



January 1

May we start on this new year with a firm conviction that, having enrolled ourselves and pledged our lives under the glorious standard of the holy Cross, we must, to the last breath, further or check its progress according to how we fight vigorously or cowardly the battle in which we are engaged.

—Fr. Edward Sorin, C.S.C.

THE START OF a new year is often a time to focus on self-improvement. The idea of a New Year's resolution may be a bit of a cliché, but it's still a time of year when people buy a lot of gym memberships and nicotine patches. Often that's a good thing; it's certainly good to take inventory of our lives periodically and address areas that need some work. The problem with New Year's resolutions, of course, is that they often get broken—quickly. This is especially true if we view resolutions as an all-or-nothing proposition. If February rolls around and we've slipped, we often give up or wait until next year to try again.

Hopefully, some of our New Year's resolutions involve being a stronger Christian. We promise to pray every day or to go to confession every month. Perhaps we resolve to get involved with a charity or to overcome finally that nagging sin with which we struggle. Like all worthwhile goals, these are difficult. We always struggle; we often fail. But that doesn't mean that we simply discard these resolutions and wait for next year. Instead, we keep trying because we aspire to more than mere self-improvement. We aspire to conversion. Conversion is not a one-time

self-improvement project. It's the everyday work of being a Christian, the work we will do every day for the rest of our lives.

So as this new year begins, we cannot be afraid to set the bar high and to reach for it every day. Some days we will come close; some days we will fall short. But when we give thanks for our daily successes and learn from our daily failures, we will find that Jesus Christ—our crucified yet risen Savior—can work through both of them to draw us closer to himself.

Steve Lacroix, C.S.C.



January 2

The sacraments are the most tangible proof of the love of Jesus Christ for us.

—Blessed Basil Moreau

SOMETIMES WORDS ARE insufficient. A gesture is needed to complement them. In the musical *My Fair Lady*, a suitor, Freddy, keeps speaking sweet words to Eliza. One day she goes into a tirade, saying that she is sick of his many words. If he truly loves her, she begs him to show her.

Jesus needed a means to be with his Church in every generation. His enduring presence would be supported by more than his powerful and beautiful words. Thus, he gave the Church the gift of seven sacraments. They are words combined with gestures that make tangible his saving presence. In Baptism, we are called by name and immersed through water in the life of the Triune God. In Confirmation, we are sealed with the Holy Spirit as

sacred oil is placed upon our foreheads. In the Eucharist, bread and wine are blessed by the priest and thus changed into the Lord's body and blood.

I recall perhaps most of all the literally thousands of the sick and dying with whom I have celebrated the Anointing of the Sick. I have observed the power of this sacrament, as peace overcame fear, trust overtook anxiety, and a deep awareness grew of Jesus' abiding presence. The mood of the patient, spouse, and family changed as the sacrament put Jesus' love for them not only into words but into action.

Seven sacraments in their words and gestures have graced millions over the centuries. Jesus remains present to us—welcoming, strengthening, feeding, forgiving, healing, marrying, and ordaining. We can't help ourselves. We keep coming back to his sacraments time and again, just as Eliza sang, "Don't speak of love. Show me!" In the sacraments, Jesus visibly shows us his love while touching and healing our minds, hearts, and spirits.

Michael D. Couhig, C.S.C.



January 3

Bear in mind and do not forget that just as Divine Providence has willed its greatest works to begin in humility and abjection, it has also decreed that they should expand only at the price of difficulties and contradictions, trials, crosses, contempt, calumny, and detraction. Its purpose in so decreeing is that the first

materials of these spiritual edifices may be tried as gold in the fire.

—Blessed Basil Moreau

FROM THE PERSPECTIVE of the Christian faith, encountering the Cross is more than a probability; it is an inevitability. Trials—of whatever kind and in whatever dimension of life—will not rank among our favorite moments, but neither can they be avoided. In fact, consciously trying to avoid these difficulties might be the worst thing that we could do. For, as Blessed Moreau points out, God’s greatest works usually begin in small, humble circumstances. Scripture testifies to this truth; we need only recall the stable in Bethlehem to remember the power hidden in unassuming beginnings. And, as Blessed Moreau goes on to say, these works progress and expand through trials. Scripture testifies to that also; we need only envision the hill outside Jerusalem to bring to mind the saving victory wrested from seeming defeat.

These are not merely the truths of scripture; they are embodied in the very history of Holy Cross, and they are experienced daily by all who follow Christ. Yet we live in settings that often deny pain and pretend it away. We ourselves may even try to discard or erase the memories of our encounters with the Cross. The great risk in this is that we also discard the grace that accompanies painful, difficult, or confusing times. We might, instead, reflect on the graces that God is offering us through these trials and thus find the strength to embrace them. For each encounter with the Cross is the Lord’s invitation to us to grow ever more fully into the persons God made us to be.

