lead to knowledge of God's Truth. While the study of literature is not theology, it can and does accomplish some of the same things, especially if we approach it in the light of faith. Being a priest-professor of French literature allows me to study these questions and to guide others in this worthwhile search as they discover the great novels, poems, and plays of the literary tradition.

What cannot go without mention is that I get to do all of this as a Holy Cross priest. It is our tradition at Notre Dame, and our other higher education institutions, to live in the residence halls, among our flock. Our role as

priest-professor is tied to the classroom but goes beyond it, as we contribute to the sacramental and intellectual life of the students whom we serve. Our founder, Blessed Basil Moreau, wanted his sons and daughters in Holy Cross to live in imitation of the Holy Family, and in being as present as we are to the students, we hope to invite them into the wonderful life in Christ that we as Holy Cross priests and brothers share. No matter how we embody the charism of Holy Cross, whether in parish, education, or missions, we are called to stand tight at the foot of the Cross with our Mother, Mary, and to speak of the hope of the Resurrection. As we walk with people in this life, whether in the classroom or right where they live, we choose to walk with them as they experience the Cross. Amid their suffering, our presence, our teaching, and our preaching of the Gospel are meant to be signs of hope. And so it is with my vocation as a priest-professor in French literature. As I stand with those who are experiencing the Cross in their lives, I hope to lead them to a little beauty along the way.



Rev. John Dougherty, C.S.C.

Ordained April 9, 1994
Currently serving as Pastor of
Holy Redeemer Catholic Church
in Portland, Oregon

Parish

I would like to start this reflection by simply saying, "I love what I do!" I have been a Holy Cross priest for almost 23 years and have spent most of that time as a parish priest. A number of years ago, I did a three-year stint as director of André House of Hospitality in Phoenix, and even then, people indicated that my leadership made the house feel more like a parish. I took this as a compliment. I think parish ministry is in my blood.

I am often asked what I like most about parish ministry and my response is always, "All of it!" But, if I have to hone in on one aspect of the work, I think I would say it's diversity. I am not speaking only of race and ethnicity (which is a characteristic of my current home, Holy Redeemer Catholic Church, in Portland, Oregon) but, rather, a diversity of ministerial opportunities I have as a pastor. For example, the other

day I was in our pre-school classroom with a gaggle of three-year-olds. I tend to stop in regularly and get the kids riled up and then take off leaving the teacher a bit unnerved because it is then her job to restore order. (I did the same when my nephews and nieces were little. Uncle Johnny stops in, shakes the apple cart and then takes off!) But, after that wonderful exchange with those pre-schoolers, I walked out in front of our school and encountered Mr. Jack Basic. Jack is 94 years old and is a graduate of our school. He attends Mass most days and still walks to church from his home four blocks away. Jack is quite the talker, so we visited for a spell and then I headed back to my office to take care of a few pressing matters.

As I reflected on those two experiences, I was immediately filled with gratitude. The chance to minister to our youngest

schoolchildren and then turn around and be with our oldest living and active graduate – almost a century separating them in age – was a remarkable moment in my priestly life. The opportunity to minister across these wide swaths – of age and life experience – is characteristic of parish ministry in Holy Cross. Our parishes are places where we encounter a rich tapestry of people all striving for goodness and peace, and blessed with a desire to do that in community led pastorally by the men of Holy Cross.

What the people of God ask of us, sacramentally, as Holy Cross pastors, is equally diverse. I get to celebrate all of the Sacraments (well maybe not one ... Holy Orders) with great regularity. One day, I might be at a local nursing home with three or four seniors celebrating Mass and anointing those who are in need of healing, and the next week I could be at a local prison hearing confessions, celebrating Mass and confirming someone who has been behind bars preparing to enter our Church. I am no John Vianney, but I have certainly heard my share of confessions both here at Holy Redeemer and in many of our local Catholic high schools. Finally, with such a beautiful church at Holy Redeemer, marriages and their accompanying preparation are a common part of the weekly routine for Fr. Matt Fase, C.S.C., and me. The Lord has blessed me, indeed. As our Holy Cross rule puts it: “He has nothing but gifts to offer.”

