

THE HISTORY OF HOLY CROSS COLLABORATION IN PERU

1988-8

by

Thomas Shea, CSC

Prepared for the Seventh Annual Conference
on the History of the Congregations of
Holy Cross
Saint Mary's College
Notre Dame, Indiana
June, 1988

THE HISTORY OF HOLY CROSS COLLABORATION IN PERU

by Thomas Shea, CSC

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the Revolution in France had left the poor and the Church with many needs.

Jacques Dujarie gathered a group of young laymen to respond to the need for education in the rural areas of France. Basil

Moreau formed a group of young diocesan priests to respond to the needs that the overworked and small group of diocesan

priests were unable to attend. He later fathered a group of

laywomen to respond to the ever increasing educational needs

of the poor. It was in the context of the needs of the poor

and the needs of the Church that Basil Moreau formulated

the vision of a group of men and women, lay and clerical,

ministering side by side in equality to respond to real needs.

The pleas for help from Algeria, the frontier United States,

Canada, and Bengal, as well as post-revolutionary France, marked

the areas for collaboration for the recently organized "Associa-

tion of Holy Cross". The Association was composed of three

Societies - Sisters, Brothers, and Priests - united to minister

to needs from the richness and uniqueness of the feminine and

the masculine, of the lay and the ordained minister. Collabora-

tion was never an end in itself but the means to the end -

service to the needy as a sign of the presence of Jesus and His

Kingdom among us.

In the early 1960's, the Church called for help in Latin America.

There was a need for religious women and men to attend the large Catholic population which found itself with a shortage of ministers. Among the many religious groups that responded to the call was the Eastern Priests' Province of the Congregation of Holy Cross. After looking into several possibilities of ministry in Chile and in Peru, the Provincial of the Eastern Priests' Province, George DePrizio, accepted the Hacienda Cartavio in the Archdiocese of Trujillo, located on the northern coast of Peru, as the place for ministry. As the Archbishop of Trujillo had written to Fr. DePrizio, "30,000 souls have need of the sacraments and pastoral ministry in Cartavio." Three religious of the Eastern Priests' Province arrived in Cartavio on September 10, 1963.

These three religious, like many others who arrived in Latin America at that time, had little or no preparation in the language or culture of Latin America. Culture shock, health problems and the turbulent years of Vatican II caused an almost immediate problem of personnel in the new foundation. It was in these difficult years of the early sixties that collaboration began.

The Indiana Province of Priests responded to the needs of the people in Cartavio and to the needs of the Eastern Priests' Province for personnel by lending religious to the Cartavio foundation. These religious usually came from the Holy Cross District in Chile.

In 1968, the Latin American bishops met in Medellin, Colombia, to adapt the Vatican II documents to the Latin American reality. The bishops called for a new thrust in being Church - the people

of God. They called for greater collaboration between bishops, priests, religious and laity in responding in a preferential way to the needs of the poor. In Cartavio the religious strove to put these orientations into practice, participating in the priests' movement called ONIS, in the Conference for Religious, and in the lay movement called Iglesia Solidaria. They also promoted more active participation of the laity in the parish through a parish council, through the organization of lay movements, and through lay ministers in the preparation for the sacraments.

In the early 1970's, especially around the 100th anniversary of the death of Fr. Moreau, there arose in Latin America, as in the rest of the Holy Cross family, a greater desire for contact with other groups of Holy Cross. As early as 1971, Robert Plas-ker, District Superior in Chile, had visited Cartavio to promote more contact between the religious in Chile and those in Peru. Before that, religious from both Chile and Peru had informally visited the other's area.

In February 1972, there was a surprise meeting in Lima between one of the religious in Cartavio and a Canadian Sister of Holy Cross who was ministering at that time with two other Sisters of Holy Cross in the town of Chincha on the southern coast of Peru. Neither group had known of the presence of the other in Peru. Plans were made for future contact but were never realized since the Canadian Sister returned to her country later that same year.

In 1973, the author, from Cartavio, was invited by Robert

Plasker, District Superior in Chile, to participate in the Chilean District Chapter. It was the first formal contact between Peru and Chile on the regional level.

In 1974, the General Chapter of the men's Congregation called for greater unity and collaboration between the different districts of Holy Cross on each continent. Robert Plasker, who had recently been exiled from Chile by the Pinochet government, arrived to work in Peru in December 1973. Plasker assumed the task of implementing these directives of the General Chapter in Latin America since he had also participated in the Chapter. In early 1975, delegates from the South-West Brothers' Province's area in Brazil, the Canadian Priests' District in Brazil, the Holy Cross Sisters' area in Brazil, the Indiana Priests' District in Chile and the Eastern Priests' area in Peru met in Peru for four days to study the possibilities of collaboration and the possibility of a joint apostolate in Lima. Although the group saw no immediate possibility for a joint apostolate in Lima at that time, the group laid the foundation for future contacts, visits, dialogue and collaboration between the areas of Holy Cross in Latin America.

