



SUPERIOR GENERAL  
CONGREGATION OF THE  
PRIESTS OF THE SACRED HEART  
Dehonians

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Caracas, December 1, 2019

*To all the members of the Dehonian Family*

Letter for Christmas 2019

## **“Let us not be scandalized by the manger!”**

Dear confreres and all members of the Dehonian Family,

One of the first general assistants of Fr. León Dehon, Fr. Alfonso María Rasset, expressed this about the season:

*“At Christmas, let us be born with Jesus, let us be children, poor, humble, suffering; Let us not be scandalized by the manger.”<sup>1</sup>*

“Let us not be scandalized by the manger!” What a beautiful exhortation! In some ways it can be understood as a call not to give up on the contemplation of the gift that has been given to us: Jesus. On the other hand, it can also be a provocation so that all that He teaches us with his Life and his Word, in his constant love for the will of the Father, is received and lived without reservation.

The closeness of Christmas invites us to delve into the scandalous and surprising ways of God. This is how Mary, Joseph, Elizabeth, Zachariah, the shepherds, the Wise Men of the East and many others lived. How good that we can also recognize God's passage through our lives, through our communities and through the lives of so many people with whom we share our mission daily! This time of the year is a good opportunity to stop, give thanks and recognize the work of a gracious God among us.

Looking at the life of the Congregation, I want to share three events that can be read in association with what we celebrate this time of the year. In each, there is both scandal and surprise, but above all a strong sense of God's gift.

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<sup>1</sup> “Pour Noël, naissons avec Jésus, soyons des enfants, pauvres, humbles, souffrants, ne nous scandalisons pas de la crèche”. P. Léon Dehon, *Un prêtre du Sacré Cœur. Vie édifiante du Révérend Père Alphonse-Marie Rasset*, 342.

First, I point out the memory of Fr. Nicola Martino Capelli. At the beginning of October, we remembered that seventy-five years ago Martino made his life a pleasing offering to God. In times of great darkness, our brother did not cease to be guided by faith and the vocation he had received. In spite of the danger he faced, he attended to those who suffered the most in the mountains of Monte Sole, in the region of the Italian Apennines: women, elderly and children seized by violence. In them, he found the aching face of Christ. In spite of such cruelty and dehumanization, Martino, in a true spirit of reparation, did not let his heart be snatched away by hatred or give up in the search for peace and reconciliation and approached everyone. He was not guided by any light contrary to that of the Heart of Christ, which he loved so much. Martino was not scandalized by the manger. He was executed for his faithfulness to his religious consecration. His great desire was to be a missionary in China, which he would never realize. He had another path: that of Jesus. As the Wise Men of the East who went to Bethlehem following a star, Martino took the best path: he allowed himself be guided by the light of the Gospel. Thus, our brother, becoming a friend and servant of all, met the Prince of Peace forever.

Secondly, I highlight the Meeting of the Superiors of the Entities of our Congregation held in Rome in November. During those days, we had the opportunity to listen, pray and reflect together. These were days that helped us to get to know each other better, and to feel, above all, more as one body in the always challenging vocation of living the *Sint unum*. Day after day, we confirmed our call and the desire to continue making the way of Jesus our way: "*His way is our way*" (Cst 12). We are aware that we have to continue adjusting our steps and refining our eyes to better recognize the path that the Master is showing us. We have to grow closer to one another. We know that we will not achieve this without distancing ourselves from our own interests and projects. The desire is great, but we have to continue concretizing it. We must trust each other more. Therefore, during those days we felt like the shepherds who, on that holy night, encouraged each other to go to Bethlehem to undertake a path that would lead them to the Child in order to worship him. They did it, and they did it together, because they trusted in the things of God. That is the message we have to give ourselves, to tell ourselves every day, again and again: Let us go out to meet him! We do so when we feed on the living mystery of God in the Eucharist, when we worship him in our communities, when we revere him in our brothers and when we serve him in so many faces, especially those of the poorest and most afflicted.

Third, and finally, I thank God for the gift of our brothers who just a few months ago renewed the generous "yes" they proclaimed on the day of their religious profession. On this occasion, their "yes" opens the way for the Congregation in Colombia, on the outskirts of the city of Bogotá. They are companions from Argentina, Brazil, Indonesia and the Philippines, and will have special support from our brothers from Ecuador and Spain. Each of them, in discernment with their Entities of origin, sets aside their commitments and ordinary life to undertake and share a new mission. All of them will come as humble disciples who have much to learn, but will also come with the desire to share their vocation of Love and Reparation in a land needing peace and reconciliation. Like Mary and Joseph, these colleagues of ours have been startled by a proposal that took them away from their plans and normal daily lives. However, they have

recognized in all this the call of God's gracious Spirit and have welcomed it with faith and hope in the desire to contribute, from small and fragile first steps, to the mission of the Church of living and proclaiming the Gospel.

Dear friends, surely we can add many other events to these three. It would be great if you also make time in each community to share this year's other occasions and experiences where a special closeness of God in your midst can be recognized.

Together with the whole General Council and the members of the General Curia I wish you a very merry Christmas; may the mystery of Bethlehem not scandalize us and continue encouraging us on the path of life and service we wish to continue walking in the next new year.

Fraternally, *in Corde Iesu*,

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