

# **Midwest Holy Cross Associates**

*Apostolic Zeal:*

*A Call to Christian Leadership*

In the summer of 2017, Sister Veronique gave a comprehensive presentation on Christian leadership for Associates. It was so full of inspiration we have divided the content into sessions for further exploration and reflection. They are in keeping with our theme:

**“Competency to See; Courage to Act.”**

Brother Carl Sternberg, CSC  
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## **The “Lectio Divina” Process for Praying the Scriptures:**

The desert fathers and mothers in the early church had a very unique way of spending an entire day in reflection on a passage of Scripture. Their method, known as “lectio divina,” has come down through the centuries as an important way of growing in the spiritual life. It consists in reading a passage of Scripture three times. Each time the passage will contain more meaning as the reader begins to apply its message to his or her own life.

Follow these instructions as you reflect on Scripture and on the readings as part of your monthly chapter meetings.

The group leader chooses volunteers to read the selected scriptural passage three times.

Prior to the first reading, the chapter spends a moment in silent prayer asking the Holy Spirit to be present in this discernment process.

It would be helpful for all to have reflected on the readings before the session.

Before the first reading, the group leader says, “As we read the passage for the first time, choose a word or phrase that captures your attention.” (No further explanation here). After the passage is read, the group leader says, “Take a moment to reflect on that word or phrase.” After a short period of reflection, the group leader shares only his/her word or phrase and then invites others in the group to share theirs. It is important to allow enough time for all to participate.

Before the second reading, the group leader says, “As we read the passage for the second time, listen for a personal message God is giving you. It could have something to do with the word or phrase you have already chosen”. After the passage is read, the group leader says, “Take a moment to hear the message God has for you in this passage. I will begin by sharing first and then I will invite others to share”. It is important to allow two or three minutes before the leader shares his/her thoughts. Some members will need this time to receive the significance of the passage for them. After the group leader shares, he/she invites others to share. Stress the importance of sharing aloud. Each individual sharing is a gift to the group and has special significance for the community.

Before having someone read the passage for the third time, the group leader says, “As we read the passage for the third time, listen for a call from God. What direction does God want you to take during the coming month? I will begin by sharing first and then I will invite others to share”. It is important to allow two or three minutes before the leader shares his or her thoughts. After the group leader shares, he or she invites others to share.

At the end of the process the group leader asks the group how God is leading the chapter for the coming month.

### **Modification to the “Lectio Divina” Process**

We are adding a fourth element to the lectio process. REST. Take a few moments of quiet time recalling the prayer of the Chapter. Say it quietly to yourself as a means of making it more vivid and adding to its importance as you live with it through the month.



## **Session One: A MISSION TO COLLABORATE**

“We, the family of Holy Cross have been bequeathed a mission, a mission in the collaboration with all God’s people, to proclaim to the cosmos that love has conquered death.

Mother Teresa of Calcutta, a saint that had close ties with Holy Cross, knew of and shared in this mission of announcing God’s love for all of creation. She had a principle of service that she shared with all who worked with her community. She was fond of saying; ‘Love is a fruit in season at all times, and within reach of every hand.’

The reality of our life as part of God’s continuing creation is that we are loved and precious in God’s sight. God continues to choose life for us and for the cosmos in the midst of, and perhaps even in spite of, the chaos in which we live and have our being,”

*Sister Veronique Wiedower, CSC*

“But the more divine providence is pleased to bless the works that it has confided to us and for which we are jointly responsible, the more keenly I feel the weight of my responsibility and the more deeply I am convinced of the need of personal holiness, if am not to be an obstacle to God’s designs for each one of you. Pray, for me, my dear sons and daughters, and pray also for one another, in order that we may accomplish all the good we can, and that the many souls in whose salvation we are privileged to cooperate may at last attain eternal life.”

*Moreau Circular Letter 25*

“So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the holy ones and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the capstone. Through him the whole structure is held together and grows into a temple sacred in the Lord; in him you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”

*Ephesians, 2:19-21*

**Lord, help me collaborate with others in bringing about your kingdom.**

## **Session Two: Collaboration Means Mutual Cooperation**

“I am defining collaboration as a mutual relationship where all parties actively seek to work for the common good of the whole group and its purpose or mission. You as Associates of Holy Cross have committed to just such a relationship.