Joel Giallanza, C.S.C.



January 4

Let the humble, candid and guileless souls of our Congregation gather around the poor, dear little Babe in his crib, and present him with the gold of their charity, the incense of their prayers, and the myrrh of their penitential life!

—Fr. Edward Sorin, C.S.C.

WHEN I WAS studying in Japan, a group of sisters invited me to preside at Mass in their convent. After Mass, the nuns presented me, their visiting American priest, with a holy card featuring the Blessed Mother. The image of Mary was one with distinctly Japanese features and dress; she was wearing a kimono. At that point, I had just come from the main university church in downtown Tokyo, where the statue of Mary had distinctly Germanic features. It struck me that the historical Mary, a young Jewish girl in Palestine, probably had little physical resemblance to either image.

The little Babe in his crib, born of the young Jewish mother, is at once the Savior of all the world, the Deliverer of every people, and also a particular human being, fully present in time and space, with physical features and a cultural context determined by the circumstances of his birth. He belongs to every people and also to the Chosen People. Every nation wishes to claim him as its own, to depict him in familiar fashion, and yet he appears as a helpless baby at a specific place in a particular moment in history through the mystery of the Incarnation. We are all challenged to respond to this act of extraordinary generosity, to

embrace both the universal mission and the very real humanity of our Savior through lives of charity and prayer—not only for our people but for all the peoples of the world.

Art Wheeler, C.S.C.



January 5

Our calling is to serve the Lord Jesus in mission not as independent individuals but in a brotherhood. Our community life refreshes the faith that makes our work a ministry and not just an employment; it fortifies us by the example and encouragement of our confreres; and it protects us from being overwhelmed or discouraged by our work.

—Holy Cross Constitutions

AS A SEMINARIAN, I learned how to be a good brother in community by watching how the finally professed religious at Moreau Seminary acted. I remember one day early in formation when after ministry I returned to the seminary disappointed and upset. I was frustrated with the people to whom I was ministering and beginning to question whether this was the life for me. My frustration must have been quite evident as Br. John Platte, C.S.C., one of the wisdom figures in the seminary community, took one look at me, gave me a hug, and invited me to the refectory for a bowl of ice cream. As we ate, Br. John listened to me complain, smiled knowingly, and told me that I was going to be just fine. It was exactly what I needed to hear.

I am sure that every Holy Cross religious could tell a similar story of a time in which a community member came to his aid. For me, these stories get at what it means to share in the brotherhood of Holy Cross. As brothers in community, we are called to be present to each other through the ups and downs of religious life. In sharing these moments, we make Christ's deep and abiding love for us real, and our faith is renewed.

This call to accompany others is not unique to Holy Cross but is instead the call of every Christian. Whether we live in a religious house, as part of a family, or as a single person, all of us are called to bring the love of Jesus Christ to those we encounter. That is what it means to be a good community member and part of the Body of Christ.

Christopher Rehagen, C.S.C.



January 6*

After seeing and adoring the Infant Savior, oh, for his sake, for the sake of our holy faith, for the sake of our beloved family, we, too, shall return from the stable by a different road.

—Fr. Edward Sorin, C.S.C.

AFTER THE MAGI reached Bethlehem, they had every reason in the world to be overjoyed. They finally had found the newborn Jesus whom they had been seeking and presented him their wonderful gifts. In fact, we might think they were also deeply satisfied and ready to declare “mission accomplished.” But instead, as

Matthew's gospel recounts, they were scarcely halfway through their long journey. Having received instructions in a dream to avoid King Herod, they returned home by a different road.

Fr. Sorin plainly saw a significant lesson in this episode from Christ's Nativity that applies to us as well. The command that we go back differently than the way we came puts us in the position of the Wise Men, who saw and believed, and who now carry the Good News of God's presence among us, in place of gold, incense, and myrrh. But this obligation to take another route also resonates with the great arc of the biblical drama, which begins in an earthly garden and, after taking a surprising path from the tree of knowledge of good and evil to the very wood of the Cross, ends in a heavenly city. The paths we are called to follow are often strange and new, teaching us to trust in the Spirit. They bring us into contact with unfamiliar people who enrich our knowledge of the image of God. These roads often confront us with difficult choices and challenging situations, which become so many opportunities for a new epiphany as we follow the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Patrick D. Gaffney, C.S.C.

* Although the Church in the United States celebrates the Feast of St. André Bessette today, the day of his death, the Congregation of Holy Cross and most of the Church in the rest of the world, including in his home country of Canada, celebrate St. André on January 7. This difference is due to the fact that most local churches celebrate the Solemnity of the Epiphany on January 6, rather than moving it to the nearest Sunday after the New Year, as is the custom in the Church in the United States.



