

A THREAT TO THE UNION OF BROTHERS AND PRIESTS IN THE CONGREGATION OF HOLY CROSS

Introduction

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This year marks the 175th Anniversary Celebration of University of Notre Dame du Lac, an educational establishment brought about by the union of brothers and priests of the Congregation of Holy Cross in the United States of America. In retrospect, how did this union come about and how did it sustain the members of the Congregation of Holy Cross to better respond to themselves as a community and as men with hope to bring.

How the Union Came to Be

In response to the needs of literacy in rural France, during and in the aftermath of the French Revolution, two personalities readily come to mind in the Church of France, Fr. François ^{Francis} Jacqué Dujarie and Fr. Basile Anthony Mary Moreau. According to Grove and Gawrych, in their book Basil Moreau: Essential Writings, whereas “Fr Dujarie established the teaching Brothers of St Joseph of Ruillé, in 1820 to respond to literacy needs in rural France, Fr Moreau, a seminary teacher, gathered around himself Auxiliary Priests, (Auxiliary Priests of Le Mans) in 1835, to as it were, revitalize parish life through missions and on instructing the youth, especially in preparatory seminaries and colleges”.¹ Grove and Gawrych further posit that “due to age, ill health, and decline in numbers, Fr. Dujarie,” pressured in part by the some of the brothers of St Joseph, “turned over the administration of the brothers to Fr. Moreau in 1835. Now, becoming the superior of the brothers and founding the Auxiliary Priests, Moreau brought the two societies

¹ Kevin Grove and Andrew Gawrych, Basil Moreau: Essential Writings (Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 2014), 26.

together and by a Fundamental Act of Union, signed on 1st March 1837, involving fifty-four (54) brothers and seven priests (7),”² the Congregation of Holy Cross came to be.

This basic union is indeed fundamental to the uniqueness, essence and character of the Congregation of Holy Cross. Brothers in Holy Cross did not evolve with time and clerics therein were not the result of any response to a renewed vision or mission in Holy Cross as its history unfolded. Neither one society nor the other met Holy Cross on the way, so to speak. “They were from the beginning,” as the Decree of Approbation stipulates, “an institute composed of priests and laymen who mean to be united by a covenant of friendship in such a fashion that each society preserves its own nature, neither one prevailing over the other.” Thus, from the very onset, Philip Armstrong in his book A More Perfect Legacy, has it that, “Father Basil Moreau, founder of the congregation, proposed a governmental structure that, he hoped, would safeguard this “covenant relationship” based on equality and mutuality.”³

But perhaps as fate may have it or in the words of Hugh Cleary, quoted by George Klawitter, in his book, *Early Men of Holy Cross*, due to “administrative irresponsibilities”,⁴ this fundamental pact, by the benefit of our history, always trod on shaky grounds. Nonetheless, the union stood the test of time and bounded together the very nature of Holy Cross as a society of priests and brothers, despite the ramifications the union took on in the course of time due to tensions.

The American Mission

² Grove and Gawrych, *Basil Moreau*, 26.

³ Philip Armstrong, *A More Perfect Legacy: A Portrait of Brother Ephrem O’Dwyer, 1888-1978* (Notre Dame: Indiana. University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), IX

⁴ Hugh Cleary, *A Year of Rejoicing and Spiritual Renewal* (Rome: Via Framura 85, 2006), 18. quoted in George Klawitter, *Early Men of Holy Cross: To Sustain Each Other until Death* (Bloomington, IN: iUniverse, 2016), 92.