This kind of interaction produces a synergy innately involved in collaboration, a joining and multiplication of energies that result in more than the sum of the energy exerted by any of the parts. Again, Father Moreau would refer to this synergy that we help create and receive as zeal.

Collaboration requires that I open myself to the influence of another even as I am influencing them. Collaboration is also cooperation with the creative and evolving life of God in the world, and indeed in the cosmos. It is by nature generative and it always seeks the good of creation.”

*Sister Veronique Wiedower, CSC*

“For in a great work of charity, as in the erection of a building, one worker alone does not build it, nor is it constructed out of a single stone or single beam of wood. On the contrary, the various workers make their separate contributions, each stone is cut to fit into the place for which it was destined, and each piece of wood is arranged and placed so as to add to the beauty and the strength of the entire building. Union, then, is the powerful lever with which we can move, direct and sanctify the world, not letting the spirit of evil exercise its power.”

*Moreau Sermon*

**Lord, help me to exercise my gifts in my Commitment to Holy Cross.**

### **Session Three: Step out in Faith and Charity**

“Psychology tells us that this commitment is not just a head-trip, that it is not just what we think or say which defines our true identity. Identity for us as human persons requires a commitment of hands, feet and heart, because we are enfleshed creatures, that is, we are bodily beings.

William Wilson has famously written: ‘We do not think our way into a new way of being; we act our way into a new way of thinking.’

We cannot think our way into being the person of our dreams. We need to begin acting in the way the person of our dreams acts; we need to engage in behaviors that belong to the person we desire to be. If we can do this, we will think about ourselves and our world differently.”

*Sister Veronique Wiedower, CSC*

“Humility is the base of all fraternal generosity. Where all the members of a community are humble, there can be but few sins against charity. Where charity is not violated, a Christian community is a foretaste of heaven.

To follow the precept of Jesus Christ on fraternal charity, we must pay particular attention to the practice of charity as it is described by St. Paul.

‘Our charity must be ‘patient’ so that everything may be suffered from others, and others may not be made to suffer by us, that thus there may be no murmurings or complaints.’ (1Cor:13)

It must be ‘full of kindness,’ so that we are always reasonable, obliging, and civil... Should we unwittingly give offense by word or deed, we must not let the day pass without asking for forgiveness.”

*Moreau Sermon*

**Lord, help me step out in faith and charity.**

## **Session Four: An Invitation to a Fuller Life**

“This journey of self discovery is unique each day because we are evolving beings. We are not the same person we were yesterday, in exactly the same way as we were yesterday. Some of us have experienced more of life’s journey, and now find ourselves in older adulthood, where our identity as generative and creative persons is hopefully transformed by experience and reflection, and we find ourselves transitioning more deeply in the stage of being elders, leaders and wisdom figures.

Times, like today, are great opportunities to get in touch with our bodies, our spirits, our minds and hearts, to see how healthy our spirit of zeal is. Has a friend ever said to you, ‘you used to be so...’ Fill in the blank...so happy; so creative; so involved; so prayerful, etc. Take some time right now to check your body, spirit, heart and mind. What might help you keep moving on this journey of life so that you continue to be generative and focused on the common good? Are you ready to say yes again today to God’s invitation to live life to the full, to be a partner in the mission of spreading the Good News? God has provided you this time and space to begin answering these questions. Take hold of the invitation to join in the dance of Christian leadership.”

*Sister Veronique Wiedower, CSC*

“Let us think often of our interior graces and good inspirations that deter from evil and urge to good, of our preservation from grave faults and from many venial ones deliberately committed, of our ever-increasing ease in triumphing over obstacles to our sanctification, of our ever-increasing love of vocation. Oh, it is most true that God is good, that his mercy endures forever. What return shall I make to him for all God has done for me? Let me follow him, let me be known as God’s disciple by the love I have for those who walk with me on this difficult road to sanctity.”

*Moreau Sermon*

**Lord, help me respond to your invitation to be a Christian Leader.**

## **Session Five: Creative Caring**

“Father Moreau named his congregation for the neighborhood in which it was founded, Sainte Croix, Holy Cross. He asked that those who collaborated in Holy Cross discern the needs of the people of the neighborhood, and place those needs within the context of the world reality. Understanding all this, Moreau then asked them to trust in the Provident God to show them how they should serve.

