

SIXTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE
ON THE
HISTORY OF THE CONGREGATIONS OF HOLY CROSS

AN AUDIO VISUAL PRESENTATION

THE HISTORY OF THE SOLITUDE OF LE MANS

PRESENTED BY
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AT

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INTRODUCTION

"Holy Ground" from Be Exalted by John Michael Talbot

This is holy ground, we're standing on holy ground
for the Lord is present and where he is is holy (repeat)

These are holy hands, he's given us holy hands
he works through these hands and so these hands are holy (repeat)

This is holy ground, we're standing on holy ground
for the Lord is present and where he is is holy (repeat)¹

The land or place of which I am about to speak is for
me not only "Holy Ground" but the HOLY LAND of the
Congregation of Holy Cross. Let us assume a posture of
prayer and enter as pilgrims to this HOLY LAND.

In 1962 several editors, members of the Congregation of Holy Cross, wrote in Spes Unica that to be able to live in Le Mans allows a religious of Holy Cross the physical reality--the corporeal contact with the birthplace of the Congregation and leads one closer to Father Moreau.² In the same little book Leon Lucas, CSC says that the heart of a pilgrim in the Holy Land can only be filled with sentiments of respect, love and joy and these should be the feelings that animate any Holy Cross religious as they find themselves at the 'cradle' of the Congregation,³ walking in the footsteps of Father Founder on holy ground. Fr. Edward Heston, CSC past procurator of the Congregation wrote on the 110th anniversary of the opening of the Solitude, October 18, 1950 to Mother Mary St. Odile, then Superior General of the Marianites of Holy Cross saying that "Holy Cross owes to the Solitude what the Benedictines owe to the holy cave at Subiaco, what the Jesuits owe to Manresa, and what Franciscans owe to the rocky caves of La Verna." He congratulated Mother Odile "for the wonderful work she had done in restoring the house and making it worthy of the noble traditions for which it was the 'cradle'."⁴

I, at one time, lived at the Solitude. My bedroom was adjacent to Father Founder's and many times during my stay there as well as in the days thereafter knew well that Fr. Moreau's influence, his search for--a bringing to light of the integral witness of tradition, and of Christian experience to the whole concrete reality of life in Christ Jesus⁵ had greatly deepened within me. I have been imbued with his spirit, I have grown in my capacity to affirm God and all of God's creatures. It is gift, it is grace, I am grateful and I attribute it not only to the experience I had of returning to the 'cradle' but also to trying to en flesh Father Founder's desire that 'we BE Christ for others.'⁶ Today, I would like to bring each of you on a journey to a holy land-ground. We will be pilgrims. I hope the journey will lead each one to see that Fr. Moreau was called to holiness in a process of self-emptying, that is, a growth in consciousness of God's loving concern for him. Father Moreau was impelled in turn to love God with a similar self-giving. "Set your hearts on greater gifts." 1 Cor. 12:31⁷

Basil Antoine Moreau

When Basil A. Moreau was born at Laigné-en-Belin, Sarthe, France, February 11, 1799 he was the ninth child of fourteen. His parents Louis and Louise were admirable Christians of modest means. Basil went to school at the parish rectory where he was taught by Fr. Provost. He later entered the seminary and was ordained August 12, 1821 in the Chapel of the old monastery of the Visitation, Le Mans. Although Basil wanted to continue his studies at the Seminary of the Foreign Missions, the Bishop of Le Mans, Bishop Le Myre, sent him to St. Sulpice in Paris so he would eventually become a seminary director. On October 11, 1821 Basil entered St. Sulpice where he became exposed to a very stimulating intellectual atmosphere and where he spent a year of formation for younger clergy. On July 21, 1822 he went to Issy-les Moulineaux near Paris, to a novitiate for the Sulpicians, and a retreat house which the Sulpicians called "the Solitude."⁸ Here, between the philosophy seminary and the Solitude there was an underground passage. The ascent from the tunnel led to a dome opening on the garden, and written on the lintel St. Bernard's phrase. O Beata Solitudo! O Sola Beatitudo! O blessed solitude! O only happiness!⁹; a phrase very important to Father Founder. The spirituality of the Company of Fr. Olier, as the Sulpicians were also called, focused on the interiorization of the Christian life. It was based on the hidden aspect of divine grace, fostered and developed by recollection, prayer, and the practice of different virtues. Here, at the Solitude, under the direction of Fr. Mollevaut, who would become Basil's spiritual director for the next twenty-five years, Basil was kept busy at manual labor, sweeping and cleaning the Church, and sacristy. Here too, there was early rising, evening examen, monition, direction, and the monthly retreat.¹⁰ Basil was taught that the servant must be like the master, that meekness and humility must direct and control the activity of one who would be a disciple of Jesus.¹¹ The importance that our Founder gave to silence, to prayer, penance, the spirit of faith and obedience are a result of his days at the "Solitude" of Issy. His devotion to our Lady deepened during this year and mani-

fested itself by recourse to her intercession in all circumstances.

The summer of 1823 Father Moreau left Issy, he returned to his diocese to begin teaching future priests which he did until 1836.

During these years he was grateful for the friendship of his confrères, his family, and his friends. Fr. de Lisle, one of his confrères had suffered for years with scruples, unable to finish his office or say Mass. Fr. Moreau would visit him and they prayed the breviary together. Soon Fr. de Lisle was able to pray his office alone and say Mass again after a long interlude.

