



## Saints today. Saints for all eternity. From the desk of Dr. Marco Clark



Dear Holy Cross Family and Friends,

As I begin my tenure as president of Holy Cross College, I've been invited to share a monthly reflection on my travels, meetings with our many constituents, programs and events that I've attended, and the excellence taking place in the classroom, through service and ministry, on the playing field, in the labs, and through residential life. Pope Francis calls upon us in Catholic higher education to create “cultures of encounter”—encounters with one another and encounters with the living presence of Christ. I look forward to sharing my encounters with you throughout the year.

Let me first start by saying how humbling it is to be serving in this role, especially as the first non-consecrated or ordained Holy Cross religious. I often like to say, however, that although I don't have the initials C.S.C. after my name, I do have C.S.C. in my DNA. The impact that Holy Cross has had on my life has been nothing short of transformational. It all began for me at the age of 14 when I first entered the doors of Bishop McNamara High School to inquire about admissions. Emerging from behind the desk to welcome us was Brother Eli Pelchat, C.S.C. What my family and I noticed immediately was the warmth, hospitality, and joy expressed to us. Little did I know then that a key hallmark of Holy Cross is hospitality.

The core principle of hospitality continues to define the Congregation of Holy Cross. Whether visiting one of our colleges or universities like Holy Cross College or the University of Notre Dame Bangladesh, or a high school like Moreau Catholic H.S. in the Bay Area of California or Holy Cross Secondary School in Lakeview, Uganda, or Moreau Seminary, Columba Hall, or Corby Hall, joy, warmth, hospitality is the daily witness. This is fundamental to what it means to be Holy Cross.

This past April I had the privilege to participate in a five-day meeting at the Holy Cross Generalate in Rome, Italy as a member of the International Education Commission. This was my third and final year on the Commission, although our first-time meeting in person. Education Commission delegates gathered from East and West Africa, South and Latin America, India, Bangladesh, and North America. I was the only non-Holy Cross religious in attendance, and perhaps the first in the history of the Commission. What an enormous honor it was for me.

From day one, Holy Cross hospitality shone through. I was picked up at the airport by Brother Paul Bednarczyk, C.S.C., the First Assistant and Vicar General of the Congregation. Brother Paul has also been a life-long friend. In fact, he was my junior year American Literature teacher at Bishop McNamara. He is sworn to secrecy on my performance and behavior, although I think he would give all positive reports. Brother Paul then gave me a tour of Rome and several of the churches and cathedrals, unlike any tour I've ever had. His in-depth knowledge of the history and stories and the unique culture of each was astounding. It was a truly moving experience.

During one of our other days in Rome, we were able to celebrate Mass in one of the small chapels in the crypt at St. Peter's Basilica. This too was a special experience. Following Mass, we were given an in-depth tour of St. Peter's and several other churches by Fr. Abraham Kochupurackal, C.S.C., Second Assistant and chair of the Education Commission. There were times that I found myself on the verge of tears as I experienced the beauty and history of these sacred spaces while enjoying the camaraderie with my fellow travelers from around the world.

The meetings themselves were informative and inspirational. If one ever wondered about the impact of Holy Cross around the world, imagine this, there are over 120 Holy Cross colleges, universities, and schools in 13 countries (if we add the three Sisters' branches, we're in 21 countries!). Collectively we educate more than 125,000 students in our schools, 72,000 of who are in Asia where fewer than 3% of the students are Catholic. This is remarkable to me. Imbued with the mission, charism, and core values of Holy Cross education—to educate hearts and minds, build respect, be family, and bring hope—Holy Cross is truly making a difference.

As Holy Cross began to expand around the world, some dissent and division began to occur. Fr. Moreau, founder of the Congregation of Holy Cross, wrote to the world leaders of Holy Cross challenging them to stay unified, to put the mission ahead of their self-interests, and to always be reminded of their apostolic call to work with zeal to make God known, loved, and served. In that letter, he stated, “Union is that great lever in which we could move, direct, and sanctify the whole world.” Indeed, that is what has been happening for the past 200 years and with God's grace will continue for the next 200+.

My visit to Rome confirmed for me that the Holy Cross charism — the divinely inspired gift to our community — is alive and well and stronger than ever. It also revealed that while we maintain our core values, Holy Cross also transcends cultural differences and guides our individual and collective growth in mission.

As a family of Holy Cross, let us pray in a special way during these early weeks of July as the priests and brothers of the Congregation of Holy Cross from every district and province in the world gather for their General Chapter in Rome. This meeting, which takes place once every six years, will set the course for the future of the Congregation. From the election of the General Administration to discussions on our various ministries, may the delegates be guided by the Holy Spirit, and may God continue to bless the Congregation of Holy Cross.

Ave Crux, Spes Unica,

Marco J. Clark, Ed.D.

