

« HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THE
MESSENGER WHO ANNOUNCES PEACE »

DEHONIAN MEMORIAL DAY | 2025

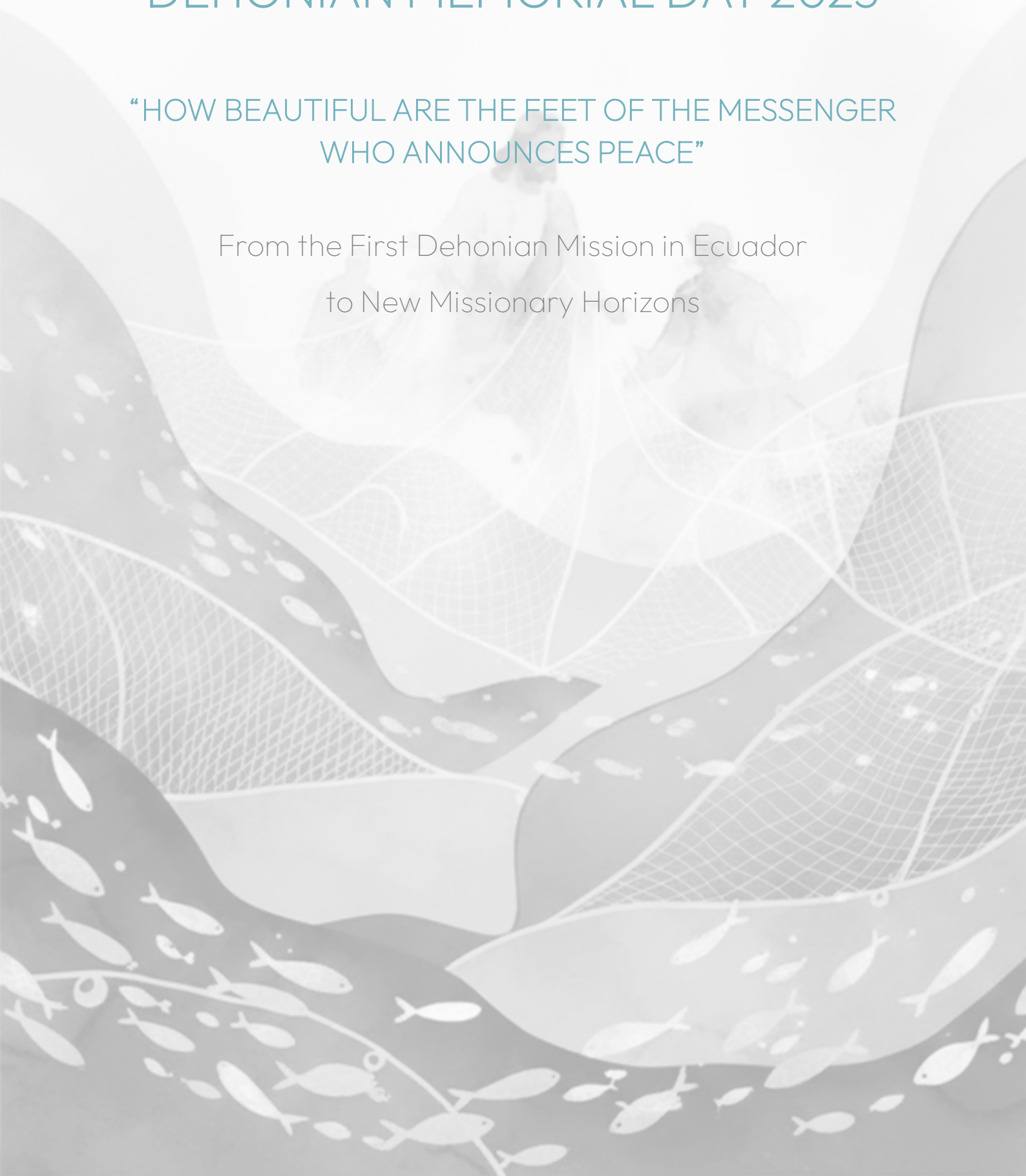
26 | NOV
2025



DEHONIAN MEMORIAL DAY 2025

“HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THE MESSENGER
WHO ANNOUNCES PEACE”

From the First Dehonian Mission in Ecuador
to New Missionary Horizons





I. INTRODUCTION: FR. DEHON, FISHING IN DEEP WATERS

OPENING MONITION

(L) Brothers and Sisters, we are gathered in this Dehonian Jubilee Year to remember our Founder, Fr. Leo John Dehon, and to renew our missionary vocation. When Fr. Dehon encouraged us to go out and fish on the deep waters, he wasn't speaking only of an apostolic action but of an attitude of the heart: to leave behind comfort zones, to trust in God's Providence, and to offer one's life in reparation and service.