When I was discerning the priesthood many years ago, I made visits to several religious communities as well as to a few dioceses. It became quite evident to me that my vocation involved being a member of a religious community. Because of my connection with Holy Cross (my uncle is Br. Fulgence Dougherty, C.S.C., and I am a University of Portland grad), joining the Congregation of Holy Cross made sense. Our common life is really what binds us together in all our varied ministries. At least that has been my experience. Having served in three cities where Holy Cross exerts a powerful and hopeful presence (South Bend, Phoenix and Portland), my positive experience in those local Holy Cross communities energized me for my work in the local Church. In South Bend, for instance, I

looked forward to the shared table and prayer at Moreau Seminary, Corby Hall and Holy Cross House, along with my fellow parish ministers. In Phoenix, Casa Santa Cruz was always a welcome respite from the busyness of André House as well as the hectic schedule I kept when I was serving as pastor at St. Gregory. Here in Portland, the University community has become a second home for me. Their hospitality inspires me.

I have to believe this is an experience universally felt by all of us Holy Cross Religious scattered on five continents. In all of our local communities we come together from various ministries but under the common (and wide) umbrella of our brotherhood in Holy Cross. These strong connections with my brothers

who serve in other ministries enrich me. Although I am a “parish guy,” I thoroughly enjoy spending time with those who engage in other ministries, especially in the apostolate of higher education.

I began this essay saying that I love what I do and I will conclude it in that grateful vein. It is a joy to spend your day doing what you love, and knowing as well that it is what God has called you to do. I have been in Holy Cross over half of my life and I have cherished all of it, even the difficult and challenging moments. I encourage all who are considering a vocation to religious life to check us out. Come, see what we do and how we live. I am sure you will be inspired. I was, many years ago, and I never looked back.

A family from Phoenix traveled to Portland to visit their former pastor, Fr. Dougherty.





Rev. Patrick Neary, C.S.C.

Ordained April 6, 1991
Currently serving as District Superior of the Holy Cross District of East Africa

District of East Africa 2016-17 Postulants

Please remember us in your prayers

- Mr. Herimence Ahimbisibwe
- Mr. Innocent Ahuniriza
- Mr. Douglas Alinaitwe
- Mr. Francis Amukasa
- Mr. Lambert Asasiri
- Mr. Vincent Balikudembe
- Mr. Moses Baruta
- Mr. Deusi Bwambale
- Mr. Matayo Bwanandeke
- Mr. Charles Irumba
- Mr. Emmanuel Isabirye (MP)
- Mr. Joseph Isingoma
- Mr. James Kamau
- Mr. Benjamin Kamushana
- Mr. Simon Peter Kansiiime
- Mr. Ronald Katongole
- Mr. Martin Kule
- Mr. Augustine Paul Kullaya
- Mr. John Lwanga (MP)
- Mr. Patrick Mabiru
- Mr. John Maliyamungu
- Mr. Lawrence Masau
- Mr. Martin Matsiko
- Mr. Augustine Muhindo
- Mr. Simon Peter Mukasa
- Mr. Vinney Mukisa (MP)
- Mr. Michael Musiime
- Mr. Cosmas Mutuku
- Mr. Edson Mwoleka
- Mr. Joachim Nganda
- Mr. Gilbert Nina
- Mr. James George Nyenza
- Mr. Novert Ogezi
- Mr. George Owiny
- Mr. Sylvester Pareeso
- Mr. Joseph Rwebemberera
- Mr. John Marvin Ssebugenyi
- Mr. Patrick Tugume (MP)

Mission

Being of Irish descent and a history buff, I confess to being enamored with the great Irish missionaries who evangelized Europe after the collapse of the Roman Empire. Recently, I stumbled upon a little book entitled, “Irish Monks in the Golden Age” by Fr. John Ryan, S.J. I was most struck by the story of St. Columba (Colmcille), the great missionary apostle to Scotland. St. Columba was born in 521 and was in the direct line of the greatest royal family in Irish history. According to legend, an angel intervened in a dispute between Columba and another monk by the name of Ciarán. The angel is reputed to have told Ciarán that he sacrificed nothing but his father’s overalls to become a monk, while Columba sacrificed the kingdom of Ireland to become a monk!

The craggy island of Iona became his home until he heeded the summons to depart for Scotland, never to look back. This Irish missionary spirit endured for centuries. At heart, it is the Gospel willingness to leave all things behind to go and follow Christ.

