

A BRIEF HISTORY OF
THE ASSOCIATES OF HOLY CROSS IN PRAYER

1990-8

Prepared for the Conference on the
History of the Congregations of Holy Cross
in the United States

June 15 - 17, 1990
New Orleans, Louisiana

by

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An Outline of

A BRIEF HISTORY

OF

ASSOCIATES OF HOLY CROSS IN PRAYER

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the "South-West Province Review," January, 1984, there was an announcement of a new program in the province. The news item stated briefly how the program was to be formed and identified, in general, its goals.

The statement:

"The Associates of Holy Cross in Prayer is a program designed to unite the relatives and devoted friends of the brothers with the religious of the province in praying for an increase in brothers' vocations, for the spiritual and temporal welfare of the members, and for the good of all those entrusted to the care and nurture of the Brothers of Holy Cross."(1)

Now we need to go back just a few years in the history of the South-West Province to put this program--**The Associates of Holy Cross in Prayer**--in perspective to the community; and to put it into a very human context with a short sketch of Brother Charles Andersen whose ideas, determination and gentle tenacity became the force behind the beginnings and the first couple of years of the associate program.

2. IN PERSPECTIVE

In 1946, the United States Province of the Congregation of Holy Cross composed of priest and brothers, was divided into two provinces: the Indiana Province of priests and the Midwest Province of brothers. During the next ten years both provinces grew and expanded rapidly. The brothers' Midwest Province nearly doubled in membership from about 350 to more than 600. In 1956 part of the Midwest Province was formed into an Eastern Vice-Province, part into a South-West Province. Within two years both vice-provinces had become provinces. The area of the South-West Province was extensive: the southern and western halves of the United States with one school on the Amazon River in Brazil. The name of the province was hyphenated, as in the quiet exuberance of the growth of the previous ten years, it was generally assumed that, within a few years, there would be still another division into a southern and a western province. 956

The first ten years of the South-West Province was a time of considerable growth and expansion. In 1957, there were 196 professed brothers and 27 novices. In the next nine years, the number of professed rose by more than 100, to 299 members. In 1983 when Brother Charles was forming plans for the associates, membership had dropped in 18 years from a high of 299 to 165; today our membership is 144. 1966 was both the high point and the turn-around point in membership. An annual growth of ten members was replaced by an annual decline of ten members. I mention these figures because the decline in vocations was one of Brother Charles Andersen's reasons for seeking intercessory help through prayer for vocations for the province.

In 1983, when Brother Charles Andersen began active planning for the Associates in Prayer, he was 72 years old and had been professed for 52 years. After graduation from Notre Dame in 1935, he taught at Cathedral High School, Indianapolis, and at Reitz Memorial High School, Evansville, Indiana. After only seven years of teaching, he was appointed principal of Reitz Memorial High School. For the next 16 years he was a high school principal, serving also at St. Joseph's High School, South Bend, and at Notre Dame High School, Sherman Oaks, California. From 1958-1970, he held several positions at St. Edward's University and then spent 15 years as a high school counselor and alumni director.

Brother Charles was a man deeply devoted to Holy Cross, to its history, its community life and mission and with a warm personal friendship for the lay persons connected with Holy Cross, especially students, their parents, and the school's faculty. Lay men and women, as well as community members, perceived in him a certain wisdom, a genial warmth, an incisive but gentle humor, an understanding compassion and a sincere love.

One of Brother Charles' continuous efforts was the promotion of vocations. More than 40 years ago when he was principal at Reitz Memorial High School, he organized the entire student body into one large vocations club and led the faculty and students in novenas to St. Joseph for vocations. In the 1950's when he was principal at Notre Dame High School, Sherman Oaks, there were candidates nearly every year for the novitiate. 1957 was the banner year, as ten graduating seniors entered our novitiate; his recommendations had been accurate, as each one made his first profession the following year. In the 70's as a counselor at Moreau High School, Hayward, California, he continued his activities to promote vocations and to increase the knowledge and understanding of the students about the Congregation of Holy Cross and of Father Moreau.

