



SUPERIOR GENERAL
CONGREGATION OF THE
PRIESTS OF THE SACRED HEART
Dehonians

Prot. N. 0048/2020

Ho Chi Minh, March 3, 2020

Change Perspective for a Better View

*Letter for March 14,
on the anniversary of the birth of Fr. Leo John Dehon*

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

We have been trying for some years to make the most of the so-called “Dehonian places” of the Congregation, especially La Capelle, where our Founder was born; Saint-Quentin, where he started his religious life, and Brussels, the witness of the last years of his life. Currently, the community of La Capelle is engaged in parish ministry and welcoming those who wish to visit the Dehon family home. The community of Brussels keeps the missionary memory alive, as well as continuing pastoral collaboration and academic commitment so dear to our Founder. Saint-Quentin, for its part, in addition to watching the tomb of Fr. Dehon, also carries out an intense apostolic activity.

Right here in January, the Francophone European Province (EUF) experienced a very simple act because of the collaborative agreement between the Province and an organization that helps people with housing difficulties. In our Church of Saint Martin we celebrated the Eucharist with Mons. Renauld de Dinechin, Bishop of Soissons, Laon and Saint-Quentin. He showed his appreciation for Fr. Dehon and for the Priests of the Sacred Heart whom he has come to know.

One of these is Bernard Masséra, who knows very well what the Founder has done in this region. He has just celebrated 50 years of religious life. I had the opportunity to walk with him to some Dehonian places in the city. While showing me the majestic Basilica of Saint-Quentin, where Fr. Dehon was a parish vicar, he also told me about his life: “*Do you know? I also worked here ... repairing the roof!*” A Blue-collar worker in high-altitude jobs! Without a doubt, it is a unique way to see the basilica, the environment and one's vocation.

He, like many others confreres, knew the period of nonconformism, including the protests, which arose from the desire to change both society and the Church. The concerns of many Catholics of that period, inspired by the voice of Vatican Council II, resulted, in many concrete

actions. Some succeeded and some failed. In an era which had many contradictions and conflicts, the beauty of those who lived the newness and hope of that time was their willingness to listen and dialogue.

Today, remembering both Fr. Dehon's birth and the day of prayer for the Dehonian vocations, Bernard's sharing about his religious life as a worker on the roof reminded me of a mandate from Jesus: "*What you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops*" (Mt 10,27). Isn't this a request from the Master to his disciples to change their perspective? It seems to be a clear invitation to move, to be willing to come out into the open – onto the roof! - where you have few defenses, but most importantly, the vision is clear!

Our confrere climbed to the roof, the tallest in the city, not to be seen, as we see an artist who goes on stage. He did it to share his faith with others, with the desire to relive in some way the ever-present sensitivity in Fr. Dehon: "*Carrying out the ordinary functions of the sacred ministry in a peaceful way is not enough. We must go in search of souls. We must strive to conquer the men and especially those of the largest class, the workers. Have we really started?*"¹

In the legacy left to us by Fr. Dehon, with the limits of each person and culture, we can recognize a genuine "school of perspective". He found the best patrimony: the Heart of Christ! With Him he learned to love the Father's plan and to go out of himself to observe the Church and the society of his time with authentic passion. This was how Fr. Dehon, rooted in the most cordial of possible perspectives, discovered a horizon of faces to love and repair. However, this interior and apostolic dynamics that characterized him was not improvised. It was the result of intense research and continuous discernment that characterized his life: "*It is a state of mind that must form in us, a disposition to go to the men, to the people, with all the means available*"².

The memory of our Founder pushes us to deal with this "*state of mind that must form in us*" (DRD 16/7). Throughout his life we learn that, from beginning to the end, it is a question of disposing ourselves to the reception of divine action in a permanent way: "*Cor Iesu, quid me vis facere? Heart of Jesus, what do you want me to do?*" (NHV 5/2). Only with questions like this does personal and community existence manage to maintain itself in the fruitful dynamic of the Spirit, who continues to present in our different "here and now" so many realities to love and so many situations where we can share our reparative vocation: "*Have we loved contemporary society enough not to maintain an attitude of discontentment?*"³

Blessed be the Lord for the gift of Fr. Dehon's life, the passionate witness of the Heart of Christ. We give thanks for the gift of vocations, which inspired by him continue to actualize the charism we have received with creative generosity. Let them not be lacking, Lord! And may this

¹ "*Remplir paisiblement les fonctions ordinaires du saint ministère ne suffit plus. Il faut aller à la recherche des âmes. Il faut s'efforcer de gagner les hommes et surtout la classe la plus nombreuse, les ouvriers. Avons-nous vraiment commencé?*" (DRD 16/7).

² "*C'est un état d'âme qu'il faut former en nous, une disposition à aller aux hommes, au peuple, par tous les moyens favorables*" (DRD 16/7).

³ "*Avons-nous assez aimé la société contemporaine, pour ne pas garder vis-à-vis d'elle une attitude de bouderie ?*" (DRD 16/7).

call that we share keep us restless and decentralized with respect to what is not the search for the best perspective: the Gospel, because “*the Heart of Jesus, the love of Jesus, is the whole Gospel*”⁴.

In Corde Iesu,

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

⁴ “*Le Cœur de Jésus, l’amour de Jésus, c’est tout l’Évangile*” (ESC 1/193).