1837-1841 ? Fast forward to 1841, saw the North American mission opened with six brothers and a priest ^{superior} chaplain. In the course of time, especially, according to James Burtchaell in his book One Congregation Two Societies, “after the turn of the twentieth century, the center of congregational life, along with the superior general himself, had moved to North America, Notre Dame to be specific and it is there that our awkward fellowship between priests and brothers would flare up in the provinces of the United States and Canada”⁵

Consolidating this union, in the same year of opening the North American mission, no other person other than the founder, Fr. Basil Moreau, drawing on the analogy of the holy family, the trinity, the vine and the branches, and the hierarchy of the heavenly spirit, in his 1841 Circular Letter, stated unequivocally: “Woe, then, and anathema to the priest, brother, or sister, who by word or action, would attempt to separate establishment which God has willed to unite under the same general authority.”⁶

One could observe from these carefully worded pronouncement that, Fr. Moreau as much as he had the ideal of union at his heart, also aimed to bring under his coordinative care the various branches of the Holy Cross family: Brothers, Priests and Sisters, modelled after the unity of the Holy Family and the Holy Trinity. But Rome, before granting the congregation a papal approval in 1856, discouraged such ambition and advised that the Sisters be separated from the men, with their own administration and autonomy. Fortunately or unfortunately, in the course of

⁵ James Burtchaell, *One Congregation, Two Societies: How Much Fellowship* (Holy Cross History Association, St Mary's and Notre Dame Indiana, 2003), 15.

⁶ James Burtchaell, *One Congregation*, 8.

time, a perfect and concrete reflection of such ideal of union in the lives and interactions of brothers and priests would be hard to find.

Skeptical of the Union

In fact, per the wonderings of James Burtchaell, “how could men (priests and brothers) of socio-cultural differences, of noticeable and radical differences of class, and of different benefits going to form a fellowship wherein none would have the advantage of the other?” Humanly speaking, this was unrealistic to Burtchaell, “given that in other circumstances they might be considered as employers and employees and moreover, Fr. Moreau by his very utterances and specification in the Fundamental Act of 1837 of how assets must be assigned should the Union collapse, was a proof that the union would not see the light of day.”⁷ Yet, he mused that:

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if these men had been good enough to one another that the brothers were encouraged and empowered to develop their native talents and cultivate their judgement, and the priests were enlightened enough to transcend the stratifications of secular society, Holy Cross would need to have been a most revolutionary community: community of confreres that did not permit, but urged its members to re-position themselves as confreres regardless of background, education or assignment.⁸

Later, on the General Chapter floor of 1932, Armstrong reflects that Fr. Burns, a leading proponent of unity within the congregation and a provincial of the U. S. Province, will conclude that “though there is grave unrest, I do not agree...that the unrest is in the nature of the Congregation,⁹ as Burtchaell tries to make it seem so. On the part of Ephrem, the first brother

⁷ Burtchaell, *One Congregation*, 7.

⁸ Burtchaell, *One Congregation*, 7.

⁹ Armstrong, *A More Perfect Legacy*, 18.

provincial in the United States Province of brothers, Burtchaell quotes him as saying that “he wished to personally die in union.” Nonetheless, Ephrem inferred from his thirty-six years of experience of tensions in Holy Cross and remarked to Cousineau (General Superior) that, “the solution to the strained relation of the two societies, brought on by the union, lies more in conjunction than in amalgamation, for there are properties in the two elements that seem to resist complete fusion, and give off too much heat in the attempted process.”¹⁰

It is obvious from these submissions above that, the interplay of optimism and skepticism of the nature of the union, brought on by the glaring tensions between brothers and priests, was a source of worry to many in the congregation. Yet, probably, the binding force of the union behooved each member to sustain it, because it was the will of God. Indeed, today, whatever the nature of Holy Cross, one can confidently claim that the Oath of Union was crucial to its

nuances.

Tensions threaten the Union

Not long after the fundamental pact, did dissensions and challenges begin to threaten the union of priests and brothers in Holy Cross. For Burtchaell, “tensions existed even as far back as the 1860’s between the society of priests who held most positions of executive authority and the society of brothers who wanted to direct their own novitiates, scholasticates, and schools. Brothers accused priests of mismanagement and the tendency to recruit into the priesthood the most capable of the brothers.”¹¹

To resolve these problems, Ralph Weber in his writings, Notre Dame’s John Zahm, states that, “the 1868 General Chapter decreed that the Superior General, the Procurator General and

¹⁰ Burtchaell, *One Congregation*, 37.

