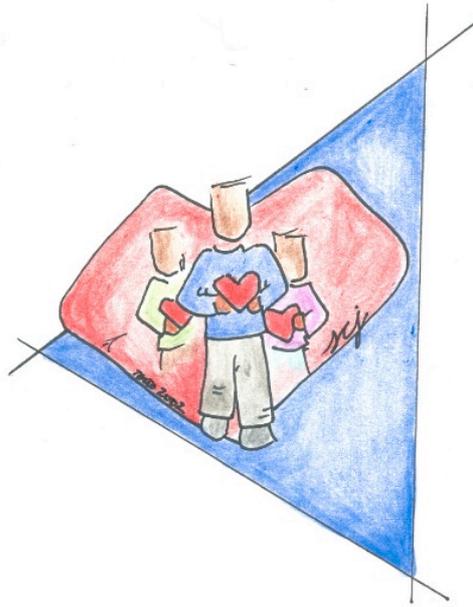


SPIRITUAL PATH – LAY DEHONIANS

WITH FR. DEHON IN THE 21TH CENTURY

Loved by God, in comunion, for the life of the world



YEAR ONE

FAMILIARITY WITH DEHONIAN LIFE

Come and See (Jn 1.39)

Rome, 2014

SPIRITUAL PATH – LAY DEHONIANS

In the great family of the children of God, the Dehonian Family is a recent addition, born of the charism of Fr. Dehon. In his experience of faith, he perceived the greatness of the love of the heart of Jesus who gave himself completely to the Father for humanity. This shared experience gave rise to the desire in other people who wanted to devote their lives to the same love. It also attracted many lay believers. The Foundation of a religious Congregation and its approval by the Church allowed the charism to be deepened and spread among the people of God. And so, from the beginning, the charism came alive not only among priests and religious, but also among many lay people. They joined with Fr. Dehon, initially in the form of an association, but later, at the end of his life, they were called *Adveniat Regnum Tuum*. They were more or less present in those areas where the Dehonian priests and religious were working. But with many ups and downs over the years, the seed of participation in the charism by lay people grew and took form in associations and lay groups, many of them consisting of former students from schools, people working in our parishes, our communities and social works.

The term *Charismatic Family* was not yet in use at the time of Fr. Dehon. It has been used in the Church by various institutes to designate a participation in the different expressions of the same charismatic vocation. It became especially common because of the spirituality of communion after Vatican II. Among us, the term began to be used in 1985. Since then, several steps were taken to consolidate its use. Of special note were the international meetings of 1990 and 2000 and the discussion of this topic at the General Chapters of the Congregation in 1997 and 2003. This led to the adoption of the *Communion Charter* and *A Proposal for a Way of Living* for Lay Dehonians.

Recent years have seen the consolidation of the reality of the Dehonian Family through the formation of lay groups and various forms of consecrated life, both individual and common life. And so the gift which the Lord gave to Fr. Dehon began to produce an increase in following of the charism so that the need was felt to prepare some sort of manual for a gradual and on-going formation.

In 2010 the need to reflect on how best to proceed became more urgent. And so it was that in early 2011 the General Administration of the Congregation decided to establish a small working group to design the *Spiritual Path* which is now in your hands. It consists of four consecutive years of formation. At this time, we have made available the first year. We can now begin using it for the formation of Christians who want to grow in union with the Heart of Christ, following the path of the spiritual experience of Fr. Dehon. There are ten themes that seek to help you become familiar with this path. At this time, it is offered “ad experimentum.” In its use it will need to be adapted to the cultural and Church realities of each country. In the use of the suggested prayers, songs, examples and testimonies, the animator should not be afraid to substitute them for others that are more in tune with the local situation. Also the written reflections can be improved or completed. It is important that, in doing so, you get in touch with the coordinating team with your comments and suggestions. The *Spiritual Path* may, in this way, become a good tool for formation with the collaboration of many.

We intend to present the second year around Easter in 2015, and shortly thereafter the third and fourth year. We are already in possession of the first draft of all the texts, up to and including meeting 40.

We want to thank all those who have helped in the planning of the *Spiritual Path* and its writing, translation and the revision of the texts. May the Lord keep you and bless you. May the Venerable Fr. Dehon inspire and deepen your experience of the merciful love of the Heart of Christ.

Rome, May 10, 2014

Fr. John van den Hengel scj
General Vicar

Fr. Claudio Weber scj
General Councilor

Many persons have worked on the project of the Spiritual Path, some of them Dehonians, others Lay Dehonians. To all of them we express our deepest appreciation.

The Working Group: Fr. Adérito Barbosa (POR), Fr. Bruno Pilati (ITS),
Fr. Ramón Domínguez Fraile (ESP), Fr. Josef Gawel (POL), Fr. Vincenzo Martino (ITM),
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The Coordinators of the Project:

Year I: Fr. Adérito Gomes Barbosa scj
Fr. Ramón Domínguez Fraile scj
Spain & Portugal

Year II: Fr. Cláudio Weber scj
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Year III: Fr. Bruno Pilati scj
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Year IV: Fr. John van den Hengel scj
English-speaking world

Redaction of Year I: Fr. Adérito Barbosa scj, Fr. Fernando Rodríguez Garrapucho scj,
Fr. Gonzalo Arnáiz Álvarez scj, Fr. Ramón Domínguez Fraile scj.

Translation and revision of texts:

I. A BRIEF PRESENTATION OF THE ITINERARY

Before beginning our work on this formation program for adult lay Dehonians, we prepared a questionnaire for the groups of lay Dehonians of the various continents, based on the different components of the Dehonian Family (SCJ religious, other consecrated institutes, secular institutes) in order to arrive at the basic outline of a dehonian itinerary. Only after reading and analyzing the results of the questionnaire, did we begin to work on the project. It became the point of departure for a four- year itinerary which we here propose to anyone who wants to follow and live the dehonian spirituality.

The formation curriculum consists of four years. It highlights the relationship of Fr. Dehon with God, with the Church and with society. It is specifically intended for lay adults, individuals and groups. In some cases, it can also be adapted for young people.

The first year intends to create a familiarity with dehonian life. The second year has as goal to have an encounter of Jesus Christ with Fr. Dehon. It has as content a summary of the relationship of Fr. Dehon with Jesus Christ. The third year – *the itinerary of Fr. Dehon* – has as content the vocation and communion of Fr. Dehon in the Church. The fourth year – “*for the life of the world*” – speaks of the apostolate and the social dimension of Fr. Dehon.

After this fourth year, we have also already considered even going further in the direction of ongoing formation. In other words, it is not out of the question to have a second project of such an itinerary of three or four years.

This itinerary does not want to be a simple presentation of only theological content. It is a pedagogical-pastoral proposal that starts from a mystagogical reading of the life and works of Fr. Dehon. Every year consists of ten meetings. It is suggested that there be a meeting once month with each meeting lasting two hours. In the meetings there will be presented the different aspects of the faith experience of Fr. Dehon.

There are certain parts of the meeting that will come back regularly, such as the welcome, the reflection theme, a short text of Dehon, a written or oral testimony, discussion points, a time of prayer or celebration (song, introduction, biblical text, story, psalm, symbol, sharing, brief sayings), and final song. Each meeting must take place in a dynamic language that is adapted and comprehensible to the participants. The presentation of the theme must not be a conference, but should be presented inductively, starting from the experience of the participants. The theme of every meeting ought to be clear, with a specific objective, and a creative and coherent methodology.

Let us now present the objectives and the titles of the themes of each year:

Year One
BECOMING ACQUAINTED WITH DEHONIAN LIFE
“Come and see” (John 1.39)

General objective: *To raise interest in the Dehonian spirituality and mission*

Specific objectives:

- To obtain hands-on experience of Dehonian reality
- To raise awareness of being a lay person in the Church; the baptismal vocation as the foundation for the different forms of life in the Church
- To discern the call to participate in a specific spirituality
- To involve oneself in the formation of a Lay Dehonian

Year One has the following ten themes:

1. *Who are we?*
2. *Life as a gift*
3. *The baptismal call*
4. *Christian life*
5. *From the devotion to the spirituality of the Heart of Jesus*
6. *The different forms of life in the Church*
7. *Identity and mission of laity in the Church*
8. *Human / Christian / Dehonian values*
9. *The participation in the charism as lay people*
10. *Pilgrims – the visit to a Dehonian community – retreat*
Gift of a biography of Fr. Dehon / Prayer Book of the Dehonian Family

Second Year
TO ENCOUNTER JESUS CHRIST WITH FR. DEHON
“He loved me and has given himself for me” (Gal 2.20)

General objective: *To grow spiritually in dialogue with the experience of faith of Fr. Dehon*

Specific objectives:

- To recognize a common spirit, a spirituality that unites you.
- To become aware that the spirituality of Fr. Dehon is a gift for the Church and the world
- To make oneself available for actions and a common project
- To appropriate this Spiritual Path in your daily life

Year Two has the following ten themes:

11. *Fr. Dehon and the Ecce Venio of Jesus*
12. *The experience of faith of Fr. Dehon: in the Heart of God*
13. *The experience of faith of Fr. Dehon: in the heart of the world*
14. *The experience of faith of Fr. Dehon: in the heart of the Church*
15. *The lay dehonian, disciple of the Master Jesus*
16. *Charism and mission of the lay person in the Church*
17. *Companions on the road of Fr. Dehon. The saints of the Heart of Jesus*
18. *Fr. Dehon and prayer*
19. *The prayer of oblation*
20. *The social dimension of Fr. Dehon*
Ritual: The giving of an icon of Jesus Christ

Year Three

THE FAITH JOURNEY OF FR. DEHON

“They looked on him whom they had pierced” (John 19.37)

General objective: *To become aware of the experience of the Church of Fr. Dehon*

Specific objectives:

- To become aware of the vocational process of Fr. Dehon
- To grasp the identification of Fr. Dehon with the mysteries of Christ
- To deepen the various expressions of faith of Fr. Dehon
- To make one’s own the communion of Fr. Dehon with the Church

Year Three has the following ten themes:

21. *A proposal for the life of a Lay dehonian*
22. *Fr. Dehon and the Word of God*
23. *The pierced Heart (John 19.34-37)*
24. *Fr. Dehon and the Eucharist*
25. *The presence of the Risen One transfigures our life*
26. *The sense of Church of Fr. Dehon*
27. *The communion of calls in the Church*
28. *Eucharistic adoration*
29. *Prophets of love*
30. *Servants of reconciliation*
Ritual: The giving of a Bible and the symbol of sandals

Year Four
FOR THE LIFE OF THE WORLD
“That they may have life and have it in abundance” (John 10.10)

General objective: *To deepen the awareness of the social dimension of Fr. Dehon*

Specific objectives:

- To become interested in the social dimension of Fr. Dehon’s apostolate
- To spread Dehonian spirituality to different realities
- To put together contemplation and action
- To study the social dimension of Fr. Dehon

Year Four has the following ten themes:

31. *Life in love*
 32. *Open to the world*
 33. *Dehonian values*
 34. *Participation in the reign of charity and justice*
 35. *Living in a family and society*
 36. *Involved in social spirituality*
 37. *Meditation with Fr. Dehon*
 38. *Contemplation and action*
 39. *Accompaniment and spiritual direction*
 40. *Dehonian Family*
- Ritual: The giving of the Dehonian Cross and the Symbol of Salt and Light*

II. REMARKS OF A TECHNICAL AND PASTORAL NATURE

In order to succeed in putting together an itinerary and to maintain continuity, it is necessary to underline some points. We wish to say something about (1) the importance of the animator of the group, (2) service to one another in the group, (3) how to stay in contact and finally (4) the meaning of being a Lay Dehonian.

1. The animation of a group

According to some authors, it is everyone's task to animate. We are often called on to animate those who are discouraged. Sometimes we are the beneficiaries of animation, because we are discouraged. We are all at one time sick, at another taking care of the sick. However, to be an animator pertains only to a few. An animator must have a certain charism. To animate is to liberate dormant forces in someone.