This celebration invites us to contemplate the mystery of the Heart of Jesus and to renew our "yes" to his mission.

The miraculous catch in the Gospel is the image we choose as our guiding theme. It expresses a Christian paradox, the fruitfulness which is born from taking the risk. Setting out to sea implies leaving behind certainties, accepting vulnerability, and trusting in the One who provides. In this sense, we hope that this Dehonian Memorial Day be an act of gratitude and commitment.

Let us remember not only the history, but also the spirituality that made it possible: worship, oblation, and reparation.

OPENING PARYER

Lord, we have come to listen to you.
You have words of eternal life.
Just as you entered into Simon's boat,
enter also into the boat of our Congregation.
Once again, we come near to you
as we need to hear those firm words.
Full of strength and missionary spirit,
they came out from your heart and your lips,
to encourage us to renew our "Ecce venio":
"Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a
catch".

We have worked hard,
we continue to work hard,
and yet our nets are empty.
We don't want to become hopeless,
frustrated or discouraged.
Without you, we can do nothing.
The miraculous catch, this abundant fruit,
does not depend on us,
but on living united to you in love
and being obedient to your Word:
"Fiat"; we want to do what you tell us
and to go where you lead us.

Our world asks for signs,
like that of the miraculous catch of fish.
May your Spirit take away our fear
of going into deep waters.

May he accompany us
in showing the abundance
of life of your Kingdom.
As people of hope,
through the consecration of our life,
we ought to reveal our faith transformed into works of charity.
Amen.





II. PROPHETS OF LOVE: OUR PIONEERS IN ECUADOR

MONITION

- (L) The decision to send the first missionaries to Ecuador in 1888 was not an improvised act but the response to a call. Our pioneers did not seek glory or comfort; they allowed themselves to be shaped by the devotion to the Heart of Jesus and by a concrete love for the poor. Today, as we remember those who first set foot on Ecuadorian soil, we recognize in them a Dehonian missionary profile: humble, perseverant, and available. Their lives challenge us: to which “deep waters” is the Lord sending us today?

READING

- (L) A Reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah (52,7-10)

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, “Your God reigns.” Listen! Your sentinels lift up their voices, together they sing for joy; for in plain sight they see the return of the Lord to Zion. Break forth together into singing, you ruins of Jerusalem; for the Lord has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem. The Lord has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God”.

The Word of the Lord.

GOSPEL

(L) A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Luke (5,1-11)

Once while Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat.

When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.” Simon answered, “Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets.” When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink.

But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, “Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!” For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken; and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, “Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people.” When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.

The Gospel of the Lord.

(Silent Meditation)



LIST OF OUR MISSIONARY WITNESSES

(1) **Fr. Irineo Blanc** (1859-1932)

Originally from France, Fr. Irineo Blanc was among the first missionaries sent to Ecuador in 1888. His work focused on the formation of the local clergy, education, and apostolate among the most needy. Faced with the difficulties with planned unification with the Institute of Father Julio María Matovelle, along with political tensions, he remained faithful to the spirituality of the people, reflecting the Dehonian oblation. Expelled from Ecuador in 1896, he continued his service in other places until his death. His testimony reminds us of the centrality of formation and prayer in sustaining the mission.

(2) **Fr. Gabriel Grisón** (1860-1942)

Born in St. Julien, France, Fr. Gabriel Grisón was ordained to the priesthood in 1883, and entered the SCJ Congregation in 1886. He took his vows in 1887 choosing the name of Gabriel-Mary. Sent to Ecuador in 1888 to work at the Apostolic School, he served in Ambato and Bahía de Caráquez, directing the Diocesan College. He documented his experiences in his book “Memories of Ecuador (1888-1896),” highlighting challenges such as hostile climates and persecution. Expelled on June 12, 1896, along with Fr. Gabriel Lux, on the feast of the Sacred Heart, he departed to the sorrow of the faithful. He later founded the mission in Congo in 1897, becoming a bishop in 1904, and offering his life in spiritual martyrdom: “He died on February 13, 1942, offering his life to the Sacred Heart.” His life expresses the continuity of missionary service beyond borders and the option for the peripheries of the world.