¹¹ Burtchaell, *One Congregation*, 10.

the Provincial could only be chosen from the Priests, negating the 1864 Circular Letter.”¹² In return Burtchaell writes that, “brothers were granted full control in their novitiate, scholasticate, and schools as well as parity between the two societies in chapters and councils.”¹³ No matter how good such resolution might seem, it did not stand the test of time.

In his 1994 Circular Letter, Claude Grou has it that, “tensions between the brothers and priests continued throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century.”¹⁴ According to Weber, “the issues centered on unequal treatment, inferior educational opportunity for studies, assigning teaching brothers to manual labor, inadequate recruitment policies and school closings.”¹⁵ For example, James Burtchaell, posits that “whereas the brothers had once had responsibility for staffing dozens of parochial schools in the United States, they had decamped from 15 schools in the 1880s and about 20 more in the 1890s. By 1904 they had only four left. Continuing he added that, the brothers’ view was that while much was done for the educational development of seminarians little was being done for the brothers.”¹⁶ Considered by the brothers as apathetic to their advancement and welfare, Armstrong admits that, “during his (Fr. John Zahm c.s.c.) tenure as provincial of the United States Province of Brothers and Priests (1896-1906), much of his attention was centered on the needs of the priests’ society, (building Holy Cross theologate in Washington D. C.) and ^{on} the University of Notre Dame.”¹⁷

Dissatisfied with progress made so far in resolving such tensions, Burtchaell on his part suggests that, “eleven brothers, in August 1901, signed letters of grievances, complaining of

¹² Ralph E. Weber, *Notre Dame's John Zahm* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1961), 157.

¹³ Burtchaell, *One Congregation*, 10-11.

¹⁴ Claude Grou, *Circular Letter No. 14* December 9, 1994, 8.

¹⁵ Weber, *Notre Dame's John Zahm*, 156-163.

¹⁶ Burtchaell, *One Congregation*, 24-25.

¹⁷ Armstrong, *A More Perfect Legacy*, 44.

injustices and Fr. Zahm's role in it."¹⁸ Whereas Armstrong has it that, "a copy of the letter was given to Fr. Zahm,"¹⁹ Burtchaell is rather silent about it but writes that, "the brothers submitted it directly to the superior general, Father Gilbert Français, with a promise to forward a copy to the Holy See in three months' time if no satisfaction was given."²⁰ . This did not go down well with Fr. Zahm when the Superior General sought his response to the matter. In reporting on how the issue was resolved, whereas Weber writes that "a commission was set up by Fr. Français with Fr. Zahm included, to look into the issue,"²¹ Burtchaell on the other hand writes that, "Zahm assembled three other priests, (with no brother)...summoned the signers one-by-one, swore them to secrecy, and interrogated them at length."²² In the end Armstrong says "no substance in the complaints was found and individually, brothers were made to retract their accusations. But despite the outcome of this investigation, on September 1, 1901, Father Gilbert Français inferring from his observation while on a visit to Notre Dame Campus in 1897, acknowledged that brothers had some grounds for their complaints."²³

In 1910, Weber writes that, "tensions still persisted and the brothers in the United States initiated petitions to Rome to be separated from the priests as an independent congregation."²⁴

^{by whom?} The petition was politely but very firmly rejected and as Burtchaell puts it, "what Rome had joined, Rome now refused to put asunder."²⁵

According to Weber, the actual solution was, as Father Français wrote in 1912, "that a new future was open for the Brothers-catholic high schools had grown and become more

¹⁸ Burtchaell, *One Congregation*, 18.

¹⁹ Armstrong, *A More Perfect Legacy*, 45.

²⁰ Burtchaell, *One Congregation*, 18

²¹ Weber, *Notre Dame's John Zahm*, 371-373.

