



SUPERIOR GENERAL  
CONGREGATION OF THE  
PRIESTS OF THE SACRED HEART  
Dehonians

---

Prot. N. 0569/2023

Rome, December 16, 2023

*To all the members of the Dehonian Family*

Letter for Christmas 2023

## **“What is Best?”**

Dear confreres and all the members of the Dehonian Family,

The convocation of the next General Chapter has activated a particular dynamism in the whole Congregation: each religious, each community and each Entity has been invited to pray, reflect and decide on the path to follow in the light of our charism and the present times that we share. Since that time many entity chapters have already been completed. Preparing for these chapters well and then developing them is a demanding task. However, nothing will have been in vain if all this helps, as St. Paul says, to have a better "knowledge and understanding" (Phil 1:9) of what we are called to live: the offering of our whole life in the service of the Gospel (Cst 52).

Guided by Paul, we can understand that a Chapter is the shared search for "what is best" (Phil 1:10). Not from selfish or accommodating criteria, but from a restless and determined disposition, open to the Spirit, to commit one's life to the ever gracious will of God. And what better disposition for the chapter - and for a synodal culture - than to appropriate that to which the apostle Paul exhorted true Christians:

I urge you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship. Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect. (Rom 12: 1-2)

For Paul to understand this, certainly the Spirit made use of the communities through which he passed. Even of the disciples, like Ananias in Damascus and Barnabas and Peter in Jerusalem, who told Paul about Jesus, his roots, his life and his Passover. From all that he heard, what idea did Paul get of the family of Nazareth? The same one that today, and even more so in this time of year, continues to draw us closer to the mystery of God incarnate. Could not Paul's words just quoted speak for the lived experience of that family? The one to whom "God first sent his Son, born of a woman" (Gal 4:4). For each of them, for Joseph and Mary, what was best?

For Mary, the best was to allow God to sow the seed of His Word in her. From then on and forever she declared herself "the handmaid of the Lord" (Lk 1:38). For Joseph, on his part, the best was to accept everything as God's *kairós*. That is why he allowed himself to be led by something new prescribed by the Angel instead of what he already knew from Moses. Thus, by welcoming Mary, Joseph made the true offering pleasing to God. With her in his home, he began his humble discipleship (cf. Jn 19:27). Then, when the time came for the birth, the best thing they both did was to transform a manger into their improvised home, exposed to the surprised and amazed eyes of those who came to meet the Child. Later, they would end up accepting that the best for the three of them was to be refugees rather than risk the life of the most fragile one.

But with that birth more people, in one way or another, became involved in the never-ending story of love and closeness that the little child from Bethlehem embodied. So it was with the magi of the East, for whom the best was to have valued creation and to have known how to interpret a star in the sky.

Where the star stopped, they did not need to find out more about the newborn to satisfy Herod's curiosity. It was enough for them to see Him to know who he was, as would happen years later to a group of disciples by the lake (cf. Jn 21:12). For the shepherds, on the other hand, the best was to encourage one another to set out on the road that very night, in spite of the fatigue of their work. They believed wholeheartedly that they had much to see. Certainly they returned with much more to tell. They were not disappointed, nor were the disciples who, years later, after a tiring night's work, once again cast their nets in the light of a new Word (Jn 21:6).

May these days of Advent and Christmas help us in the task, especially in this time of Chapter, of discovering and taking on together what is truly good in the eyes of God, for you, for your community, for your family: like Mary, who welcomed the Word of the Lord without reserve; like Joseph, who left his past dreams to accept those of God; like the Magi, who knew how to understand creation and walk with it; like the shepherds, who, even in the night, never ceased to encourage one another to go to meet the Lord. May He be the One who keeps us united to know how to recognize, adore and serve Him with more heart, also among the refugees, among the men and women who cry out for their lives and their dignity in so many places in our world - all of them close to us. May he make us people of Peace in this humanity of ours, collaborators of his Love and witnesses of his Kingdom, Good News for all peoples.

To all, a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year 2024

Faternally, *in Corde Iesu*,

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