In 1974, the religious in Peru formulated their apostolic plan at the request of the Eastern Priests' Province. One of the conclusions of this apostolic plan was to invite the Brothers' Society to collaborate in Peru. In early 1975, the author visited practically all of the houses of the Eastern Brothers' Province and spoke with the religious about Holy Cross in Peru and invited them to minister there. Brother George Schmitz of

the Eastern Brothers' Province visited Holy Cross in Peru in the summer of 1975 but later decided to minister in the District of Chile since it had a school and Peru at that time did not and he was interested in school ministry. During that same year, David Farrell from Peru was elected Assistant Superior in the District of Chile and he left Peru to collaborate with Holy Cross in Chile.

The meeting in Peru in 1975 between the areas and districts of Holy Cross in Latin America produced more contacts between the Holy Cross groups during the late seventies. In the summer of 1975, Robert Baker and Robert Plasker from Peru participated in the Brothers' Regional Assembly in Brazil. In 1977, Arthur Colgan from Peru assisted at the Chile District Chapter. Brother Edwin Nix, Superior of the Brothers' Brazil District, came to the Peru District Chapter in early 1978. In 1979, Fermin Donoso, Superior of the Chile District, and Brother Ronald Heim of the Brothers' Brazil District participated in the Peru District's annual assembly. Jose Prado, District Superior of the Priests in Brazil, came to the Peru District annual assembly in 1980. In practically all these chapters and assemblies there was legislation or conversation to promote collaboration between the Latin American districts and areas. There was a special emphasis on the areas of formation, interchange of personnel and the preparation of a single document for all the provincial chapters with districts or areas in Latin America. One of the recommendations of the 1978 Peru District Chapter went even further. The Chapter recommended that "dialogue be promoted

between the districts about the future of the districts in Latin America and concretely about steps toward a future integration."

At the beginning of the 1980's, the District of Peru had religious from four Priests' Provinces: Eastern, Southern, Indiana and English Canadian. Many of these religious had worked previously in Chile and had been forced to leave by the Pinochet government. During these years, the continued inter-district collaboration took the new form of sabbatical years spent in other districts. In 1981, the author spent several months in Brazil studying the reality of basic Christian communities and visiting all the areas in Brazil where the Holy Cross Sisters, Brothers, and Priests were ministering. The following year, Robert Plasker from Peru spent a year collaborating in ministry with the Brothers in their parish in Petrolina, Brazil. During those same years, Brother Joaquin Parada of the District of Chile spent two years with the Brothers in Santarem and Campinas, Brazil. In 1981, Peru and Chile also collaborated for two months in a common novitiate in Chimbote, Peru.

In 1982, delegates from the Holy Cross districts met after the Peru District Chapter to formulate common criteria for the formation of Holy Cross religious in Latin America. This study was continued in 1984 during the meeting of the men's Council of the Congregation in which all four Holy Cross congregations participated. The meeting was held in Santiago, Chile. Among the criteria formulated was the recommendation that members of the other societies be members of the formation team of each district or area where possible. In Peru, since 1986, the three societies

have been present on the formation team of the men's Congregation.

During 1982, the Sisters of the Holy Cross from Brazil decided to open a house outside Brazil. They chose the Holy Cross parish in Chimbote, Peru, as the place for collaborative ministry to the poor. In November of 1982, two Sisters of the Holy Cross arrived in Chimbote and a third Sister arrived in August 1983. The Sisters and priests work in the same parish together and also have their own areas of ministry. They meet regularly for prayer, common meal, community and reflection on their ministry. Together with the lay leadership of the parish, they plan apostolic ministry. The Sisters form part of the Brazil-Peru Region of the Sisters of the Holy Cross.

In November 1983, the religious in Peru were looking for ways to foster closer ties with some of the laity that minister with them. It was decided to promote Holy Cross Lay Associates in Lima and Chimbote on a three-year experimental basis. The Lay Associates see themselves as forming part of the Holy Cross family, ministering together with Holy Cross and promoting Peruvian religious vocations to the Holy Cross congregations. After several years of experimentation, some religious in Peru feel that the idea of Holy Cross Associates can be divisive or elitist among the other lay leadership and the other religious congregations that minister together in the parishes. Whatever the case, a close collaboration with the laity is characteristic of the work of Holy Cross in Peru. Some of the laity actually feel that they are really members of the family of Holy Cross, a characteristic that stems from the time of the founder.

The Sisters of the Holy Cross in Chimbote also have a two-year program for Lay Associates from the United States who minister together with them in the parish in Chimbote. As a district, the men's congregation has not promoted a program for Lay Associates from the United States and Canada. But on the local level of parish or school, the District of Peru has accepted some lay persons from the United States and Canada to serve real needs, especially in the large Canto Grande Parish in Lima.