²² Burtchaell, *One Congregation*, 18.

²³ Armstrong, *A More Perfect Legacy*, 45.

²⁴ Weber, *Notre Dame's John Zahm*, 156-163.

²⁵ Burtchaell, *One Congregation*, 27.

indispensable. From this time forward, the high schools is the outstanding vocation of our brothers...and would be the special work of our teaching brothers.”²⁶ With a sigh of relief, Frank Ellis concludes that, “the emergence of Catholic high schools brought an armistice to generations’ old differences within the Congregation of Holy Cross.”²⁷

Fr. James Burns, Proponent of Unity

Burtchaell narrates that “between the 1926 and 1932 General Chapters, the priests, mostly from Notre Dame were requesting the Vatican for total separation of the two societies and this came at the backdrop of the accusation that brothers were controlling the decisions of the General Chapters through their disciplined bloc voting. And furthermore, the priests complained that the brothers were a financial liability because of their small salaries in parochial schools.”²⁸ This priests’ movement for separation, according to Burtchaell, “received a backlash from Fr. James Burns at the chapter floor of 1932. Onetime president of Notre Dame, and now a Provincial, Fr Burns reportedly pointed boldly to this work as a prime beneficiary of priests and brothers working together. He reminded the chapter that in 1864-1873 brothers had constituted 40% of the Notre Dame faculty; in the next decade, 49%; in the next 60%, but by 1920, only 32%.”²⁹ Fr. Burns continued that:

There was no division of interest at all in the older days; the priests and the brothers acted as one. The brothers’ schools were closed because of the needs of the University.... Why were they closed? Because Fr. Sorin needed brothers at Notre Dame to help build the university; the brothers lost their schools as a consequence: they lost an opportunity for their own development by bringing in thirty teachers to help build up Notre Dame.

Giving us a glimpse into how the union once flourished, Fr Burns continued:

²⁶ Weber, *Notre Dame’s John Zahm*, 165.

²⁷ Frank Ellis, *Co-adjutor Brothers in the Congregation of Holy Cross: 1946 until 1986* (A paper presented at the Holy Cross History Conference, Notre Dame.: Indiana, 2015), 2.

²⁸ Burtchaell, *One Congregation*, 31-32

²⁹ Burtchaell, *One Congregation*, 31-32

When I had been rector of Sorin Hall, there was no such trouble as this. We worked in harmony. This is not a hereditary problem, as it has been called here...It comes from circumstances that could and should be avoided. What about the good that has been done by the priests and brothers working together, much of which would not otherwise have been done? Notre Dame is the fruit of the union of priests and brothers. Were it not for the union there would be no Notre Dame today; it would never have been founded. Father Sorin came here with one priest and five brothers. Notre Dame University was founded, continued and developed; it could not even have existed, were it not for the union of the two societies.³⁰

Indeed such prophetic stance and remainder gives us a glimpse into how the union once flourished. This was an assurance that despite tensions, once upon a time, brothers and priests lived together with a sense of mutual admiration and respect out of which came what we are proud of today, ^{the} University of Notre Dame.

In a song for pilgrims ascending to Jerusalem, a psalm of David reads, "how wonderful and pleasant it is when brothers live together in harmony,"³¹ and when brothers and priests could see night from day by recognizing our common brotherhood. With such prophetic utterance, the 1932 motion for separation was rejected by 44 to 7 to 2 votes. This vote answered the question regarding the Union of two Societies but hardly did it totally remedy the causes of the tensions between brothers and priests, which were a major threats to the sustenance of the union. Kilian Beirne reports that "at the 1938 General Chapter Father James W. Donohue, the superior general, raised the question of two separate societies and it was rejected by a large percentage of the delegates."³² Nonetheless, the question still lingered on. / ?

Addressing the Question of Union

³⁰ Maurus O'Malley, *The Portrait Of A Builder* (Holy Cross History Conference. Manchester, NH 1987) B1-B2
quoted in Burtchaell, *One Congregation*, 31-32.

