

EDUCATION • PARISH • MISSION

Ave Cruz



Volume 3 Issue 1 | The Ordinandi

Office of Vocations, Congregation of Holy Cross



Ave Crux, Spes Unica – Hail the Cross, Our Only Hope!

We in the Congregation of Holy Cross profess this truth as the center of our spiritual tradition, and for 175 years, we have worked to bring the hope of the Cross to schools, universities, parishes and other ministries on five continents.

We are men with hope to bring. Discerning God's will and taking this step in our lives was not entered into lightly or on our own – finding the right next step often comes by reaching out to a vocations director. Our role is to help you hear and answer God's call. Drop us a line and we will help you discover God's call.

CONGREGATION *of* HOLY CROSS
UNITED STATES PROVINCE
OF PRIESTS AND BROTHERS

Office of Vocations
P.O. Box 541
Notre Dame, IN 46556
(574) 631-6385
vocations@holycrossusa.org
holycrossvocations.org



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Fr. Neil's Letter

Our community recently had the distinct honor and privilege of welcoming three new priests into the Congregation of Holy Cross. What a joy it was to stand with them as they were raised to the order of the priesthood! In the pages of this issue of *Ave Crux*, Fr. Chris, Fr. Brendan, and Fr. Tim talk about the different aspects of religious life that inspired them to consider it as a possibility for their own lives. Fr. Chris was raised in northern Indiana, as I was, and he had the chance to develop personal relationships with not only Holy Cross priests, but other priests, too. The witness of all the priests he'd met through the years gave him the courage to open his heart to the idea that God might be calling him. Through his formation, Fr. Brendan has found that the evangelical counsels were what intrigued him. He was surprised to discover that the vows that he was required to take were not restrictive, but liberating. During his formation, Fr. Brendan traveled to India and discovered there that his vows allowed him the freedom of mind to see the needs of others in ways those with worldly concerns often overlook. Fr. Tim was fascinated by the Holy Cross charism of being 'educators in the faith.' He was excited by the opportunity to bring God into the hearts of others as a teacher. While all teachers seek to instill knowledge in their students, we in Holy Cross seek to share knowledge that surpasses all; Knowledge of God and His love. And, all three of these new priests speak of their joy in the community life of Holy Cross. It is a joy to which I myself would also gladly testify! Thank you for your prayerful support of all in Holy Cross, particularly our new priests, Fr. Chris, Fr. Brendan, and Fr. Tim, and all of our seminarians.

Rev. Neil Wack, C.S.C.
vocation@holycrossusa.org

Rev. Neil Wack, C.S.C., is director of vocations for the U.S. Province of the Congregation of Holy Cross. After earning a degree in computer science, Fr. Wack entered the seminary at the University of Notre Dame in 1997 and was ordained a priest at the Basilica of the Sacred Heart in 2004. He was assigned to a parish in Colorado, and then transferred to his home parish of Christ the King in South Bend, Indiana, in 2005, and served there for ten years. As director of vocations, Fr. Wack coordinates vocation promotion efforts at Holy Cross campuses, parishes and other apostolates across the United States.





If You



Only Open



Your Heart

Rev. Christopher Brennan, C.S.C.

“Like the first disciples, we know that He will draw us along and reinforce our loyalties if we yield to Him.” (Constitution 18)

For the most part, people join religious life or consider priesthood because of contact or a direct experience that they have had with a priest or religious. In that way, you usually join what you know. Having grown up in South Bend, Indiana, and attended a parish that was run by Holy Cross, and later the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, all I really knew were diocesan and Holy Cross priests. I, of course, knew of other religious communities, but it never entered my mind to apply to them. For me, it was always a question of either diocesan priesthood or priesthood as a Holy Cross religious. My uncle, a diocesan priest, witnessed well to the work and life of a priest, and I had other great models of diocesan priesthood in Msgr. Bill Schooler, Msgr. Mike Heintz, Fr. Dan Scheidt, and Fr. Jacob Meyer. Their collective witness, along with Holy Cross

priests I met over the years through two of my brothers who went to Notre Dame (both of whom discerned priesthood when I was in pre-school), helped me to seriously consider entering seminary after high school.

Yet, I would say that there were a lot of factors that led me to the seminary - my mom’s faithful devotion to the Church, my uncle’s priesthood, my two oldest brothers’ discernment of priesthood - especially my brother Mike who was just ordained a Norbertine priest in May 2017. Altar serving at St. Pius X in Granger, Indiana, also afforded me the opportunity to serve under a great pastor in Msgr. Schooler, who always encouraged my vocation.