During January and February 1984, the District of Peru was host to the first Holy Cross Latin American Renewal Program. The program was held in Lima with visits to Chimbote and to the Cuzco-Puno areas of Peru. Participants included Sisters, Brothers and Priests from several areas of Latin America where Holy Cross ministers - Mexico, Dominica, Chile, Brazil and Peru and also a delegate from the Holy Cross Hispanic Association in the United States. The renewal consisted in a mutual reflection on how to live our Holy Cross charism in Latin America and the re-reading of our histories and of our Constitutions in the light of the orientation of the Latin American Church toward a preferential option for the poor.

In November 1984, just before the meeting of the four congregations in Chile during the men's Council of the Congregation, the provincials and area superiors of Holy Cross with religious in Peru met in Canto Grande Parish in Lima to talk about the future of Holy Cross in Peru. It was decided that, although Peru was a collaborative effort between two congregations of Holy Cross and between several of the men's provinces, the provincial

The Sisters of the Holy Cross in Chimbote also have a two-year program for Lay Associates from the United States who minister together with them in the parish in Chimbote. As a district, the men's congregation has not promoted a program for Lay Associates from the United States and Canada. But on the local level of parish or school, the District of Peru has accepted some lay persons from the United States and Canada to serve real needs, especially in the large Canto Grande Parish in Lima.

During January and February 1984, the District of Peru was host to the first Holy Cross Latin American Renewal Program. The program was held in Lima with visits to Chimbote and to the Cuzco-Puno areas of Peru. Participants included Sisters, Brothers and Priests from several areas of Latin America where Holy Cross ministers - Mexico, Dominica, Chile, Brazil and Peru and also a delegate from the Holy Cross Hispanic Association in the United States. The renewal consisted in a mutual reflection on how to live our Holy Cross charism in Latin America and the re-reading of our histories and of our Constitutions in the light of the orientation of the Latin American Church toward a preferential option for the poor.

In November 1984, just before the meeting of the four congregations in Chile during the men's Council of the Congregation, the provincials and area superiors of Holy Cross with religious in Peru met in Canto Grande Parish in Lima to talk about the future of Holy Cross in Peru. It was decided that, although Peru was a collaborative effort between two congregations of Holy Cross and between several of the men's provinces, the provincial

of the Eastern Priests' Province should assume the leadership, since his province was canonically responsible for the district, and that the other provincials would form an executive council to assist in different areas of support and solidarity.

The Peru District Chapter of 1985 invited religious of Holy Cross to collaborate in ministry to the poor together in Peru. A letter was sent to all the Holy Cross membership of the four congregations through their respective provincial superiors. Brother John Benesh of the Midwest Brothers' Province, who had visited Holy Cross in Peru in the summer of 1984, responded and came to minister in Peru in September 1985. That date has made history in the District of Peru because it was the first time that the three societies were present in Peru. Sister Patricia Clossey of the Sisters of the Holy Cross also came to minister in Chimbote at that time.

In June of 1986, the Sisters of Holy Cross from Canada responded to that same invitation and sent Sisters to visit Puno, Peru, where Holy Cross ministers to the Aymara people in the Prelature of Juli. In October of that same year, the Sisters' General Council in Montreal approved the plan for collaboration in Peru and sent three Sisters in April 1987: Marguerite Gravel, Francoise Savoie and Lyette Finnerty. Two more Sisters arrived in September, Kathy Walshe and Marie Pilon. During the visit of the general administration in November 1987, it was decided that the Sisters would collaborate both in the Juli Prelature and in the Holy Cross parish in Canto Grande in Lima.

In the summer of 1986, William Persia from the Eastern Priests'

Province and Richard Kelly of the Brothers' Southwest Province came to Canto Grande Parish in Lima, responding to the needs of the Holy Cross religious in Peru to better serve the people and the Church in Peru. With their arrival, there were six provinces of the men's congregation collaborating in Peru.

In January 1987, Peru was again host to the second Latin American Holy Cross Renewal Program which was held in Lima. Participants came from the priests, Brothers and Sisters ministering in Brazil, Chile and Peru. A group of delegates from the Hispanic Association of Holy Cross in the United States also participated. Among the many other facilitators, Thomas Barrosse, the former superior general of the men's congregation, gave a presentation on the life and charism of Moreau. At the end of the renewal program, the participants, together with the district and area superiors of Holy Cross in Latin America, felt that there was a need to take some further steps in the area of collaboration between the districts and areas. They decided to experiment with a new structure called the Latin American Holy Cross Inter-District Council. The Council composed of the superiors of the districts and areas has as its objective the creation of a sense of belonging to Holy Cross in Latin America with a shared vision in the areas of culture, politics, option for the poor, church and pastoral ministry. It also has as its objective the promotion of experiences and activities between areas, districts and other groups of Holy Cross such as the Hispanic Committee in the United States. Another objective is to coordinate activities and initiatives for the Latin American integration between the Holy

