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**CLAIMING OUR HERITAGE:**

**A Report on the First Ten Years of the Holy Cross Heritage Committee**

**by**

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The third meeting of the general councils of the four congregations which constitute the family on Holy Cross was held at Pierrefonds, Quebec from March 22 to 24, 1987.<sup>1</sup> Prior to this meeting a survey<sup>2</sup> of the four general councils had been done by the Marianites of Holy Cross regarding the future of the Solitude in Le Mans. The survey included these questions:

- To what extent to you value the roots/heritage of Holy Cross as being at the Solitude in Le Mans, France?
- To what extent do you value the concept of a spirituality center as drawn up in the proposal?
- To what extent do you value contributing (in a designated trust) to the Solitude in order to preserve the heritage of Holy Cross and carry it into the future?"

At that March 1987 meeting of the councils reached a consensus in response to those questions:

- That a committee of one member from each congregation be formed to study concrete solutions for the preservation of the Heritage of Holy Cross at Le Mans. This study is to include La Solitude as an important part of this heritage.

This committee was called both the "Heritage Committee" and the "Heritage Study Committee" even in the same document. For example, a cover letter dated June 30, 1988<sup>3</sup> and signed by the four members of the committee referred to the committee as the "Heritage Study Committee", but the Report<sup>4</sup> itself dated September 1988 was titled "Report of the Heritage Committee." In order to distinguish between the two, I will refer to the first committee as the "Heritage Study Committee" and the present one as the "Heritage Committee", or as it became in 1995, the "Intercongregational Heritage Committee."<sup>5</sup>

The Heritage Study Committee members appointed by their general administrations were: Father Joseph Callahan, CSC, Eastern province of priests, Chairperson; Sister Madeleine Sophie Hebert, MSC, Marianites of Holy Cross; Sister Margaret Michael King, CSC, Sisters of the Holy Cross; and Sister Eveline Swaile, CSC, Sisters of Holy Cross.

Their task was directed to four pieces of property in Le Mans -- La Solitude, the church of Notre Dame de Sainte-Croix, the house where Father Moreau died, and the community section of the cemetery. They were to determine ownership of the property, its 1987 value, the use to which it was being put and the possible cost of whatever repairs might be needed. In addition, they were to see what the eventual plans might be for the future of each place, including an analysis of needs to be met as well as projected finances and personnel to realize the plan.

The committee promptly got busy, meeting five times in the next year, once each in Ottawa, New Orleans, and Le Mans, and twice at Saint Mary's, Notre Dame. One of the first questions that occurred to them was whether any other locations, important to congregational history but outside of Le Mans, should be included in the study; specifically mentioned were Laigne en Belin and Ruille. Brother Philip Armstrong, who had been appointed liaison person between the men's council and the committee, also circulated the question to the other councils. A definite response was received -- the Councils did not wish to add any other locations.

Because all members of the Heritage Study Committee were North Americans, there was a bit of uneasiness on their part that they might inadvertently neglect adequate input from the religious in France who were directly affected by the very locations under study. To address this situation, the committee prepared a short survey to be sent to France before the committee was scheduled to meet in Le Mans. The scope of the survey was to ascertain from all Holy Cross religious in France their thoughts and feelings on the subject under study. This survey, taken during December 1987 and January 1988, asked, "What should or could the congregations of

Holy Cross do in the future for the preservation and promotion of our heritage in Le Mans?" The responses were quite positive, both in terms of number and quality.

In May 1988 the committee met in Le Mans and provided time for exchange and discussion with all the French Holy Cross religious who cared to meet with them. They met with the provincial administrations of priests and sisters, the pastor and staff at Holy Cross parish, the Brothers at Rennes, and the Marianites at the Solitude, the Clinique Sainte-Croix, and the congregation superior and one of her councilors. The committee also visited rue Jeanne d'Arc, where Father Moreau's last house was located, Laigne en Belin, where he was born, and the community cemetery. Because it was more important to spend time gathering information, the committee did not hold deliberative sessions at this meeting.

The Heritage Study Committee completed its report in September 1988.<sup>6</sup> It left clear information about the four properties in Le Mans. The questions they researched were:

- What is the present condition of the building?
- What is the present value of the building?
- Are any major repairs anticipated within the next ten years? If so, how much would it cost?
- What is the annual operating cost of the building? and
- What use is being made of the building at this time?

Descriptions included the following information:

By "the Solitude" they meant only the original building at 35 rue de la Solitude and approximately five acres of land surrounding it. The building, they reported, was owned and administered by the Marianites, and was in "fair" condition.