Mr. and Mrs. Varenne, friends and benefactors of Basil's were likewise touched by his works. The gratitude of the Varenne's and Fr. de Lisle found a more direct expression of thanks in a donation of properties. On Dec. 21, 1831, the Varenne's offered Fr. Moreau their house and property near Le Mans, which they insisted he could not sell or give away so he would not end up in the poor house in his old

age. The property was known as La Charbonnière.¹³ Fr. de Lisle's property was given to Fr. Moreau Dec. 24, 1832. It was about seven acres, worth about 20,000F and called Notre Dame de Bel Air and was in the commune of Ste. Croix at the gates of Le Mans. This was to be the future Ste. Croix, Our Lady of Holy Cross.¹⁴

In 1840, Fr. Moreau rented from Mr. Letessier and then bought the property of the Solitude on July 13, 1844 for about \$4,000. All this property would constitute the 'estate' of the Congregation of Holy Cross.¹⁵

Brothers of St. Joseph

Fr. Moreau had another friend, Fr. James Dujarie, who had begun to form a group of teaching brothers in 1820 in Ruillé. At first many brothers entered but a lack of spiritual formation, the outset and results of the 1830 Revolution, as well as the age and infirmity of Fr. Dujarie led to a rapid decline in the brothers membership. At Fr. Dujarie's request and with the permission of Bishop Bouvier, Father Moreau assumed the leadership of this group on August 31, 1835. The new society, the Brothers of St. Joseph, moved to Le Mans to the de Lisle property on

¹⁶
November 1, 1835.

Auxiliary Priests

Another project that Basil Moreau undertook was the initiation and organization of a group of priests from the seminary in order to improve the intellectual standards in France. In 1834, Fr. Moreau sent three priests to the Sorbonne at Paris to secure their degrees. Bishop Bouvier gave his consent for establishing this group in 1835. Thus the same year he took over the responsibility of the Brothers of St. Joseph he began the Auxiliary priests. In August, 1835, Basil and his associates made a retreat at La Trappe de Port du Salut, at Laval. In prayer and consultation with the abbot the associates decided to form a new society called Auxiliaries. ¹⁷ Fr. Hupier, chaplain to the Brothers joined this group in their very beginnings. The active apostolate of the Auxiliaries, who were dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, began in the spring of 1836 and that same year they left St. Vincent's Seminary. The priests were temporarily housed in a low rent house belonging to Mr. Barré, who had certain hostilities toward the church but respected Fr. Moreau. It is in this way that Holy Cross came together. In time the Brothers and Fathers signed the Fundamental Pact, March 1, 1837, a major step ¹⁸ toward union of the two societies. Fr. Moreau was certainly a pioneer in elementary and secondary education. In 1839, the Holy Cross elementary school expanded to a secondary boarding school, an institution with the right to teach humanities.

Marianite Sisters

By 1838 some lay women had come to help the priests and brothers. Basil wanted to establish a small group who would take care of the "housekeeping" of Our Lady of Holy Cross. In addition to housework, they had to wash the clothes in the Huisne River, 1½ miles from Holy Cross. This small group of women were soon joined by Leocadie Gascoin who first met Fr. Moreau as he came from saying mass at the Solitude. After spending time in training at the Good Shepherd Monastery, Leocadie, to be known as Mother Mary of the Seven Dolors became the first superior and later the first Superior General. It is she whom we consider our foundress.

Purchase of the Solitude

Fr. Moreau asked Bishop Bouvier permission to open a novitiate for the Auxiliary priests in Oct. 1840 either at La Charbonnière or in the Barré house. Moreau wanted nothing better than a kind of preliminary novitiate like the Issy Solitude in Paris. He looked for property and found Chateauneuf situated about seven minutes from Our Lady of Holy Cross toward the east of the city. It was a quiet, isolated spot on a picturesque hill of Gazonfiers. To the novices who were looking for a place for quiet meditation, this place offered its silent dwelling, its pure air, the shade of the elms, and the green meadow of its charming woods.

Father Founder's first visit was decisive. He rented it at first and later bought it. A statue of Our Lady was erected at the entrance of the woods thus completing the likeness to the Solitude at Issy at Paris.

This house was called La Solitude and to this title Father Founder added that of du Sauveur to signify further the consecration of spiritual sons to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The stone structure included: a cave, ground floor, first floor, and an attic. It has an east-west exposure and within its panoramic view are the basins of the Sarthe and Huisne rivers. Fr. Moreau had the four rooms on the ground floor transformed into: chapel, small recreation room, refectory, and kitchen. To the rear of the building there was another small building which was demolished to give place for the present chapel of Our Lady of Seven Dolors.

The first floor of the Solitude was divided into fifteen small cells, each furnished with a bed, table, chair, crucifix, and holy water font. At the entrance of the novitiate, Fr. Moreau inscribed O Beata Solitudo! O Sola Beatitudo!...O blessed solitude! O sole happiness! enter here wholly, dwell solely, and go out from here
20
other!

Bishop Bouvier, Canons Piolin and Dubignon blessed the chapel on October 18, 1840 dedicating it to the Holy Spirit and placing it under the secondary protection of St. Luke. That evening, Fr. Moreau took his cell as Master of Novices. During this first year at the Solitude Fr. Moreau planned the project of the Constitutions

which he proposed to the Society of Priests. He compiled for the Brothers a manual of prayers and customs proper to the Institute and it is more than likely that in 1846 he framed the first Constitutions here.²¹ For many years, the Solitude was a home and a source of intense religious life in which Fr. Moreau formed ardent young apostles.

Fr. Moreau wanted to organize into a civil society and this happened in 1841 with the death of Mr. & Mrs. Varenne. The civil society was formed for the administration of Le Mans properties so that Moreau's death would not lead to complications for the Association which did not have the legal right to hold property.²² The Brothers moved from Holy Cross in 1841 and settled in La Charbonnière. This novitiate of the Brothers was called the Solitude of St. Joseph. The Association of Holy Cross was born in September, 1841.