3. BROTHER CHARLES' VISION AND PLAN

In 1983 Brother Charles began organizing his ideas about the possibility of forming a lay group which would be a spiritual association, and in no way a public relations or fund raising gimmick. It would have no dues, meetings, raffles or money concerns. After 16 years as a high school principal he would relish being free of those.

His purpose was to recognize past and present friendships and various associates with Holy Cross, to deepen the spiritual bonds already existing among the Brothers and their relatives and friends. Many of these friends would have been parents of present or former students.

Brother Charles thought of the associates as praying for the brothers, especially for vocations, for the ministries of the brothers and for all those who were taught or served by the brothers. Further, that the associates would pray for each other, and that the community of brothers would remember the associates in their prayer.

In October, 1983, Brother Charles outlined his ideas in a four page memo to Brother Patrick Sopher, provincial of the South-West Province. His planning had been complete. He outlined a five point letter of invitation to prospective associates; he composed a simple response card which was an application for membership; he presented ideas for a regular newsletter, for a CSC calendar and for gaining membership. He outlined a five point letter to members of the community, plans for a prayer booklet and for an annual day of recollection shared by the brothers and the associates. He suggested other details concerning organization: a logo, membership certificate, printing, a timetable, various forms that would be needed and recommendations for initial printing.

Most of these ideas had been generated at Notre Dame High School where Brother Charles was alumni director. As the plans grew, it was recognized that some of the planning and work would have to be done at the provincial office in Austin. The next step was the usual and natural one--form a committee. Brother Edwin Reggio, director of the provincial house community and regional director of the Eastern Priests' Province program, **"Families for Prayer"** and Brother Bernard Palmeri, provincial counselor and director of Casa Santa Cruz, a formation house in San Antonio, with Brother Charles formed the committee.

The provincial council approved the plan presented by the committee, which asked that Brother Joel Giallanza, who was working in retreat ministry at the St. Joseph Spiritual Life Center, Valatie, New York, prepare the prayer booklet. This booklet was to provide special Holy Cross prayers, an article on **"Growth in Prayer,"** a short history of the Congregation and a calendar of the principal religious feasts celebrated by the Congregation. Brother Patrick agreed with and followed their suggestions.(2)

4. RAPID GROWTH IN 1984

Now after all this introduction and placing in perspective, we are back at square one. After the first announcement about the proposed **Associates of Holy Cross in Prayer**, Brother Charles began collecting names and addresses from the members of the province. In the first paragraph, of his first letter to those who might join, he tried to get his readers' attention with a typical Brother Charles' appeal. He wrote,

"How would you like to join an organization that has no dues, meetings, raffles or money concerns. Now is your chance! Though all of the above is true, you do need to give...but in a spiritual way. Rascals, aren't we?"

He then recognized the bonds between the friends of Holy Cross and the community. He outlined some possible ways of developing and deepening their intercessory prayer. He expressed his confidence in their spirituality by recognizing that their own prayer would help them develop a pattern of prayer for the mission of Holy Cross and for their fellow associates. He offered some practical suggestions: daily prayer using the Holy Cross prayer booklet; offering their participation at Mass for the intentions of the brothers and the associates; praying the rosary for the same intention; and sharing periodic days of recollections with the brothers. Additional ways of praying were left to the spiritual initiatives of the future associates, but he did indicate the necessity of giving in a spiritual way.

After the first announcement of the Associates of Holy Cross in Prayer, there was a quick response. Within a month, more than 50 persons from 11 states had enrolled; the following two months brought 150 more members. By June, five months after the announcement, more than 300 persons had enrolled. During the first few months the names of the new members were published in the Province Review, and in each of the province houses a brother was recruited and appointed the facilitator of the local group. His chief duty would be to plan, organize and carry through on the day, or part of a day, of prayer for the associates and the local community.

In June, the local community in New Orleans inaugurated the day of prayer with the associates. During the next few months, days of prayer were held at St. Joseph Hall, St. Edwards's University, Austin; at Holy Cross School, San Antonio; St. Anthony's High School, Long Beach; St. Francis High School, Mountain View, California; and at the Brother John Baptist Community, Casper, Wyoming. These days of prayer and the growth of the associates continued into the following year.