We must first be in touch with who we are, then look to the needs of the people and environment in which we live. We bring our personal experience and the wider experience of the world reality to our prayer, and learn how we can care creatively for self, others, and our world. Creative caring for myself requires collaborative moments of intimacy with myself and God, in much the same way that any true friendship will require moments of intimacy.

Creative caring of myself demands a healthy ability to distance myself from any rigid definition of who I am at any one moment of time. All of life is a movement and it either continues to change and grow, or it stops growing and dies. If I truly believe that I am alive and well, I must continually assess who I am becoming. This is so that I can imagine new options for my own potential as God’s creation and begin to make choices and engage in behaviors which enable me to continue to grow into the person, the saint that God desires me to be.”

*Sister Veronique Wiedower, CSC*

“I firmly trust, however, that the same God who has begun this work under such favorable auspices will carry it through to its completion. This he will do, provided that you strive constantly after the perfect life. This perfect life is characterized by obedience, discipline, punctuality, community spirit, zeal for the interior life, edification, and devotion to work. The perfection of this life stands out, particularly in that purity of intention that seeks not self but God alone; strives for nothing but the happiness of possessing Jesus and belonging to him and to his Blessed Mother; and directs all interests, goods and rights to the sole honor of the divine master and the salvation of souls.”

*Moreau Sermon*

**God, help me be creative in caring for self, others and the world.**

## **Session Six: Works-in-Progress**

“Our world is unfinished; our cosmos is unfinished. They are works-in-progress, too, and we are responsible to be good stewards of earth and the cosmos. Therefore, I need to look at my world anew each day, and ask of it: how can I collaborate with you? How can I work within the environment where God has placed me?”

This exercise is extremely important for those of us who have been called to leadership. We are the people today who are asked by God to reveal redemption to all creation. Pope Francis in his encyclical ‘Laudato si,’ reminded us of this deep interconnectedness in all created things. Each day is God’s gift to us to grow in deeper relationship to life. Life itself is unfinished until the last day when Christ will come again in glory. Life in all its myriad forms is a work of God that is still in the making, and a mystery to be cared for by each of us as God’s collaborators.”  
*Sister Veronique Wiedower, CSC*

“Even though we base our philosophy on the data of faith, no one need fear that we shall confine our teaching within the narrow and unscientific boundaries. No, we wish to accept science without prejudice and in manner adapted to the needs of our times. We do not want our students to be ignorant of anything they should know. To this end, we shall shrink from no sacrifice. But we shall never forget that virtue, as Bacon puts it, is the spice, which preserves science. We shall always place education side by side with instruction; the mind will not be cultivated at the expense of the heart. While we prepare useful citizens for society, we shall likewise do our utmost to prepare citizens for heaven.”  
*Moreau, Circular Letter 36*

**God, help me to lead for the betterment of the world.**

## **Session Seven: Imagination, creativity, ingenuity**

“Effective leaders and collaborators, charismatic leaders who have the potential to improve systems that enrich the love of others, are needed today more than ever. Key characteristics of such persons include flexibility, resiliency and openness to God’s future.

We are often good at remembering and planning for professional updating, and less agile at finding times for leadership updating. Times of real leisure and quiet, laughter and sharing of fun are the building blocks of creativity, imagination and ingenuity. Blessed Basil Moreau often used imagination and creativity, along with intuition to find options for joining apparently disparate elements. Perhaps finding time for reflection and self-discovery, praying and playing with others, that is, finding time for re-creative activity can help us to deal with life and life’s crisis moments more peacefully truthfully and honestly.”

*Sister Veronique Wiedower, CSC*

“Where did Christ get all this knowledge, seeing that he has never studied? What is the not the life hidden in God or rather God hidden in him? Is it possible you would not want to share in the happiness of this hidden God? Learn then the way ‘to hide your life in God with your divine master.’(Col 3:3), cherishing your place in Solitude.”

*Retreat, Moreau*

**God, lead me in ways that use my gifts to bring about my purpose in life.**