

MIDWEST – MIDWEEK

Brothers of Holy Cross – Midwest Province - P.O. Box 460 – Notre Dame, Indiana 46556-0460

April 6, 2022



Lenten Lecture Series 2022 **Thursdays** in Geenen Hall

April 7 @ 3:00 PM
“Mary’s Passion”

Fr. Tom Bertone, CSC

Fr. Thomas C Bertone, C.S.C., is assistant religious superior at Moreau Seminary. He holds a B.S. in biology from Stonehill College in North Easton, Massachusetts. He professed final vows in the Congregation of Holy Cross on September 12, 1980, and was ordained to the priesthood on June 13, 1981. After working in Holy Cross Brothers' high schools in the D.C. area, he attended Catholic University where he received his Master's in Social Work in 1997. His experience as a social worker included geriatric social work, medical social work, and mental health counseling. Before serving at Moreau Seminary, Fr. Tom served the Congregation as the director of Health Care and Aging. He has also received training as a spiritual director.



The Early Brothers and the Relevance of their Virtues Today

by Brother George Klawitter, CSC

A Lenten talk presented at André Place, Holy Cross Village:

Part Four

Finally, for the meditations we've done in the past month on the early Holy Cross Brothers, we turn our attention to a hard-worker among the early Brothers at Notre Dame: the carpenter-undertaker **Brother Francis Xavier Patois**. He lived in the city of Le Mans for less than a year before he was professed on July 25, 1841, and shipped out for America ten days later: he was an impressive and promising religious man, the most recent of the seven America-bound émigrés to enter the Community, arriving at Le Mans even later than the adolescents Anselm and Gatian, who rounded out the group chosen by Father Moreau for the Indiana mission.



After a year near Vincennes, the Brothers moved north to Notre Dame in 1842, and late in his life Francis Xavier remembered how difficult the November trip north had been:

We came through from Vincennes in an old stage coach, which the Bishop who sent us here picked up somewhere. It was too small a conveyance to hold us all and our baggage, so we took turns at walking. When we arrived at South Bend we stopped for several days at the home of the first Alexis Coquillard as there were no accommodations for our party at the mission. We did not ford the river, ferry it, or go over it in row boats, but crossed it on the old bridge north of the brickyard. Alexis Coquillard, Jr., might have gone with us, but he was a small boy then. There was nothing at Notre Dame but the old log house.

As the Brother-carpenter settled into life at Notre Dame, he found his talents well used not only in construction projects but also in instruction. The Manual Labor School was chartered in 1844 and supervised by Brother Francis Xavier.

We have precious few letters by Francis Xavier, but a crisis in 1863 between Notre Dame in America and Sainte-Croix in France affords us a very beautiful letter from the carpenter to Basil Moreau. The letter is dated January 27, 1863, and is

posted from Notre Dame. You can sense the agony in Francis Xavier's words:



Please excuse me for not writing since our difficulties began. You perhaps interpreted my silence as a mark of disrespect for the Congregation. But let me say first of all that nothing would be less true than to believe me lacking love for her! She is my mother, and I'm

attached to her from the bottom of my heart. Everything that concerns her concerns me, and my happiness here couldn't be greater... God alone knows how much I love the Congregation and its superiors and also how much I am attached to the Motherhouse, but I can't think without crying about the possibility that Notre Dame du Lac could fall into ruin... I beg God to have pity on our unhappy Congregation, that things will work out safe and sound, that the darkness will dissipate, and that we'll enjoy happiness, security, and peace before eternal happiness.

The squabble between Holy Cross in France and Holy Cross in Indiana came from many problems fomenting over many years.

We do not know how Francis Xavier came to be the designated undertaker at Notre Dame, but as the master-carpenter of the pioneer group, he would have been the obvious choice to make coffins. His first client may very well have been Brother Joachim, who died within two years of the group's arrival at Notre Dame. From coffins to undertaking it was just a matter of getting a hearse and a reputation. He acquired both soon enough, and by the time of his death he was an accepted part of the South Bend burial scene. We do not know how many dead he buried a year. The nineteenth-century records for Cedar Grove Cemetery name no undertakers. But we know he buried non-Community people because Cedar Grove was his bailiwick (in addition to the Community cemetery located first near the present-day Columba Hall and later up St. Mary's Road to its present location). He built the beautiful little chapel in the Cedar Grove Cemetery, and he even gave the cemetery its name because Francis Xavier's favorite trees in the cemetery were the cedar trees.