In my visits to the Old College Undergraduate Seminary, I truly felt at home. Had I not made those visits, I am not sure that I would have joined, precisely because my visits to Old College opened my heart to the work

Above: Deacon Christopher Brennan, C.S.C., baptizing an infant at Holy Redeemer Parish in Portland, Oregon.

of the Holy Spirit, and the peace that the Spirit always brings to a well-discerned decision.

Once in Old College, I was introduced to religious life through the witness of men like Br. Ed Luther, C.S.C., Fr. Kevin Rousseau, C.S.C., and Fr. Stephen Koeth, C.S.C., and it is also where I began to make friendships with fellow seminarians that have been true gifts of God and the avenues to Him.

Over time, I have certainly grown in my understanding of Holy Cross. In a certain sense, I think the decision to enter religious life was similar to the stages of dating, engagement, and marriage. As you continue in relationship, you get to know the community better and better. There is so much good that is before me, just as there is before a couple who gets married. Of course, there will be struggles and crosses to bear, but it is encouraging to know I will be supported by my family in Holy Cross. We are a



REV. CHRISTOPHER BRENNAN, C.S.C.

Born: August 9, 1989

Parents: Michael & Dorothy Brennan, Granger, Indiana

College: University of Notre Dame, B.A., 2012

Graduate Study: Notre Dame, M.Div., 2017

Entered Formation: 2008, Old College

First Vows: Aug. 3, 2013

Final Vows: Sept. 15, 2017

Deacon Placement: Holy Redeemer Parish, Portland, Oregon

family, a band of men - though certainly not perfect - we live together and support each other in and through Christ and His Church. I have been drawn to the simple witness of my older brothers in Holy Cross, especially those who have been missionaries. Their zeal, their ability to prophetically preach the Gospel by their witness, and their love for the Eucharist has been inspiring to me as I begin this journey as a young religious and priest.

Throughout my formation, and even still today, my favorite way to pray is with Scripture - whether by simply sitting with some of my favorite psalms or *Lectio Divina* (Divine Reading). I also enjoy saying the Rosary, as I find the meditative repetition to be helpful, especially when I find myself particularly distracted. As a deacon, the time I have spent in

prayer preparing homilies has been quite fruitful. Matthew's account of the Transfiguration has been a particularly striking image for me. Jesus' words to Peter, James, and John, "Get up. Do not be afraid!" have been an encouraging reminder for me to preach the Gospel boldly and courageously. When it comes to the question of *your* vocation, the very first step is to pray about it. Invite God into the conversation, as it was God who has called you and placed your vocation in your heart. He is the one that can best help you discern what He is calling you toward. Also, begin to talk to others about it - it is good to get the perspective of people who know you well - your family, friends, teachers, and your parish priest - but it's also valuable to speak with those who may not know you well like a vocation director. Other people can help you discern where God might be calling you, most often because they can see things in you that you may not be able to see yourself. Then, visit the seminary and see what it is like! It really is the best way to begin to discern your vocation. It is also important to remember that the formation process is a long and beautiful journey - you do not have to be absolutely sure you will be ordained a priest or profess vows as a brother to enter. The first discernment is to enter seminary; the work and prayer of the years of formation will do the rest. And, of course, stay close to the Eucharist, stay close to Mary, stay close to the Church, and have courage - Jesus says to us throughout the Gospel: "Do not be afraid!"

As Fr. Moreau reminds us, "We are committed by our vocation to extend the reign of Christ in people's hearts." (Blessed Basil Moreau, Exercises) It is through our collective and individual witness of yielding to Christ and inviting Him into our own hearts that we are able to help others yield and open their hearts to God. What a beautiful mission and opportunity this is!

— Fr. Chris Brennan, C.S.C.



"Our mission sends us across borders of every sort. Often we must make ourselves at home among more than one people or culture, reminding us again that the farther we go in giving the more we stand to receive. Our broader experience allows both the appreciation and the critique of every culture and the disclosure that no culture of this world can be our abiding home." (Constitution 2:17)

I have had many significant experiences of ministry in Holy Cross, even as a seminarian and later deacon; however, my time in India particularly stands out. While a majority of my time in India was studying with our men at the Jnana-Deepa-Vidyapeeth, a Pontifical institute for philosophy and religion located at Pune, India, I had many experiences of ministering with our missionaries in Mizoram, Northeast India. Our Holy Cross missionaries have given their lives for the mission of the Church and the mandate of the Gospel to "Go into all



the world and preach the Gospel to all creation.” My hope for ministry is that I approach everything I do with the same zeal and joy that these men do.