From the beginning, Holy Cross had this missionary spirit. Our founder, Blessed Basil Moreau, called us “to undertake anything ... to suffer anything and to go anywhere that obedience may call us to save souls that are perishing and to extend the reign of Jesus Christ on earth.” Fr. Moreau sent his best and brightest to some of the harshest outposts, whether to East Bengal or to the wilderness of Northern Indiana. Notre Dame’s founder, Fr. Edward Sorin, was a missionary at heart.

When I was a college seminarian at Notre Dame in the early 1980s, I was in awe of the old-time missionaries who would spend a few months of home leave at Moreau Seminary. These men had spent decades in Bangladesh or East Africa among the poorest of the poor. Their lives were no longer in America. Though they didn’t talk much about their missionary endeavors, they radiated a certain humility, simplicity,

and inner peace.

The whole notion of a missionary has broadened. In former times, a Holy Cross missionary went to bring the Gospel to foreign lands to save souls. Today, a missionary is not necessarily tied to a geographical place overseas. At its most basic, to be a missionary still means what it has always meant: a radical willingness to go wherever you are needed, to do whatever is needed, for as long as it is needed. It still means a radical openness to foreign peoples, languages, and cultures, but now they are often immigrants in one’s own country. It still means a radical love of the poor, even if the poverty is no longer that of the village.

I sometimes laugh when people refer to me as a missionary in Africa. In the traditional sense, I wouldn’t qualify. In the minds of most people, to be a missionary in Africa means you are surrounded by primitive peoples dressed in traditional garb in a rural setting of grass huts. I live in Kampala, Uganda, a city of people where Western-style dress, coffee houses, high rises and shopping malls abound. People might be surprised to realize that, presently, 60% of Africans live in urban settings.

I never expected to find myself in East Africa after I finished my term as rector of Moreau Seminary in May of 2010. When I agreed to have lunch with my provincial to talk about the future, I remember being stunned that he would ask me to run our seminary in Nairobi, Kenya, but I was even more surprised that my heart leapt at the idea. A commitment of two years has turned into almost seven now. Somewhere along the way, I got elected district superior of East Africa, another development that I never anticipated.

The whole reality of mission depends on fidelity to the Vow of Obedience, a willingness to listen radically to God’s will as mediated through our superiors. In my case, it happened over lunch with

my provincial!

What has my time in East Africa taught me about mission? This quote from our Constitutions summarizes it well: *“Our mission sends us across borders of every sort. Often we must make ourselves at home among more than one people or culture, reminding us again that the farther we go in giving the more we stand to receive.”*

I have learned that in a world fractured by tribalism and nationalism, the most important witness we give is that Holy Cross men from Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, and America can live and work together as brothers and close friends. And in a culture that so values family, Fr. Moreau’s desire that his religious should live together with the affection of the Holy Family resonates with young Africans, and we are now the fastest growing sector in Holy Cross. Given that our charism is to be educators in

the faith, we seem to be reaching young people in our schools in East Africa on a deeper level than most. With more of our men going on for higher studies, we even dream of starting our own university. Increasingly, our men in East Africa understand that they are also called to serve in foreign lands and to cross borders of every sort.

The Church still stands in need of missionaries as the whole world is mission territory. Even St. Columba’s native Ireland, the land of great missionaries for centuries, finds itself in need of a new evangelization. For the modern Holy Cross missionary, as an educator in the faith, the mission field is the university, the high school, and the parish, it matters not in what country. A few may serve overseas but probably for briefer periods and in ways that allow them to share a particular training and expertise. At heart, every Holy Cross

Religious is a missionary, standing ready to undertake anything and go anywhere that obedience calls him to serve.

In this past year, my silver jubilee of priesthood, I could scarcely have predicted on my Ordination day where God would lead me to serve Him in a mission. That Africa was destined to be part of my life’s journey fills me with deep gratitude. It has been an amazing adventure with Holy Cross and I wouldn’t change a thing. God is full of surprises but is always faithful. As I prepare for the next 25 years, I wish to remain open to what God has in store for me. I want Isaiah’s cry to always be my own, “Here I am, Lord. Send me!”

Fr. Patrick Neary, C.S.C., with students from Lake View Senior Secondary School in Fort Portal, Uganda.





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Front Cover Photo: Fr. Patrick Neary, C.S.C., with students from Lake View Senior Secondary School in Fort Portal, Uganda.
Back Cover Photo: Fr. Lou Del Fra, C.S.C., preaches at the all school Mass at St. Rita Parish in Ft. Worth, Texas.