Eventually Death caught up with Francis Xavier, Death's main servant at Notre Dame. On November 12, 1896, Francis Xavier "dropped dead on the steps of his office at seven o'clock. He had just eaten a hearty breakfast and was on his way from the dining room when stricken with apoplexy." The United States Provincial at the time of Francis Xavier's death, William Corby, remembered the old carpenter-mortician in a circular letter dated one day after the man's death:

Brother Francis was a model religious, regular at all the exercises, industrious to the very last, devoted to the Community, and who led a life of great self-denial. He was a cabinet-maker by trade. From the very earliest history of his life in America, in 1841, he was employed as an undertaker, and he was frequently called up at night, and had to go eight or even twelve miles to attend the dead. Hundreds of times he was exposed in rains or snow-storms; perched upon an uncovered hearse, slowly making his way to the church or cemetery.

The student newspaper also remembered Brother Francis Xavier with fondness:

Another link between the present and past of our Alma Mater has been broken; the last of the silken strings that bound the Notre Dame of '42 to the Notre Dame of '96 has been snapped in twain. Brother Francis Xavier is dead! and with him passes away the last survivor of that little band of heroes who changed the bleak forest into a bright fairy-land, and reared on stones cemented with their blood the domes and turrets of our noble college home... Since Father Sorin died, Brother Francis has been the Patriarch of Notre Dame; but no stranger who saw the silent, unobtrusive Brother, as he moved actively about his work, would have guessed it. He wore his honors gracefully, and to the end he remained the prayerful, laborious, amiable, humble religious that he was in youth. Such men never die. They live again in every life which their example has helped to sanctify. The days of the founding will seem ancient now that Brother Francis has passed away, but the memory of his good, long life, and the fragrance of his Christian virtues, will never depart from those who knew him. God grant his noble spirit rest.

And what can we learn today from this wonderful patriarch? We can learn faithfulness. Coming to a new country when he was a young man, not fully knowing what he would await him away from his native France, he prospered as a man of simple but steadfast faith in the mission to which he was entrusted. As the little university grew, so did Francis Xavier's belief in its excellence and importance to the Church in America. He gentled into old age a venerable and revered part of the

Notre Dame community, and he lasted almost to the end of the 19th century, his grave dug by a young man whom many of us older Brothers knew.

Faith—that bedrock of not only church but also civilization. When we stop believing in each other, when we stop trusting our elections or our elected officials, when we stop believing in our ordained ministers, we lose a gift that we owe to each other—faith, faith in each other. Lent is a time to renew that faith. Faith in ourselves. Faith in each other.



Nothing New Under the Sun
Joe McTaggart, csc

We watched the movie, *Belfast* the other day at Columba Hall. It's in black and white. How appropriate.

But it isn't black and white. Not at all. Life is never black or white.

Wars are repetitive. You think it's over forever. No so, not so. I remember the Vietnam war and its effect on me as a young teacher who in the middle of that mess, in a time now long gone, I helped a high school student become a conscientious objector. In the midst of all that upheaval for them, the students, and for me the teacher with no mentors at the time, only peers, it was likewise its own kind of hell—also a product of war.

Earlier on during those times of war we learned the lyrics and took them to heart, "Ain't gonna' study war no more," we being the people at the time, maybe fully awake to our war "over there." Joining those lyrics and sentiment as a musical bookend during that same time there was Edwin Star who probably had only one top-ten-hit in his life, and its title was simply, "War." It's lyric went, "War! Huh! What is it good for? Absolutely nothing. Good God, y'all. Say it again, Absolutely nothing!"

