



SUPERIOR GENERAL
CONGREGATION OF THE
PRIESTS OF THE SACRED HEART
Dehonians

Prot. N. 0118/2024

Rome, March 9, 2024

Watching with you!

*Letter for March 14, 2024,
on the anniversary of the birth of Father Leo Dehon*

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

On this occasion, the anniversary of Father Dehon's birth, which is also a day of prayer for Dehonian vocations, takes place near our XXV General Chapter. Starting August 12, we also begin a journey towards the centenary of his death. They are both events of great relevance for the Congregation and the Dehonian Family. Among other reasons they give the opportunity to thank God for "Father Dehon's faith experience" (Cst 2) and its impact on our Christian life. He, as a disciple who knew how to "choose the best part" (Lk 10:42), helps us understand the charism we share:

Faithful to hearing the Word
and sharing the Bread,
we are invited to discover ever more deeply
the person of Christ and the mystery of His Heart,
and to proclaim His love which surpasses all understanding. (Cst 17)

We look around us and understand that yes, we continue to be urged by that same love that springs from the victorious side of the Savior. From that source was born, like fresh water that revitalizes, the vocation, the conscience and the reparative action that shaped Father Dehon's Christian identity. It was there, in that open wound, where he found the living water that kept him awake, attentive and committed to embracing the cause of Jesus: so often suffering, adored in the Eucharist and recognized among the people of his time. Despite many vicissitudes, he was able to accomplish Samaritan gestures that verified the authenticity of his reparative vocation. He approached childhood and youth with hope; he embraced the mission of the Church; he stopped in adoration of the Lord; he dialogued with employers and workers; he dedicated time to study and reflection to use his words to improve the world he was getting to

know. He allowed himself to be questioned by what was happening, and no one was indifferent to him:

More than ever, we are conscious
of the misery of so many people today;
we hear the cry of the poor.
This persistence of misery,
at individual and collective levels,
is a constant call for conversion
of our mentalities and our attitudes. (Cst 50)

This appeal from the most disadvantaged reminds us that we are “in the midst of a world which still constantly needs to be evangelized” (Cst 86). Fr. Dehon did his part, but never alone. With some, he participated in associations of clear religious and social sensitivity; with others he formed a new community of consecrated life. But with everyone he shared his ideal of love and reparation in the service of the Reign.

Thus, his passion to do God's will at all times and places alerts us to the temptations of spiritual and missionary laziness, the self-congratulatory gaze, fatalism, exclusive narcissism, indifference, the supremacy of one's own criteria, the flawed use of goods, comfortable isolation, lethal criticism and so many other seductions ready to take away from us the genuine power that God has given us: to be his children (Jn 1:12) and to be brothers and sisters (Mt 23:8).

For this reason, while acknowledging our own fragilities, including those that we foster in our communities of life, we do not want to neglect the persistent provocation of the Gospel in order to continue to collaborate, together with so many others, in the cause of God which is Life. This is what Jesus asked of his disciples in the immediacy of his total abandonment: “Stay here, watching with me!” (Mt 26:38). This is how he wants us today: taking care to welcome his Spirit, to share his bread and to protect all life. Watching over the gift of faith and of community. Alert and attentive, without petty individualism and without believing that the road ends with us. God continues to call us to be with him, without borders or distance, in novel ways, without format and without script:

Conscious of that call
which has repercussions in our whole life,
and concerned about responding to it in faithfulness,
we want to be attentive to this action of the Spirit,
by helping each person, young or adult,
discern their vocation and respond to it. (Cst 86)

But how can we do this if we don't go out to meet them? How can we accompany others without finding time to listen? Where can we welcome them if the community is not fraternal? How can we encourage the yes of others if we don't first give our own yes daily?

For all these reasons, Father of goodness, we ask that our remembrance of your servant, the Venerable Fr. Leo Dehon, may sustain us in the yes we give to your Love. Following his example, may we be able to listen to your voice in our General Chapter and on the journey of preparation for the centenary of his death. May the memory of his life and of his dedication

enliven us for the permanent availability that Mary, the mother of your Son, points out, to be awake and to do “whatever he tells us” (Jn 2:5):

“Heart of Jesus, what do you want me to do? *Cor Jesu, quid me vis facere?*” This is the disposition that best responds to our vocation. (Leo Dehon)

Fraternally

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