

# YOUR KINGDOM OF LOVE COME!

## Prayer vigil for the day of dehonian vocations on the 179<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Father Dehon

### Introduction

**Leader:** In the days from 13<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> February 2022 in Rome the IX General Conference of the Priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus was held. The theme of the Conference was: “Dehonians in social commitment: the impact of God’s love in our society”. It was an opportunity to listen, to reflect and to share thoughts and hopes, taking in hand the testimony left for us by Father Dehon in order to continue the work he has initiated. He had prepared himself well for his mission and he developed a lively sensitivity and a capacity for openness in order to be able to interpret the situation of his time in an evangelical way.

In this vigil of prayer for the vocations to the dehonian charism we use some texts from our Constitution – in the fortieth of their approval (1982) – in particular those that refer to the *Kingdom of the Heart of Jesus in the souls and in the society*.

*(The same person reads the texts of Father Dehon and the texts from the Constitution. If there is a president distinct from the leader, he may make the sign of the cross)*

**Leader:** Father Dehon was born on March 14<sup>th</sup> 1843 and he died on August 12<sup>th</sup> 1925. One of the expressions cherished by him was: *Adveniat Regnum tuum!* May your Kingdom of love come!

In his spiritual writing “Retreat for the s. Heart” Father Dehon wrote:

*“The kingdom of the Heart of Jesus in the society is the kingdom of justice, of love, of mercy, of compassion for the little ones and for those who suffer. I beg you to dedicate yourself to all these works, o support them and to help them. Favor all the institution that must contribute to the kingdom of the social justice and that must prevent oppression of the weak by the powerful”. (Fr. Dehon, RSC 610)*

### ***Pact of love of Fr. Dehon***

*My Jesus,  
before you and your heavenly Father,  
in the presence of Mary Immaculate, my mother,  
and of St. Joseph, my protector,  
I make the vow of placing myself out of pure love  
at the disposal of your Sacred Heart,*

*and of devoting my life and energy  
to the Congregation of the Priests of your Heart.  
I accept in advance all the trials and sacrifices  
which it will please you to ask of me.*

.....

*I vow that pure love for Jesus and his Sacred Heart  
shall be the intention for all my actions.*

*And I beg you to touch my heart  
by inflaming it with your love,  
so that I may have the intention  
and desire of loving you.*

*Through your grace  
let me again feel the happiness  
of having all the affections of my heart  
centered on you alone.*

*Leader:* The Church has recognized the heroic virtues of Father Dehon and continues to pray for his beatification. We familiar with him, also on this occasion, pray together:

## **Prayer**

Lord, our Father, we thank you;  
through your servant Leo Dehon  
you have enriched the Church with a new religious family.  
May the beatification of your servant be to the praise  
of your glory.  
Following his example,  
make us prophets and ministers  
of reconciliation in the Heart of your Son.  
May worthy disciples follow in his footsteps and  
may they bring the joy of your Gospel  
to the whole world.  
Heavenly Father,  
united to Jesus Christ our Lord  
and sanctified in the grace of the Holy Spirit,  
may our life be an offering that is pleasing  
to you for the salvation of the world.  
Amen.

## **Song**

# I. According to the Father's Dehon experience of faith

## From the Gospel according to John

Now since it was preparation day, in order that the bodies might not remain on the cross on the sabbath, for the sabbath day of that week was a solemn one, the Jews asked Pilate that their legs be broken and they be taken down. So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and then of the other one who was crucified with Jesus. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs, but one soldier thrust his lance into his side, and immediately blood and water flowed out. An eyewitness has testified, and his testimony is true; he knows that he is speaking the truth, so that you also may [come to] believe. For this happened so that the scripture passage might be fulfilled: *"Not a bone of it will be broken."* And again another passage says: *"They will look upon him whom they have pierced."* (Jn 19:31-37).

*Leader:* The opening of the Christ's side was an object of the particular contemplation for Father Dehon. Therefor he often went up to Calvary, he felt there among the chosen disciples to whom the Lord has allowed to experience him in a privileged way. *They will look upon him whom they have pierced in the house of my friends* (Cf. ASC III/496). We follow his invitation climbing up to the mountain to let us transform and shape through the image of love *until it tears the heart*. Our Constitution also ask us to take this path.