(3) Fr. Gabriel Lux (1869-1943)

Born in Luxembourg, Fr. Gabriel Lux distinguished himself for his pastoral dedication in Ecuador, where he strengthened parish life, liturgical architecture, and formation. In 1896, he was cast out along with other religious, marking a new direction in his mission. He was ordained to the priesthood on September 7, 1895, in Túquerres, Colombia, after having received diaconal ordination in Portoviejo on February 3, 1894. After Ecuador, his missionary life extended to Africa and the Americas. He served in Congo and later in Brazil, where in 1903 he founded the Southern Brazilian Province, based in Florianópolis. That foundation gave rise to what are now the two Dehonian provinces of south-central Brazil. He remained in Brazil until 1943. Fr. Lux is remembered as a figure of perseverance, pastoral creativity, and missionary availability.

These first three missionaries embodied Father Dehon's dream to open new apostolic paths inspired by the Spirit. Their dedication confirms what is expressed in our Constitutions.: "For him missionary activity was a privileged form of apostolic service." (Cst 31).



PSALM 97 (98)

O sing to the Lord a new song,
for he has done marvelous things.
His right hand and his holy arm
have gotten him victory.

The Lord has made known his victory;
he has revealed his vindication in the sight of the nations.
He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness
to the house of Israel.

All the ends of the earth have seen
the victory of our God.
Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth;
break forth into joyous song and sing praises.

Sing praises to the Lord with the lyre,
with the lyre and the sound of melody.
With trumpets and the sound of the horn
make a joyful noise before the King, the Lord.

HYMN



III. SERVANTS OF RECONCILIATION: SPIRITUAL MARTYRDOM

MONITION

- (L) Missionary history is not exempt from persecution. The events of 1896 — the expulsion of religious persons during episodes of anti-clerical tension — have been interpreted by the Dehonian tradition as an “unbloody martyrdom”. Their lives were offered and lost, not through physical death, but with spiritual and pastoral costs. Similarly to the early Christians, this type of martyrdom teaches us that suffering is a participation in the mystery of the cross.

READING

- (L) **A Reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Philippians** (2,5-11)
Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death — even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The Word of the Lord.

GOSPEL

(L) A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to John (15,5-13)

I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends.

The Gospel of the Lord.