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Belfast ends with the family at the center of that war movie moving out of their bombed home and beloved city in all its particular war-torn squalor slowly and then rapidly going to hell itself. Judy Dench, playing Granny, looks plaintively at the camera staring with that empty hollow look of war on her lined and seasoned face saying, "Move on" as she stays there and they leave. Then comes the end, and the script of dedication rolls..."For all those who left; For all those who stayed; For all those who lost their lives."

And still, here we are again in Ukraine with this war inching itself toward the possibility of *a world* war, no one really knowing its outcome in our time and its effect on our lives in the U.S., monetarily mainly. But to see its own haunting display night after night on yet one more screen again, distant but surely connected, shoves your face into the dirt and grime of something from afar—another country, another place. Was January 6th our inching toward the kind of discord that separates and separates again teetering on its own precipice of, if not war itself then surely breakdown? That mess is a fracturing of our own society just like "The Troubles" of Protestants and

Catholics in Northern Ireland portrayed hauntingly in the movie *Belfast*.

Like everyone else I wrestle with those images and reality, but this time it has pushed me to the far edges of my faith and tightly compacted ideas and notions of what life is really like on this planet—in the final analysis.

Is it the Buddhist “unsatisfactoriness” of life itself that screams for answers when none can be found, especially now, as it all grinds on day in and day out, or the Christian answer of the Crucified Christ and its cross face to face with the realities of our own time and lives? Either way, one hits a brick wall eventually with this world’s pain and suffering and especially now with yet another war if you don’t turn your face away or change the channel hunting for some good old day to day politicking or latest outrage from Hollywood via “the slap seen around the world.” Life is circular and stupid.

In this search for meaning on my part of why all the trauma, death, and horror in life itself, I have found perhaps a direction and hopefully greater clarification in a recent book entitled, *The Five Things We Cannot Change* by David Richo coupled with a posthumously published work by Anthony De Mello, Jesuit, spiritual writer, and world recognized author on the nexus and integration of Western and Eastern spirituality. His book, *Stop Fixing Yourself* is cut from the same cloth and urges the spiritual seeker to confront control and the need for answers in life itself. That, I confess, might well be more of an issue for the intuitive than the sensate personality.

In any case, facing this war and seeing the terrible conditions upon us now I have found myself clinging to Jesus’ words, in John 16:12 loosely translated as “There is much more I want to tell you but you can’t bear it now. Or, maybe right up my alley in this translation of the same verse, “I have much to say to you but you are not able to grasp it now.”

That’s for sure. I don’t get it. My own need for jumping this personal brick wall may well be settled if I really grasped the major intent of the first step of A. A. which confronts its adherents with, in my case at least, pray as you may, think as you think, read what you read, guess what? There are limits in this world, Joseph. What makes you think otherwise? The curse of not being good enough yet is an Irish torture of its own unique strain and sort.

And I think that age old juncture of learning at a point of crisis, loss of faith, massive slaying of the ego, whatever that may be, sure has brought me to another stage in my journey. Maybe. I’ve shared before how confounding all this has been especially with the images forever on the tube and brought face to face without end in sight. I think that has definitely pulled me up

short and without being flippant I definitely “cry uncle” in my penchant for knowing. And especially now, why God do you permit all this especially for the young and the old to be so terribly hurt? Are you some kind of sadist?

This is hardly a new question in anyone’s life, and for me now this is not like a bodily challenge of health but rather an out-there challenge of what I see happening to others and therefore the why and especially the unfair nature of it all. I alluded previously to Elie Wiesel and Johann Metz and take from Metz now another helpful statement of his. He says due to his WWII experience, he refuses to forget its horror and speaks from there.

On his return from a solo mission finding his entire troop dead and splayed on the ground, he said, **“I did not take this experience to the psychologist but into the church not to let myself be talked out of this experience and memory in order to believe in God and talk about God.”** Metz would not let God off the proverbial hook and said further, “We have too much Easter Sunday Christology. We have lost the way between Good Friday and Easter Sunday.”

If I get Metz correctly here, he claims that in taking in all the horror and anesthetizing nothing that one comes out the other end with a “cry.” And that cry is one of helplessness and dependence. No answers. Period.