*"Our Institute is rooted in Father Dehon's faith experience. Saint Paul expressed the same experience this way: And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me (Galatians 2:20). The open side and the pierced heart of the Savior most wonderfully expressed for Father Dehon a love whose active presence he experienced in his own life"* (CST 2).

*"Father Dehon saw the very wellspring of salvation in this love of Christ, who accepts death as the supreme gift of His life for all and as filial obedience to the Father. From the Heart of Jesus, opened on the cross, human beings are reborn in heart, enlivened by the Spirit, and united with their brothers and sisters in the community of charity which is the Church (cf. Etudes sur le Sacré-Coeur, I, p. 114)"* (CST 3).

*(In this time the dehonian cross is expoused)*

*Leader:* In a particular way this dynamic is being expressed in the symbol which recently became our hallmark in the world: greek cross with empty space in the shape of a heart. It is love that binds the heaven with the earth: the infinite divine and the human oblativity that adapts itself to the divine one. The arms of this cross are the same because he *no longer calls us servants, but friends*. Let us bring now this cross and let us place it in front of our eyes. Let us take time to contemplate

it in the silence of Calvary waiting the words of Christ himself, who even on the Cross speaks as the master speaks to his own.

The words of Pius XII will help us to deepen that mystery.

### **For the personal meditation**

The Sacred Heart of Jesus shares in a most intimate way in the life of the Incarnate Word, and has been thus assumed as a kind of instrument of the Divinity. It is therefore beyond all doubt that, in the carrying out of works of grace and divine omnipotence, His Heart, no less than the other members of His human nature is also a legitimate symbol of that unbounded love. Under the influence of this love, our Savior, by the outpouring of His blood, became wedded to His Church: "By love, He allowed Himself to be espoused to His Church." [...]

Concerning the meaning of this symbol, which was known even to the earliest Fathers and ecclesiastical writers, St. Thomas Aquinas, echoing something of their words, writes as follows: "From the side of Christ, there flowed water for cleansing, blood for redeeming. Hence blood is associated with the sacrament of the Eucharist, water with the sacrament of Baptism, which has its cleansing power by virtue of the blood of Christ." What is here written of the side of Christ, opened by the wound from the soldier, should also be said of the Heart which was certainly reached by the stab of the lance, since the soldier pierced it precisely to make certain that Jesus Christ crucified was really dead. Hence the wound of the most Sacred Heart of Jesus, now that He has completed His mortal life, remains through the course of the ages a striking image of that spontaneous charity by which God gave His only begotten Son for the redemption of men and by which Christ expressed such passionate love for us that He offered Himself as a bleeding victim on Calvary for our sake: "Christ loved us and delivered Himself for us, an oblation and a sacrifice to God for an odor of sweetness." (*From the Encyclical "Haurietis Aquas" of Pius XII, 75-78*).

### **Song**

## II. Witnesses of the primacy of the Kingdom of God

*Leader:* The Baptism set us on the way, by its grace has initiated our “*sequela Christi*”, it made us members of the Mystic Body of our Lord. In the heart of the Church, as the disciples of Father Dehon, we are called to give a faithful testimony of what we have received as gift: the love God has for us and the faith which is the source of our hope. All of it And all this in a specific “Dehonian” way, in the certainty that in this way we can enrich the world and the Church with our way of living and manifesting the message of the Kingdom of God.

### From the Second Letter to Timothy

For God did not give us a spirit of cowardice but rather of power and love and self-control. So do not be ashamed of your testimony to our Lord, nor of me, a prisoner for his sake; but bear your share of hardship for the gospel with the strength that comes from God. He saved us and called us to a holy life, not according to our works but according to his own design and the grace bestowed on us in Christ Jesus before time began, but now made manifest through the appearance of our savior Christ Jesus, who destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, for which I was appointed preacher and apostle and teacher. On this account I am suffering these things; but I am not ashamed, for I know him in whom I have believed and am confident that he is able to guard what has been entrusted to me until that day. Take as your norm the sound words that you heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. (2 Tm 1:7-13).