"If the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies it bears much fruit." Jn.12:24 United like the branches of a tree the Fathers, Brothers and Sisters were to carry the spirit of Holy Cross afar. In 1841, to Indiana, with Fr. Sorin, 1847, Canada, 1849, Louisiana, 1850, Rome, 1852, Bengal, 1855, New York.

1857 marked the height of the Congregation; the approval of the Constitutions and the consecration of Holy Cross Church begun in 1840. (Tree of family 1860)

During this period Father Moreau had to face not only financial problems, a debt of nearly \$47,000. but also the lack of understanding, indeed the intrigues of those whom he should have been able to trust the most. Oppositions continued to grow.

Some of Moreau's sons secured the authority which is the right of the Superior General. Not only were Fr. Moreau's orders contested, but unjust accusations were brought against him to Rome, to Bishops, to his fellow religious. On June 14, 1866 Fr. Moreau resigned as Superior General. He made the announcement from this chair in the chapter room and then took his place among the professed.

Later the chapter of 1868 at Rome decreed that all the establishments at Ste. Croix, Le Mans be sold and the personnel dispersed. Fr. Founder's whole life was there, in the church, the college, each of the buildings, the two novitiates, the cemetery.

All of his activities spent without measure were here. At this same chapter Fr. Sorin was elected Superior General.

Fr. Moreau learned through the newspaper of the sale of Holy Cross College. On April 21, 1869 the auction began on his properties. On April 27, the General Council told Fr. Moreau they could not provide for him, and on April 28, Fr. Moreau moved to his sisters' house and for three months he heard the auctioneers. This troubled Moreau greatly. He felt we were defrauding our creditors and planned on dissolving the civil society. Settlements with the creditors continued until 1873-²³ some only receiving 20% of what was due. When Fr. Moreau left Ste. Croix he brought his chalice, his breviary, and a few pieces of furniture. In early 1870, other religious of the Congregation left Le Mans.

On July 17, 1869, Mr. Pierre Lefebvre purchased the Solitude for about 11,000F. At this time the Solitude had on the ground floor a kitchen, a dining room, a vestibule, a living room, and a chapel; on the first floor: a corridor and fifteen cells; an attic overhead and below a cellar; at its north gabled end, a coach house. Behind the building and attached was a dishwashing nook for the kitchen. There was another building comprising a vast dwelling with an attic overhead. To the rear stretched a yard in which was located a well which is still seen today. In addition, there was a kitchen garden planted with fruit trees, the little woods, and the field, an area of about five acres.

Mr. Lefebvre became the proprietor in 1869 and silence enveloped the Solitude. Our Lady whom Father Founder had made the guardian, "Posuerunt me custodem--" the inscription he had engraved on the pedestal of the statue which he had placed at the entrance of the little woods has "Monstra te esse Matrem" 'proved herself a Mother'. The Solitude was never lost or destroyed.

Mr. Lefebvre finally left his property to his sister upon his death. She sold it eventually to Canon George Coulon, Vicar General on Oc. 25, 1913. During these years several pieces of property were bought and sold widening the circle of this peaceful above so that at present the Solitude is about 12½ acres.

When the 'estate' of Holy Cross was sold in 1869 the Marianites also were forgotten by Fr. Sorin. The Congregation of the Propoganda had requested that the Sisters be provided with a house when Ste. Croix was sold. They found a dwelling and eventually established themselves at Ave. Bollée. In the chapel of this generalate Fr. Moreau celebrated his golden jubilee, Aug. 1872, a year late because of war, and later he was buried from here in 1873. Fr. Sorin announced Fr. Moreau's death in a Circular Letter. He himself died Oct. 31, 1893. Fr. Gilbert Francais,²⁵ the new superior general, returned the generalate of Holy Cross to France.²⁶

Mother Mary of the Seven Dolours continued to share the heritage of Holy Cross with her daughters until her death on January 29, 1900.

From 1901-1904 strict laws of the state were imposed again in France. Fr. Francais had to return to the United States with the generalate and it remained there until 1954 when it was established in Rome. The Marianites too moved their motherhouse from Ave. Bollée to Presigné, a former seminary, about 31 miles from Le Mans in Feb. 1923.

The Marianites continued to dream of re-purchasing the Solitude. On Sept. 29, 1927 Mother Mary St. Eleanor, Renée Lejeune (1921-32) Superior General bought the property from Canon Coulon but he reserved the right of enjoying it during his life time.

Once again silence reigned in the house, a silence prolonged by World War II.

In 1931, Fr. Donahue, Superior General of Holy Cross asked the Bishop to reopen Holy Cross in Le Mans. In Aug. 1931, Fr. Donahue rebought the Church of Holy Cross. Nov. 9, 1937 was the solemn reconsecration of the Church and on Nov. 9, 1938 the remains of Fr. Moreau were moved from the cemetery to the crypt in the Church.

In 1943, Mother Mary St. Julian, Le Roux, (1932-1946) Superior General foresaw the possibility of soon realizing her dream of moving the generalate to the Solitude. Ill health prevented this and Mother Mary St. Odile, Richard, (1946-1958) Superior General was to be the one to finally have Canon Coulon acquiesce and sell the usufruct on the property, Dec. 1947. The work of restoration began in early 1948.