REFLECTION

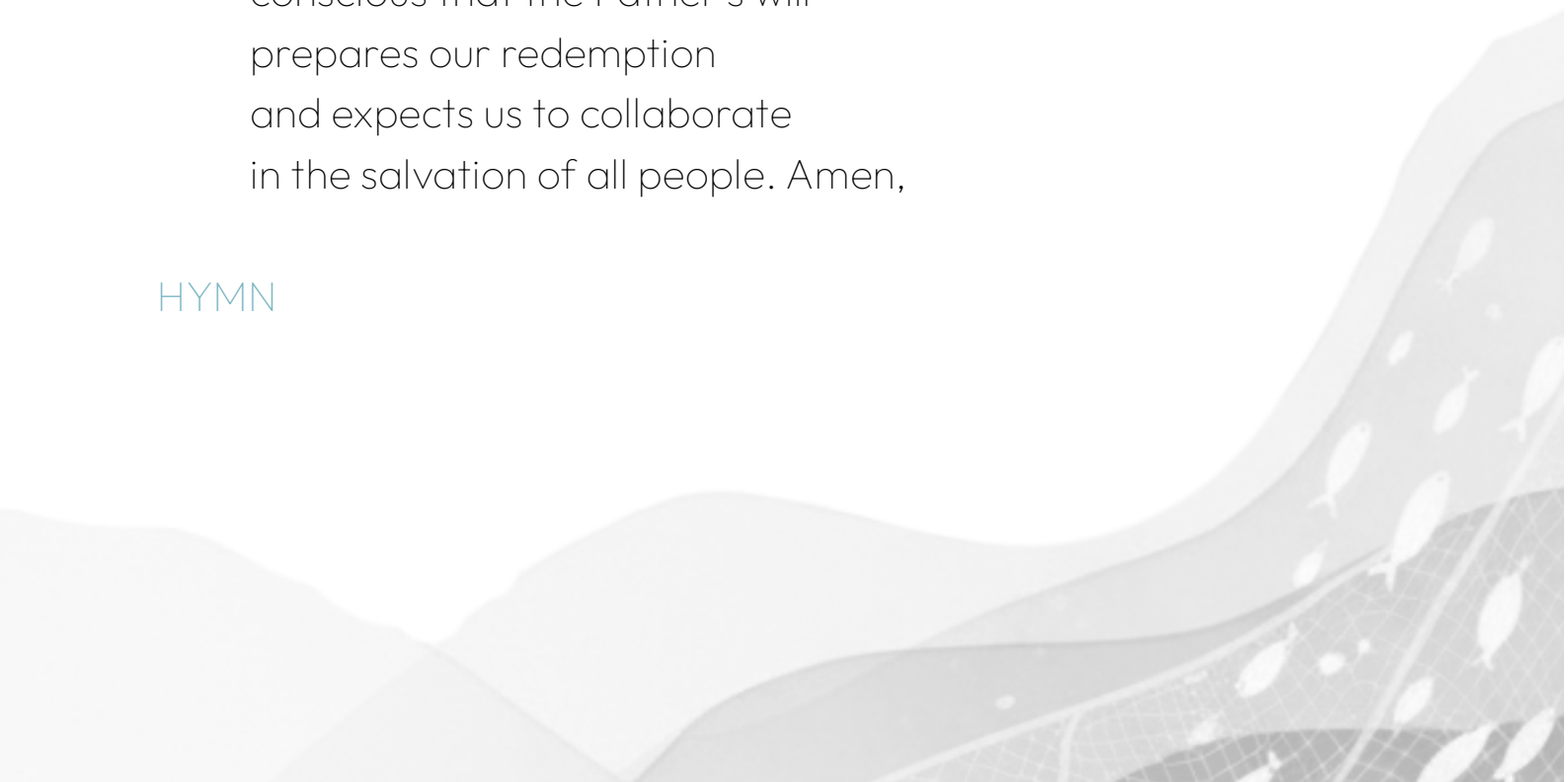
(L) Today's "martyrdom" can take various forms: expulsion, exile, extreme poverty, stigmatization. In each case, the call is the same: to remain in Christ, who is the vine, and to let his life transform ours. The Letter to the Philippians reminds us of the kenosis: Christ humbled himself and God exalted him. Our Dehonian missionaries made of this humility a way of union with the Heart of Jesus.

“Sometimes the reparative life will be lived out by offering sufferings borne with patience and abandonment, even in darkness and loneliness, as a pre-eminent and mysterious communion in the sufferings and death of Christ for the redemption of the world” (Cst. 24).

PRAYER OF OBLATION

Lord Jesus, we join you
to fulfill the Father’s will today
wherever it may be manifested:
in the many needs
of our brothers and sisters,
in the appeal of their weakness
to our indulgence,
in the appeal of their goodness
to our gratitude,
in their plea for help to be saved
in body and soul,
in their daily labors and sufferings.
We join in your reparative oblation,
conscious that the Father’s will
prepares our redemption
and expects us to collaborate
in the salvation of all people. Amen,

HYMN





IV. FROM ECUADOR TO CUBA, THIS DAY OF GOD

REFLECTION

(L) From the first mission in Ecuador to the opening of Cuba in 2025, one thread remains unbroken: total availability in the service of the Lord. As a Congregation, we continue to listen to Jesus and venture into deep waters. Cuba presents itself in a context marked by economic hardship, lack of freedom, and a Church that lives in simplicity and resilience. Both realities share social weaknesses and challenging realities, but also the possibility of embodying the reparation of the Heart. This memorial day is, therefore, pedagogical: it reminds us that being faithful to our charism does not represent a sort of nostalgia; rather, it is a renewed source of pastoral creativity.