There are three ways of making alive what is dormant in others: restraining them from doing certain things, sustaining them and stimulating them. One animates by encouraging and energizing others. It is convincing others that their bodies and minds are alive. It is a matter of putting them to work, to build up, and for others to feel that you are on their side.

The animator is truly the force of the group. His or her role may diminish the more the group grows. Ideally, the animator's role in the group gradually will become less and less. It would mean that in the end all the parts of the group have reached maturity. The animator's task is like a mission: it means to be an educator of people, a catechist and an evangelizer. He is not a speaker. However, his task is decisive, continuous, serious and systematic. The group is like a womb where free humans are generated.

What greater thing can a person do than animate, help a person to live with others, to fight for a better society, a better church, to help the interior person grow?

It is obvious that all animators need preparation, not only theological and spiritual, but especially pedagogical and pastoral. The task is more than being a coordinator of the group, because he or she creates unity, looks for openings, and helps to form a community.

2. To serve one another in the group

The animation of a group is an act of service and service is an act of love. For Jesus, the person is the center of every structure. The movement, the organization, the group exists for the person. The Sabbath is for the person and the person for the Sabbath (Mark 2.27-28) Hence, in the group who is in charge is the person. In this sense, the service of animation must be undertaken with love, respecting and furthering the members of the group.

The animator may not look to be served, but may only serve (Mt. 20.27-28). He or she must love the individuals, and fulfill his or her mission in a disinterested manner and freely. The animator ought not act towards the others as if the group is at his or her service. That would be a sign of selfishness. He or she needs to be at the service of the group, helping and accompanying everyone in their spiritual and human growth.

3. To be the contact person

The facilitator of a group is first of all the promoter of relationships. He or she looks for opportunities to allow the members of the group to be in relationship. In other words, the animator of the group is a servant of its unity.

The animator's life depends on the persons of the group. He or she stimulates the members, searches out those who are living in special situations: happy or sad events, especially in situations of distress. He or she also becomes like the memory of the group. Every significant event (anniversary or birthday) is a reason for some sort of communication. In other words, the animator must be a person aware of details. He or she will make sure that any important information is brought to the attention of the group.

4. The meaning of being a Lay Dehonian

According to the document *Lay Dehonians, A proposal for life*¹ a lay dehonian, man or woman, is first of all, a member of the Church, who, faithful to Christ, is committed to building up the kingdom of God in the midst of the world. He or she is one, who, deeply conscious of their baptismal vocation and lay mission and alive with the faith experience of Fr. Léon Dehon, arrives at a personal vocation. He or she is someone who recognizes in Fr. Dehon and his charism, approved by the Church, a personal call to a spiritual life, who comes to Christ in the mystery of his open and compassionate Heart and united in his reparatory oblation.²

Thus, the lay dehonian, animated by the Spirit, lives fully in the world, feels connected with the Church and shares a passion for the Church through the Gospel and the world as a prophet of love and Christian hope. (ChL, No. 14)

It is because lay dehonians are Christians, who, inspired by the Dehonian charism, read the Scriptures and live their faith in the Church, they try to put this charism into practice in their daily life, whether in their family or in their profession, as well as in other groups of church or society. They live the full spiritual richness, inspired by the charism received from Fr. Dehon for the edification and enrichment of the Church (See Const. #1)

Each one has his or her own task and responsibility in accordance to the will of God to work for the harmony of the Church and together help in the construction of society so that no one is excluded from the service which can be given to all.

Only in this way, with the human oblation of Mary – *Behold the servant of the Lord* (Luke 1.38) – which has made Christ the heart of the world, can we match as humans, Christians and dehonians the divine oblation of the Incarnate Word – *Behold I come, O God, to do your will* (Heb. 5.10)

The Coordinating Group

¹ A document of the General Government of the Priests of the Sacred Heart. Prot. N. 263/2001, text no. 2. Document of the General Government with the title *La Famiglia Dehoniana, Letter of Communion*. Prot. N.63/2001

¹ Umberto Chiarello, *Un profillo del laico dehoniano*, in *Dehoniana* 2000/2, 85-92.

FAMILIARITY WITH DEHONIAN LIFE
Come and See (Jn. 1, 39)

Coordination: Portugal & Spain

1. Who are we?
2. Life as a Gift
3. The Baptismal Vocation
4. The Christian Life
5. From the Devotion to the Spirituality of Jesus' Heart
6. The different forms of church life
7. Identity and mission of lay people in the church
8. Human, Christian and Dehonian values
9. Lay participation in the Dehonian charisma
10. Pilgrims – visit a Dehonian house – Retreat

Structure for every meeting

- Name of the meeting
- The objectives of the meeting
- The outline of the meeting: strategies and activities
- The development of the meeting
 - A. Welcome
 - B. Theme of the reflexion
 - C. Thoughts of Fr. Dehon
 - D. A moment of dialogue
 - E. Oral or written testimony
 - F. A moment of prayer or celebration:
 1. *Hymn*
 2. *Introduction*
 3. *The Word of God*
 4. *Story*
 5. *Psalm*
 6. *Symbol*
 7. *A moment of sharing (prayer, reflexion, intercessions)*
 8. *Shared prayer – Words to Share*
 9. *Final Hymn*
- Literature

Meeting I

WHO ARE WE?

The objectives of the meeting

- Welcome each participant
- Accept the individuality of each participant
- Instill and bring awareness of the Dehonian spirituality
- Become aware that Fr. Dehon's spirituality is a response to the meaning of life
- Recognition of the existence of the Dehonian family
- Present the *Spiritual Path (Iter Formativo)* as a proposed way of life in the Dehonian spirituality

The outline of the meeting: strategies and activities

The intent of the first meeting is to greet participants and enable each one to introduce themselves, sharing their faith experience. In this first meeting we will present the whole project.

The development of the meeting

A. Welcome

After the welcome, the participants are invited to have a seat and begin the meeting with a hymn. The hymn could be previously recorded and sung or simply listened to. Then each individual introduces themselves sharing their own personal faith and/or ecclesial experiences in relation to this meeting.

B. Theme of the reflection: *Come and See*

Come and see will be the first theme for reflection. The facilitator will have to prepare the theme as well as its presentation.

A Power point presentation can be used, after which the participants could be asked to comment; or subgroups can be made. Each subgroup reads and prepares a presentation of the main point to be presented to the rest of the whole group.

1. What are you looking for?

Read Jn. 1: 35-42.

1.1. God

John the Baptist presented Jesus to His disciples as the "Lamb of God". The disciples followed him because he was different, special. They were touched by the words of John the Baptist about Jesus, and found themselves drawn to him. They felt something stirring in their hearts just by looking at him. God is different; He does not get confused with limitations, lies and human vices. God does not align himself with schemes, or disguised tactics. God is pure. God is divine. God is

transcendent. God is Father. God is Son. God is the Holy Spirit. God is eternal. God is also human, with a heart, understanding, friendly and patient. God is forgiveness, reconciliation, mercy and love.

1.2. Calling

John the Baptist, encourages the disciples to join Jesus.

This passage (vv. 35-42) presents the calling of three disciples: Andrew, another apostle without name, and Simon Peter, Andrew's brother. Later, the calling of two other disciples is described: Philip and Nathanael (vv. 43-51).

In the Synoptic Gospels, the disciples come to Jesus by invitation, by mandate. The initiative is entirely up to Jesus. It is He who invites. They were beside the Sea of Galilee when they were called by Jesus.

According to the narration of the Gospel of John, the apostles are the ones who take the initiative to approach Jesus, except Philip to whom Jesus says: "follow me". In this passage are the first disciples who follow Jesus. It is the beginning of Discipleship. In John, the vocation of the disciples is one of 'testimony of faith'; it is the confession of faith in Jesus.

Andrew, brother of Simon Peter, was one of the first disciples. It is not known who the other was. When Andrew finds his brother, he announces that Jesus is the Messiah. This is enough for Peter to make the decision to follow Him.

2. First question

2.1. What are you looking for?

The first question of Jesus is His first words uttered in public ministry: "What do you want?" These words were addressed by Jesus to the disciples. It is the first time Jesus speaks in the Gospel of John. We must emphasize that it was Jesus who took the initiative to speak, not the disciples. It is always God who is revealed to man in the unpredictability of life.

This question of Jesus is for everybody, for me, for you, for everyone. It is for anyone who is on a spiritual path. If God would ask us what we want, what would we say?

2.2. Where do you live?

Here they called Him Master. They could have called Him prophet.

It has nothing to do with the doctors of the law. Calling Jesus "Master", they showed great respect and regard for Him. This special way to treat others can and should lead us to think how we treat and consider other people. How do we treat the ones we live with? How do we treat the individuals with whom we interact in the classroom? How do we treat the people we work with? Or the people we interact with during our leisure time and games? How do we treat those we call friends?

It looks like the disciples were not expecting Jesus' question. That is why they answer with another question: "Where do you reside? Where do you live?"

This question shows the restlessness of the human being. Where do you come from? What are your origins? What do you do on earth? What is your mission? Which is your path? What is your future? Why do they want to know where Jesus lives?

This question is a question, not so much of curiosity but of searching. Certainly, they do not want to know if His house has windows and doors. They want to know who Jesus Christ is. And you, do you know who Jesus Christ is? And you, do you know where you should live?

3. Come and See

Jesus' answer is not a philosophical response, a demonstrative response, or a major theoretical argument. But it is a response that invites us to live the experience. "Come and See".

The two disciples said yes to Jesus. They accepted His invitation. They went and saw; and stayed with Him all day. It was the tenth hour. What is the intention of the evangelist to say that it was the tenth hour? It is time for the fulfillment, the fulfillment of the Father's will. The number ten is important in the Old Testament, Judaism, for the Pythagoreans and the Gnostics.

Those were the last moments of the evening, the heat of the day had passed. They stayed with Jesus; they had a spiritual experience of eternity, of something supernatural... of God.

Jesus is fullness, He is perfection. Where Jesus lives, everybody should live. Those who seek Him will find the answer. Jesus is the fullness of Revelation.

C. Text of Fr. Dehon and The Spiritual Path

Text of Fr. Dehon about being a Disciple

The call of the Divine Master - how inspiring are the calls to which the joyful elect respond to so generously! Jesus according to Matthew: "Now as Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. And He said to them, 'Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men'. Immediately they left their nets and followed Him. Going on from there He saw two other brothers, James the *son* of Zebedee, and] John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and He called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him." (Mt. 4:18-22)

Many times John adds to the Gospel details that only he observed: "He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, 'You are Simon the son of John; you shall be called Cephas' (which is translated Peter)". (Jn. 1: 42)

Jesus, look at us, look at the children of your choice and multiply the vocations in these difficult times. Give us many and true priests of the Sacred Heart.

Formation- For three years the Savior embraced His disciples with the most assiduous care. He is totally dedicated to their preparation, their formation.

"You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.

If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before *it hated* you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A slave is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you for My name’s sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin.” (Jn. 15,14-22).

The good Master taught His disciples until the end with an ineffable charity.

How fortunate to be friends of Jesus, his confidants/ intimates, the ministers of his work and also his companions in work and atonement on the cross.

[L. Dehon, OSP 4, ASC, p. 254-257]

The Spiritual Path (Iter Formativo)

Present at this moment the four year plan.

D. A moment of dialogue

After the presentation of the theme and the Text of Fr. Dehon, a time for dialogue can be opened to share, responding to the fundamental questions:

- Where do you live?
- Who is Jesus Christ?
- Who is Fr. Dehon?
- In what ways can we grasp the spiritual path that has been proposed?

E. Oral or written testimony

The encounter with Fr. Dehon in my life (Helena Castro – Lay Dehonian, Portugal)³

The first contact I had with the figure and spirituality of Fr. Dehon took place when I was 21 years old, in a youth encounter. For me, it was amazing to find someone with a way of thinking and living the life of the church and the gospel so current and engaging.