January 7—Feast of St. André Bessette

God does not ask the impossible. God asks that we offer our good intentions, accept the inconveniences that come with each day, and offer our daily work.

—St. André Bessette

THIS IS THE formula that Br. André used throughout his life, and it led him to sainthood. Simple and straightforward, his words reflect a profound trust that God is and remains faithful, that God will use our usual daily activities to bring us to holiness. St. André needed that trust throughout his life, from his entrance into Holy Cross to the development of the Oratory of St. Joseph. He trusted even when confronted with misunderstanding and lack of support. St. André nurtured that trust with the truly essential works of his life: faith, prayer, service.

St. André believed that he would enter Holy Cross; he believed that he could make a contribution; he believed the Oratory was possible. And all of that came to be. He would say to others, “If you do not believe in God, you will get nothing.” He believed, and today we see the fruits of his faith and the ways that he continues to touch so many people. So it must be for us. How does our faith enable us to touch the lives of others and so make a difference in our world?

St. André prayed. Eyewitnesses testified that when he prayed he looked as if he was speaking to someone from whom he expected an answer. His prayer to God—often through St. Joseph and Mary—was, above all, a personal relationship from which he drew strength and encouragement for the work before

him. He believed that God was very close to anyone who prayed. As he would say, “When we pray, God’s ear is pressed to our lips.” So it is for us. How is our own prayer a relationship?

St. André served others to the best of his ability, not allowing his limitations to shrink his openness to whatever God and St. Joseph wanted to accomplish through him. We could consider his work for the development of the Oratory and his ministry of healing as the primary activities in his life. His own perspective, however, was much more Gospel-based: “We cannot love God without loving our neighbor.” He understood his main vocation in life was to love even as Jesus loved. So, too, for us. Beyond the arenas of family and profession, in which ways do we serve others?

Believe, pray, serve, and, by all that, trust God. It is a simple enough regimen for a full spiritual life. It is a simple enough formula for sainthood. A regular recommendation from St. André was: “Be saints.” In his mind, this was not an impossible task for he knew God would not ask that of us. Rather, this is what we were created to be: saints.

Just before he died, St. André’s last words were, “This is the seed.” He was a seed, a small seed—he would say an insignificant seed—but one that was watered by God’s grace and grew in the fertile soil of faith and prayer and service. He was a seed that became a saint. And so it is for us because, after all, God does not ask the impossible.

Joel Giallanza, C.S.C.



January 8

Once entered into the house, having found the Child with Mary, his mother, and fallen down to adore him, let us pause awhile in their holy presence, forgetting the world with its vain noise and treachery. And, opening our only treasure, our hearts, let us make him our richest offering, our whole being, that he may dispose of it as he pleases.

—Fr. Edward Sorin, C.S.C.

THOUGH I HAVEN'T experienced the joys and challenges of fatherhood, I am privileged to have eight nieces and nephews. Now a new generation is arriving—six great-nephews and three great-nieces grace the family hearth, including one from his place in heaven. I'm at a stage in life and ministry that I call "spiritual grandpa-hood"—baptizing the children of the children I baptized those many years ago.

How easy it is to give one's heart to an infant. Our attention is focused solely on that little child. Outside distractions fade away. We marvel at the tiny physical features, feel the clasp of small fingers, and lose ourselves in the depths of the little one's eyes. We get down on the floor and play with rattles and squeaky toys. We make silly faces. The "conversation" between ourselves and the infant is perfectly understandable to both of us. In other words, it's all right for us to let go of our adulthood. An infant gives us permission to be a child ourselves.

So, too, it is with Jesus. True, we won't relate to him as though he were a baby, nor does he expect that. But how deeply

Jesus desires the clasp of our hands, our gaze into his eyes. He longs for the language of our heart speaking to his heart. Playfulness is welcomed and cherished. We can let ourselves go with Jesus, just as we do with an infant. Yet one huge difference remains between Jesus and an infant. Sooner or later the infant's attention shifts to something different. Jesus never tires of us.

Herbert C. Yost, C.S.C.



January 9

Even in this life God blesses human efforts surprisingly, when the cause of his Holy Mother is interested in them. Whoever neglects her deprives himself of something essential to success.

—Fr. Edward Sorin, C.S.C.

IN MY FIRST few days as a new provincial, I received from a predecessor a storied rosary that was well-used, old, and fragile. According to him, the rosary first belonged to Fr. Edward Sorin, C.S.C. Fr. Sorin had given it to Notre Dame faculty member Fr. Cornelius Hagerty, C.S.C. Fr. Hagerty had mentored the young Patrick Peyton, C.S.C., at Notre Dame and had given this precious rosary to him. More than fifty years later, as he lay dying, Fr. Peyton, the American Apostle of the Family Rosary, passed the rosary on to his provincial superior at the time. And, in turn, it was given to me.