5. BROTHER CHARLES ANDERSEN'S SICKNESS AND DEATH

In December, 1985 because of a weakening physical condition, Brother Charles found it necessary to give up his work as alumni director at Notre Dame High School, Sherman Oaks. Over the next five months he was in and out of the hospital several times and was not able to do much work as the director of the associates. As his health continued to decline, physical complications multiplied, and he died of lung and heart failure at Barlow Hospital, Hollywood, California on Sunday, May 11, 1986. Since most of his relatives live in the Midwest, burial was at the Brothers Center at Notre Dame.

6. GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

After Brother Charles' death, Brother Bernard Palmeri took over the directorship of the associates along with his work as province vocation director. His chief efforts were to promote the day of prayer with the associates in the local houses, to remind the members of the province of our part in praying for the associates and to edit the associates' calendar. Themes for the standard 8 1/2 x 11 calendar for the past five years have been art work from the brothers in the province; favorite recipes from the associates, campus scenes from the schools and harvest scenes from St. Joseph Farm near South Bend; and for the past two years individual pictures of brothers, preferably taken at their work place or with persons whose lives they share.

Membership continues to increase gradually. We now have more than 700 members. Membership is greatest in California, Texas, Louisiana and Indiana, but there are some members in more than 30 other states. The majority of members are lay women and men but there are also quite a few Holy Cross Sisters, a few priests, both diocesan and religious order, including a few Trappist Fathers.

We keep in touch with the associates with a monthly column in the "South-West Province Review," in which a page and a half (more if we wish) is reserved for a message about prayer and for the intentions sent to us by members. The Review is mailed to more than 1100 persons so that news about the associates reaches an additional 400 persons who are not members.

The day of prayer and fellowship with the associates has been an excellent experience for both religious and the lay members. For a variety of reasons not every house has had such a day each year. For the one house that has, the number of participants has increased and an excellent spirit of fellowship has developed.

7. PRESENT VIEW OF THE FUTURE

In the summer, 1988, Brother Theo Flynn became the director to free Brother Bernard Palmeri to devote full-time to vocation promotion. Our present view of the future is optimistic. It is up to us now to continue the good work begun by Brother Charles Andersen, who, in a certain sense, designed and laid the cornerstone. During the past six and a half years a considerable number of persons have contributed to putting together a firm foundation. Gradually, our vision was widened, as we are coming to think more of the associates in terms of ministry, and of the entire Family of Holy Cross, rather than just our own province.

The following quotation from a 1988 letter to the associates illustrates this:

THE HOLY CROSS FAMILY

In the monthly letter to the associates, we have written that one of our purposes is the spiritual support of the Holy Cross Family. This concept of family is based on a vision of Fr. Basil Moreau, founder of the Congregation of Holy Cross, who saw the Holy Family as the model for his religious group of sisters, priests and brothers. As the number of religious increased (now about 4,600) and the ministries expanded over four continents, details of administration and "signs of the times" modified somewhat Fr. Moreau's original hopes. But as with any busy and expanding family, we try to maintain unity and some support by interest, concern, fellowship and prayer for all the members and ministries of Holy Cross fathers, sisters and brothers.

Although most of what you read in this Review and note on our calendar will be about South-West Province brothers, we are part of much more numerous congregation and a wider, extended religious family. And we consider Associates in Prayer as part of this extended Holy Cross Family. Trusting a close relationship in prayer, we welcome you as friends and companions. Like all Christian pilgrims, we recognize that our lives, our ministries and our future depend on the graciousness of God coming to us through his Church. And all of us are the Church!

Fr. Moreau died on January 20, 1873. For our special intention this month, we suggest this prayer for his beatification:

"God of wisdom and mercy, you inspired your servant, Basil Moreau, to found the Congregation of Holy Cross. We beseech you to glorify without delay this apostle of the Cross who for love of you suffered so many tribulations. We ask this in the name of Jesus our Lord. Amen

NOTES

- (1) THE SOUTH-WEST PROVINCE REVIEW, January, 1984
- (2) Letter of Brother Patrick Sopher to Brother Joel Giallanza, October 14, 1983
- (3) Letter to the Associates, December, 1988