Fr. Dehon with his concern for the education of the youth, his social concerns and above all with the new way of facing his own priestly ministry, fascinated me because it gave a new way to experience the Church as Christ in the world. I perceived that Fr. Dehon’s concerns for the Kingdom of Christ were not directed, as a call, only to the religious Dehonians, but they were instead, a call that Jesus gives to each one of us in the place and the circumstances in which we find ourselves. It particularly captivated me the way Fr. Dehon lived his devotion to the Heart of Jesus, because he discovered that this devotion was not something superficial or intimidating, but a driving force for prayer, for personal growth, internal and external, and as a commitment to life and humanity.

I feel that the Dehonian spirituality, from a psychological point of view, has an amazing balance associated with a genuine Gospel/oriented radicalism that was a profound change of heart, which helped me to rediscover new paths of hope and a profound Christian sense encountering the daily

³ Professor of Philosophy.

difficulties especially in the workplace. At this point resides one of the innovating ways of looking at the message and the spirituality of Fr. Dehon: that is to say, to be Christian is of real value in the workplace.

Thus, is recognized that the Gospel must shine in all human surroundings and that faith is a challenge and a response to the meaning of human life as a whole and not just part of it.

As the Dehonian's spirituality deepens, whether through the reading of Fr. Dehon's writings, or through his biography, we perceive his extraordinary relevance and how it would be of great value for today's world, so many people could share this gift that the Holy Spirit granted to the Church. When Fr. Dehon states that priests should "get out of the sacristy", this invitation is an imperative to go out for an encounter with the people of God, where He is present, in the mist of sufferings and injustices which I understood as a personal concern: "What about you? Have you got out of the sacristy? Have you left your safety and comfort zone?" This concern took me throughout my life to evaluate the way I was living in this world, as a Christian, my particular way of interacting with people, having as a center of that relationship, not my personal interests, but the need of the Kingdom of the Sacred Heart in people and in societies.

In a similar way, when Fr. Dehon states that "the priest must be a man of study, prayer and action", I see it extended to all lay people. Today, a lay person aware of his mission as a member of the Church and of society can no longer be confined to a merely ritualistic and superficial religious practice, or going to Church just to fulfill a duty.

Lay people of today; have to be people of prayer, because only in a deep relationship with God and through the filial trust in Christ we can find the means and the proper ways to get this world closer to the Heart of Jesus. On the other hand, prayer also drives us to the study, the knowledge of reality in order to act in an informed way. Finally, study and prayer are two fundamental pillars of action, thereby we must do everything as if everything depends only on us, knowing by that, it all depends ultimately on God.

As for me, being Dehonian is a vocation (a call, a challenge), to live in an entirely new way, the faith transmitted through my Baptism; in a desire of allowing myself to be transformed by the love of God, and bring to all our forgotten and unloved brothers and sisters the love of God.

Living as Fr. Dehon is living a permanent effort of reconciliation, in the image of Christ the Redeemer, seeking to repair the social structures and, in the people, their image of God, which is so often degraded. In this sense, our own repair should be seen as a dynamism that must begin first within us, in those dimensions of personal and inner life where the experience of God has not yet happened. Fr. Dehon closely perceived that the secret of all real renewal of life is in the heart: the heart of God, source of all good; and in the human heart, which is the root of all actions. Therefore, changing the heart is to change the world.

F. A moment of prayer or celebration

1. Hymn

2. Introduction

This moment intends to be the beginning of a personal and/or group journey in the deepening of faith, in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, in the experience of faith of Fr. Dehon. These two figures are the lights that will illuminate our way.

3. The Word of God

The next day, John was there again with two of his disciples and, looking at Jesus as He walked by, he said: “This is the Lamb of God”. When the two disciples heard him said this, they followed Jesus. He turned and saw them following them, then He asked: “What do you want?”. They answered: “Rabbi – which means Teacher – Where do you live?”. “Come and see”, He said. They saw where He lived and stayed with Him all day. It was about four in the afternoon. One of the two who heard John’s words and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. The first he found was his own brother Simon, and told him: “We have found the Messiah”, which means Christ. Then, took him to where Jesus was, Jesus look at him and said: “You are Simon, son of John: you shall be called Cephas” which means Peter (Jn. 1, 35-42).

4. Story: *See God face to face*

The parable could be read by a narrator, a person representing God and a third person representing Ana.

Ana was a wise and respectful woman, with a great reverence for God. Her happiness was to see God face to face, she remained radiant when once, meditating on the Word of God, she felt God taking the initiative and said:

- Ana, do you want to see me?

- Sir, that has been the dream of my life – she replied somewhat uncertain that what was about to happened would be true.

- Well, come up to Mount Sinai and, away from everything and everybody, you will see me.

After He finished the sentence, Ana left the sacred space and began to wonder if, in fact, the dialogue with God was true or only a dream. Meanwhile, she was thinking what she should offer God if she were to meet him.

- Which would be the offering pleasing to the eyes of God? A pearl necklace? A gold necklace? A car of the future? First, I should try to dress well. First of all, I am going to buy brand new shoes, a pretty hat, a blouse and an expensive jacket. Ana went looking for the best brands; then she decided to find the most unusual things to offer God; then she went to visit jungles and forests, to discover some special plants that she might offer to God; she also found some animals. When finally she resolved to climb Mount Sinai, Ana had to rent three huge trucks to carry all her offerings. When she was at the top of the mountain with her cargo, Ana was asking for God:

- God? I am here. I am here. Where are you God?

But the noise caused by the truck engines, diminished her voice and Ana had to repeat the call many times, to the point that she had to shout.

When she was almost to the point of losing her temper, she heard God's voice.

- What noise is this?

- It's not noise. It's the trucks I got loaded with gifts for you.

- What? Worldly things? I cannot hear or see you. Make that noise stop.

Ana made the engines stopped.

- Done. Now, I want to see you God.

- I see huge trucks between you and me. If you do not have those trucks moved I cannot see you.

- But these are gifts for you.

- Those trucks do not let me see you and you do not see me either

Distraught, Ana sends down the trucks, so she could see the Lord.

Suddenly, she sees a burning bush and hears a voice saying:

- Do not get closer, take off your shoes because this land is sacred, then, remove your hat so I can see your face (Ex. 3.1-10)

- What Lord? I bought the most expensive shoes and the prettiest hat to see you

Ana could not believe it; she had gone through a great effort buying things for God, and He made her send the trucks down the mountain. She had worked hard to buy the shoes and the hat, and now God commanded her to take them off.

- Ana, I do not want what you have, I want what you are. I do not to see what you have. I want to see what you are. Many people live so concerned about what they have and not who they are. I do not want a human being drowned in products, suffocated with mountains of superficial stuff that prevent him from breathing the human air in life. I want to see your face; I want to see your heart. I want to see your soul.

Suddenly, a few rays appeared between the clouds and lit up the face of Ana and she saw God. It was a face to face encounter. Ana felt a joy that was transcendent, spiritual, superior, divine and infinite.

Then, she heard the voice of God.

- Ana, now that you have seen, now that you have reached the maximum joy, go and proclaim the good news to all the people of Israel, the people of Palestine, to all the people in the world. Because I do not want war or slavery, but peace and freedom, love and happiness; I am the God of love.

Ana went down the mountain and proclaimed the serenity, the reconciliation, the freedom among people. As the people were getting to know God, they understood each other, they lived in peace and did everything they could to help others to experience the peace of God.

Spontaneous response in a playful manner:

- What would you wear for an encounter with God?
- What would you offer to God?
- Why are you not closer to God?

5. Psalm 112 - Blessings of the Righteous⁴

¹ Praise the LORD!

Happy are those who fear the LORD,
who greatly delight in his commandments.

² Their descendants will be mighty in the land;
the generation of the upright will be blessed.

³ Wealth and riches are in their houses,
and their righteousness endures forever.

⁴ They rise in the darkness as a light for the upright;
they are gracious, merciful, and righteous.

⁵ It is well with those who deal generously and lend,
who conduct their affairs with justice.

⁶ For the righteous will never be moved;
they will be remembered forever.

⁷ They are not afraid of evil tidings;
their hearts are firm, secure in the LORD.

⁸ Their hearts are steady, they will not be afraid;
in the end they will look in triumph on their foes.

⁹ They have distributed freely, they have given to the poor;
their righteousness endures forever;
their horn is exalted in honor.

¹⁰ The wicked see it and are angry;
they gnash their teeth and melt away;
the desire of the wicked comes to nothing.

6. Symbol: *Icon of Jesus*

Icon/Image of Jesus: We are Christians. We are followers of Jesus Christ. We follow His path. His message is our ideal and our life's project. The face of Jesus invites us to follow His way, His message and His life. We want the image of Jesus to help us place Him in the center of our lives and to be capable of following and imitating His life.

7. Moment of sharing (prayer, reflection, intercessions)

8. Shared prayer. Words to share

- There is a part of my life known to me and known by others
- I do not need to use masks
- There is a part of my life known by others and unknown to me
- I need others' constructive criticism
- There is a part of my life unknown by others and unknown to me
- Slowly I should gain trust in others
- We must speak as we think and act as we speak

⁴ This biblical text is taken from the *New Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition* (NRSVCE).

9. Final hymn

Conclude the prayer with the next Marian hymn:

The following prayer is the oldest known prayer, it was found in papyrus:

*We fly to thy protection
O holy Mother of God
Despise not our petitions
in our necessities
But deliver us always
from all danger
O glorious and blessed virgin
Amen.*

Literature

Manzoni, G. (1995). *Leo Dehon and his message*. Translated by Edward Hagman, O.F.M. Cap.

Meeting II

LIFE AS A GIFT

The objectives of the meeting

- To value life as a gift from God to each one of us.
- To discover that Jesus is the model of generous surrender of self, as a gift given to man
- To value and to bear in mind that creation is a gift from God.

The outline of the meeting: strategies and activities

In this second meeting: Life as a gift, proposes to carry out the next activity as a welcome and preparation to the reflection on the topic.

Activity: Your “LIFE” LINE. Each participant writes or comments on his/her life line, emphasizing, not the transpired events, but those moments where they have found God, where it appeared that God has made Himself present, and that “that” event became a gift from God.

Where have I noticed that God has done marvelous things in my life? When has life been turned into a gift from God? What aspects of my life are a gift from God? How do I give thanks to God?

The development of the meeting

A. Welcome

The participants are invited to share in the activity: **Your Life Line**. The indicated questions may also help during the activity.

B. Theme of the reflection: *Life as a gift*

1. Gift. . . Definition of Gift

By Gift we understand, that which is given (person or thing) to someone who has no right over what is given. The GIFT is totally or partially free and comes from the kindness of the donor.

In the given definition we find three subjects or elements that are necessary for the realization of this gift.

There is a DONOR. He is the principal subject. He is the one who is completely aware of that what he gives is done out of benevolence or kindness. The benevolence allows for degrees of will, but it must always be present to maintain the reality of the gift. If this is done out of pure interest (self interest) of the donor or imposition, then one cannot speak of a gift but trickery.

There is a RECIPIENT of the donation. The person surprised by the initiative of the other, welcomes and appreciates the gift offered. If the action of the donor is not welcomed, the donor will become frustrated. If it is welcomed like something deserved without reciprocity of appreciation, the gift is unsuitable.

There is the GIFT. Usually we interpret “Gift” as “talent” (human) diversely making them function like sacraments (sacramentals) or expressive of a greater reality that encloses them but do not exhaust them by any means. The gift entails the greatest love of the donor and the loving appreciation of the one that receives it.

It could be that encompassed in the “gift” may be the very being of the one who donates, and/or the very being of the one who receives. For example, in a marriage the one who donates himself as a “gift” is the husband to the wife and the wife to the husband in absolute reciprocity of loving benevolence. Both subjects are at the same time “donors” and “donation”.

