



MEETING OF THE DEHONIAN BISHOPS

A MESSAGE OF THE BISHOPS TO THEIR CONFRERES

Dear confreres,

we, the SCJ Bishops, having been invited by the General Administration of the Congregation, gathered in Rome from the 18 to 23 January 2018, to reflect on the theme: *“The challenges of evangelization from Vatican II to Evangelii Gaudium and Laudato si.”*

It was a great joy to meet with the Bishops that came from various parts of the world, given that in our dioceses we serve the Church in the light of the Dehonian charism. Many of us were present at a similar meeting held in 2013.

Seeing the faces of the confreres, to have known their new and not so small challenges, listening to them talk about their hopes that animate them, helped us understand better the words of the psalmist: “Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity” (Psalm 132-133,1).

We feel very much united with our brother SCJ Bishops who could not make it to the meeting because of health reasons. We are with them in our prayer.

It was a lovely experience to stay in our generalate in the company of the General Administration and of the confreres who live in this house of the Congregation, either responsible for a certain service to the Institute or as student. We can, with simplicity and frankness, affirm that with them we felt at home.

Most importantly, we give thanks to God for the gift of the Congregation, which His Spirit gave birth to, through the charism and work of Fr. Leon Dehon. We are aware and are very grateful for the fruits that they gave to the Church and continue to raise in the hearts of men and women, consecrated brothers, priests and Bishops who let themselves be attracted by the Heart of Christ and avail themselves for service of the Kingdom.

As Bishops, we are aware that the journey taken by the Congregation has helped us to avail ourselves to serve the Church and the world in the mystery that has been given to us, with special attention to the poor and the excluded, as the expression of the Heart of Jesus, wounded by love for the weakest of humanity, wounded and sinful, where the plan of God grows and develops.

We started our meeting listening to reflections of the superior general, Fr. Heiner Wilmer, SCJ, who presented to us *“The challenges of Evangelization in times of change. Contributions of the Dehonian spirituality.”* After that we shared our experiences, particularly regarding *“The care of creation in the pastoral sphere; Pastoral challenges in the world of work; The relationship between the Church and Islam; The missionary spirituality; Evangelization of the youth; Confession of faith and social responsibility; the challenges of migration; Ecumenism and the inter-religious dialogue etc.*

Besides that, we listened to some theological presentations – *“Evangelization in the light of Vatican II,”* by Dr. Serena Noceti, and *“The ecclesiology in the pluralistic world – Contribution of the Dehonian charism,”* by Fr. Joseph Famarée, SCJ – which opened wide horizons for us.

Unforgettable moments were those of prayer. For many of us who live without having our confreres near us, it has been good to celebrate with them the liturgy of hours, participate at Eucharistic adoration and, particularly, to gather around the table of the Eucharist. How can we forget the visit to Loreto, the place where our founder visited three times? Loreto left in his heart profound and determined traces from which we benefited. The Eucharistic celebration in that Holy House was the highlight of our meeting. We left there with a renewed conviction that Mary of Nazareth, as Mother and Mistress, will continue to accompany our episcopal ministry with her motherly love.

We also had the joy of participating at the celebration of the Sunday mass at the Ascension Parish at the Quarticciolo in Rome. The hospitality of the confreres and the joy of the parishioners made us remember the innumerable parishes that are assisted by our Congregation, some of which, in the past, were left to our responsibility.

It is impossible to transmit in a few words what this meeting meant to us. However, know that we sincerely felt how much the Dehonian charism is alive in us, how grateful we are in our hearts towards Fr. Dehon, how we feel our belonging to his Congregation and how wonderful it was to meet the confreres.

We could not personally manifest our unity with Pope Francis, the Bishop of Rome, who leads us in love, simply because he was in Chile and Peru for his Apostolic visit. We surely carried him in our prayers and reflections. We feel deeply united with him in his ministry, in his gestures and words where we see the breath of the Spirit of God which guides the Church. In the apostolic communion with him, we feel, as pastors and Dehonians, the push to *go out of the sacristies* in order to be actively present in the world which is in need of illumination of faith, mercy in feeling and oblation in action.

In short, this meeting has been for us a moment of grace, which gave new life to:

- Our fraternal communion and our dedication to the episcopal ministry;
- Our communion with the whole Congregation and the sense of belonging thereto, happy to be sons of Fr. Dehon;
- Our love in feeling with the Church.
- Our Dehonian compassion for the world, reading the signs of times, looking for the seed of the Kingdom in actual cultural expressions.
- Our commitment to Evangelize in accord and in harmony with the proposal which Pope Francis makes to the whole Church.

To the Superior General of the Congregation, to the council and to the community of Rome, we offer our gratitude for the invitation to participate in this meeting and for the hospitality given. May the Lord enlighten them so that they can, with renewed dedication, continue with their mission. To the confreres of every country and continent, our communion. That the Heart of Jesus, the marvelous treasure, which Fr. Dehon left us, sustains us always.

Our blessings to all.

Aloysius Sudarso

Archbishop of Palembang, Indonesia

Claudio Dalla Zuanna

Archbishop, Beira of Mozambique

Murilo Sebastião Ramos Krieger

Archbishop of S. Salvador da Bahia, Brazil

Tomé Makhweliha

Archbishop Emeritus of Nampula, Mozambique

Wilson Tadeu Jönck

Archbishop of Florianópolis, Brazil

Adam Leszek Musiatek

Archbishop of De Aar, South Africa

André Vital Félix da Silva

Archbishop of Limoeiro do Norte, Brazil

António de Sousa Braga

Bishop Emeritus of Angra, Portugal

Antônio Wagner da Silva

Bishop of Guarapuava, Brazil

Carmo João Rhoden

Bishop Emeritus of Taubaté, Brazil

Elio Giovanni Greselin

Bishop Emeritus of Lichinga, Mozambique

Gaetano di Pierro

Bishop Emeritus of Moramanga, Madagascar

José Alfredo Caires de Nóbrega

Bishop of Mananjary, Madagascar

José Ornelas Carvalho

Bishop of Setúbal, Portugal

Józef Wróbel

Auxiliary Bishop of Lublin, Poland

Manuel Neto Quintas

Bishop of Faro, Portugal

Teemu Jyrki Juhani Sippo

Bishop of Helsinki, Finland

Vilsom Basso

Bishop of Imperatriz, Brazil

Virginio Domingo Bressanelli

Bishop Emeritus of Neuquén, Argentina

Vital Chitolina

Bishop of Diamantino, Brazil

Zolile Peter Mpambani

Bishop of Kokstad, South Africa

Rome, January 23, 2018