*Leader:* God had made his “investment” of grace in the life of that young man called Timothy. The Apostle Paul knew well that God’s gift cannot be wasted. This letter is a message of encouragement which served the young disciple and which also serves us, who often need to regain our strength, return to the sources of our vocation.

Our Constitutions help us in this:

*“Within the Church we have been initiated in the Good News of Jesus Christ: So we have known and believe the love that God has for us (1 John 4:16). We have received the gift of faith, which grounds our hope; a faith which orders our life and inspires us to leave all to follow Christ; in the midst of the challenges of the world we have to strengthen this faith through living it in charity. With all our fellow Christians, through the Spirit, we then confess Christ as Lord, in whom the Father made His love known to us, and who remains present in our world to save it. No one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:3)” (CST 9).*

*(At this time, one brings the volume of the SCJ Rule of Life to the place prepared)*

*Leader:* As we have just heard, our Rule of Life is a criterion, an indication of how to preserve within us the charism received from the Spirit. Let's welcome it! And in silence let us allow ourselves to be touched by the words of Father Bourgeois. They are a great impulse to bear witness to the Kingdom of God without ever forgetting what our "*proprium*" is, our specific contribution:

All this is a necessary requirement of dehonian fidelity to reap the maximum benefit from the real and profound devotion to the Heart of Jesus and for the real fruitfulness of an authentic Dehonian life: a life of love and reparation, conceived and lived as a life of charity, a realization of that agape that must animate our life, because we are "prophets of love and ... servants of the reconciliation of men and the world in Christ" (n. 7), "Committing ourselves unreservedly to the advent of a new humanity in Jesus Christ" (n. 39), so that "from the Heart of Christ, opened on the Cross", "man with a new heart, animated by the Spirit, united with his brothers in the community of charity which is the Church" (n. 3) ... A "spiritual life", nourished by the contemplation of the Heart of Christ, cannot be authentic if it is not in itself "prophetic" (A. BOURGEOIS, *The Constitutions of Priests of the Sacred Heart - Reading guide*, 200).

### **Prayer: Psalm 113 (112)**

Praise, you servants of the LORD,  
praise the name of the LORD.  
Blessed be the name of the LORD  
both now and forever.

From the rising of the sun to its setting  
let the name of the LORD be praised.  
High above all nations is the LORD;  
above the heavens his glory.

Who is like the LORD our God,  
enthroned on high,  
looking down on heaven and earth?

He raises the needy from the dust,  
lifts the poor from the ash heap,  
Seats them with princes,  
the princes of the people.

Gives the childless wife a home,  
the joyful mother of children.

### III. So that God's love may reign

(With Christ in the service of the Kingdom: Participants in the mission of the Church and Beware of the appeals of the world)

#### From the Gospel according to Mathew

You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its taste, with what can it be seasoned? It is no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket; it is set on a lampstand, where it gives light to all in the house. Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father (Mt 5, 13-16).

*Leader:* Jesus makes his disciples aware that they are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. This is our greatest service to the Church and to the people of our world. It is a call to make our lives a dedicated service to others, like Jesus, to be "here" and "now" the Salt and Light of God.

*(At this moment everyone present is given a small bag of salt and a candle)*

*Leader:* Even "today" the Word of God tends to become a history within us and within our religious family which is called to be revelation of God's love for the people "here" and "now". We are called to allow ourselves to be expropriated in order to put ourselves totally at the service of the "mission". We are called to be the "word" of God to declare his love for man, especially for the least and needy of our society. Let's listen to what our Constitutions say:

*"This mission, for Father Dehon in a spirit of love and oblation, entailed Eucharistic adoration, as an authentic service of the Church (cf. Notes Quotidiennes, 1.3.1893), and ministry to the lowly and the humble, the workers and the poor (cf. Souvenirs XV), to proclaim to them the unfathomable riches of Christ (cf. Ephesians 3:8). With this ministry in mind, Father Dehon gave great importance to the formation of priests and religious. For him missionary activity was a privileged form of apostolic service. In all this his constant concern was that the human community, sanctified in the Holy Spirit, would become an offering pleasing to God (cf. Romans 15:16)" (CST 31).*