In this sense, the Dehonian presence in Cuba becomes a sign of hope and continuity of Father Dehon's charism: to be there where the Heart of Jesus suffers, in the little ones, the poor, and the abandoned. Just as Ecuador represented a bold beginning in 1888, today Cuba opens up a horizon of radical dedication.

In Cuba, we Dehonians are called to exercise closeness, spiritual accompaniment, and the promotion of hope. This mission does not consist in great works, but in patient sowing and witnessing to fraternity. It echoes the first oblation of Fathers Blanc, Grison, Lux, and so many other Dehonian confreres, which is now being revived in a new time.

As disciples of Father Dehon, we want to make union with Christ in His love for the Father and for all the principle and center of our life. (Cst 17).

(We are invited to pray for the new Dehonian presence in Cuba)

PETITIONS

Trusting in the love of God the Father, who always listens to the prayers of his people, let us raise our supplications for the Church, the Congregation and the whole world:

R/. Lord, hear our prayer.

1. Let us pray for Pope Leo XIV, that the Lord may send his grace to sustain him in the mission of leading the Church, grant him strength and wisdom, and keep him as a sign of unity and hope for all the People of God. We pray to the Lord.

R/. Lord, hear our prayer.

2. Let us pray for our Superior General and his council, that the Holy Spirit may guide them in their service of encouragement and government for the good of the Congregation. We pray to the Lord.

R/. Lord, hear our prayer.

3. Let us give thanks for the life and work of Father Dehon. May his example of dedication and reparation always inspire us to be faithful to the Gospel. We pray to the Lord.

R/. Lord, hear our prayer.

4. Let us pray for the new mission in Cuba, that the Lord may bless our confreres who will carry the Dehonian charism and accompany the Cuban people in their hopes and challenges. We pray to the Lord.

R/. Lord, hear our prayer.

5. Let us pray that the Lord may inspire many young people to follow him in religious and priestly life, and that they may find in the Dehonian Family a path of dedication and love. We pray to the Lord..

R/. Lord, hear our prayer.

Father of mercy, accept these prayers we present to you, united to the Heart of your Son. As we follow the example of Father Dehon, may we know how to live reparation, availability, and service, to proclaim your love throughout the world. We ask this through Christ, our Lord.

R/. Amen.

OUR FATHER





V. CONCLUSION

(L) The missionary journey of the first Dehonians in Latin America reflects a history of creative fidelity and profound love for the Heart of Christ. From the beginning in Ambato, with Father Blanc's commitment to education as rector of the Bolívar College, to the pastoral witness in Bahía de Caráquez and the initiatives of evangelization reaching new mission lands, a tradition of dedication was woven and remains strong to this day.

Ecuador "was the beginning of something great." The Dehonian mission has surpassed its original limits: today, after more than one hundred years of service, we are present in over 40 countries in four continents, sharing a common charism in diverse contexts and cultures. And, in fidelity to the Spirit that drives us, we find ourselves at the dawn of a new page in our history: the opening of the mission in Cuba, a land that awaits us with its challenges and hopes, so that the Heart of Christ may be known and loved there as well.

This echo of past, present and future is not just a memory, but a call to continue being Prophets of love and Servants of reconciliation in every reality where the Lord sends us.

SYMBOLIC GESTURE

(We express our availability with the words of Father Dehon: "The miraculous catch of fish is not made in the sacristy, but in deep waters." Let us light a candle remembering all those who have made history in our life and in the Congregation; those who perhaps are no longer with us today but left behind a legacy as Prophets of love and Servants of reconciliation, following always the message of our Founder).

HYMN

CLOSING PRAYER

Jesús,
Jesus,
your Heart, opened on the Cross,
is the great sacrament of God's love for the world.
Grounded in the faith experience of your servant,
Leo John Dehon,
we celebrate this joyful time of Jubilee.
We recall his devotion to your Heart
and his commitment to social action.
Merciful Savior,
as the Dehonian family,
we wish to join in your oblation to the Father
so may you always live in us.
With the intercession of Mary,
your blessed mother,
we ask for the grace to bring
our Founder's devotion and action
into new times and places.
Lord Jesus,
hear our prayer:
make our time of Jubilee
an ever-new sign of God's infinite love
in the heart of the world.
Amen.

CLOSING HYMN

