

THE CONGREGATION FOR THE CAUSES OF SAINTS

Le Mans

Beatification and Canonization of the Servant of God
BASILE-ANTOINE MARIE MOREAU

Priest and Founder of
The Congregation of Religious Men and Women of Holy Cross
(1799 -1873)

DECRETUM SUPER VIRTUTIBUS

"Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust and will not be afraid" (Is. 12:2)

The servant of God, Basile Antoine Marie Moreau, with no confidence in merely human means, placed his trust in God and found in Him the strength to face countless difficulties and overcame severe hardship. In the aftermath of the French Revolution, he effectively devoted himself to the spiritual renewal of the Church through parish missions, the Christian education of youth, and various other works of charity. In order to ensure the stability and the continuity of his works, he founded a new religious family with two branches, one for men, the other for women, known as the Congregation of Holy Cross.

This true witness to Christ was born on February 11, 1799 in the village of Laigné-en-Belin (Sarthe, France) to a family of merchants. He was taught Christian morals by his family and the catechism by his parish priest, who also taught him the basics of literature. He entered the local College of Château-Gontier and later, the Seminary at Le Mans where he studied philosophy and theology.

He was ordained a priest on August 12, 1821 and, in order to continue his formation, he was sent by his bishop to the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice in Paris where he devoted himself to further study for two years. On his return to Le Mans, he assumed his responsibilities for teaching philosophy, dogmatic theology, and Sacred Scripture. At the same time, he was constantly involved with additional pastoral activities. Deeply concerned with the Kingdom of God and the salvation of souls, he established a society of diocesan priests in August, 1835, to help pastors, especially in rural areas, in their ministry of preaching. Shortly after this, he received a mandate from his bishop to care for the Institute of the Brothers of Saint Joseph, which had been established fifteen years earlier by Father Jacques-François Dujarié, a priest from the saine diocese. This Institute had been founded to provide for the primary education of boys living in the villages of the region. The Servant of God joined his society of priests with those of the Brothers of Saint Joseph, a union created by the so-called "Fundamental Act" of March 1, 1837. He thereby laid the foundation for the Congregation of Holy Cross, dedicated to assist the pastoral and educational needs of the Church in France, which had recently suffered great devastation. In 1838, the Servant of God gave a rule of life to a group of women he had gathered in order to assist the Priests and Brothers of Holy Cross. These women were given the tasks of housekeeping and caring for the sick in his educational institutions. Later, he entrusted them with the responsibilities of teaching. On August 15, 1840, the Servant of God was the first priest of the new Congregation of Holy Cross to pronounce publicly his religious vows. His religious priests, brothers, and sisters

were known as "Salvatorists," "Josephites," and "Mariantes" of Holy Cross. Later, at the request of the Holy See, the Sisters became a Congregation of Pontifical right, under the name of the "Marianites of Holy Cross," which obtained the approval of the Holy See in 1867, where as the men's Institute had already received papal approval in 1857.

The work founded by the Servant of God to spread the Gospel in rural regions and foreign missions, and to provide a Christian education for youth in need of material and spiritual assistance, developed rapidly, extending to North America and the American continent. The Founder also opened the first rural orphanage in Rome at the request of Blessed Pope Pius IX, who conferred on him the title of Apostolic Missionary. Yet, as often happens to the friends of God and to faithful witnesses of the Gospel, Father Basil was bound to undergo false accusations and rejection.

Indeed, some members of the Institute, to which he had completely dedicated himself, accused him unjustly of mismanagement, even alleging tyrannical control. For this reason, he thought it best to resign as Superior General. His decision was rejected by the Holy See at first, but was later accepted.

He endured these sufferings with remarkable serenity, finding consolation through his faith in Christ, who enlightened his path. He firmly believed in the truth of Revelation and in his preaching, he constantly proclaimed these truths to the people of God. He nourished his own spirituality through the Eucharist and through his devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary and to Saint Joseph. Throughout his lifetime, he kept his mind fixed on Heaven.

He lived in the sight of God and turned his thoughts and works towards Him. The love of Christ motivated him to become prolific in his apostolic activity and to undertake his work for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. Both by the example of his life and his writings, he made every effort to exhort others to avoid every kind of sin. A man of tireless activity, he accepted innumerable sacrifices for the good of others, in whom he beheld the face of the Divine Redeemer.

Some of the members of his Congregation, through negligence, were the cause of serious economic problems; yet, he acted with such a sense of prudence and justice that he protected both the good reputation of the Institute as well as the legitimate rights of its creditors. He was faithful to the laws of the Church and to the Rule of the Institute, which he founded. He admirably mastered his somewhat impetuous nature. He led a simple and austere life, willingly adding acts of penance to those already prescribed by Church discipline. With patience and the deepest spirit of humility, he endured innumerable adversities and illnesses. During a time in which Gallicanism was rampant, he remained faithful to the Holy See. He persevered in following the advice of his spiritual director and was detached from material goods as well as being a model of chastity.

In the last years of his life, he continued his apostolic work as a substitute priest. He died in Le Mans on January 20, 1873. Before going to his eternal reward, he forgave all those who had caused him harm in any way.

With his reputation for sanctity spreading, the bishop of Le Mans started to work on his cause for beatification, initiating the information gathering stage between the years 1947-1950. Following the Decree for the Introduction of the Cause, dated May 2, 1955, the Apostolic Process was undertaken from 1955-1957. The Congregation of Rites, in a decree

published October 23, 1959, recognized the legal validity of these canonical investigations. After the meeting of the Historical Advisors, which occurred on December 6, 1994, the usual study was made to see if the Servant of God had practiced the virtues to an heroic degree. On January 31, 2003, the Special Meeting of the Theological Advisors gave a unanimous response to the question under study. The cardinals and bishops present at the ordinary session on March 18, 2003, after having heard the report of the Postulator for the Cause, His Excellency Émile Eids, Titular Bishop of Sarepta of the Maronites, declared that the Servant of God, Basile Antoine Marie Moreau, had practiced the theological virtues, along with the related cardinal virtues, to an heroic degree.

After the presentation of the complete report by the undersigned Cardinal Prefect to the Sovereign Pontiff, John Paul II, His Holiness received the request of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints. He approved it and ordered the proclamation of the Decree on the heroic virtues of the Servant of God.

In the presence of the undersigned Cardinal Prefect, along with the Postulator of the Cause, and before me, the Secretary Archbishop of the Congregation and those duly convened, the Holy Father then solemnly declared: We declare that Father Basile Antoine Marie Moreau, Priest, Founder of the men and women religions of the Congregation of Holy Cross, practiced the theological virtues of Faith, Hope, and Love towards God and neighbor, as well as the related cardinal virtues of Prudence, Justice, Temperance, and fortitude, to an heroic degree.

The Sovereign Pontiff ordered that the Decree to this effect be made public and placed among the Acts of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints.

Given at Rome, in the year of Our Lord, April 12, 2003.

Joseph Cardinal Saraiva Martins, Prefect
Edouard Nowak, Titular Archbishop of Luna, Secretary.