The “gift” between persons is how we can come to understand, for example, the sacrament of the Eucharist, a “gift” of nourishment of the very body and blood of Christ. It is the same as the surrender of Christ himself to us as the bread of life and means of salvation.

There is a “greater gift” for one who receives, that allows you to endure as a person. It will come from benevolence and self surrender of other persons, but for you it is constituent and absolutely free to the point that it touches the fundamentals of your being. I am referring to the GIFT OF LIFE. Life is an absolute gift that we receive without any initiative on our part and that it is given to us absolutely free and it constitutes us as subjects capable of loving and living. This gift is one that children receive from their parents.

We are speaking precisely of this GIFT when we make the reference to God because He is the giver of life, the FOUNDATION of life, both that of our parents and our own.

2. The Gift of Life

Is life a gift or a coincidence?

An indisputable fact is that we have life. Those of us gather here, reflecting about this, are aware that we are living beings, conscious, free, capable of love. But this does not guarantee anything. This precisely raises questions about the meaning of life. A philosopher of our time – Javier Goma—in this regard says: “the modern individual, born to the world knows his unlimited dignity and almost at the same time is conscious of the indignity of his destiny: Death. It is natural for one who knows that he is given this kind of dignity and foresees himself secure in this world to the end, then every citizen, might ask himself if there is any possibility of continuing in this way after death, if the ‘story’ of such subjectivity ends or not in the grave.” We are all aware of our “personal dignity” and at the same time we are conscious of the disparities of that dignity. We are aware that we cannot give a reason for it or guarantee its subsistence within ourselves. The essence of our subjectivity, of personal being either it is given by someone or we are the fruits of irresponsible and fickle chance.

We as believers reject chance and affirm that the world finds its reason for existence in the Love of God who creates out of pure grace, as a pure gift, to communicate and make others participants in the beauty of life.

3. God the Creator, Friend of Life

The Bible, from the first chapter, affirms that God is the creator of all things. He is the foundation of all reality created. Of all “that is visible and invisible”, as we say it in the creed.

The creative act of God is not by necessity. God does not need to create in order to be happy; nor does He need to create out of a personal need beings inferior to Himself. God creates from nothing and creates out of pure love. The creative act is the word of salvation in behalf of all that is created and he makes out of pure generosity or pure love (P. Dehon speaks a lot of “pure love”). We can say that God “does not gain anything” by creating. He does not create for His own benefit. He creates for our benefit, at the benefit of the created. He creates because He loves “infinitely” with a love that is benevolent and would like for others to participate in His kindness, His life, His being.

In the act of creation, man is created separately from the rest of creation. Man is created with particular attention by God. “Let us make man according to our image and likeness” so says God as He begins His master piece. The man who is “adama” (soil) receives spirit (ruah) from God. Man received part of the breath of God and is formed as an image and is made in the likeness of God.

Man is created by God with dignity in an act that is sobering and absolutely gratuitous. It is God who establishes man in his dignity, and man does not have to or cannot do anything for this to happen. It is pure loving initiative of God that creates and sustains the dignity of the human person. Man would be worthy of this dignity given by God, but only because God wanted it so; because God has made him the favored object of his love and He wants to pour himself out on him and fill him with his very life.

There is a particular moment when God manifests himself as a friend of life. In the story of Noah and the flood, God made an alliance with Noah, putting the rainbow as a sign of his promise not to ever destroy life on earth. The book of Wisdom calls him “friend of life” and enemy of death. He doesn’t want death for anyone.

4. The Gift from God is God Himself

God doesn’t only give us life but he gives us his own life. He is not only the sustainer of our life, but he becomes one with us and he gives up his own life for us and he himself becomes the GIFT. This reality is the one that drives Fr. Dehon and other contemplators “mad”, madly in love. John 3, 14-16 tells us that “God so much loved the world that he gave His only Son up so they may have life, an abundant life”. This is surprising and marvelous at the same time. God totally gives himself to us in his Son. He makes himself the GIFT in the Son so that we may live and be sons in the Son. Our reason for being comes from the intense love that emanates from the Father Himself in giving us His Son, so that in this way we may be children of God by means of the Spirit. It is an admirable trade between God and man, where God is the Gift and man is totally thankful.

The creative work of God comes to its fullness in the work of the mystery of the Incarnation and Redemption. God, when he creates thinks of Jesus Christ his son the Anointed, to be the foundation of all that is created. Paul in Colossians 1, 15-20 makes a beautiful description about Christ as the head of the universe which is good to keep in mind.

5. Jesus Christ the Model of the Gift that is Given and the Giver

Jesus Christ is truly God and truly man. Jesus Christ is one being, the second person of the Holy Trinity. The life of this person of the Trinity will be the one that will be transparent in some form in the humanity of Jesus.

The Word receives everything from the Father. The Father infinitely loves the Son giving Him everything that He is. He delivers himself, totally giving His Son for love. The Son is constituted as a free gift, totally given and totally loved.

The Son is fully aware, he knows himself as the GIFT FROM THE FATHER, GIVEN FROM THE FATHER, and LOVED BY THE FATHER. This is his being. TOTALLY GIVEN. And in reciprocity of love, the Son LOVES, HE GIVES HIMSELF ENTIRELY TO THE FATHER. An interrelationship that is mutual, perfect, loving, self-giving, gift, reciprocal and accepting.

Jesus, made man, lives the reciprocity with the father to the end. He knows himself and recognizes himself as sent by the Father, as one who receives everything from the Father. The identity between the Father and Son is astonishing. Jesus comes to say that the Father and He are “one”. Jesus identifies his work with that of the Father’s because the Father works and He also always works. Jesus recognizes that He receives all from the Father and on His part he returns to the Father everything he has received, all of his being. And he does it because he loves Him unconditionally, against all hope, and that is why he enters into obedience to the Father to the point of giving his life on the cross.

This mystery of the love of Christ towards the Father manifests itself in all of its fullness on the cross, is the one that fascinates Fr. Dehon and from it stems the dehonian charisma. Jesus delivered himself for us to the Father. He loved me so much that he surrendered himself for me.

6. Jesus Our Model

Jesus breaks the dynamic of Adam and Eve’s sin; the dynamic of the sin of the world. He recognizes his dependence on the Father, His being freely given and received. He is aware that He is gifted by the father. And this is what constitutes Him as a “personal” being. And He lives this with extreme joy and continuous appreciation to the point of returning the love received with the love returned by the faithful and obedient Son, fully in love with the Father and united with Him in every way. Jesus does not take a step without the approval or the consent of the Father. Jesus never makes a move against the will of the Father, even though he may not understand it at times or would prefer otherwise. “If it is possible, take this cup away from me; not my will, but yours your will” he prayed in the Garden of Olives. Jesus lives totally and for God.

If Adam sought to become like God, his disobedience brought death into world; however, by the obedience of Christ the gift of life returned again to the world. Jesus sought to be “God from God”. He was obedient to his death and that is why he became the source of Life and Salvation for all of us.

CONCLUSION. Jesus is the new “human being” (new creation).

If humans deny God or do not recognize their dependence on God, a dependence which is freely given, then their destiny is death, and life is futile, senseless, and worthless. By believing they affirm their dignity; by denying God, that what they deny is really their own worth and their own being.

Jesus by affirming and recognizing God as Father, and therefore the source and origin of all being, He opens to humans all kinds of possibilities. The possibility of living as a child of God, placed in the world with a concrete purpose. We are in the world not to die but to have live.

This gives the possibility of fraternally living and accepting others as brothers and sisters, with those who can build a world of fraternity and of justice; a world reconciled with God, with the world and with each other. The possibility of making and building the Kingdom of God on earth, and making the Reign of God available to all souls and societies.

C. Text of Fr. Dehon

I would like to go over my life and review the groups in which I’ve been enlightened.

The group La Capelle: My mother, my father, my brother and some members of my family, my pastor, some women that were interested during my childhood and two or three colleagues.

The Hazebrouck group: Fr. Dehaene, my supervisor and director; Fr. Boute, the best of the professors; a few colleagues; Vasseur, Laenhouder, Dassonville, Van de Walle. The first three became Priests. Providence guided me to this land of faith to find my vocation.

At 16 years old I went to study in Paris, where I took on a great intellectual culture without forgetting my vocation. The Catholic Circle at the Parish of Saint Sulpice enriched me greatly. Leon Palustre was a friend with whom I traveled for two years.

The ideal period of my life was in Rome from 1865 to 1871, be it because of the superiors, companions, or events such as pilgrimages, ordinations, etc.

I spent the greater part of my life in Saint Quentin (1871 to 1897). Mons. Thibaudier was a great friend of mine. I formed a men’s work group to attend to the details of the Circle, the newspaper, the founding of St. Martin parish, etc.

We had a meeting with Christian leaders, a catholic youth circle. That maintained the health and faith of many young people.

Sister Marie helped me a great deal. Sister Marie de Jesus offered her life for me. Sister Ignace received from heaven many inspirations for our work. Sister Oliva and Sister Clara helped me at Saint John and Sister Veronique in the undertaken for orphanage. I founded the college of Saint John. It had good pious teachers and students who died as saints. I consulted some great saints, like Don Bosco and Mother Veronique, amongst other people for the foundation of the congregation.

(Fr. Dehon, *NQT*, Vol. 5, XLV/1925, nn. 33- 43)

D. A moment of dialogue

After the presentation or reflection of the topic: Life as A Gift, and having read the reflections of Fr. Dehon, there can be a dialogue and sharing regarding the various presented points:

1. Gift. Definition of Gift.
2. The gift of Life. Is life a gift or a coincidence?
3. God as creator and friend of life
4. The gift of God is God Himself
5. Jesus Christ model of the gift: that which is given and that which goes on giving
6. Jesus our model
7. Conclusion. Jesus is the new human being (new creation).

E. Oral or written testimony

“My inner adventure continues along with the multitude of the sick from Mozambique” (Fr. Aldo Marchesini scj – Mozambique)

Father Aldo Marchesini scj, dehonian missionary and doctor, was infected with HIV virus exercising his ministry in the Quelimane hospital in Mozambique.

Like Christ, he took upon his body, the pain of those to whom he dedicated his life. The magazine “Nigrizia” has published his own testimony, which we summarize:

I like warm weather, and I’ve always thanked God for having me live in Quelimane, a very warm and humid place. This year, nonetheless, the heat, literally, has destroyed me, something that has never happened. Moreover, during several nights, I’ve had a fever, with a persistent dry cough; the possibility of leaving unresolved projects worried me, especially when, in a few days, I would be leaving on vacation to Italy. Arriving in my country, my friends and family told me that I did not look well, and I should get examined. When the doctor who attended me gave me the results, he told me, with some concern, that I was a carrier of the AIDS virus. I was speechless. I confess that I did not feel any particular emotion, I wasn’t even discouraged. As a doctor, many times I’ve had to inform my patients, that they were HIV positive, which was a very difficult duty for me. Sometimes I imagined being in their place, and that thought caused me some anguish; I was calmly telling myself that I wasn’t sick, and those were only mental fantasies. But the truth is that now I am the patient! Nevertheless, I did not feel anguish, rebellion or fear. Internally, everything remained the same, and everything had changed... changed forever.

Considering that 20% of my patients are HIV positive and that, like any other surgeon, I run the risk of injuring myself, the occasions of being contaminated weren’t few. I recognize that the grace of God has helped me to welcome with serenity this news; on the other hand, I believe that part of my tranquility derives from the fact that very effective medications exist, with the hope that life would be good. I would take a cocktail of three medicines, in two doses in the morning and another at night. Thanks to this, the virus in circulation is reduced to an insignificant number. Meanwhile the lymphocytes, which generate in the body in a greater quantity than those destroyed, begin to multiply. The hope of being able to live with the illness for a long time consoled me. Nevertheless, the thought of this hope consisted in the fact that I was Italian and that this way I would have access to medication, tormented me; but, what about my Mozambique patients? Why can’t they have the

same hope? Why can't they have the same access to the therapy? I felt that I should insist in making other men and women – at least, the inhabitants of Quelimane – have the same hope of life that I have.