The "Church" included church, crypt and chapter room at 6 rue Notre Dame. The Bishop of Le Mans held legal title to it, but the Priests and Brothers of Holy Cross were the real owners. It was in "good" condition.

The "House" where Father Moreau died on rue Jeanne d'Arc "included several articles relating to the life and history of our Founder." It was owned and maintained by the French Province of Priests, but was in "bad" condition and would require costly repairs, including a new roof.

The "cemetery" for Holy Cross was within the city cemetery, a short walk from the Solitude. By agreement between Father Moreau and the city of Le Mans the segment is for the exclusive use of Holy Cross and is owned by them. The Marianites maintain the chapel containing the remains of Mother Mary of the Seven Dolors, as well as the graves of the Marianites and Priests and Brothers of Holy Cross and the ground in the part of the cemetery reserved to the Congregation. Annual upkeep, they reported, is minimal.

In view of this information, and the responses from the French religious, the Heritage Study Committee in their September 1988 report made eight recommendations. These recommendations were presented at the meeting of the four general councils in Rome, Italy in January 1989.<sup>7</sup>

According to the minutes, among the topics considered at that meeting of January 1989 was that of "Holy Cross Heritage". In addition to the report from the Heritage Study Committee the four councils also discussed the following points:

1. Who are our founders? What is their place in our congregations? What are the attitudes towards our founders?

2. What is being done to promote our founders and our heritage? What interest is there in sharing resources, etc.?
3. An assessment of existing programs. and
4. What are our future plans, goals and projects?

As a result of these discussion the following decisions regarding heritage were made

1. . . . that the four general administrations take collective responsibility for preservation of the burial crypt of Father Moreau and the original Solitude. This collective responsibility includes enhancement and major repairs of the sites while normal upkeep remains with the present administrators.

Decisions regarding the use of these sites or major repairs or enhancements will be brought up at the time of the meetings of the four general councils. Whenever decisions on these matters need to be taken outside the meeting of the four general councils, they will be made by the four superiors general of Holy Cross after consultation with their respective councils.

2. . . . that the house on rue Jeanne d'Arc be phased out as a heritage site and the contents that authentically relate to the Founder be translated to the parish church or the Solitude, because that the building is not in good repair and would be quite costly to renovate; also, it is doubtful whether there are sufficient heritage holdings to justify its development as a museum or library.

3. . . . that no collective action be taken at this time regarding the proposal to convert the Solitude into a spirituality center. The spirituality center is unrealistic due to:
  - a.) Insufficient interest of present membership;
  - b.) Dwindling numbers;
  - c.) Prohibitive costs -- especially travel.
4. Recognizing that the life of Our Lady of Holy Cross Church community is a genuine and vibrant expression of the founding spirit of Holy Cross, the parish [should] be drawn more explicitly into the promotion of the heritage.
5. . . . that one member of each of the four general councils be appointed as responsible for matters concerning the heritage of Holy Cross. These four persons will work together to coordinate various questions relative to our joint heritage. Their task will be:
  - a. To assist the general administrations in their role as preservers and promoters of the heritage;
  - b. To coordinate efforts and to communicate with the other general councils as to the value, possibilities and other matters concerning publications that would be of interest to the family of Holy Cross.
6. . . . that special attention be given to carefully protecting the irreplaceable records of the sisters, brothers and priests in France.
7. . . . that the heritage dimension be integrated into chapters, assemblies, celebrations and other Holy Cross activities.



Because of general chapters and changes in administration in two of the congregations, there was a delay in starting the work of the Heritage Committee. Father Leo Polselli finally got the group together for its first meeting in October 1990<sup>8</sup> at Saint Mary's, Notre Dame. Father Polselli agreed to continue as chairperson until the end of his term of office. The other members of the committee at that time were Sister Eveline Swaile, Sisters of Holy Cross, Sister Beverly Ann Nelson, Sisters of the Holy Cross, and Sister Judith Coreil, Marianites of Holy Cross.

The agenda items for this meeting included a review of the tasks assigned to the committee. In an attempt to implement the tasks they first clarified the purposes of the committee. They identified these to be "to coordinate our heritage activities as efforts are sometimes duplicated" and "to discover ways to contemporize our heritage." Father Jim Connelly, Indiana Province archivist, and Sisters Campion Kuhn and Georgia Costin from Sisters of the Holy Cross archives were invited to the meeting and added their expertise to the discussion. The Holy Cross History Conference was recognized as "a significant vehicle for sharing our heritage." The members of the Heritage Committee expressed a desire to support this effort by encouraging attendance, proposals and membership in the Holy Cross History Association.

