

Recipes for the Soul ...

One of my favorite treats as a kid was homemade hot chocolate. After spending a crisp fall afternoon outside playing, we would come inside and relish the warmth of the kitchen and the smell of dinner in the oven. If we were lucky, Dad would warm up a pan of milk on the stove and mix in the Bosco Chocolate Syrup. (I had never heard of Hershey's syrup and still wonder at its awkward can for pouring.) No marshmallows for us! Dad would top our steaming mugs with a spoon of Fluff Marshmallow Cream which would seal across the top of the mug and make the whole treat even more delicious.

While I don't drink a lot of hot chocolate anymore, I still have a hankering for it on an autumn afternoon. However recently, I have taken to Mexican Hot Chocolate. Same chocolatey goodness with cinnamon and chili pepper for a little kick. Every Mexican grandmother has her own variation, but this recipe is pretty good.

Ingredients to make 4 Servings:

- 3 cups whole milk
- 3 tablespoons crushed cinnamon sticks
- 6 ounces semisweet chocolate, finely chopped
- 3 tablespoons superfine sugar
- 3/4 teaspoon vanilla extract
- Pinch of kosher salt
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cayenne pepper
- Lightly sweetened whipped cream

Preparation:

Bring milk and cinnamon to a simmer in a medium saucepan over medium-low heat, whisking occasionally and making sure milk doesn't boil, until cinnamon is floral and fragrant, about 10 minutes. Whisk in chocolate, sugar, vanilla, salt, and 1/4 tsp. ground cayenne and cook, whisking frequently, until mixture is smooth and creamy and chocolate is melted, about 5 minutes.

Divide hot chocolate among mugs. Top with whipped cream and dust with cocoa powder.

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Dear Friends of Holy Cross,

The Holy Cross community at Notre Dame was recently blessed when the General Administration of the Marianites of Holy Cross came for dinner. These MSCs are the original branch of the sisters founded by Fr. Moreau and they are located principally in France and New Orleans. It was wonderful to connect with new acquaintances and reconnect with old friends for a few hours. During our time together, it was easy to see that our two congregations - though very different - share the charism of our founder Fr. Moreau. We are truly separate branches on the same tree, each bringing a familial spirit wherever we go, an unreserved trust that we are guided by Divine Providence, and true hope in the promises of Christ.

These past weeks have brought untold suffering to our country and neighboring countries through various kinds of natural disasters. The three hurricanes that struck Texas, Louisiana, Florida, Puerto Rico and the rest of the Caribbean left wide swaths of damage on an unprecedented scale. The earthquakes in Mexico and the wildfires in the American West have also brought devastation to their regions and changed lives forever. In this month of October, let us ask Our Lady to intercede for us and for our brothers and sisters who are hurting.

NOVEMBER PRAYERS

As we have been doing all these years, we men of Holy Cross will be remembering not only our own beloved dead, but yours as well.

If you wish, jot down the names of those you would like us to remember on the enclosed prayer sheet. They will be placed by the altar at Moreau Seminary throughout the month of November.

No offering is required, but any gift that is included will be used for the needs of Holy Cross.

On September 15, the Solemnity of Our Lady of Sorrows, the patroness of the Congregation, we celebrated the perpetual profession of three of our men. **Deacons Chris Brennan, C.S.C., Brendan McAleer, C.S.C., and Tim Weed, C.S.C.**, each offered "his life and his life's work in the service of the Lord for the needs of the church and the world" according to the Constitutions of the Congregation of Holy Cross. The next day, they were all ordained deacons by Bishop Kevin Rhodes of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend. Chris and Brendan started in our college program and Tim joined us after several years of work after college. Chris is serving as a deacon at Holy Redeemer Parish in Portland, Oregon, Brendan is in Campus Ministry at King's College in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, and Tim is in Campus Ministry at the University of Portland in Oregon.

The past few weeks brought the deaths of three priests who were beloved on their respective campuses. **Fr. Don McNeill, C.S.C.**, (August 24) founded the Center for Social Concerns at Notre Dame and spent his life advancing the social gospel. **Fr. Tom Halkovic, C.S.C.**, (September 9) was a longtime campus minister at Stonehill College who loved preaching and leading retreats for students. He officiated many weddings of Stonehill graduates over the years. A Notre Dame rector in the 1970's, **Fr.**

John "Moose" Mulcahy, C.S.C., (September 21) spent many years administering a remote adventure camp in Canada. Please pray for the repose of the souls of these priests of God.

As the leaves display themselves in a vibrant array of colors, may you been filled with the richness of God's blessing this fall season.

LET US NOT FORGET THEM IN DEATH

I took the last photo that I have of my mother the day before she died. She would absolutely hate it. The nurses had combed her usually perfectly coiffed hair straight back and her face betrayed the signs of one in constant pain. She was unconscious and bore little resemblance to the gentle, smiling woman I knew most of my life. But it's my mother and this was part of her life, too.

My sister had called me on a Thursday in late January to tell me to come quickly, that Mom was failing fast. I had last seen her in October when I was able to spend Fall Break with my parents. The intervening months were caught up in switching jobs and moving from Oregon to Indiana in order to be closer to them. In November, Mom - who was living with advanced Alzheimer's - fell and an otherwise physically healthy woman began to slip fast. She was in great pain, but was unable to help her doctors figure out what was wrong. Apparently, simply saying "Ow!" a lot is of little use in the diagnostic phase. In the succeeding weeks, she became more withdrawn and began to wither. She stopped speaking in early January and her pain was evident. A week or so before I received my phone call, she left consciousness entirely.

