



SUPERIOR GENERAL
CONGREGATION OF THE
PRIESTS OF THE SACRED HEART
Dehonians

Prot. N. 02082020

Roma, June 5, 2020

“Through you”

*Letter for the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus,
June 19, 2020*

*To the members of the Congregation
To all the Members of the Dehonian Family*

The solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus comes preceded by months that have left a cluster of suffering, worries and uncertainty. Personally, in communities and families this unexpected period has allowed us more personal time to pray, think and become more aware of the weaknesses and strengths of our time. This was also done by Fr. Dehon during his prolonged confinement during World War I and throughout his life. For this reason “he was aware of social evils; he had carefully studied their human causes, both individual and social” (Cst 4). His testimony urges us not to stay on the surface of events and, even less, to remain indifferent.

All of us have given more thought to the adversities that harm life, be it this pandemic that we are now experiencing or so many other situations with which we have unfortunately grown familiar (hunger, racism, violence, the drama of those who are forced to emigrate, and a long list of others). We have to react. Not doing so would be inhumane and it would not be Christian: “Our lack of response to these tragedies involving our brothers and sisters points to the loss of that sense of responsibility for our fellow men and women upon which all civil society is founded.”¹ There is no doubt: our world still needs love and reparation.

Our Founder realistically assumed his responsibility for the evils of his time: “The reform of society requires multiple and persistent efforts. More than one instrument is needed: prayer, study, and action.”² His enthusiastic commitment was born from the best possible inspiration: “the open Side and the pierced Heart of the Savior” (Cst 2). There he contemplated the boundless solidarity of Jesus with humanity in obedience to the Father (cf. Cst 10). There he

¹ Papa Francisco, *Laudato si'*, 25.

² « La réforme de la société exige des efforts multiples et persévérants. Il y faut plus d'un instrument: la prière, l'étude, l'action ». REV 8031040, 1897.

understood that this world has deep wounds and that only Love will heal it. In the words of Leo XIII: *“The cult of the Sacred Heart was predestined by God to heal the wounds of modern society and above all, the selfishness which destroys all the bonds of social life [...]; the desired salvation must be the fruit of a great outpouring of charity and this charity has its source in the divine Heart of the Redeemer.”*³

It is a dynamic that requires permanent conversion and “a progressive liberation from egoism” (Cst 95). It is the path of discipleship. This is how Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque lived, whose centenary of canonization we celebrate: *“If up to the present you have only taken the name of my slave, I now give you the name of much-loved disciple of my Sacred Heart.”*⁴ In this way the permanent longing of God for his people was updated in her life: to leave behind all slavery to walk with the Lord. It is the way of the Heart that transforms life to make it a living echo of the Gospel: *“My divine Heart is so wrought with love for men and in especial for you, that it can no longer contain the flame of the fire of its love but must spread this flame **through you** and manifest itself to men to enrich them with its precious treasures: these I show you.”*⁵

Through her fragility and smallness, Jesus confirmed the joy that he offers to those he calls. So it was with the walkers who, despite not having recognized the Lord, were able to welcome him and resume discipleship: they listened beyond themselves, they shared the bread, they learned to discern together – *“Were not our hearts burning within us?”* – and they announced the good news (cf. Lk 24,13-35). A whole dynamism of life! We too, contemplating the same Heart, “are called to enter into this movement of redemptive love” (Cst 21) uniting ourselves to the surrender of the Son to the Father, open to the action of the Spirit, so that the world may have life. It is an opportune time to renew our discipleship. What does the Lord ask of us today? What is he offering us from the inexhaustible treasure that is his Heart? What should we contemplate, welcome, live and share with greater attention in our own lives, in our communities, in our families and in the apostolate that we develop?

Despite the imposed social distancing, we remain close in prayer and in so many forms of communion and solidarity. We need each other. We have experienced mourning up close, especially in some Entities of the Congregation. However, we know that we cannot stay in grief or allow a crippling “what's going to happen?” leave us adrift. Everything we are living is a Holy Saturday experience like the one that Fr. Dehon meditated upon to understand, thanks to Mary, John, Mary Magdalene and the holy women, how to live that day as a prelude to new life: *“Mourning, compassion and love, these are the dispositions that today I must deeply assimilate to fulfill my mission as a disciple of the Sacred Heart”*. Gratefully, he recognizes in

³ « *Le culte du Sacré Cœur a été prédestiné par Dieu même pour guérir les plaies de la société moderne et particulièrement l'égoïsme qui détruit tous les liens de la vie sociale [...]; le salut désiré doit être le fruit d'une grande effusion de charité et cette charité a sa source dans le Cœur divin du Rédempteur* ». CHR 1894.

⁴ Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque, *Autobiography*, (December 27, 1673, first revelation).

⁵ *Ibidem*.

them “*our models today of compassion and reparation. They are the only faithful friends of the Heart of Jesus. I will join them today and always.*”⁶

Let us also give thanks to God for so many men and women, old and young, who are daily models **through** whom God continues to make us know the richness of his Heart and become more passionate about his Kingdom. Do we recognize them among us, in our community, in family, in our places of life and apostolate? This year we invite you, in each community to find on the journey of the Heart of Jesus the way to express your gratitude to these specific people. Without their intending to, they encourage us with their testimonies to live with passion the path of love and reparation to which the open Heart of Jesus, who loves us so much, calls us to walk.

In Him, fraternally,

Fr. Carlos Luis Suárez Codorniú, scj
Superior General
and Council

⁶ « *Deuil, compassion et amour, telles sont les dispositions dont je dois me pénétrer aujourd’hui pour remplir ma mission de disciple du Sacré Cœur [...] ; nos modèles dans cette journée de compassion et de réparation. Ils sont les seuls amis fidèles du Cœur de Jésus. Je m’unirai à eux aujourd’hui et tous les jours* ». ASC 3.