I've heard that the community of St. Egidio was beginning a pilot project in Mozambique, with the objective to offer free of charge to the African AIDS patients the same treatment available to the rich nations. I decided to go to Rome to speak with the person responsible for the project; the meeting was very positive, and I went home full of hope: I found a way to begin an effective anti-retroviral therapy in my hospital... and free of charge. I returned to Mozambique five months before schedule, without fear, and resumed my work in the hospital. I am very happy!

I've decided not to hide from anyone my illness; today, everyone knows that Fr. Marchesini, the doctor of the hospital, is HIV positive, he is receiving therapy, he's alive, he's fine and continues to work. In a few days, they will also know that the therapy is now available for all who are sick, now there is no reason to hide, or not to be tested for fear of knowing. There are now many people who have approached me to talk, to receive comfort and to be put on the way toward therapy.

My story ends here, but my inner adventure continues along with the multitude of the sick from Mozambique. I cannot thank the Lord enough for having known them, and for having moved things in a way that a seed of hope could, in one brief space in time, transform into one great tree; a tree that offers its fruits to all those who need it.

F. A moment of prayer or celebration

1. Hymn

2. Introduction

We are joined together to have a moment of prayer, to encounter God, ourselves and our brothers. We need to focus on prayer; we should be quiet so that God may penetrate our inner being. There we'll discover his voice and his word, which is directed to each one of us. Let us keep an inner silence. Let us discover the gift which God giving to us: the gift of life.

Life is the most valued possession each one of us has, and we have received it as a gift from God. It is not our life, it belongs to God. With this prayer we give thanks to God for this marvelous gift: the gift of LIFE that comes from God.

3. The Word of God

I am the good shepherd. A good shepherd lay people down his life for the sheep. The hired man, who is not a shepherd and whose sheep are not his own, sees a wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away, and the wolf catches and scatters them. This is because he works for pay and has no concern for his sheep. I am the good shepherd and I know mine and mine know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I will lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. These also I must lead, and they will hear my voice, and there will be one flock, one shepherd. This is why the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down on my own. I have power to lay

it down, and power to take it up again. This command I have received from my Father. (Jn 10: 11-18)⁵

4. Story: *How much is life worth?*

It is said that a little girl asked her teacher how much is life worth? The teacher took off his ring and said to the little girl: “Ask a few people how much this is ring worth? But, don’t sell it no matter how much they give you for it.”

Then, the little girl found a woman selling oranges and she would give 20 kilos of oranges for the ring. Later she found a man selling bananas. He offered 30 kilos of his merchandise.

Later, she found a jewelry store and the jeweler, after thoroughly examining it he asked the little girl if she had stolen the ring which was worth more than \$6000.

The little girl went back to the school and returned the ring to the teacher. Then explained what had happened:

“For some people life is worth 20 kilos of oranges, 30 kilos of bananas or \$6000. And for you, how much is life worth?”

The little girl opened her arms without knowing what to say. The teacher concluded saying: “Life does not have a price. It has an infinite value because it is a gift from God.”

5. Psalm 111 – Great Are The Works Of The Lord

Hallelujah!

I will praise the LORD with all my heart
in the assembled congregation of the upright.

Great are the works of the LORD,
to be treasured for all their delights.

Majestic and glorious is your work,
your wise design endures forever.

You won renown for your wondrous deeds;
gracious and merciful is the LORD.

you gave food to those who fear you,
Mindful of your covenant forever.

You showed powerful deeds to your people,
Giving them the lands of the nations.

the works of your hands are right and true,
reliable all your decrees,

Established forever and ever,
to be observed with loyalty and care.

You sent deliverance to your people,
ratified your covenant forever;

Holy and awesome is your name.

⁵ The biblical text is taken from the New American Bible.

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom;
Prudent are all who live by it.
Your praise endures forever.

6. Symbol. *Life and gift: the creation*

Creation (the world) is a symbol of the gift God offers us. God gives us this marvelous gift which invites us to discover how life becomes present in all that surrounds us and how everything we value is a gift – gift from God. And He offers it all to us unselfishly.

7. A moment of sharing (prayer, reflection, intercessions)

8. Shared prayer. Words to share

- Live and let live.
- Life is a ladder that goes up and down
- It is necessary to have strength and courage so that there is a full sense of living.
- Life is a gift from God.
- Life is peace and joy (cf. Rom. 8)
- “I will never be satisfied until my soul rests in God” (St. Augustine of Hippo)

9. Final hymn

Literature

Meeting III

BAPTISMAL CALLING

The objectives of the meeting

- To Discover that baptism is a calling of the Church, and, behaving as God's children, we are to carry out the mission of the Church.
- To deepen profoundly our baptism as well as its celebration.
- To discover the roots, the significance, and the symbolism of Christian baptism
- To appreciate the grace of Baptism

The outline of the meeting: strategies and activities

In this third meeting: the call of our Baptism is recognized for its value as a rite of the Church and not as some social event. It allows for us to deepen our identity as Baptized Christians in the symbols that are used in the Baptismal rituals. In addition we become more profoundly aware of our own baptism. Baptism calls us to be better people: children of God and a holy people. Baptism also calls us to carry out the mission of the Church as was mandated by Jesus Christ: to bring the Reign of God to the whole world.

The proposed activities and strategies carry out for us the achievement of the different objectives that are stated previously: informing us of our baptism; deepening in us the symbols of our baptism, profound and great riches; praying from our Christian existence and our baptism; meditating and carrying out our baptismal commitment.

The development of the meeting

A. Welcome

Those participating in the meeting will share various aspects of their Baptism, such as the certificate, pictures of the event itself or some personal memory. By means of this dynamic, the various symbols used in the ritual will also be explained.

B. Theme of the reflection: *Baptism as our vocation: holiness and mission.*

1. The Baptismal Calling

The vocation is a calling from one person to another. There is an individual doing the calling and another who listens. When the call is received and welcomed by the one who is listening, we call this a positive response: if, on the contrary, it is received and not welcomed, the response is negative.

Because this is truly a vocation, the one who is acting as the agent, or the caller, and the individual receiving the call should be absolutely free and acting unconditionally. If the call or response is forced there does not truly exist a vocation.

1.1. The first call comes from God

Contemplating the Triune God we can find reason to see the vocation that exists in the permanent dialogue within God Himself Who calls and responds in an ever loving manner.

But for now, we prefer to look at the action of the Triune God as it relates to all of us in the world. Creation itself is the fruit of a VOCATION which calls everything into existence from NOTHING. The Bible takes this action created by God through the words proclaimed with great solemnity” Let there be light.” His words and His action joined with: “and God saw that it was good.” These words of God have such force that they constitute for us all that comes into being, namely the light, the sea, the earth, and the stars, etc. But there is a very special Word from God, His last, in which God calls and creates the most sublime of all because He will create someone in His own image and greatness. The human being, in the image of the Creator, will be able to respond to the calling of God. A calling that will make man responsible and capable of saying YES or NO to God, and able to talk with God and love Him in return. We say that our first calling as human beings is part of us from our first moment of conception. Each one of us enters into life which God wishes us to carry out for our salvation. This salvific plan of God will expand in the history of the World through God’s callings. When we say that God’s callings are directed to specific people and fulfill specific Works from God, we use the term “vocation”, properly speaking.

1.2. The History of Salvation

Through the history of salvation we encounter peak moments where God’s voice is heard in an extraordinary way. These callings have been real “kairos” or extraordinary moments that we call as passovers of God.

God made a passover with Noah, in his commitment that he would not send any more floods over the earth. Noah was given the responsibility as the guardian of the rest, the guardian of life. According to him life comes with God’s respect and proclamation that he is a friend of life.

God made a passover with Abraham who was faithful to God’s calling, obeying to the point of giving up his only son on Mount Maria. The obedient response of Abraham will be proverbial for all humanity and so God made Abraham to be the father of all believers.

God also made a passover with Moses whom he appointed leader and liberator of Israel. Moses obeyed God from the beginning. That is why there has not been another prophet like Moses. After Moses there have been many men and women who are called. Many of them were prophets called by God to care for his people. Some of them were obedient, and some not so much and some not at all. To name some of them: David, Solomon, Hosea, Isaias, Jeremiah, Ezechiel, Daniel, Judith, Esther, Ruth and most especially John the Baptist. All of them obeyed God’s call and thus were able to guide the People to the New Covenant.

1.3. Jesus learns to obey

Jesus is the Son of God made man. The mystery of the Incarnation unfolds with a Call – brought about within the Holy Trinity. The Father decides to send His Son into the world. For this to come about it is necessary that the Son be born of a woman and become a human being. The Son responds

to the Father's call saying: "here I am Lord, I come to do your will." ECCE Venio (Behold I come to do your will.) which unchains the bonds and redeems and saves all of humanity.

We know this Son-made-man as JESUS CHRIST. And Jesus lived all His life in an obedient attitude of a positive response to his Father's plan. As we all are tempted, Jesus will suffer temptations to separate himself from the will of God. Jesus suffered the temptations of power, pleasure, and having great wealth (the three temptations in the desert). Jesus always resisted by responding with God's Word and the will of the Father. Saint Paul dares to affirm that Jesus suffered in learning how to obey. This does not mean that at any moment he was disobedient. But because obedience does not always promise success, a person has to especially make efforts in times of suffering and times of darkness.

Jesus fulfilled his vocation and call on the cross with His "it is finished" and "into your hands I commend my spirit." (Luke 23, 44; John 19, 30)

1.4. Mary also obeys

Mary's vocation is also a paradigm for all of us Dehonians. Her ECCE ANCILLA echoes in our ears (Lk. 1, 26-38). It is because of her ECCE ANCILLA that Mary was the perfect believer and the perfect obedient person. She knew God's purpose for her when Gabriel the Archangel spoke to her. Mary knew how to say YES to God's plans for her and since then all her life would be to always fulfill the Will of him who has called her and constituted her as the Mother of Jesus, the Son of God: and thus the Mother of God.

1.5. Jesus calls us to follow him

Following Christ is the logical premise for the attainment of the Kingdom (LK. 9, 13). The following of Him should be preceded by:

- One Calling, (Lk. 9, 57-62)

The calling is an absolute free initiative on the part of Jesus. An unconditional initiative and provoked by the conditions of the candidate and much less the initiative of the calling. The one who is called is surprised by his calling and always believes that he is not capable to give a response. ("I am a young man"; "I stutter"). No one deserves to be called. We might say that the calling (gives purpose and qualifies the one called). God together with the calling grants the gifts to make the response possible.

- Without delay in responding

Jesus expects a rapid and decided response. He does not allow that we leave for tomorrow what we can do today. One should think that because God is patient and merciful, which He is, that He will not call tomorrow and repeat the calling. It might possibly be that way, but this does not allow us to take advantage of God. Additionally, tomorrow is not in our hands and we do not know the day or the hour on which we will be "called" definitively to fulfill our option of faith for or against Christ.

- Without Conditions, (Mark 10, 17).

The parable of the young rich man is a paradigm in this sense. The response to the vocation of Jesus is unconditional. It signifies the absolute giving of oneself; therefore, this means to give up one's "interests", and one's "ego".

We can condense this proposal through the following process:

1.6. Calling - Emptiness - Following

A calling follows the “kenosis” or emptiness of the person. It signifies entering in humility and obedience acknowledging the other (in this case Jesus). This is the foundation and the sense of my life: acknowledging that His calling is the fruit of the love He has for me and that following Him is; therefore, the best.

2. Baptism

Faith has a lot to do with the following, which is a personal commitment, to Jesus. Through Faith we accept Jesus as the way, truth, and life for our lives. Through Faith we credit the One who calls us and we tell Him that all He has told us is true. And because we believe in Him and because we have trust in Him, we follow in His footsteps trusting that He will take us to Eternal Life. When Jesus leaves us, in the Ascension, He tells us to go into the world and baptize in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Baptism will be the Sacrament of the Church where in a festive way and liturgy one will undergoe the process of calling, self-emptying, birth, following on the part of the Trinity and on the part of humans who respond positively to this vocation. In Baptism (confirmation) we become aware that we are called by God. We believe in Him and we respond “YES” to his calling of love to Life in Christ.