³¹ Pslam 133.

³² Kilian Beirne, *From Sea To Shining Sea* (Brooklyn, NY: Theo. Gaus' Sons, Inc., 1966), 55-214

According to Burtchaell, “the issue of separation was still on the minds and hearts of delegates at the 1938 General Chapter” and without any viable solution available during this chapter, Frank Ellis points out that, “a new Superior General, Fr. Albert Cousineau was elected. Unsatisfied that their separation request was rejected, a group of priests approached Father Cousineau, and insisted he address the separation issue.”³³ “With the Generalate, now based in Washington, for Armstrong, “steps were taken by Fr. Cousineau to respond to the priests’ request. His enquiries led to his coming into contact with two Procurator Generals of Holy Cross and Oblates of Mary Immaculate namely, Fr Georges Sauvage and Fr. Joseph Rousseau, a canon lawyer, chapter consultant and once administrator at Oblate University in Ottawa, Canada. It was Fr. Rousseau OMI, who proposed that the next Chapter should prefer autonomous homogenous provinces to total separation of Societies.³⁴ Fr. Rousseau supported his recommendation of homogeneous autonomous provinces in a detailed nine page treatise as follows:

The Erection of Homogeneous and Distinct Provinces seems to be the answer to the problem. First of all it would maintain the Union of the two Societies, from two points of view:

1. Union IN PERSONA, that is to say, in the person of the Superior General, with his Council, to whom the two societies would be equally submitted, not only in name but in effect, according to the terms of the Constitutions
2. Union IN OPERIBUS, that is to say, the two elements may and should cooperate in this prosecution of works common to both, according to a well-defined mode of cooperation.³⁵

Fr. Rousseau also recommended that:

...it would be opportune for the General Chapter to re-approve, with a very substantial majority, the principle of UNION, declaring that if the Congregation is organized into homogeneous provinces, the purpose is not to arrive at the extreme, though logical,

³³ Frank Ellis, 1945 General Chapter Congregation of Holy Cross: Allocation of Assets (paper presented at Holy Cross History Conference, Notre Dame, Indiana, 2016), 3.

³⁴ Armstrong, *A More Perfect Legacy*, 52-53.

³⁵ Joseph Rousseau, *Congregation of Holy Cross: The Union of Two Societies of Priests and Brothers* (unpublished manuscript 1945), 2, quoted in Frank Ellis, ‘1945 General Chapter of Congregation of Holy Cross: Allocation of Assets’ (paper presented at the Holy Cross History Conference, Notre Dame, Indiana, 2016), 9.

conclusion, separation; on the contrary it is in view of maintaining sure union, that a measure is being adopted to favor good will, and cooperation between the two societies.³⁶

This proposal would be accepted and effected in the 1945 General Chapter. So important and crucial was this General Chapter, that not even the chaos of World War II could halt it from dealing with the present tensions in Holy Cross. Still looking into the separation issue prior to the 1945 General Chapter, Burtchaell is quoted as saying, “preliminary preparations, consultations, interviews, visits and deliberations by Fr. Coussineau throughout the congregation proved that majority of priests and brothers (90%) favored the preservation of the fundamental unity between the two Societies.”³⁷ Armstrong writes that, “in a confidential memo quoted by Fr. Coussineau, some Canadian members of Holy Cross, (they had tensions in their societies too), laid down two unambiguous principles in these words: 1. The principle of union of our two societies must be safeguarded at the cost of whatever sacrifices required: 2. We must return without bias to the spirit of our Founder, who wanted two societies distinct but not separate. It seems, therefore, that if a problem existed, it was primarily among the clerical members of the United States province.”³⁸

En route to Union in Persona and in Operibus

So far one wonders why these tensions cannot be dealt with once and for all. Where is the prophetic will as opposed to the political will to tackle these tensions head-on? Perhaps Armstrong gives us a clue to such hesitation on the part of members of Holy Cross or delegates to General Chapters when he posits that:

³⁶ Rousseau, *Congregation of Holy Cross* 8, quoted in Ellis, *1945 General Chapter*, 9.