Wishing to keep the building as it was used as the first novitiate of the Fathers of Holy Cross, it was decided to build a wing on each end. On the left: a ground floor containing a community room, a parlor, the Superior General's office and the sacristy; its first floor, the linen room, the infirmary, and the retired sisters rooms; its second floor, the novitiate; its third floor, a dormitory. The right wing, smaller in size because of zoning has a kitchen on its ground floor and a dormitory on each of the floors above the kitchen. Before these wings were constructed the primitive Solitude had to be repaired. It was necessary to rebuild a great part of the walls as well as all the partitions.

The chapel or Oratory was completely restored. The stain glass windows, the work of Mr. Jumeau remind us of what was the strength of our founders. Father Moreau "I glory in your cross, source of all my happiness." and Mother Mary of the Seven Dolours, "Do not let your crosses overwhelm you because all that God wills is good." There are two other windows in the chapel of Sts. Basil and Anthony, the baptismal patrons of Fr. Moreau. On each of the lateral walls had been inscribed O Beata Solitudo! O Sola Beatitudo! A miniature of the Holy Face is found in the oratory. It was one of Fr. Moreau's cherished devotions. The altar at which Fr. Moreau so often celebrated Mass was completely restored. The tabernacle, a gift of Bishop Carron, and before which Father Founder prayed many long hours, reminds us of his great love of the Eucharist. The sacristy was used as a place for the souvenirs of the founders.

When the oratory served as a community chapel until 1955 it was somewhat larger. As soon as the chapel of Our Lady of Seven Dolours was completed the Oratory was restored to its primitive dimensions. The original refectory on the ground floor was enlarged.

Father Moreau's room is on the first floor. As far as possible it too was restored to its primitive form: the floor was covered with flagstones of the times; the bed and night stand are also of that period; a book case, a chair. He had a small window for air and light and no heating or electricity. The knob on the door dates

to Father Moreau's epoch. The picture of the Holy Face on the wall recalls Father Moreau's devotion. In an adjoining room are a few pieces of Mother Mary of the Seven Dolor's furniture.

The little belfry has always been in the center of the roof and the bell, too long silent began again to call to prayer.

The right wing comprises a kitchen on the ground floor and a dormitory on the two floors above. The left wing about 128 sq. yds. has a community room in which is a life sized oil painting of Fr. Moreau executed by P. Grandin on the 100th anniversary of Fr. Moreau's birth. This painting was found in one of the Brother's schools.

Outside, at the entrance to the little woods, through which Fr. Moreau often walked, prayed, and reflected upon the Constitutions and Rules of the Congregation is a statue of Our Lady of the Solitude. The garden also has a statue of Fr. Moreau with three branches of the Congregation climbing to his heart, and St. Joseph teaching the Child Jesus to write. These were done by Mr. Dubois from Solesems. In Sept./Oct. 1950 the general council of the Marianites, the elderly and sick sisters, as well as the novices moved into the Solitude. On Oct. 24, the solemn blessing of the house took place. Bishop Grente officiated.

Several years later on July 20, 1955 the Chapel of Our Lady of Seven Dolors was consecrated by Msgr. Chevalier. Father Founder's prie dieu, and Mother Mary of the Seven Dolors chair are also found here. ²⁹ In 1957, a novitiate was constructed. It presently houses the Sisters of the Holy Cross Clinic, across the street.

Mother M. St. Cajetan, Doricort (1958-1964) Superior General wanted the Solitude to retain its character as a Mother House. Under her direction the province of France had a provincial house built and ready for Oct. 1963. The sisters would leave the left wing of the Solitude to live there.

Mother M. Madeleine S. Hebert (1964-1977) Superior General, would put new life into the Motherhouse. Renovations were effected inside the building and an entire section of the building became a guest house. Meetings, retreats and other gatherings are

held in the serenity and beauty of the Solitude. (floor plan)

Most of all the Solitude has become a place of pilgrimage. It is here where the tree of Holy Cross was planted. 150 members of the family of Holy Cross came to celebrate the centenary of Father Founder in 1973. Among those present were the Superiors General of Canada and Indiana, Msgr. Chevalier, Fr. Christopher O'Toole, and Fr. Moreau's family.³⁰

The Sisters of the Holy Cross of Indiana began a project that they have come to call the Moreau Pilgrimage in 1969. Mother Olivette, Superior General received a very generous monetary gift for the Congregation in 1968 and it was to make possible "that the sisters through personal experience have the opportunity for travel to the historical and geographical settings in France where Fr. Moreau lived, worked and died."³¹ In that year 19 sisters participated in a trip to Le Mans with Fr. Wulstan Mork, OSB as their chaplain. From 1970-74, 75 sisters visited the Solitude as well as other places in the world. In 1975, a group visited but there is no record of the number. From 1976-78, 49 sisters visited. In 1979, the summer of the General Chapter of the Sisters the Moreau Pilgrimage was suspended and a mission awareness program was substituted with two sisters going to each one of the mission countries for two months. The yeears 1980-83, saw 63 sisters visit. In 1984 the Moreau money was used to send the sisters to Montreal for Br. Andre's beatification. In 1985, 17 sisters and 2 Holy Cross priests went on pilgrimage and in 1986 there again was no Moreau pilgrimage but rather a multi-cultural experience in mission areas. This year 1987, 15 sisters hope to travel to the Solitude. That in itself is a total of 241 persons who have or will visit the Solitude since the beginning of the project in 1969--18 years ago. In the earlier years of the pilgrimage the Holy Land was not included. Once the Holy Land became a part of the itinerary visits to other countries stopped. I am sure that here among us today, there may be one/several members of the family who have been a part of this pilgrimage and will be happy to share with us their memoirs of what the

to the Solitude was for them.