Overall, I felt blessed with a sense of peace and gratitude as I approached Ordination. I was definitely excited and looking forward to the actual day, but also had a deep sense of peace that, in a way, the journey was just beginning. I am so grateful to all the people who have encouraged and supported me throughout the journey. I am especially grateful to my family, especially my mother, who was my first teacher in the faith. Also, the Discalced Carmelite Nuns of Des Plaines, Illinois, who have kept me in their constant prayer since high school. These are just two examples of the deep gratitude I have for the many people who have guided me throughout these years.

The aspect of priesthood that is most

attractive to me is the great honor to lead the faith community in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass - being a bridge for those who desire first a relationship with God, especially through the Sacraments of the Church. Coming in at a close second is the great privilege to absolve sins in the name of Christ and His Church. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is such a powerful gift to so many people and it will truly be an awesome experience to share the Divine Mercy and forgiveness of God to His people.

For the sake of Christ’s mission, I feel that I have been called to live a poor, chaste and obedient life within the Congregation of Holy Cross. My experience of vowed life has been demanding yet joyful. I see the living out of these vows as the means towards effective ministry, as well as the path toward a fulfilled life. The vow of chastity lived well can be a particularly

powerful icon of the love Jesus expressed to others. Many people in our world have a difficult time understanding the vow of chastity. Many see it as an archaic discipline or an unnecessary burden, however, I see celibacy as more of a gift than a discipline and more liberating than it is a burden. Taking the vow of poverty is a beautiful and powerful tradition within religious life. I have a strong desire to live a materially simple life and to share what I have with my brothers in Holy Cross and those in most need in our world. I also see poverty as not only about material things. One does not only hoard wealth - as sinners, there is great temptation to hoard grudges, anger, or resentment. The vow of poverty is mainly imitating Jesus Christ who was truly poor. I know the more I am gifted, the more I am called to give it away - and that includes aspects of both material and spiritual poverty.

Obedience is strongly connected to these two other vows. Obedience is all about listening. True liberation is found in the perfect living out of obedience. Jesus, on the Cross, was the most liberated person to have ever walked the Earth because He was perfectly in alignment with God’s will. Obedience is not simply the desire to be told what to do, but rather, to be in a constant disposition of listening to the will of the Father. Holy Cross has truly been a school of holiness for me. I truly believe that I am being saved through the living out of these vows. I stand to receive far more from Holy Cross and the living out of these vows than I could ever expect to give back, but it is my deep and humble desire to continue journeying with this great band of men who have professed these vows of poverty, chastity and obedience.

If you are considering a vocation, start to talk about it, and take all of your questions, hesitations, and excitement to Mass and the Sacrament of Confession. Be honest with yourself and with God. Seek wise counsel from a mentor, priest, religious brother or sister, and share your desire with trusted friends and family. Finally, be patient with yourself. The road to Final Vows or priesthood is a long one. I think of my track coach in elementary school, who’d yell out during a track meet: “Pace! No Race!” Only this is a marathon. Pace yourself!



REV. BRENDAN MCALEER, C.S.C.

Born: May 13, 1988

Parents: Michael & Patricia McAleer,
Mount Prospect, Illinois

College: Holy Cross College, B.A., 2011

Graduate Study: Notre Dame, M.Div.,
2017

Entered Formation: 2009, Old College

First Vows: Aug. 3, 2013

Final Vows: Sept. 15, 2017

Deacon Placement: Campus
Ministry, King's College, Wilkes-Barre,
Pennsylvania, and Holy Family Parish,
Luzerne, Pennsylvania

The diversity of ministry assignments I have had over the years has truly sent me across borders of every sort. I have had to make myself home among more than one people, but everywhere I have gone it has been within the context of Holy Cross, therefore, it has felt like home. I know that my life as a priest will take me to places and within circumstances that are out of my comfort zone, but I do so as a Holy Cross religious and one who believes that no culture of this world can be my abiding home and that I must make friends and a home wherever I find myself.

— Fr. Brendan McAleer, C.S.C.