³⁷ Burtchaell, *One Congregation*, 39.

³⁸ Armstrong, *A More Perfect Legacy*, 84.

To safeguard the sometimes fragile unity between the societies of brothers and priests in Holy Cross, an “Oath of Union” had traditionally been taken by capitulants of chapters, by major and local superiors and directors, and by those in charge of novices and postulants. The oath included a promise to God and the congregation never to say or do anything, or to allow anything to be said or done, contrary to the preservation of union between the two societies unless the Holy See judged otherwise. Any violation of the oath could result in the loss of one’s office and his vote in chapter.”³⁹

Indeed one can confidently say among other statements, that probably, the oath of union served as a binding force that kept Holy Cross united despite the many moves by both priests and brothers to separate. The oath was perhaps also a reason for the congregation to keep searching for better ways of resolving these “administrative irresponsibilities” other than total separation.

At the spring meeting of 1944, Fr. Cousineau presented to his Council three propositions based on the recommendation of Fr. Rousseau to seek a secret vote from them and also to go to the General Chapter of 1945 fully prepared to present one option of union to the Chapter to vote on. As Fr Cousineau presents in his own words, “the project concerning the union between two societies in the Congregation of Holy Cross, give rise to three main solutions: the first is to keep the status quo with a few modifications: such as separate novitiate, etc: the second is separation of two societies and a return to the ideal of each respective founder: third is a revision of our Constitutions with provision for union in the General Administration and separate Provinces.”⁴⁰ The first two solutions were rejected and the third solution, within which union was assured, was submitted to the General ^{Chapter ?} Council as a basis for discussion.

It is noteworthy, per the submission of Armstrong, to state that, “as far as the oath of union is concerned, the superior general and his council were entirely at liberty to openly and

³⁹ Armstrong, A More Perfect Legacy, 83

⁴⁰ Armstrong, A More Perfect Legacy, 85.

frankly discuss the concept of union and its potential implication of separation because they sought and were granted dispensation from Rome to do so.”⁴¹

It suffices to say that after the Chapter of 1945, Armstrong concludes that,

the Congregation of Holy Cross worldwide (France, Bengal, Canada, United States of America) was composed in principle of Autonomous Provinces of priests and of brothers, with a Provincial Superior at the head of each: a priest provincial for the priests and a brother provincial for the Brothers. In this way the suggestion of Fr. Rousseau became a reality, in the sense that union in persona and in operibus was assured. Whereas In Persona: the priests and brothers were united in the person of the General Chapter, the General Council, and the Superior General, In operibus: the priests and brothers could help each other in common works according to a well-defined plan of coordination. In this way union was made more perfect and the spirit of the founder’s intentions was respected and maintained. With this new face of union assured, both societies took charge of its own destiny and developed from strength to greater respect and to greater collaboration.⁴²

On 29 November 2013, Pope Francis met the Union of Superiors General in Rome during the latter’s 82nd General Assembly. Among the many questions posed to him was the issue of conflict in religious life. He responded by saying:

Community conflicts are necessary: we can’t dream of a community or any human group which is free of conflicts and we must tolerate them and overcome them not by eliminating or ignoring them but by facing them. At times, we can be very cruel to each other. We are all tempted to criticize either because we think we are better or for some personal gain”...In any case, “we must never act like managers when faced with a brother’s conflict: but our charity must reach out like a gentle touch”. When faced by conflict we mustn’t react like the priest or the Levite in the parable of the Good Samaritan who simply ignored the problem: we can’t avoid conflict but we mustn’t remain stuck in it either: we need to tackle it and behave like wise people trying to find possible solutions. Patience and tenderness are the virtues we need. It is painful but it’s the only way forward. Certainly, if there is no resolution of the problem, other solutions will need to be found...but everything must be done in a gentle and caring way.⁴³

⁴¹ Armstrong, A More Perfect Legacy, 83.