At the Congregational Chapter of 1977 held in New Orleans, the Marianites not only separated the concepts of Mother House and Generalate; they also chose for the first time a team of three persons as the Congregational Administration. Sister Vivian M. Coulon, MSC(1977-1981), Congregational Superior, Sr. Raymonde Marsollier, MSC, Sr. Catherine M. Hennessy, MSC as assistants. The chapter body decided it would maintain the Solitude as the Mother House of the Congregation. It was the Chapter's desire that the Solitude be a center of pilgrimage and research for all of Holy Cross. That same year the Congregational Administration chose to move the generalate from the Solitude to a residence in the United States. 33 An annual meeting with the Provincials and the Congregational Administration took place the following June, 1978 at Our Lady of Princeton, Princeton, NJ. During these discussions many present felt it would be appropriate to ask the family of Holy Cross to help us defray some of the cost of maintaining the Solitude. Sr. M. Gerald, former treasurer of the Sisters of the Holy Cross assisted the Congregational Administration in drawing up a proposal for the Council of the Congregation, some of the members were Fr. Thomas Barrosse, CSC, Sr. Kathleen Nelligan, CSC and Sr. Jeanne Duseault, CSC Superiors Generals of Holy Cross. This meeting took place Dec. 1978. The project proposed was called SOLITUDE PROJECT. The members of that meeting indicated their personal support for the project; some indicated that they would have to contact their provincial treasurers since budgets had already been allocated; others felt they had to speak with their councils for a continuing commitment. During that first year the contributions to the SOLITUDE PROJECT from the family of Holy Cross were \$30,633.

The Marianites and others began to raise questions about the project. Fr. Barrosse had suggestions for a Congregational rather than a provincial participation for their Chapter of 1980. In April, 1980 a meeting was held at St. Mary's Indiana. Representatives of the different branches of Holy Cross met with Sr. Raymonde

Marsollier and Br. Montcalm--the chair--for this meeting to examine the possibility of on-going support. It was decided at that time that the SOLITUDE PROJECT be dropped because further study was needed concerning continuous support and the Marianites thought that the Congregational Chapter should make a decision about permanent financial aid. This matter became a part of the Congregational Chapter Agenda of 1981. From Dec. 1978, to May, 1981 the SOLITUDE PROJECT did receive \$78,232.70 in financial aid from ALL the family of Holy Cross.³⁴

During these years 1977-1981 a much needed fire escape was added to the Solitude. This project was undertaken by Sr. M. John McCormack, MSC then Provincial of the Province of the North.

At the Congregational Chapter of 1981 held in Le Mans, France the stewardship committee generated a questionnaire about the support of the Solitude. The overwhelming choice was to establish a renewal center for all of Holy Cross. A decree was adopted during the chapter stating "that each Marianite, within the next four years, be involved in a renewal program emphasizing the heritage of Holy Cross and held at the Solitude, in various provinces, or with other members of the family of Holy Cross."³⁵ Sr. Raymonde Marsollier was elected Congregational Superior and Sisters Laura Melancon and Joyce Hanks became her assistants. They chose to reside at the Solitude.

Renewal programs were established at the Solitude in 1982 and continue to the present except during a Chapter year. From 1982-1985, 115 members of Holy Cross, mostly Marianites, were able to walk in the footsteps of Father Moreau and Mother M. of the Seven Dolors at the Solitude.³⁶ In 1985, the Congregational Chapter was held at Princeton, NJ. The delegates elected Sr. Bertilla McNeely as Congregational Superior, assisted by Srs. Verda Frederick and Marie Jose Verrier. They reside at the Solitude.

The renewal sessions began anew in 1986 with two sessions being held during the summer months. 69 members of the family of Holy Cross continued to be nurtured during their visit to the Solitude, a 'return to the sources.'

This summer, 1987, two sessions will be held at the Solitude. One is presently in session. I do not have the number of participants for you but know that all of the family of Holy Cross is represented. The Solitude, 'our cradle' is truly a place of research, a place of pilgrimage.

So the dream continues--the Solitude is a HOLY LAND--Holy Ground for the family of Holy Cross, for ALL. Each morning at the Solitude in the oratory and on the same altar that Fr. Moreau used, the Eucharist is celebrated for all the family of Holy Cross. Alleluia, Amen.

FOOTNOTES

- ¹"Holy Ground" from Be Exalted by John Michael Talbot
- ²Robert Morin, Thomas Norris, et al, Basile Moreau (Le Mans, France: Jean Vilaire, 11-15 rue St. Jacques, 1962) p. 5.
- ³Leon Lucas, CSC., "Les Decors parlent..." in Basile Moreau, ed. Robert Morin (Le Mans, France: Jean Vilaire, 1962), p. 7.
- ⁴Edward Heston, CSC to Mother Mary St. Odile, 18 October 1950, Archives Marianites of Holy Cross, Le Mans, France.
- ⁵Rev. P. Pourrat, Christian Spirituality, 4 vols. (New York: P.J. Kennedy & Sons, 1922), 1:ix.
- ⁶Marianites of Holy Cross, "Marianite Spirituality Handbook, " New Orleans, 1976. (Private Press) p. 1.
- ⁷Pourrat, Christian Spirituality, 1:ix.
- ⁸Catherine M. Hennessy, MSC "A Call to Holiness" (MA Thesis, Fordham University, New York, 1984) pp.7-10.
- ⁹Canon Etienne & Tony Catta, Basil Anthony Mary Moreau, 3 vols., trans. Edward L. Heston, CSC (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Co., 1955), p. 44.
- ¹⁰Ibid., p. 50.
- ¹¹Gerald M. Fitzgerald, CSC, Juxta Crucem, (New York: P.J. Kennedy & Sons, 1932), p. 25.
- ¹²Canon Etienne & Tony Catta, Basil Anthony Mary Moreau, p. 60.
- ¹³Ibid., p. 113.
- ¹⁴R. P. Archambault, SJ, T.R. P. Basile Antoine Marie Moreau (St. Laurent, Montreal: L'Oeuvre des Tracts, 1930) p. 4.
- ¹⁵Marianites of Holy Cross, "La Solitude du Sauveur, " Le Mans, France, 1956. (Private Press) p. 9.
- ¹⁶Canon Etienne & Tony Catta, Basil Anthony Mary Moreau, p. 291.
- ¹⁷Marianites of Holy Cross, "In the Footsteps of Our Founders," Le Mans, France, 1979. (Private Press) p. 5.