Deacon Tim Weed, C.S.C., preaches on Moreau Day in the Chapel of Christ the Teacher on the campus of the University of Portland.

Photo by Bob Kerns

Becoming a Bearer of The Light

Rev. Timothy Weed, C.S.C.

“We walk by Easter’s first light, and it makes us long for its fullness.” (Constitution &119)

When I first entered the seminary with Holy Cross, I had in mind a religious order of educators as teachers in the strict sense of the term ‘teacher.’ We taught and worked at schools, and, while that is certainly true, there is so much more to being an ‘educator in the faith.’ We are men with hope to bring because our lives are lived out as educators. Regardless of being a teacher, everything that we do as Holy Cross religious should help people grow in knowledge of the faith, of God, and of their own role in the Church. We make God known, loved, and served through our daily work of witnessing with our lives to the vows that we have made. Part of my own role at the University of Portland as a deacon was to help students become aware of their own role in the Church, to help them grow in prayer and in worship of the Lord. It is a constant source of education and growth, and it impacts me as well as them. By being ‘educators in the faith,’ we also continue to grow in our own faith, our own relationship with Jesus Christ.

The thing that excites me most about ministry in Holy Cross is that there is no limit to what we can pursue. We have excellent institutions and parishes, along with organizations that allow us to directly reach out to those living in poverty or struggling with resources. I have no idea what the future has in store for me, but I know that it is all good and valuable work in the name of the Church. Right now I am enjoying ministry on campus, living in a dorm, walking through the college journey with students. It is exciting to work with young people as they grow

in their faith and come to know Jesus Christ. It will be a challenge to let that go someday, moving on to another assignment. Part of being an effective minister is investing in the people to whom you minister, and that makes letting go quite difficult. This links back to the need for strong community, allowing you to move from one ministerial experience to another.

Still, I could not live this vocation without community life. I have found community life to be an enriching and strengthening experience for me. While there are certainly challenges in living in community, there is also the opportunity to grow in relationship with other men who seek to live their lives faithfully in Holy Cross. Community life in Holy Cross, especially the camaraderie and familial spirit, has been wonderful. Each Holy Cross religious brings something unique to the table when it comes to community. Whether they are a priest or a brother, we are all Holy Cross, and it is by living in that common life, that shared vision, that we so strongly resemble what Fr. Moreau envisioned.

The best advice that I can give to those discerning a vocation is, ‘don’t over think it!’ God works on our hearts slowly; and while, yes - inspiration can come in a flash - discerning one’s vocation in life is the matter of a long time; not snap decisions. It’s best to take a decision and sit with it - allowing God to speak to you; and, when you think that it’s appropriate, to finally act on that decision. Action is also necessary because otherwise you will get caught up in indecision, and no one likes that!



REV. TIMOTHY WEED C.S.C.

Born: October 28, 1984

Parents: Robert Weed and the late Mary Weed, and stepmother DeAnna Pierce, Grand Rapids, Michigan

College: Aquinas College, B.S., 2007

Graduate Study: Notre Dame, M.Div., 2017

Entered Formation: 2011, Postulant

First Vows: Aug. 3, 2013

Final Vows: Sept. 15, 2017

Deacon Placement: University of Portland, Campus Ministry and in Residence at Shipstad Hall, Portland, Oregon

“We walk by Easter’s first light, and it makes us long for its fullness.” This line has always been my favorite from the Constitutions because it is a reminder of who we are and what we do. Yes, we proclaim the Cross as our Hope, but the Cross is our only Hope because of Easter. We live in a world bathed in the first light of the Resurrection, and to lose sight of that means that we live in the despair that the Cross without the Resurrection would mean. Easter is everything for us, and it is our role in Holy Cross to be bearers of the light of Easter.

— Fr. Tim Weed, C.S.C.



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Office of Vocations

P.O. Box 541

Notre Dame, IN 46556

(574) 631-6385

vocations@holycrossusa.org

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Front Cover Photo: Rev. Brendan McAleer, C.S.C., Rev. Timothy Weed, C.S.C., and Rev. Christopher Brennan, C.S.C., on the front steps of the Basilica of the Sacred Heart after their Ordination Mass.

Back Cover Photo: Deacons Timothy Weed, C.S.C., Brendan McAleer, C.S.C., and Christopher Brennan, C.S.C., with Bishop Kevin Rhoades at their Diaconate Ordination Mass.