Cross groups. The new Inter-District Council also wishes to be a channel of communication between Latin America and other areas of the congregation on other continents. The council will meet twice a year and will organize gatherings and contacts between the Holy Cross religious in Latin America and with Haiti and the Holy Cross Hispanic Association in the United States. A newsletter will also be published. Themes to be discussed in future meetings will be formation and ministry in school education. In 1990, a third renewal program will be organized in Santiago, Chile. All these objectives and plans were presented to the provincials and general councils of the four congregations for their respective approval.

The Holy Cross religious in Peru held a Holy Cross Assembly together with the men's District Chapter in late February 1988. All the Holy Cross religious present in Peru at the time participated: eight men (seven priests and one Brother) and eight Sisters (three from the Sisters of the Holy Cross and five from the Sisters of Holy Cross). One of the major themes was collaboration between the three societies and the three congregations of Holy Cross in Peru. After much reflection, together with the provincial of the Eastern Province, Joseph Callahan, the group decided to form an Association of Holy Cross in Peru with three coordinators or superiors, one from each of the three congregations. This association is mandated to foster collaboration between the religious and to organize two meetings each year of all the membership to reflect together on their mutual ministry to the needs of the poor and of the Church in the areas

where Holy Cross ministers and to evaluate the efforts at collaboration. At the end of the assembly, the association was formed with Philip Devlin, superior of the men's district, Sister Marianne O'Neil of the Sisters of the Holy Cross, who arrived in Peru in December 1987 to collaborate in Chimbote, and Sister Lyette Finnerty of the Sisters of Holy Cross. The assembly was a HOPE-FULL one and all left animated to continue or to begin collaborating in ministry and community.

At the end of February 1988, Carlos Loli, a candidate for the Peru District left for Chile to begin his novitiate year in a collaborative inter-district novitiate program. In Brazil, the District of Priests and the District of Brothers have had a collaborative inter-district formation program for several years.

As of March 1988, the priests and Brothers are present in Chimbote with the Sisters of the Holy Cross. But in the near future there may be a problem there with the presence of the priests' society because of a shortage of priests in the men's congregation. In Lima and in the Prelature of Juli (Puno) the Priests' Society and the Sisters of Holy Cross minister together along with other religious congregations. The religious in Peru hope that in the near future the Brothers' Society will be present in both these areas. It is also hoped that it might be possible to continue the presence of the Priests' Society in Chimbote.

Collaboration of men and women religious, lay and clerical, goes back to the founder and his vision on how best to respond to the needs of the time. Holy Cross struggles today to be

faithful to this vision. The collaborative effort in Peru, at first inter-provincial, then inter-congregational and finally inter-societal, has tried to be faithful to the needs of the Peruvian people, the majority of whom are poor, and to the Peruvian and Latin American Church. They have attempted to live the preferential option for the poor and to work in collaborative ministry between bishops, priests, religious and laity as defined by the Latin American bishops in Medellin, Colombia, and in Puebla, Mexico. They have also tried to be faithful to the orientations of the Peruvian Bishops' Conference.

The new Latin American Holy Cross Inter-District Council, formed between the four Holy Cross congregations in 1987, and the new Holy Cross Association in Peru, formed in 1988 between the three Holy Cross congregations ministering in Peru, are a HOPE for the future, a CHALLENGE to be faithful to the vision that Fr. Moreau left to Holy Cross. The charism of collaboration is also a CALL to minister to the NEEDS of the People of God, the poor of Latin America, with our respective vocations, lay and clerical, and with the richness and uniqueness of the masculine and feminine. Collaboration is also a rich OPPORTUNITY to plant the seed of Holy Cross on a new and vibrant continent with the hope that Peruvian men and women might see in the family of Holy Cross a WAY to lead their lives in service to the God of life who calls men and women to walk with His People, the poor and the needy, and to accompany them as they struggle to move out from the shadows of poverty and injustice into the light of new life.

Holy Cross in Peru invites Holy Cross religious on other continents to join them in their collaborative effort in Peru. It also asks all Holy Cross religious to accompany Holy Cross in Latin America in solidarity as Holy Cross throughout the world walks into the world and the Church of tomorrow.

Note: For more background on the History of Holy Cross in Peru consult HOLY CROSS IN PERU: ANOTHER FRONTIER by Thomas Shea, CSC, a paper given at the 1984 Holy Cross History Conference.

Resources:

1. Personal experience of the author
2. Chronicles of Cartavio
3. Archives of the District of Peru
4. HOLY CROSS IN PERU: ANOTHER FRONTIER by Thomas Shea, CSC, 1984