FOOTNOTES

- ¹⁸Gary Mac Eoin, Father Moreau (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Co., 1962) p. 66.
- ¹⁹Marianites of Holy Cross, "In the Footsteps of Our Founders," p. 7
- ²⁰Marianites of Holy Cross, "La Solitude du Sauveur, " pp. 10-11.
- ²¹Marianites of Holy Cross, "Chez Nous," Presigne, France, 1950. (Private Press) p. 14.
- ²²Thomas Barrosse, CSC, Moreau (Notre Dame: Fides Publishers, Inc., 1969), p.87.
- ²³Ibid., p. 365.
- ²⁴Marianites of Holy Cross, "La Solitude du Sauveur," pp. 11-13.
- ²⁵Gary Mac Eoin, Father Moreau, p. 177.
- ²⁶Ibid., p. 185
- ²⁷Marianites of Holy Cross, "La Solitude du Sauveur," p. 14.
- ²⁸Gary Mac Eoin, Father Moreau, p. 186.
- ²⁹Marianites of Holy Cross, "La Solitude du Sauveur," pp. 16-25.
- ³⁰Marianites of Holy Cross, "In the Footsteps of Our Founders," p. 15.
- ³¹Sisters of the Holy Cross, Minutes of General Council 1968-1969 (Typewritten) St. Mary's, Notre Dame, Indiana.
- ³²Sisters of the Holy Cross, Records on Moreau Pilgrimage 1969-1987 (Typewritten) St. Mary's, Notre Dame, Indiana.
- ³³Marianites of Holy Cross, A Four Year Congregational Report 1977-1981(Typewritten) Alexandria, Virginia.
- ³⁴Marianites of Holy Cross, Minutes of the Congregational Administration 1977-1981 (Typewritten) Potomac, Maryland.
- ³⁵Marianites of Holy Cross, Congregational Chapter Proceedings 1981 (Typewritten) Le Mans, France.
- ³⁶Marianites of Holy Cross, Records of Renewal Programs 1982-1985 (Typewritten) Le Mans, France.
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ADDENDA

1. Letter of Edward L. Heston, CSC to Mother M. St. Odile, Richard October 18, 1950.
2. Statistics of the Congregation of Holy Cross 1860 (tree)
3. Floor plan of the Solitude with new changes
4. Copy of Letter of Sr. Vivian M. Coulon, MSC to the Family of Holy Cross Dec. 2, 1978.

PROCURA DI SANTA CROCE

VIA ALDROVANDI, 19

TELEF. 870-087

R O M A

October 18, 1950

Reverend Mother Marie de Ste. Odile, M.S.C.
Mother General, Marianites of Holy Cross
Rue de l'Eventail
Le Mans (Sarthe), France

Dear Mother Odile:

Yesterday morning I received your kind invitation to be present for the formal and solemn inauguration of the Solitude du Sauveur. Circumstances, unfortunately, will make it impossible for me to be present, but on this day which marks the 110th anniversary of the opening of the Solitude by Father Founder, I want to offer you my sincerest congratulations for the wonderful work you have done in restoring this house, and making it worthy of the noble traditions for which it was the cradle. Holy Cross owes to the Solitude what the Benedictines owe to the Holy Cave at Subiaco, what the Jesuits owe to Manresa, and what the Franciscans owe to the rocky caves of La Verna, and the interest you have taken in restoring and beautifying this holy spot will undoubtedly be for yourself personally and for your entire Community a source of rich and lasting graces.

I wish also to take this opportunity to thank you once more for your warm and gracious welcome to my "gang" when we passed through Précigné. That is one of the finest memories of our vacation, and the men still think of it and speak of it often. You will be glad to know that they have since succeeded in finding the right note.

The volumes of Italian history desired by the Sister whom we met at the Preventorium during our visit have been sent, and I trust they have arrived safely. It was a pleasure for me to be of service to one of your religious, and I hope she will find these volumes helpful.