2.1. What is Baptism?

It is the first of the seven Sacraments of the Church; therefore, Baptism is a SACRAMENT. Our Catechism tells us that a Sacrament is an effective symbol of Grace.

2.1.1. The Church

It is fundamental to understand that the Sacraments are celebrations of the Church. The Church, always known as the Community of Believers, calls us together in the name of the Trinity to celebrate a salvific event or more specifically, to celebrate an aspect of the mystery of Salvation fulfilled in the same Passover of our Lord Jesus.

The Church is the principal Sacrament of Jesus Christ. It is the Sacramental Fountain which brings us to Grace and which is our life in the Trinity.

We have this fulfillment (reality) in the manner that Sacraments are referred to:

- The Sacrament flows from Christ who reveals the Father (and the Trinity).
- The PRINCIPAL Sacrament is the Church which places us in the presence of Christ.
- The 7 SACRAMENTS which are celebrations of the Faith of the Church and which occur through the power of the SPIRIT are an aspect of the mystery of salvation.
- In order for any of these 7 sacraments to happen, the liturgical assembly of an ecclesiastical community should gather together. If there is no Church, there is no sacrament. And if there is no community called together and united in the liturgical celebrations, there is no sacrament.

A Sacrament is given when the Church experiences with intensity the faith celebrated in the Passover of the Lord. It is an ecclesiastical faith, in a God who calls and unites us. It is a faith in

God who desires that his salvific action take place in this moment of celebration. This action of God is to be celebrated and remembered. It is an obedient love of a God who has first loved us and will always love us unconditionally.

2.1.2. Efficacious Signs/Symbols

Man is a social being. He needs others in order to exist. Therefore, he needs to be open to others both receiving and giving of self. Some signs/symbols are needed to transmit what is from him or to receive what comes from others. For example, we need language so we can communicate our thoughts or ideas. The language can be phonics or words, that are already signs/symbols. Or we use other languages such as sign language, body language, music, architecture, art, sculpture and many more signs/symbols with which we can communicate what is our innermost realities to one or many other people.

It is evident that the Church is made up of a union of people that form a community. This community which is intimately bound or held together united to the Holy Spirit needs and uses all of the languages and means of communication previously described. That is why in the language of the Church there are specific symbols or signs which reflect the specific salvific interior reality. The sacraments pertain to these SIGNS/SYMBOLS of the Church which are created and guaranteed from the same Church that celebrated this efficacious salvific moment.

2.1.3. Symbols of Baptism

Baptism is the first sacrament because it is the sacrament of entrance or incorporation into the Church. It is properly called a sacrament of initiation because with Baptism the way begins in the following of Jesus.

From the perspective that Baptism is an effective sign/symbol of Grace, we are going to try to describe the signs/symbols within the sacrament that are cause for celebration.

- A. **FIRE:** Fire is one of the four basic elements. Fire is light and warmth. It is difficult to imagine a world without these two realities. As light, it illuminates, and makes things visible. If there were no light we would be blind. When the sun is not shining, the colors fade and things look the same and lose their identity (e.g. at night all cats are brownish grey).

At night, the light makes it possible to see where we are going and identify things. The navigators at sea, when they discover the light of a nearby lighthouse are full of joy. The coast, the port is near and with that they feel safe and happy soon to be with their loved ones.

Fire is warmth. The warmth of home. Coming home to a warm place brings joy to the family. Home where meals were cooked, served and eaten and stories are shared, anecdotes, fables, songs and bonds of love and friendship were made stronger. Home that smells of bread baking. Home that is house and habitation, refuge from outside dangers. Home that warms the hearts.

Fire also burns, destroys, purifies. Applied well, it is an essential element in human life.

- B. **AIR:** Another basic element. It is essential for life. Without oxygen we cannot breathe or live. Lest we forget, the air in our lungs allows us to talk and communicate. Wind is also

primary energy. It blows where it wills and when it wants. It makes the turbines and windmills turn; it tows/draws the boats; supports the airplanes. It is able to drag us.

- C. **OIL:** Nourishment. Multiple uses in the kitchen, important even for the conservation of food. Ointment/salve that nourishes, beautifies, softens the skin, the hair, the muscles, and the body. And, of course, oil splatters, penetrates, and it becomes one with whatever it touches. Furthermore, oil is combustible, generates light, serves for heating or to make fire; it is a source of energy.
- D. **WATER:** Another basic element. It washes, hydrates and heals. Water is the fountain of life. Our body is fundamentally water. Without water we will dehydrate quickly. Water refreshes, quenches the thirst, washes and cleans filthiness, nourishes the fields, fertilizes the earth, helps the plants grow. It is also a purifying and healing element. It can also be destructive. Water announces the life of a new being that is born in “breaking waters”.

These four elements (Fire, air, oil, water) are the symbols utilized to signify the Grace that is celebrated and that takes place in Baptism. Formerly, salt was used and perhaps it would not be bad if it was placed back in the ceremony.

In Baptism, WATER has a great importance. From all that we have said above about water, we should add the Church’s references to water and its salvific meaning.

We must remember all the salvific events or “kairos” moments of God, that all through the history have happened through water. And we will be surprised to see that water and also salvific water is permeated throughout the Bible. We note the salvific water in the creation (Gen 2,3), through the flood, the Red Sea, the Jordan River, Massah and Meribah, etc. But in particular we see in the baptismal waters of John the Baptist, which are of purification and with Jesus the regeneration of the Spirit (Mt 3, 3-13). Water purifies and erases sin and regenerates and gives new life. A new life in Christ. A new life that happens through the GIFT of the Holy Spirit (Mark 16,15-16).

Additionally, for us water reminds us of Jesus’ pierced heart, from which flowed blood and water. This water is the baptismal water *par excellence*. It is the water that expresses the maximum surrendering of life from love, but a surrendering that signifies to us the gift of Life; regenerated through the Life in Christ given for us on the cross but rescued from death through the resurrection (Jn 19, 34-37).

Thus Baptism for us means the sacramental participation in the death and in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. A death to our old self, and to sin and a rising to a new life in the resurrected Christ. This step from death to life in Baptism is well expressed in the symbolic immersion of the body in the water during baptism and coming out like a new person. In the same way we understand the custom of disposing of the old clothes, and being re-vested, when getting out of the baptismal bath wearing a white tunic and a new sign of the new life and being clothed in Jesus Christ, an action completed in baptism. (Rom. 6,3-4; Col 2, 12; 2 Cor 5, 17; Ga 3,27)

Also, OIL, has a great importance. Oil appears in the bible as a sign/symbol of the presence and blessing of God and by its nature is part of the symbolism we see in Baptism. Above all we see the consecrated times of choosing some men through God for a special mission. In particular, all the anointing of kings, priests and prophets. It is an anointing that represents in some form that God takes possession of these persons, that He embraces and penetrates through all their pores so as to make them His. It is an anointing that transmits the gift of the Spirit, the force of God, His healing force, and His energetic force. Now they will be taken by the Spirit, the power of God, to where God wants them to go and they will speak the Word of God if they are faithful to the action of God in them. Therefore, the oil in baptism signifies the action of God in the lives of the baptized in the same form that he acted in the chosen people of the old covenant. God, with the power of His Spirit penetrates to the core the reality of the baptized, and He consecrates and makes them members of the Holy Nation, the new City of God, the Chosen Nation, City that is His. And at the same He time makes them Kings, Priests, and Prophets. In baptism, we receive the gift of prophesy, to be witnesses of the Kingdom of God. Being Priests and being consecrated fully to the Lord and capable of responding with love to the love of God, we are capable of responding with the offering of our lives to the offering that God makes of His Life for us. He makes us “kings” or gives us the dignity of being part of his family; meaning that He makes us His children. We are children in the Son. (Dt 11, 14; Ps 23, 5; Is 1, 6; Lk10, 34; 2 Cor 2, 15).

Also, LIGHT, has its importance. Light is God’s “first creation”. The first day He created the light. It is clear that without light there is not life and no possibility of a worthy life. God’s first work is a victory over darkness and chaos. Through the history of salvation we encounter this struggle of chaos and darkness against the Light. Darkness covers Egypt. The column of the bright cloud illuminates and helps those who are travelling to the promised land to advance through the desert. Jesus says that He is the LIGHT OF THE WORLD. Whoever walks with Him does not go in darkness. Darkness tortures Jesus in the moment of His passion and death.

Good Friday is a dark night, as is the dark night of Holy Saturday or the day of the burial. Night is broken and illuminated with the resurrection of the Lord in the first day of the week; that first day of the week that will no longer have an end because the Light of Christ illuminates and will not disappear again. Christ, our Passover, has been sacrificed and rises on the third day and will not die again. Christ is our light and makes us participants of His light. If we live with Him, we die with Him and we rise with Him. In Baptism we celebrate and receive this reality of Christ, LIGHT of the world. Christ is our light and illuminates all of our being. He give light to our soul, in such a way that He purifies, heals and recovers all that does not function or has not functioned. We come then to be regenerated and brought back to a full life as children of God. (Jn 1, 9; Hb 10, 32; 1 Thes 5, 5; Ef 5, 8). It is Jesus Christ who precedes us and goes ahead of us. He illuminates our road and He is our guide.

Also, in baptism, through the fire of the Holy Spirit, we are purified, our sins are forgiven and erased and we are reborn to a new life.

We note the significance of AIR but do not celebrate it so much. Maybe because that is the way the Spirit is. It blows where it wants and when it wants, but we do not see it, that is why the symbol is weaker. But what would our lives be without an atmosphere, without oxygen? How would we be

able to talk without air? The Word of God is proclaimed through the breath of the Holy Spirit. In the celebration, as proclaimed, St. Paul says that the Word of God is life and is effective like a two edged sword that penetrates and divides even our innermost being. In baptism we are asked that through the action of the Spirit our ears be opened to the same Spirit that makes us understand God's Will manifested in His Word which is Christ. Besides this Spirit enters us and moves us. It guides us in God's way to Eternal Life.

2.2. The Grace of Baptism

We have defined this Grace as the same life of the Triune God. Grace is truly the dialogue initiated by God with man so as to make him in his likeness, to make him God-like, and to make children of the Son of God. If man opens up to God and allows God to dwell in him, then a great transformation sanctifies and makes him God-like.

This first step in the process of sanctification takes place in baptism. It is an initial moment. The process is begun in the path of faith, hope and love. But in its initiation, we are given all the guarantees that we can achieve a happy ending. These assurances are no more and no less but the gift of the theological virtues which are Faith, Hope and Charity. Through these virtues, man can begin to see and recognize what comes from God. He will carry with him God's salvific actions and confidently go forward to the future loving God with all his heart, with all his mind and love his neighbor as he loves Jesus.

Through baptism all our sins are erased, because where the light enters, the darkness disappears. All that is negative in man, be it through inheritance, through worldly sin, or through personal sin, remains forgiven and healed.

Through baptism we are a new being (2 Cor 5, 17); we are children of God (Gal 4,5-7) and we have been made participants in the divine nature (2 Peter 1, 4). Through baptism we are incorporated into the Church. (1 Cor 12, 13); we are stones of the spiritual building which is the Church (1 Peter 2, 9) and we are the chosen lineage and priestly people. Through baptism we cease to belong to ourselves and we belong to the one who died and rose from the dead for us (1 Cor 6, 19) the one who we proclaim as OUR LORD. Baptism makes us witnesses of Christ in the world, even though this is seen more clearly in the Sacrament of Confirmation.

C. Text of Fr. Dehon

The life of God in us is a result of Baptism. Not only does God give us the grace, which is a created gift, but He gives of Himself.