⁴² Armstrong, A More Perfect Legacy, 87.

⁴³ http://www.africamission-mafr.org/Pope_Francis_meets_Superiors_General.pdf

These consoling but challenging words from Pope Francis ^{is} a perfect reflection of ^{the} Holy Cross situation. Conflict shall always be with us as religious communities of men and women who, because of the mission of Christ, have come together to live out the gospel values. Unfortunate as these tensions ^{may} be, the use of dialogue was key to finding resolution to the problem of conflicts among priests and brothers in the Congregation of Holy Cross. Far from being angels from above, we are first and foremost human beings who are subject to human weakness and all the inadequacies that come with it. Hence the need for a concerted efforts of tolerance, equality, and seeking out the good of each member in community. As Holy Cross enters into the process of restructuring, hopefully, the Fundamental Act of Union will guide us towards greater union of mutual admiration, equality, and respect towards one another as priests and brothers.

Benefits and Challenges of the Renewed Union

A retrospective look at the outcome of the 1945 General Chapter, to a large extent, brought a seizure to the main causes of friction between brothers and priests. Burtchaell recounts that, “questions of inequality of treatment, suspicion and the likes are no more. The old disparity in educational attainment and professional status have disappeared. The settlement is so successful in giving the brothers the autonomy to govern their own affairs and develop their own apostolates, and so successful in making the priests hospitable to brothers in their houses and works, that now brothers and priests live and work under their own and each another’s governance more peaceably than would have been foreseen in 1945....However, the only inequality that still persists is the adamantine refusal of the Church to accept religious brothers as

General Superior”⁴⁴ or in some cases Provincial Superiors in a mixed society of priests and brothers. In this vein James Gaffney asserts that, “when brothers cannot be superiors in so called “Clerical Institutes,” they experience discrimination,”⁴⁵ a case in point is Holy Cross prior to 1945. The astronomical increase in vocations to the religious life, post-World War II, became a blessing to the Congregation of Holy Cross, to the extent that the 1956 General Chapter divided the United States single homogeneous-autonomous province of brothers into three provinces namely the Midwest, South-West and Eastern Provinces of brothers. The Priests province in the United States also increased in vocations and today still has young men in their formation whereas the brothers hardly do have any.

It holds true according to Burtchaell that, “if the essential resources of a religious congregation is its members, and more especially its younger members, the post-1945 years were a season of another kind of affluence. Between 1946 and 1958 U.S. Priests numbered 774 and U.S. Brothers numbered 951.”⁴⁶ New missions in the African continent were opened by priests and brothers provinces. Whereas the brothers (Mid-West Province) responded to mission in West Africa, Ghana in 1957, and later in Liberia, the priests, on the other hand, went to the opposite direction, East Africa, (Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania and ^{Can. Brot.} Rwanda) in 1958. Today these missions are thriving and booming in vocations serving as a source of hope to the existence of Holy Cross.

However comfortable, assuring or settling the 1945 Chapter might have been, its presented challenges too. Regretting, Burtchaell writes that:

Our peaceable arrangement of half-century ago has made many of us strangers to one another. Except for our most senior confreres and those much younger in new provinces

⁴⁴ Burtchaell, *One Congregation*, 43-59.

⁴⁵ James E. Gaffney, “The Religious Brother in the Life of the Church,” in Robert J Daly et al. *The Religious Life In The U.S Church: The New Dialogue*, Ramsey, N.Y.: Paulist Press 1984, 142.