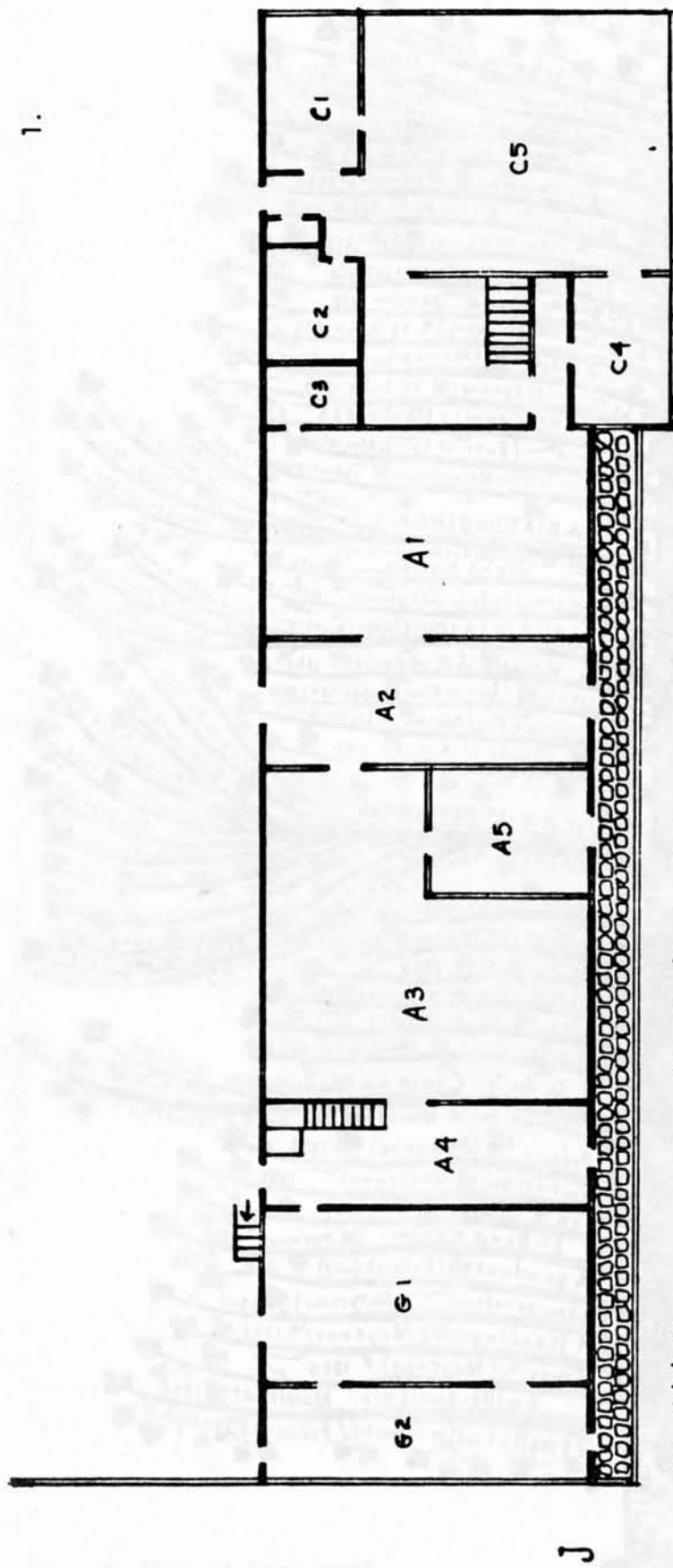
At the present time I have Archbishop Binz, Coadjutor of Dubuque, in the house with us, and in a few days I shall have also the Apostolic Delegate from Washington. He is coming for the definition of the Assumption, and wrote to ask for hospitality at the Procura. That will all help Holy Cross.

With renewed felicitations and best wishes, and asking for the favor of a memento during your visits to the crypt of the Mother Church, I remain

Devotedly yours in Holy Cross,

Edward L. Heston, C.S.C.





G1 Kitchen
G2 Pantry

A1 Oratory
A2 small refectory
A3 refectory for community
A4 pantry - Kitchennook
A5 quest house office

C1 Cong. Sup. Office
C2 Council room
C3 Sacristy adjacent to orator
parlor - quest book
C4 community room

GROUND FLOOR

La Solitude

Prepared and presented at
History Conference
Notre Dame College
Manchester New Hampshire
June 19-21, 1987

Done by Sr. Kay Hennessy MSC
only from memory-rough floor plan

H3 Bathroom

B2 MMSD's Souvenirs

B3 rooms used by Cong. Ad. + Local Superior
B4 Srs. Bedrooms.

FIRST FLOOR

La Solitude

ID: scriptorium

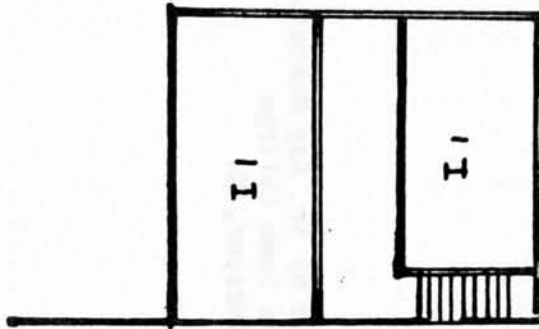
D2 archives

D3 Offices Cong. Ad.,

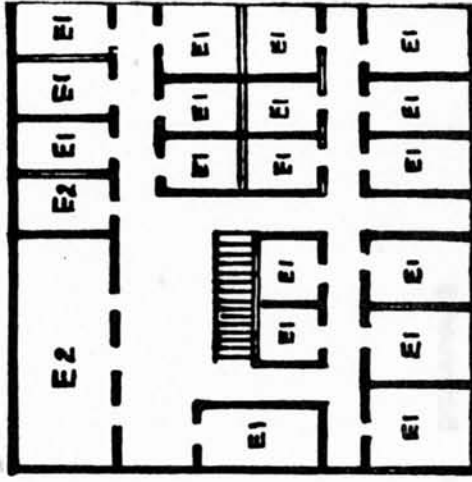
D4 Bathrooms

Prepared and presented by Sr. Kay Hennessy MSC
June 19-21, 1987 Notre Dame College
Manchester, NH