It is the principal theme of the Epistles of St. Paul to the Ephesians and the Corinthians.

To the Ephesians: That God, according to the richness of His glory, strengthens the inner man through His Spirit. He makes Jesus Christ live, through the faith, in our hearts (Eph 3, 16).

"But be renewed in the Spirit of your mind and put on the new man which has been created according to God in justice and holiness of truth" (Eph 4, 23-24).

Do not grieve the Holy Spirit, with whom you have been sealed... (Eph 4, 30).

In the First Epistle to the Corinthians: The love of God was poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. (5, 5). Moreover: As for us, do not be under the dominion of the flesh, but under the dominion of the Spirit, if the Spirit of God still dwells in us....(8, 9).

This indwelling deals with what is the basis of ascetical theology. The XVII and XVIII centuries describe and analyze admirably this life of the love of God in us.

God does not only give us His Grace, which is a participation of the divine nature; He gives of Himself, through his greatness and sharing of the divine nature. He gives Himself and dwells in us as in a temple of his kingdom.

The Angel does not only say: “Hail Mary, full of grace”, but adds: The Lord is with you”. In a manner of due proportion, these same greetings occur for us.....

The elevation to the state of grace is accompanied by the indwelling of God, especially the Holy Spirit, in the children who are so blessed.

The state of grace comes from God, in the extent that in grace the soul is united and lives in God. God dwells in our hearts to accomplish everything that pertains to a supernatural life.

He is in our heart as a parent of the family in His own home; to govern it;

Like a teacher in His school to teach;

Like a gardener in His gardens to produce flowers and fruits;

Like a monarch in His kingdom to rule;

Like the sun in the world to illuminate it;

Like the soul in the body to give it life, emotion and action: What the soul is for the body, that is what God is for the soul (St. Augustine).

It is about a relationship of mutual affection, from friend to friend, son to father, husband to wife: A partnership of life and work that intimately unites one heart and one soul from two persons.

There is an ineffable union that Our Lord compares to the branch with the trunk, the head and the members of the body with the Triune God. St. Paul compares it to the union of matrimony, the union of the Father and of the Son, to the union of the graft with the branch, to the soul and the body.

The soul, in the state of grace, is the dwelling, the temple, the kingdom, the throne of God.

God and man long for (search for) each other more and more, like the sun and the atmosphere, the fire and the metal.

The complete Triune God lives in us: “And we will dwell in Him” (Jn 14, 23). The Son dwells in us in the same way as the Holy Spirit, through Grace (St. Thomas, Summa Theologica I, 1.43, a. 5).

Jesus is our life and our heart: “I am the Life (Jn 11, 25)- says the Savior, - I give life, I am life and “I came that you might have Life” {I am the Way, I came that they may have life (Jn 10, 10-11).

St. Paul says that Christ is our life {Christ is our way.} (Col 3,4).”To me, to live is Christ (Phil. 1,21). “It is not I who lives, it is Christ who truly lives in me” (Gal 2, 20). St. Thomas, referring to the Epistle to the Galatians, (Lesson VI): Paul’s soul was moved and given life through Jesus Christ (See [John] Eudes, II, 248, and [Gerard] Maynard, p. 270). St. Paul adds: “Christ Jesus is in us – Christ Jesus is in you.” (2Cor 13,5) and to the Ephesians, “Without Christ, you would be without God” (Eph 2, 12).

The Apostles Creed leads us to say: I believe in the Holy Spirit who gives us life”.

St. Paul says to the Romans: “The children of God are moved through the Spirit of God” (Rm, 8,14) Also: “The love of God filled our hearts with the Holy Spirit who gave Himself to us: “*Charitas Dei difusa est in cordibus nostris per spiritum sanctum qui datus est nobis*” (Rm 5,5).

St. Thomas says in the first part {of the *Summa Theologica*}, quest. 43: “Some gifts are attributed as suitable to the Son, such as illuminating the soul to a life of love. “As for the effects of the grace, two divine missions concur within us: the Son’s and the Holy Spirit’s; they form a kind of common root where different effects emerge: the enlightening of the Spirit and the inflammation of the heart.”.

Through grace, the Triune God dwells in us, in accordance with the word of Our Lord, in St. John: “We will go to Him and will make our dwelling in Him.” The Father gives of Himself; the Son and the Holy Spirit are sent by the Father. But this life of God in us, requires us to reciprocate; it is necessary that we act in return.

All our faculties come together in our life; through memory, we remember the presence of God, and this memory maintains our faith and self-respect. Through intelligence, we hear the insinuations of the divine grace; through the will, we obey the precepts and divine counsel: living a life of conformity and abandonment; through the heart, we enter into an affective piety. The memory dominates the *purgative stage* of our lives. We remember our dependence of God, we recall our sins, and we remember the last things. The acts of intelligence dominate the *illuminative stage* of our lives, during which in the meantime the purification of our souls continues. The acts of will and of the heart dominate the *unitive stage* of our life.

The Holy Liturgy records in every instance the actions of the Triune God within us. We pray to God our Father to act in us through His Son Jesus Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit. The second prayers which precedes the communion in the Holy Canon of the Mass: {“Jesus, Son of the living God”], show us this divine action: It is through the will of the Father and the cooperation of the Holy Spirit, that the Savior gives us life; and we ask Him for three levels in this life:

The purification of our sins;

Advancing in the practice of virtue;

And an inseparable union with God.

This is all about the sanctity and the interior and spiritual life.

(Fr. Dehon, *La Vie Intérieure. Ses principes*. Cap. II: OSP V, 15-8)

D. A moment of dialogue

A dialogue or reflection can be initiated from what is said in the Catechism of the Catholic Church about Baptism:

Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit, and the door which gives access to the other sacraments. Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as sons of God; we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission:

Baptism is birth into the new life in Christ. In accordance with the Lord's will, it is necessary for salvation, as is the Church herself, which we enter by Baptism.

The fruit of Baptism, or Baptismal grace, is a rich reality that includes forgiveness of original sin and all personal sins, birth into the new life by which man becomes an adoptive son of the Father, a member of Christ and a temple of the Holy Spirit. By this very fact, the person baptized is incorporated into the Church and made a sharer in the priesthood of Christ.

Also, you can share the texts of the Gospels that are about the Baptism of Jesus: symbols, presence of God, characteristics of Jesus and John the Baptist, responsibility and mission of Jesus since His Baptism.

Another possible point of reflection and moment for sharing can be a repetition of the theme regarding the symbols of Baptism: water, oil, chrism, etc., or initiate a dialogue for sharing.

E. Oral or written testimony:

“I would ask myself if my God, kind and generous, and in the one who I always believed in, might be Jesus Christ” (A New Christian).

I am a woman who was born in Iran in 1982. Since I was a little girl I always had beliefs. I believed in a God, kind and generous that gave a reason for our existence. However, those beliefs and that good God were not seen reflected in the education that I received during my childhood in Iran. My religion was seen as an obligation and the teachings which I received about God were too distant to the kind and understanding God in whom I believed in.

When I met my fiancée, I would listen to the beautiful stories that he would tell me about the Sunday Masses with his family. He recounted the manner in which they would enjoy Holy Week, and the way in which he and his family shared and enjoyed the Catholic Faith, I began to feel a profound interest in the Christian Religion and I would ask myself if my God, kind and generous in whom I always believed in might be Jesus Christ.

I continued asking him to go on and share with me his beliefs and his faith, and for him to tell me of his experiences and feelings during his Sunday masses, during his celebrations during Holy Week, his meditations during the processions...I would feel more and more interested in his Christian Faith. One day, when I lived in another country, I passed in front of a Church that was near where I lived, and all of a sudden I felt that I had to enter. I felt the calling of Jesus and I entered. I entered

without any purpose, without knowing why....I simply entered. A very kind woman, who ended up being my Catechist, greeted me and told me: "What can I help you with?" I explained my situation, that I had felt the necessity to enter, that I had heard God's calling. And there I was, with Sister Roberta of St. John Parish, sharing my anxieties, my feelings, my beliefs. My visits with Sister Roberta became more and more frequent and after several meetings I ended by finding a place for all my beliefs. I felt Jesus' calling, that merciful God in whom I always believed and finally I had found Him. I shared my experiences with Sister Roberta with my future husband and I told him my desire to be a baptized Catholic. He came to visit during his vacations and a precious time started in our lives. Every morning we would walk to St. John Parish to prepare to become a Christian. We would enjoy Sunday Mass, and would help Sister Roberta prepare for a new school year.

When I returned to Spain, I continued visiting Sister Roberta frequently, continuing my preparation and at the same time my faith grew more and more. This growth in my faith accompanied me on the most important step in my life, when my boyfriend, now my husband, proposed to me and we decided to form a new Christian family in Madrid. And, here I am, living as just one more Spanish woman, and as of last Sunday, beginning happily my way in the faith of God, being baptized as a new Christian. After months of preparation, conversations, experiences and a continued inner growth, I am prepared to receive the Body of Christ and share the Eucharist with our community and I am ready to continue my new journey as a Catholic through the upcoming marriage to my fiancée, creating a Christian family and continuing to believe in the Faith of God.

Sincerely,
A New Christian.

F. A moment of prayer or celebration

1. Hymn

2. Introduction

We Christians come into the Church through the rite of Baptism. This sacrament makes us belong to the Church; therefore, it makes us CHILDREN OF GOD. We reflect in this prayer about Baptism, about our mission in the Church. We are CHILDREN of God and we are in the Church to accomplish the mission that God has given us.

3. The Word of God

Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. John tried to prevent him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and yet you are coming to me?" Jesus said to him in reply, "Allow it now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he allowed him. After Jesus was baptized, he came up from the water and behold, the heavens were opened [for him], and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove [and] coming upon him. And a voice came from the heavens, saying, "This is my beloved Son,^{*} with whom I am well pleased".
(Matt. 3.14-17)

4. Story: *God Returns*

God was tall and athletic, dressed in white in the center of a stage. He had the demeanor of a star on the stage...

The humans would turn to God, small and dressed in black. They lived happily, content, because they had a point of reference, a light that to illuminate them.

Nearby, lived a group without God. Their lives were evil and without any sense of morality. One day, this latter group decided to stir up trouble in God's group, but at first God's group was able to resist the provocations of the corrupt group. But God's group, after being provoked many times, began to weaken and they let themselves be dragged down by the evil presented by the second group. And so it happened that both groups were blended together. They got to the point of expelling God.

In this society, chaos and complete confusion reigned. Each one wanted to be god. Each one wanted to occupy God's place. After a lot of challenges, there was someone, who was stronger than the rest who took charge and seated himself on God's throne.

This man was out of place. God's place was not his place. The man had expelled God from society. Now he was an orphan. He was without God.

In such a way, during many years that society lived in evil and sin. When they grew weary of their ways of sin, they reflected on their lives and came to the conclusion that only by calling upon God, could this society return to peace, tranquility and their inner serenity. So they sent a group to look for God. It took a long time to find Him, because there were so many that left God out of their lives that they aimlessly searched for Him. They finally found God. They invited him to enter their lives. God returned. God returned to humanity. God entered the hearts of each human being. Peace, tranquility and happiness returned to that society. God remained in them forever.

(From the book A.G. Barbosa, *Com Deus* [With God]).

5. Psalm 32 (31) – Remission of Sin

Happy is he whose fault is taken away, whose sin is covered.

Happy the man to whom the Lord imputes not guilt,
in whose spirit there is no guile.

As long as I would not speak, my bones wasted away

With my groaning all the day,

My strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.

Then I acknowledged my sin to you,

My guilt I covered not.

I said, "I confess my faults to the Lord,"

And you took away the guilt of my sin.

For this shall every faithful man pray to you in time of stress.

Though deep waters overflow, they shall not reach him.

You are my shelter; from distress you will preserve me;

With glad cries of freedom you will ring me round.