Likewise, we must give over as well our own sense of how it should be, how it should go in this world, and at least cry out for ourselves as well, “My God where are you?” In the vulnerability and utter poverty of Spirit we find a respite. Empathizing with those in the throes of this horrible war provides for us an entrance into their own pain by some identification with them. It is perhaps expressed by the frustration why it even exists in this day and age. By being dependent in our observer status of those involved, we can join in some small way the grieving, confusion, and pain of that war if we allow ourselves to feel such in deeply identifying ways of the ache in the heart.

It is at that time, I suspect, that all the lines from scripture which address this very emptiness become newly available to us to bind up those wounds without denial, and without “spiritualizing” it away in any sense whatsoever. “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?” That is the same “cry” of any parent, any adult, any friend of one who has undergone unanswerable and even unspeakable pain such as we see in this war. To make it even more inscrutable Richo reminds us that “pain is not punishment and pleasure is not reward.” The whole world view is blown up. One must surrender again and again forgiving it again and again forever.

And, it seems to me, that only then is one left with total abandon to the outstretched arms of Christ on the Cross and we in his embrace cry out our

own poverty of not knowing and yielding over our ego-sense of what we think it is supposed to be. It is as the anonymous author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* instructs us—“the *knowing* of unknowing” and the ability to remain in that mystery and the mystery of love itself no matter what. It is also the setting aside of my own ego ways to understand and abide in that love alone, even without answers and many times without consolation when our only connection without being grandiose is to meet Jesus eye-to-eye straight on as he hangs on the cross without a word between us but only a yielding to love itself, our own unique “cry” known only to ourselves.



Whatever it was that flowed through Jesus in his yielding-over can be, if only at times and in a mirror dimly, our way of getting who we really are and who God really is, and knowing the difference in a profoundly new way. In the end, inevitably, we will have a conversation with God as to the whys and wherefores of it all, the ins and outs of our unique selves too. Until then there is this from Jesus, “I have more to tell you, but you are not ready for it now.” Abide in me, the crucified one. How appropriate then this Good Friday to Easter time being possibly more conscious than Metz suggests.

Holy Cross Roads Writings for the Journey

Fasting?

Dear Associates and Friends,

When we think of fasting, we usually are thinking of giving up food as a means of dieting or a religious fasting as in a Lenten practice. But there are other kinds of fasting. Those in the twelve step movement learn the practice of fasting from the kind of negative thinking that leads to the use of alcohol or drugs. They call it “stinky thinking.”

It is easy these days to be not only occupied with negative thinking but become addicted to it, given the media that we continue to use day by day, and hour by hour. This kind of addiction can lead to hurtful speech not respecting the dignity of each person and actions that can destroy the wellbeing of a community.

The solution might rest with the example Jesus gives us. While he showed anger at times, he mostly overcame these negative feelings by doing something good like his preaching on love and his compassionate healing of the sick. By fasting from what is negative, we could recall all of the reasons we have to be grateful. As Bernard Tyrrell, S.J., says in his book *Christotherapy II*, we need to “mind fast and spirit feast.” If we do this, we will be more able to be part of the solution to the problems that we face.

- What are your thoughts about fasting?
- Have you experienced that fasting can lead to positive behavior?
- Do you think that overcoming negative thinking with good thoughts and good actions can help in bridging the gap that we are having in society today?

O God, help me to have good thoughts that lead to positive action.



Brother Carl Sternberg, C.S.C.

For more reflections to grow spiritually please visit our new blog
<https://weeklyspiritualinsights.org/>

From the *Voice of Moreau Website*

The website features a Holy Cross sister, a brother, or a priest, with a weekly story on the blog. Check the following link below.



Website: <http://www.voiceofmoreau.org/>



**Brother
Philip Smith**



**Brother
Ben Rossi**



Reflection
Sent in by Brother Thomas Maddix, C.S.C.



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"You give but little when you give of your possessions. It is when you give of yourself that you truly give."

— Kahlil Gibran, 'The Prophet'

Ramadan begins at sundown on April 1. During this Islamic holy month, Muslims around the world observe a practice of fasting from dawn to dusk and bettering themselves in practices of faith.

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April 1, 2012

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Brother
James
Kane,
CSC



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