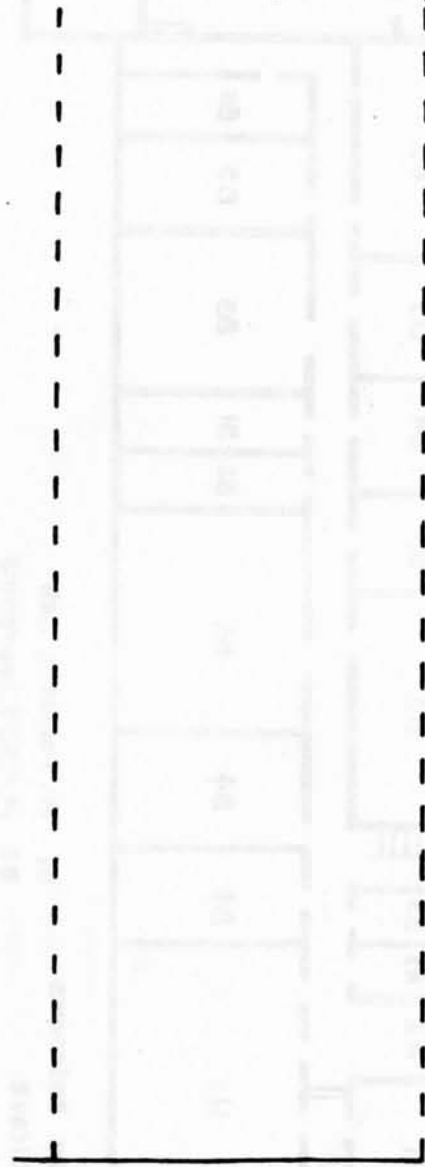
La Solitude



I 1 Bedrooms



E 1 Bedrooms
E 2 Bathrooms



F 1 Bedrooms

Prepared and presented by Sr. Kay Hennessy MSC
Notre Dame College
Manchester, NH June 19-21, 1987

COPY

Marianites of Holy Cross
10,000 Kentsdale Drive
Potosac, MD 20854
December 2, 1978

Dear members of our Holy Cross Family,

I greet you in the name of God our Father, Jesus our Brother, and God our Holy Spirit--in the name of the Triune God, whom Father Moreau our Founder wanted us to exemplify in the love which exists among the members of that eternal community. May all of you and all of our sisters and brothers in our Congregations continue to receive blessings of peace and joy. To my knowledge, this is the first "official" gathering of the leaders of the Congregations of the Holy Cross Family since the meeting at the Solitude of the Saviour in Le Mans, France, to celebrate together the 100th anniversary of Father Moreau's death, while all members of the Family were united that day in celebrations throughout the world.

And it is of the Solitude that I would like to speak with you. For many years now, it has become a place of pilgrimage, research, and "return to the sources" for members of all Holy Cross. Throughout this time, we, the Marianites, have been happy to welcome all to the "cradle of the Congregation"; and, throughout this time, we have invested considerable sums of money in re-construction/renovation, repairs, furnishings, and maintenance of the Solitude. And now, we find it necessary to turn to you, our brothers and sisters, for financial assistance in keeping up with the rising costs of maintaining the Solitude as a center of "return to the sources".

During the summer of 1977 the General Chapter of the Marianites separated the concepts of Mother House and Generalate. The Chapter body decided that it would maintain the Solitude as the Mother House of the Congregation, which in reality it is for all Holy Cross; for it is the House from which all others owe their origin, since it is there where Father Founder wrote the Constitutions of our Congregation. It was the Chapter's desire that the Solitude would be sustained by the Congregational Administration as a center of pilgrimage and research for all Holy Cross.

This same Chapter decided that the Congregational Administration could determine its own place of residence. In keeping with the adopted principles of team government, in light of the desire that the leaders be "in and out" of the provinces, and because about two-thirds of our 400 sisters are on this side of the ocean, we determined that the residence of our administration would be in the U.S. After research and consultation, we settled on using the most economically feasible space, at the National Office of the Sisters of Mercy in Potosac, MD., where we have ready access to both airports in the area. I give you this information because I want you to know that the Solitude is not presently being used as "the Generalate"; yet, it is possible that some future Congregational Administration might determine to reside there.

In our Marianite group, our financial resources are quite limited, and among the 400 members, there are 125 over sixty-five and an additional number involved in non-rumunerative or low-income ministries. Thus, we find it necessary to seek some outside assistance; and when it came to the Solitude, our first thoughts were of you. I am presenting for your consideration a proposal for financial assistance from the entire Holy Cross family based on membership. At the Solitude, we have one building (indicated "annex" on the proposed financing plan) which is utilized by our sisters of the French province who work across the street. Hence, we have presented a proposal based on a 25%-75% sharing of maintenance expenses involved.

There are some rooms in the Solitude which are offered for rent in a kind of Guest House situation, and the facilities are sometimes used by groups for various purposes. Income from these is limited and is used to defray other expenses needed to keep the place in operation. (food, cook, communications, automobile/travel, office supplies, laundry and cleaning supplies, medicinal supplies, partial support for other sisters working there, and other miscellaneous items not covered in the maintenance budget being submitted to you.)

On separate sheets I am providing you with a resume' of the background of the Solitude, a maintenance budget for the Solitude, and a suggested financing plan for the Solitude. Please look over these materials in order that I might be able to discuss them with you and receive your questions, observations and feelings.

Many thanks for your cooperation in this regard. Whatever you can do to help us will be gratefully received. I ask that the Spirit continue to bless each of you with increased awareness of His presence, His power, and His love in you.

Gratefully united in Holy Cross,

Your Sister, Vivian

Sister Vivian Marie Coulon, MSC
Congregational Superior

Enc.