When the Heritage Committee reported to the four councils in April 1991<sup>9</sup> the tasks of the committee were thus clearly delineated:

- a. To assist the general administrations in their role as preservers and promoters of the heritage;
- b. To promote existing programs relating to our heritage, e.g. the summer sessions in Le Mans and the history conferences in the U.S.A. [sic] [North America];
- c. To coordinate new programs and initiatives;
- d. To provide the members of the four congregations general information regarding heritage; and
- e. To stimulate reflection on the specific mission of Holy Cross in the Church.



The committee met again in July 1991<sup>10</sup> and, based on its tasks, set up some goals and objectives. These went to each general council and were considerably modified. The councils felt that the Heritage Committee members were offering to do too much work themselves. For instance, in the first goal, "Encourage , promote and plan for publication of materials relating to Holy Cross heritage," the words "Encourage, promote," were left, but "plan for" was removed as being full time work which a councilor would not have time to take on. So throughout the rest of the goals -- the ideas remained, but the strategies were reassigned.

At a meeting of the four Superiors General in February 1992,<sup>11</sup> it was further suggested that the parish property be considered as the site for a permanent Heritage Center, rather than the Solitude. This would leave the Marianites free to act in their own best interests regarding the future of the Solitude. It was agreed that the summer sessions in Le Mans would continue for at least the next few years. At the same meeting it was decided that the bibliography of works by and about the four congregations should be updated, and the request to do so went out to the congregational archivists.

The June 1992 Committee meeting<sup>12</sup> was the final meeting for Father Leo Polselli, who had chaired and facilitated the group since 1989. They met in Rome and worked on implementation plans for the recently revised goals.

When the committee met next in April 1993<sup>13</sup> its members were Sister Beverly Ann Nelson, CSC, Indiana, Chairperson, Brother Joel Giallanza, CSC, Rome, Sister Pauline Morneau, CSC, Canada and Sister Judith Coreil, MSC, Washington, DC. They looked into the feasibility of a Holy Cross Journal, to be circulated throughout Holy Cross as well as to students, alumni and friends, and to be divided into four possible sections -- Formation, History, Ministry, and other. Brother Joel agreed to act as coordinator of the feasibility study. The importance of the Holy

Cross History Association was again acknowledged, and it was agreed that a member of the Heritage Committee would represent the committee at the 1993 History Conference.

At that same meeting, Sister Judith Coreil announced that the Marianites were moving their generalate to Washington DC. In light of this, the committee recommended that Father Claude Grou, superior general of the men of Holy Cross, and Sister Verda Frederick superior general of the Marianites, develop a plan to preserve and display all that is of historical value in Le Mans.

Sister Graziella Lalande came to the next Heritage Committee meeting which was held in January 1994.<sup>14</sup> She briefed the members on three papers she was currently preparing on the History of the Canadian Sisters of Holy Cross, the Visit of Father Moreau to Canada, and The Apostolic Impact of Community Life from the view of the Founder. Brother Joel informed the group that he was interested in developing the asceticism and mysticism of Holy Cross. He also said that the men of Holy Cross were preparing a one-volume abridged edition of Father Moreau's letters. The group again discussed the possibility of a Holy Cross Journal as well as a "Think Tank" for contemporary application of the Holy Cross Heritage, and International Spirituality Sessions. Also, the group cited the need for formators to have materials including a common syllabus on heritage for use in formation programs. There was also discussion of computer use in the archives. The committee discussed for the first time the possibility of organizing a meeting of general archivists of the four congregations. The emphasis of the committee definitely had shifted from concerns about property to broader heritage issues.

A joint meeting of the Heritage Committee and Congregational Archivists took place in June 1994 at the time of the Holy Cross History Conference in Quebec.<sup>15</sup> The Heritage Committee members and congregational archivists discussed the computerization and coordination of materials related to the heritage of Holy Cross, reviewed the work completed on

congregational bibliographies, continued discussion on the proposed heritage display in Le Mans and reviewed plans for plaques to be placed in the church of Notre Dame de Sainte-Croix in Le Mans. The committee members also attended part of the History Conference.

During the March 1995<sup>16</sup> and October 1996<sup>17</sup> meetings, at which Sister Rollande Bastien had replaced Sister Pauline Morneau, and Sister Aline Marie Steuer had replaced sister Beverly Ann Nelson, the committee -- now called the Intercongregational Heritage Committee -- discussed the revision of their goals, and a "Moreau Year" project to be developed during 1997 and used in 1998-99. It was to be an instrument for personal and communal reflection on the apostolic spirituality of Holy Cross.

