



PARISH MINISTRY IN THE HERITAGE OF HOLY CROSS

“Work ceaselessly to care for the flock entrusted to you.”

The five qualities cited in this series of inserts were articulated by the 1998 general chapter of the priests and brothers of the Congregation of Holy Cross.

I. CLOSENESS TO PEOPLE’S LIVES, THEIR WAY OF LIVING AND CULTURE, THEIR DIFFICULTIES, JOYS AND STRUGGLES.

Closeness to the lives and concerns of the people has always marked the Holy Cross approach to parish ministry. This closeness was expressed through efforts to learn the language and the culture of the people, and through professional and personal relationships with the people.

When Father Moreau began a school in 1836, the chapel for the school became much more than a place for the students’ religious exercises. He writes,

The reason I built this church is that I wished to leave to the family of Holy Cross a temple where its members might meet in common prayer, a sanctuary to inspire the respect and build up the piety of the students in the school...and, which at the same time, would be of service to the people of the neighborhood.

Father Moreau was never afraid to commit the presence and activity of Holy Cross in response to difficult situations. During a cholera epidemic, Father Moreau placed the members of Holy Cross at the disposal of government authorities to assist in caring for victims. He also offered a house in which to place victims. He agreed to assign Holy Cross religious in the difficult mission of Bengal, India, now Bangladesh. Holy Cross religious also went to other difficult missions in Africa and the United States.

The challenge today is to continue sharing in the lives and cultures of the people we serve; this is the foundation for sensitivity to the needs and concerns of the people. Such sensitivity requires a willingness to know the people and to relate to them. The alternative is that the parish becomes an impersonal organization and the people are approached as mere objects of ministry.

1. How is “closeness to people’s lives” evident in the parish personnel, programs, and practices?
2. What celebrations highlight the people’s “way of living and culture”?
3. What efforts are made by the parish ministers to be aware and to remain aware of the people’s “difficulties, joys and struggles”?

To learn more about Holy Cross, please visit: www.holycrosscongregation.org, www.holycrossjustice.org, www.southernsc.org,