*"The life of oblation stirred up in our hearts by the freely-given love of the Lord conforms us to the oblation of Him, who, through love, is totally given to the Father and totally given to people. This life leads us to search ever more faithfully with the poor and obedient Lord for the will of the Father for us and for the world. This life makes us attentive to the appeals He makes to us through small and great events, and in human expectations and achievements". (CST 35).*

## **Texts for personal meditation**

The Kingdom of God is the new world that has come to light in the Person of Jesus and in the 'service' rendered by him to the multitudes, it is the new world that takes shape in the Mystical Body, it is the new world that is already sprouting in uncertain efforts of men ... It is above all in the New Man, in the Person of Jesus, present among us, that the Kingdom of God is already in action (const 11), so to speak of the primacy of the Kingdom means first of all affirming the primacy of the Person of Jesus (A. Carminati, *Dehoniani* 80, n. 10).

The knowledge of some dehonian social works has allowed us to identify some values that support them, such as: openness to others, love that repairs and recreates, offering spirituality, self-giving love, taking care, not only doing good but doing it WITH love. In fact, to the question: "how to be prophets of love and servants of reconciliation today?" We reply: "putting ourselves together and doing not only FOR others but WITH others, integrating the recipients into a virtuous circle that promotes them as protagonists of change". Because loving is our mission... and the source of our joy. It has also allowed us to understand how our attention and action have the ability to provoke paths of rebirth, to reactivate the reality on which we act, arousing a relational and transforming future. Our living and transmitting the love that we have received from God is the foundation of our action and opens everyone to feel loved, respecting cultural peculiarities and diversities (*From the final message of the General Conference 13-18.2.2022*, n. 8).

## **Prayer**

Heavenly Father,  
when your only begotten Son Jesus Christ  
rose from the dead,  
he commissioned his followers  
to "go and make disciples of all nations"  
and you remind us that through our Baptism  
we are made sharers in the mission of the Church.  
Empower us by the gifts of the Holy Spirit  
to be courageous and zealous  
in bearing witness to the Gospel,  
so that the mission entrusted to the Church,  
which is still very far from completion,  
may find new and efficacious expressions

that bring life and light to the world.  
Help us make it possible for all peoples  
to experience the saving love  
and mercy of Jesus Christ,  
who lives and reigns with you  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
One God, forever and ever.  
Amen.

## Song

## Conclusion

### Universal Prayer

*Leader:* Brothers and Sisters, through the intercession of blessed Giovanni Maria della Croce, patron of the dehonians vocations, and through the intercession of all those who has proceeded us, let us ask the Lord's blessing upon us who are following the way indicated by Father Dehon. May the Lord make of us witnesses of his love, through the hearing of his word, through the fraternal communion and through our self-donation for his Kingdom of love. Let us pray:

*Refrain:* Lord, hear our prayer.

For the Church, born from the opened Heart of Christ on the cross, may She proclaim to all that God is love and He wants to establish – with our cooperation – in our souls and in the societies His Kingdom of justice and charity, Let us pray, *R*

For the bishops, presbyters, deacons, for all the consecrated and for the laity, that animated by the Spirit, and united in the community of love which is Church, they announce with the word and the example of their life, the unfathomable riches of the Heart of Christ, Let us pray, *R*

For those responsible for the justice and peace in the world, that serving all people, especially the weak and the oppressed, they unite themselves to the movement of redeeming love and offer themselves for the brothers, with Christ and as Christ (and so they become the living signs of his Kingdom of charity, justice and peace, Let us pray, *R*

For our Congregation, so that, with all its life, with prayers, efforts, sufferings and joys, it may remedy sin and the lack of love and render Christ the worship of love and reparation that his Heart desires. *Let us pray. R.*

We ask Jesus the Lord of the harvest to grant us, and all the Dehonian Family, the grace of perseverance in his holy service and to send us new vocations willing to consecrate themselves in our Institute in favor of the Kingdom. *Let us pray, R*

## **Our Father**

Lord, pour into our hearts the grace of the Holy Spirit, so that faithful to fraternal union, to the breaking of bread and to prayer, we bear witness to you and we may care for the little ones and the poor and attract new vocations, willing to follow the ideal of perfect charity and to work effectively for the Kingdom of your Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, who is God with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

May the Lord bless us and his peace be with us!

Amen

**Go! May his Kingdom of charity come!**

Amen

## **Final song**