⁴⁶ Burtchaell, *One Congregation*, 52.

and districts with shared formation programs, it has created a generation of priests and brothers whose long and agreeable independence from and ignorance of one another leaves them with no strong sense of need for active fellowship: amiably distant relatives who no longer hope in the Gospel's power to make us a single, exemplary fraternity. If antagonism has waned, so too has affection, and the desire for a common life.⁴⁷

According to Dorothy Day, "of all hostilities one of the saddest is the war between clergy and lay."⁴⁸ Unfortunately this truth inherent in the words of Dorothy Day is not peculiar to Holy Cross. "Brothers, especially those who belong to religious institutes whose members are priests and brothers," complains Gaffney, "have experienced confusion, resentment, anguish and hurt because of a perceived second-class status. Their work has often been defined as derivative, secondary, and auxiliary in nature. They have been regarded as co-adjutors, (in the case of Holy Cross without passive and active voice), cooperators, lay helpmates and simple, uneducated appendages."⁴⁹

To Merge or Not To Merge

Such dreadful experience of tensions between brothers and priests seem to be far removed from young religious priests and brothers of Holy Cross today. Largely because we lack firsthand experience of these tensions, or that it is hardly talked about in formation, or because the church as a whole and the world at large, aware of the many inequalities, have grown in its awareness to bridge such inequalities and treat all people with dignity, respect and equality. This is a hopeful sign which, given the signs of the times may call into question the relevance of the settlement of 1945. Nonetheless, no matter the desire especially, among young Holy Cross religious, to return to the original vision of the founder, the saying, once bitten twice

⁴⁷ Burtchaell, *One Congregation*, 59.

⁴⁸ Dorothy, Day. *Meditations*. ed. Stanley Vishnewski. (New York: Newman, 1970) cited in *The Catholic Worker*, July 1964.

⁴⁹ Richard, Gaffney. "The Religious Brother in the Life of the Church," in *Religious Life in the U.S. Church: The New Dialogue*, ed. Robert J. Daly et al. (Ramsey, N.Y.,: Paulist Press, 1984), 141.

shy, always comes back to haunt¹ us, especially the brothers because of the bitter experience. Also, “given the unappreciative nature of the brother vocation in the Church,” as Gaffney asserts, “the hardly promoted situation of the vocation of the brother, the elevation of priesthood over and above any vocation in the church and the ambiguity that often characterizes the identity of brothers in mixed institutes of priests and brothers,”⁵⁰ make it even more unlikely, if not impossible, to translate any desire of merging into a reality among Holy Cross religious today especially, among the brothers, either young or old. Moreover, will clerics in Holy Cross be objective enough to transcend the privileges of their vocation to live with brothers in mutual respect and equality of status, and opportunities as envisioned by the founder Fr. Basil Moreau? Clerics always have behind them an authoritative “imaginary hand” of Rome whom they always obey and kowtow to, to ensure perhaps, their authority and upward mobility on the ladder of church hierarchy or privileges.

As a response to the process of restructuring and a further boost to the union of priests and brothers in the Congregation of Holy Cross, the General Chapter of 2010 approved the merging of the Eastern and South-West Provinces of brothers to become the Moreau Province *of FR+BR* and the Indiana Province and Eastern Province to become the United States Province of priests and brothers. The Mid-West Province of brothers were not ready to merge with any society of the Congregation. Why? Perhaps due to fear, among other reasons, of being subsumed by the United State Province which in terms of geographical location, and administrative authorities would be the best option to merge with because both are present in Notre Dame, Indiana.

Conclusion

⁵⁰ Gaffney, *The Religious Brother*, 142.

Indeed, Holy Cross in retrospect, despite the many tensions leading up to the settlement of 1945, has still preserved its essence and character, and its fundamental Oath of Union enshrined in Constitution 1, Article 1 of the 1956 Constitution as it reads, "The Congregation of Holy Cross is composed of two societies, (Brothers and Priests), distinct but not separate." *repealed*

Kudos to all members of Holy Cross, past and present, who by their actions or inactions contributed and still contribute daily to preserve this union. Hopefully, knowledge of where we were, where we are, and where we hope to be, especially, in light of the Union, will provide candidates, novices, scholastics and seminarians in Holy Cross with a framework to situate their calling together with any demands it make on them to preserve the character and essence of the Congregation of Holy Cross.

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