Two years before ordination to the priesthood, Patrick Peyton had been diagnosed with terminal tuberculosis and advised

by doctors that he should try prayer since they had exhausted all of their remedies. He returned to Notre Dame from Washington, DC, to die at the community infirmary. Fr. Hagerty, his favorite professor, visited him at the infirmary and told him, “Mary is alive. She will be as good to you as you think she can be. It all depends on you and your faith.” He told Patrick to pray to the Mother of God that he might be healed through her intercession—if it be God’s will. He and his friends in Holy Cross prayed the Rosary for that intention.

Later, perplexed doctors examined him carefully and confessed their bafflement. He was going to live. He was ordained Fr. Patrick Peyton, C.S.C., two years later and spent fifty-one years as a priest enriching and strengthening the lives of families all around the world. God, indeed, will bless our efforts if we seek the help of his Holy Mother.

Willy Raymond, C.S.C.



January 10

The more Divine Providence is pleased to bless the works which it has confided to us and for which we are jointly responsible, the more keenly do I feel the weight of my responsibility and the more deeply I am convinced of the need of personal holiness if I am not to be an obstacle to God’s design for each one of you.

—Blessed Basil Moreau

DIVINE PROVIDENCE IS neither magic nor attainable by mere human achievement. Instead, it is the marriage between divine initiative and human response. It is the reality we experience when we stop seeing God's design as something foreign to us and begin to see ourselves within that design. Divine Providence is not a suit we must go out to buy, be fitted for, and then live in. It is a reality already at work in us into which we awaken through prayer and attentive listening.

In awaking to the design that God has already inscribed on our hearts, we discover that our only responsibility is to respond. Ultimately, this response does not consist of a list of things to do but is a call to wake up and be—for personal holiness is a way of being in the world. As I discerned my own call to the priesthood, it did not come down to whether I believed I could do everything God might ask of me. The real question that haunted me, the real weight of the responsibility I felt, was whether I could be who he was asking me to be. And that question could only be answered through listening and then responding to what God had already planted within my own heart.

Thus, if we truly seek to do God's will, we cannot rely on our will alone nor can we count on our lives magically unfolding. The only way to fulfill God's designs for us is to listen and to respond continually to the workings of grace in our lives, thereby creating that union between our human response and God's initiative that is Divine Providence.

Jeffrey Cooper, C.S.C.



January 11

Once in their life the shepherds and the Magi beheld him in the manger; but I, every day, poor sinner, receive him, not in my arms, but in my own bosom, in my very heart, so that I may say with St. Paul: "I live: no, not I, but Christ lives in me!"

—Fr. Edward Sorin, C.S.C.

I HAVE OFTEN taken the daily reception of the Eucharist for granted. It becomes quite easily just another routine component of the Mass. More often than not, I get the most meaning from the well-read epistle or gospel, the nicely crafted and well-delivered homily, or the beautifully moving music. And then, on cue, I rise and follow the crowd to take nourishment. Regrettably, there are times when all this happens and I am completely unaware of the monumental value of the moment.

But when I am focused, it is then that I am overwhelmed with awe by the gift that Christ is giving to me and that I am receiving. The body and blood of the Lord, once shed for me on Calvary's height, now dwell mysteriously within my very heart, transforming myself and all who receive him into his Body—the Church. The concept is so awesome, so divinely generous, that it completely escapes not only my reason but my power truly to believe it. And yet it is real—it was, and it will always be.

Perhaps it would have been eminently better for me to have been present with the shepherds and Magi—physically to have witnessed the Savior incarnate in the world. Perhaps in that one spectacular event, I would have believed totally. But even now,

Christ lives and breathes and transforms me. It happens each time I receive his body and blood in bread and wine. Ever so slowly, it is not I who live, but Christ who lives in me.

Philip Smith, C.S.C.



January 12

In our attempts to love others, Jesus Christ is our model. Notice what great charity he practiced in his public life. This charity was evident everywhere, especially in his bearing, his reserve, and his constant patience with others. There was no distinction; he cared for everyone.

—Blessed Basil Moreau

NOTICING TWENTY OR so bodies of children—infants, really—piled limp and doll-like, three and four deep on metal racks in a sweltering hospital morgue in Haiti, my students stood in stunned silence. When they asked about the horror before us, I did not have a particularly good response. I muttered something and suggested a quick prayer to remember these kids whose lives had obviously ended prematurely and who were probably now saints. Most died for no good reason—hunger and its illnesses, a minor accident left untreated for lack of a physician, the absence of life-saving vaccines due to a corrupt official looking for a bribe, or a simple infection grown fatal because of filth. As a priest and biologist working in Haiti, I have witnessed all these stories. Destitute poverty and early death evoke a reaction in