

David Rae

Getting to study philosophy and theology at Notre Dame has been incredible. My classes were amazing but I wanted to get more involved outside the classroom as well and do research. I went to Fr. Kevin Grove and he told me about a project he was working on: a book presenting Blessed Basil Moreau's spiritual exercises. Moreau adapted St. Ignatius's spiritual exercises to create ones more accessible and tailored to the retreatants as they seek to unite themselves to Christ. Moreau's exercises have served a key role in the Congregation of Holy Cross since its founding as they have been prayed by all novitiates and priests of Holy Cross for over 150 years.

Fr. Grove told me that the work of the research would be in the citation section of the book. Moreau was very learned and used a plethora of sources of knowledge to make these exercises. One job to be done was to check the many times where Moreau is building off of Scripture or Ignatius's exercises. While this may at first seem tedious, it highlighted to me Moreau's special talent of filling his text with the word of God and the wisdom of Ignatius in a way that brings it all together.

The next job was to search for the unknown citations. Often Moreau would make a semi-obscure reference to his source, but a century and a half later that source is not so easy to find. Sitting at the computers on the second floor of Hesburgh, I got to work using OneSearch and google books. For some citations, this worked great. Moreau describes how "the purity of Joseph seemed so great in the eyes of a learned commentator of the gospel that he compared Joseph's virginity to that of the angels and was not afraid to call him the king of virgins." Giving Joseph the title of king of virgins is very rare, which combining that with the comparison to angels helped me find a 1634 source where Fr. Janquinot describes Joseph in just that way. Other

results from OneSearch sent me exploring through all floors of Hesburgh, finding physical copies of sources like Peter Damian.

The highlight of my research experience was on a citation where Moreau exhorts the retreatant to remain faithful “to the three ejaculatory invocations.” The citation on this read “Many are the possible aspiration prayers here. Moreau might have been referencing prayers found in a directory, informal rule, or novitiate practice. These three precise aspirations are lost to us.” Two hours on google later and I was nowhere. Luckily, I was not doing this alone. I went back to Fr. Grove and he proposed look at the directory, or little book of prayers, for the Congregation of Holy Cross. OneSearch revealed that Hesburgh Library actually had one of those from 1879 on the 6th floor. So I walked over and went up to the 6th floor of the library and stepping out of the elevator I immediately realized this was unlike any of the other floors I had had the pleasure of digging through myself. I walked through to the area of desks and spoke to one of the only people there as I did not know where BX 1999 .A32 C62 was, only to come to learn that I was in the university archives which works a little differently than the other floors. I had missed the little detail on the OneSearch page that said “Non-Circulating.” It turns out such an old book was stored off-site. Fortunately the person I went up to ask was super helpful and kind through this process. This person was Joe Smith. I cannot overstate how thankful I am for continued help and advice throughout this search. Once the book was on site, I got to look through it. It was entirely in French, a language I know zero words in but through praying and the help of google translate I stumbled upon the words “Priore Jaculatoire.” Here they were. It was as if I had been transported in time looking at the same prayers that a 19th century CSC novitiate would have gone to pray after reading Moreau. With the help of the amazing team at

the Notre Dame library, the three aspirations were no longer lost to history. Future generations of Holy Cross priests and others could now more closely follow in the footsteps of Blessed Moreau.

Not all the searches were great successes. My white whale is Moreau's reference to a "passage of the holy Gerson." After hours of searching on google, the only thing I found was that Joannis Gerson refers to the same person as Jean Gerson. Then I found out that the library had a book of Gerson's early works. I checked it out and the citations of that book referenced a writing of his speaking against a over-scrupulous conscience. The passage Moreau refers to speaks about trusting in your absolution and scoffing at insecurities about past sins so I had high hopes. Unfortunately this tract of Gerson's does not exist online. Luckily Notre Dame's medieval institute has many volumes of his works collected into volumes of "Omnia Opera". Searching through the tables of contents, I find the exact work in Latin. Excited and anxious I flip through the page and start reading through.

"Failure" or "success"? Using the library's resources often felt like these were the only outcomes. Either I found the source I was hoping for or I failed. While I did not find the source Moreau was referencing, I realized that this was not a failure. Getting to read a master's writing is an incredibly valuable and enriching experience. I would never have been able to contribute to the scholarship of Moreau if it was not for the vast sea of wisdom that Hesburgh library contains, the incredible Hesburgh staff to help lead you through it, and the amazing professors like Fr. Grove to sail through it with you.