Though I was able to get a flight that day, I didn't think that I was going to get home in time to see Mom alive. God was good and I spent the next four days at her bedside, praying with her, telling stories with my brothers and sisters, and being genuinely amazed that she was still able to hang on. Incredibly, she was still alive when I left four days later and the greatest blessing of all was that final hour I spent with her as I told her of my love for her and my appreciation of all that she had done for me. I cannot imagine having missed this opportunity to be with her at the end. It was a blessing to sit with her, and even more so, to be her son. She could be quiet, shy, feisty, and fiercely protective of her own, but most of all she was my Mom.

We will soon begin the month of November by celebrating All Saint's Day followed immediately by All Soul's Day. We will take time across the month to remember in a special way all who have died and gone before us, family members and friends, those lost in tragedies and war, those who fell asleep silently in their beds, those who died unexpectedly, those who suffered long and excruciating illnesses. We will remember those whose memory make our hearts ache with longing and

those whose deaths were noticed by no one at all. And we will remember them, not to be morbid and to fixate on death, but to pray for their well-being and to celebrate our oneness with them in the life eternal.



Until the 1960s, Holy Cross religious made a monthly retreat and, during that day of recollection, were supposed to spend some time meditating on their own deaths. They used, as the basis of their reflection each month, one of two meditations written by Fr. Moreau. To modern sensibilities, they can seem dark and not a little macabre. However, upon closer inspection, the meditations are about life: our life on earth and how we live it, and our life in heaven (all with just a hint of 19th century macabre for flavor).

The first meditation begins without artifice,

"I shall die! That is to say, I shall leave everything without exception. I shall leave my parents, my friends, my brethren; I shall bid them an eternal farewell. I shall leave my room, my books, whatever I use. I shall leave absolutely everything. To what things do I attach most importance? I shall leave them also... Alas, what folly it is to love anything so transient. I have had much trouble to acquire these things, and yet I must abandon them all."

I shall die. It is a basic point of fact that we often spend so much of our lives and effort trying to deny. But it is a fact of life that is unavoidable - death is a fundamental stage in the journey of life. We Christians also believe that it is not the end of life, but a transition point to something different, something potentially far better.

This point is summarized so beautifully in the preface for Christian Death I in the Roman Missal. There, in the introduction to the Eucharistic Prayer, we pray,

"In Christ, the hope of blessed resurrection has dawned, that those saddened by the certainty of dying, might be consoled by the promise of immortality to come.

Indeed, for your faithful, Lord, life is changed not ended,

and, when this earthly dwelling turns to dust, an eternal dwelling is made ready for them in heaven."

Our lives are changed at death, not ended. This meditation calls us to reflect on what we spend our lives concerned about, where and in what we place our love, our trust, and our hope. If it is in anything short of the eternal, we are misdirecting our concerns and our energies.

In that first meditation, Fr. Moreau goes on to discuss the earthly end of our mortal bodies (somewhat dark to say the least), the uncertainty of the timing of our death, and our ultimate trial before the judgment seat of heaven. If that moment is a moment of transition into an eternal life that is a chosen through the decisions and actions we make here on earth, why do we spend so much energy and effort on watches, clothes, homes, and other transitory possessions in this life which can only serve us but a short while?

The second meditation begins with a review of our past. "The dead past," Moreau writes,

"is a corpse scarred by many sins. The thoughts that have soiled our minds, the desires that have stained our wills, the words that have sullied our lips, the evil actions that we have done and the good that we have failed to do - all these arise to accuse us."

Moreau calls us to penance for these past sins and omissions so that we can turn toward today with a cleansed heart and soul. "If every moment of today were well spent, we would always be prepared for death." He goes on to remind us that, "As you live so shall you die. A holy life is the best preparation for a holy death." If we strive to live such holy lives, we can face the future with high hopes and expectations, confidently entrusting ourselves into the loving hands of God. We embrace this life freely trusting that all will be well when our time on this earth draws to an end. Ultimately, we can come to a place where we accept death and even welcome it with joy as the will of God. We come to know it as release from the bondage and sorrow and suffering of this life. In it, we are set free from exile and are welcomed home to the place from which we came. In embracing the reality of death, we don't grow to hate this world but come to

understand it for what it really is - a stop on our journey home.

When Mom lay dying, her suffering was palpable. Somewhere in her body something was very wrong and was causing her great pain. Though on a constant morphine drip, she needed an extra dose just to turn her every two hours. As I sat with her that last morning, I prayed for our friend death to come and take her from this misery. I longed for her suffering to end and for the rest of her life to begin. It was easy to do so, because I firmly believe that the souls of the just are in the hands of God.

Mom hung on another day and passed away at lunch time Tuesday, February 4th. I took the call from my sister and walked slowly to the chapel to pray. I cried a little for my Dad, and my family, and for me. My sister says that Dad sobbed for about five minutes when they told him, then he looked up, smiled, wiped his eyes, and said, "This is great. She's okay now." A few days later we prayed for the repose of her soul as we celebrated her life at her funeral. These days, I look at lots of pictures of Mom, mostly candid shots that capture her smile or that impish look in her eye. But I return time and again to that photo from our last visit. For that was part of her life as well.



We pray for the dead in November, that any lingering effects of their sins in this life may be wiped clean so that they may spend eternity at the banquet feast of heaven. We pray in the sure and certain hope of eternal life for those who believe. Our prayers reflect the unity of the Body of Christ and the knowledge that we are still one with those who have passed.

Let us always remember those who raised us, formed us, and guided us in this world. Let us remember our personal saints, as well as those who struggled with virtue and goodness in this life, that all may come to the glory of eternal life. As St. Ambrose reminds us, "We have loved them in this life, let us not forget them in death." May they rest in peace.