In September 1997,<sup>18</sup> the Heritage Committee met with the four superiors general,<sup>19</sup> who accepted the revised goal and objectives. A single goal emerged:

To assist the general administrations of the Holy Cross congregations in their role as preservers and promoters of heritage.

Under preserving, they listed developments related to the "heritage buildings," and preservation of archival and related records. Under promotion they listed provision of resources and opportunities related to Holy Cross, including publication, heritage sessions, and history conference; and involving the membership in reflection on and discussion of heritage topics. They also proposed that future members of the Heritage Committee could be drawn from outside the general councils.

During 1997 Sister Kathryn Callahan, archivist in Indiana, was asked by the Heritage Committee to initiate a study on the feasibility of having a meeting of the congregation archivists. The purpose of such a meeting would be "long range planning for the continued preservation of our Holy Cross heritage." Sister Mary Kay ~~Vallion~~ Marianite archivist joined Sister Kathryn in

doing preliminary work of planning for the meeting. It is projected that this effort will include members of the Heritage Committee, general and provincial archivists, congregation historians, and officers and founders of the Holy Cross History Association. Sisters Kathryn and Mary Kay are scheduled to have their final planning meeting in August 1998.<sup>20</sup>

Meanwhile, with the publication of the new edition of Father Moreau's letters, and the expected publication of Brother Joel's twelve-theme meditations, the view of the heritage of Holy Cross has changed extensively. It has expanded from an exclusive attention to four physical sites to the world-wide Holy Cross attention to the hopes, attitudes, expectations, and guiding virtues of the founders of Holy Cross. We examine their spirituality, and then re-examine our own. We find difficulties they did not know, and in looking to see if we are loyal members of the Church, we look to our brothers and sisters in Holy Cross to be the prime agents, by their example, of our continued fidelity. Facing the third century in which Holy Cross has existed, we perceive our heritage as spiritual and life-giving, and acknowledge our responsibility to transmit it into the future.

The original Heritage Study Committee recognized the need for this wider view. In the preface to their report in 1988 they said: "The Holy Cross Heritage Committee defines heritage as the preservation of the foundational sites, and the promotion of the significance of the original charism as reflected in these places. We believe that the heritage of Holy Cross is a vibrant and living extension of the gospel vision and missionary zeal of its founder, Basil Anthony Mary Moreau. This vision is characterized by the spirit of union which was central to the spirituality of Father Moreau and is expressed through fidelity to community and the living of the gospel within the church and society. This spirit of union is evidenced when women and men religious of Holy Cross collaborate in mission to make the world a place of unity and mutuality."<sup>21</sup>

## NOTES

All materials here referred to are in the Congregational Archives of the Sisters of the Holy Cross, Saint Mary's, Notre Dame, Indiana

1. Minutes and Attachments of Third Meeting of the Holy Cross General Councils, March 22-24, 1987.
2. Minutes and Attachments of Extended Leadership Meeting, Sisters of the Holy Cross, January 24-26, 1986.
3. Report of the Heritage Committee to the Superiors General of Holy Cross and Their Councils, September 1988.
4. *ibid.*
5. Minutes of Intercongregational Heritage Committee meeting, 23 March 1995.
6. Report of Heritage Committee to the Superiors General of Holy Cross and Their Councils, September 1988.
7. Minutes and Attachments of fourth meeting of Holy Cross General Councils, January 3-8, 1989.
8. Minutes of Heritage Committee meeting, October 24, 1990.
9. Minutes of the fifth meeting of the Four General Councils of Holy Cross, April 21-28, 1991, and Minutes of Heritage Committee meeting, April 27, 1991.
10. Minutes of Heritage Committee meeting, July 19, 1991.
11. Minutes and Attached Memo to Heritage Committee, of the Four Superiors General, February 10, 1992.
12. Minutes of Heritage Committee meeting, June 20-24, 1992.
13. Recommendations of the Heritage Committee, April 27, 1993.

14. Minutes of Heritage Committee meeting, January 21-23, 1994.
15. Minutes of Heritage Committee meeting, June 5, 1994.
16. Minutes of Intercongregational Heritage Committee meeting, 23 March 1995.
17. Minutes of Intercongregational Heritage Committee meeting, 21-22 October 1996.
18. Minutes of Intercongregational Heritage Committee meeting 15 September 1997.
19. Minutes and Attachment of Meeting of the Four Superiors General, September 15-16, 1997.
20. Memos and Attachments between Sister Aline Marie, CSC and Sister Kathryn Callahan, CSC regarding Meeting of Holy Cross Archivists, March 3, 1997, May 12, 1997, June 18, 1997, and January 26, 1998.
21. Report of the Heritage Committee to the Superiors General and Their Councils, September 1988.