I will instruct you and show you the way you should walk;
I will counsel you, keeping my eye on you.
Be not senseless like horses or mules:
With bit and bridle their temper must be curbed, else they will not come near you.
Many are the sorrows of the wicked,
But kindness surrounds him who trusts in the Lord.
Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, you just;
Exult, all you upright of heart.

6. Symbol: *Baptism – Water and Chrism*

Water and Chrism are the symbols of Baptism. They signify the strength that comes from God and makes us Christians. Water and Oil are elements of our creation and we find them in our world. But God looks to them so that with them we might change our lives and through them we form part of the grand family which is Christianity. They are two elements that transform our lives, they strengthen us and makes us Children of God.

7. A moment of sharing (prayer, reflection, intercessions)

8. Shared Prayer. Words to share

- Baptism integrates the one baptized with the new life of God.
- With Baptism we become children of God in Christ Jesus; brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ with one same Father, God.
- Baptism is the visible expression of the identity of a Christian.

9. Final Hymn

Literature

Meeting IV

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

The objectives of the meeting

- To verify the dynamics of daily living
- To become aware of the dimensions that flow from our Baptism
- To present the Church as the People of God
- To see ourselves as followers of Jesus Christ
- Interiorize our life in the Spirit
- To reflect on the writings of Father Leo John Dehon regarding Christian living

The outline of the meeting: strategies and activities

This meeting strives to raise our consciousness regarding the various dimensions of Christian life from the perspective of Baptism and daily life.

The development of the meeting

A. Welcome

After the people have had some time to greet each other, have them sit down. The meeting could well begin with music. (Perhaps some recorded music could be played and all could listen.)

B. Theme of the reflection: *The Christian Life*

1. How is our life?

A part of our life is festive, it can be creative, it can come from creative experiences that give us joy and are truly self fulfilling. Any person can experience these moments of joy but there is so many more who suffer.

There exists in our lives so much more that is not joyful or self fulfilling. We include our routine and daily activities in this reflection. The simple things and the necessities of life, like paying taxes. These parts of life can bring us some satisfaction because we see ourselves as responsible and faithful to our obligations. We can find other activities and conditions that are helpful to us (such as physical exercise, communication with nature, good interpersonal relationships, creating a nice atmosphere and living peacefully.) All of these favor our personal growth and can free us from some of our human limitations.

The more sorrowful parts of life are more difficult to endure and accept. Each one of us has his or her calvary, cross, or physical and moral suffering, his or her problems.

Each existing person is both an expression of fullness and limitation. It is necessary to take all that life offers us as it happens. We are people who go on feeling, loving, and living. We should weave together or integrate life's three realities mentioned above, letting what is joyful prevail, especially what gives us a sense of meaning to our lives. If we give such a sense to our life, we can carry out

all that it entails. Look how a young person in love can make such sacrifices. Or consider a mother with her child.

Our daily existence and the hard knocks of life that keep us in touch with our realities, can bring us to take on the responsibilities and the unexpected moments in our lives and to recapture a spirit of optimism and hope.

Our joy is the source of life

It is necessary to learn to be joyful as well as serene, to be a person who celebrates and has a sense of humor. The person who has such a spirit of joy about him establishes warm relationships which promote some commonality with others and sets aside those things that make us sad. To live this joy in a Christian sense, the Christian looks to the Scriptures for thoughts about wisdom, human and divine. "To build up the state of perfect manhood, for the mature measure of the fullness of Christ." (Eph 4:13)

Where is the source of this joy and optimism? In God, who desires the happiness of his children. In as much as joy and optimism are Christian, sadness, anguish and pessimism do not form part of the message of the Gospel. Life is peace and joy. (Rom 8) joy in the faith (Phil 1,25), joy in hope (Rom 12,12) Joy in love and with love.(Gal 5,22)

Joy is a gift and a commitment

Christian joy is born out of the certainty that God is love and this love is born from the Passover, a movement from death to life, from sorrow to joy, from the penitent sinner to his conversion.

2. The Church as the People of God

The council (Vatican II) in choosing the expression, *the people of God* wishes to relate the Old Testament with the Church, and apply the same notions of the Chosen People (our call), the gathering (the congregation), the covenant (the commitment) and salvation (our liberation).

With the notion, the People of God, the Second Vatican Council understands that the entire Church in all its totality stresses the communitarian dimension of the Church. The accent on this attribute, the People of God, brings out the unity factor, the church community, and it is theological in nature (the initiative is from God, from the perspective of the Chosen people, and the Covenant.) excluding interpretations that are purely biological, racial, cultural, political and ideological stressing the word "people". From another angle, the expression *the Pilgrim People of God* emphasizes the historical, dynamic, and missionary dimension of the Church. A narrow definition comes about when we lose the central reference to the church, as, for example, in a frequent pre-conciliar use which puts People of God in opposition to the Hierarchical Church.

The church is people, but should be understood as the People of God, People of the Covenant or a Messianic People. Unfortunately, this idea is losing its central focus in the understanding of the nature of the Church, due to the connotations of an ideology and a sociology that concretely reduces the theological notion of the People of God.

3. The Church as a Community

The ecclesiology of *Lumen Gentium* is an ecclesiology of community. Community in the Church is a key notion of the Second Vatican Council. According to Vatican II and in the Church in particular: The idea of community does not consist in some vague sentimentality; but rather it evokes an organic reality which demands, simultaneously, an institutional form and a living movement through the love of the Holy Spirit.

The word community comes from the Greek word *koinonia* which also means participation, solidarity, union or community. They are in community who share in the benefits and the services. The Church community is community with Jesus Christ (the breaking of the bread and prayer) and with the brothers and sisters (fraternal community). The *koinonia* or community of faith and of salvation, liturgical participation, the same spirit, a community which benefits those most in need. The Church is “a community of faith, hope and love” (LG 8) “ a community of life, of love and of truth.”

4. The Church is for Service in the world

The Church, being a sacrament, does not exist for itself but for the world, to transform the world into the kingdom of God. It does not give service to itself but for the Kingdom in the world and to liberate it. The Church is that part of the world which, due to the power of the Spirit, welcomes the Kingdom explicitly in the person of Jesus Christ....it is not the Kingdom, but a sign and a mediation for its implementation in the world.

These three realities (the kingdom, the world, and the Church) are interwoven. The kingdom of God, as the realized utopia (eternal happiness), is the primary and definitive reality that encompasses the other two: the world, as the place in history for the kingdom and the fulfillment of the Church, and the Church as the sacramental fulfillment of the kingdom in a world and the mediation in which the kingdom is anticipated in the world but in a less dense manner. The Second Vatican Council changed our attitude regarding the world, from *anathema* (condemnation) we passed to dialogue, from a lack of trust to understanding.

The Church is in the world, in solidarity with humanity and with history. It is seen as a part of God's plan, which maintains in the world a communion with all men and women. Only in this way is the Church a sacrament: a sign or an instrument of God. This spirit of service of the Church in the world can be found expressed in the third Chapter 1, Part I of *Gaudium et Spes*, where it speaks of human activity in the world: “The church tries to freely be involved in the service of everyone, under whatever political government, that recognizes the fundamental rights of each person and family and for the benefit of the common good. “

The idea of service is what is probably most frequently found in the council texts and which was most in the Council fathers minds. The Church serves the world so that it will be more real and more just, until the Church and the world are converted in the Kingdom of God.

The Church proclaims itself the servant of humanity, precisely in the time when the magisterium and the pastoral direction of the Church were held in such high esteem due to the great solemnity of the Council; the idea of service occupied a central place.

5. Values of the Holy Spirit

The Spirit despises that which the world constantly values. Only those who dwell in the Holy Spirit will understand the way of Jesus of the Beatitudes (Mt. 5).

Without the Holy Spirit:

- God remains distant
- Christ cannot come through
- The Gospel is a dead letter
- The Church is simply an organization
- Authority is power
- Worship is old fashioned
- To behave morally, is to behave as slaves

With the Holy Spirit:

- The world transforms into the Kingdom of God
- The Risen Christ is present
- The Gospel comes alive
- The Church achieves the communion with God and with brothers and sisters.
- Authority transforms into service
- The Liturgy is a celebration
- To behave humanly is to behave as children of God

5.1 Sickesses that come from a lack of responsibility

1. One forgets that it is necessary to learn to be free and responsible. When they lived physically with Jesus during the three years of preaching about the Kingdom, the Apostles would let Jesus work alone, and would be content with applauding his miracles.
2. Since Jesus rose and gave them the Holy Spirit, they became aware that the mission of Jesus was their own mission.
3. One forgets that the Holy Spirit is the one working in us. Many times we work, not to progress spiritually, but to receive compliments and obtain privileges.
4. We scarcely listen to the voice of the Spirit who is in us. We rather listen to the voices of others but do not let ourselves be lead by them.
5. We forget the voice of the Holy Spirit, and thus we judge and condemn others, based on some legalistic idea of the laws and rules.
6. Forgetting about the Holy Spirit, we observe the rules and laws only for political or personal interests.

5.2 Healthy attitudes that indicate that we are responsible.

When we let ourselves be led by the Holy Spirit, our attitudes towards others show us to be just, merciful and honest.

- Justice makes us conduct ourselves with respect.
- Mercy makes us understand and forgive others faults.
- Honesty makes our words and our deeds real and genuine.

5.3 It is the Holy Spirit who calls us and entrusts us with a mission.

The Holy Spirit is likewise a fire that embraces and unites. It is like a breeze that impels us to express ourselves. The Holy Spirit came to earth to unite a humanity that is divided. He came to bring understanding to a divided world. We see this on the day of Pentecost, in which people from many countries, understand the same message in their own tongue (Acts 2,9-11), contrary to what happened with the Tower of Babel, where one community who spoke the same language stopped understanding (each other) (Gen 11,1-9).

The mission of the Holy Spirit puts us in charge of continuing his work of re-creation, reconstructing the love, that is, is unity, understanding, moving forward and forgiveness. To carry out this mission, he gives us the gifts of wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, piety and fear of God. *“Now the manifestation of the Spirit is given to everyone for profit.”* (1 Co 12,7). The early Christian community, when it wished to select someone for a mission or responsibility, would make sure that that person was filled with the Holy Spirit. (Acts 6,3-5). The Holy Spirit likewise continues today to help his Church with the fullness of his gifts.

C. Text of Fr. Dehon

“The interior spiritual life comes from our meditation, our goals, and objectives. We do not act instinctively or spontaneously.

For the philosophers such as Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, and Seneca, the ideal of the inner life is purely rational, for them an approximation of revealed truth. There are also some whose inner life, is motivated by hatred and strong emotions. The simple man has a kind of inner life; a popular wisdom, healthy emotions and the philosophy of the proverbs.

For Christians, the inner life has a special characteristic: it is a life guided by the truths of the faith and helped by the lights of the grace of God. A life between two persons: God with us, and us with God. All the inner Christian life could be named a life of faith, a life of the presence of God, and a life in union with God.

The foundation of the Christian life is faith in God our Creator, Redeemer and the One Who Rewards us; and it is faith in the Spirit who dwells in us and gives us life. The ascetical authors propose for us various ways to elevate our life of faith, penance, perfection and of love (such as, study, practice of perfection, meditation, and imitation of the virtues of God). Many persons study and practice the ways of perfection, meditation and the imitation of the virtues of the Lord

(Fr. Dehon, OSP 5, 13-14).

D. A moment of dialogue

- What are some of the great characteristics of the Christian Life?
- What is essential in human life?
- What are attitudes of irresponsibility?
- What are attitudes of responsibility?

E. Oral or Written testimony

Castro Family: A brief biography (A Portuguese Family)

The Castro Family began on June 25, 1966, when Carlos and Isaura got married before the Church and society, in Luanda, in Holy Family Parish Church. They joined together in the desire to begin a family that could live in the shadow of the Heart of Jesus, in imitation of the Holy Family.

“The next year, June 23, 1967, our eldest daughter (Elena Fatima) was born in Carmona, a city north of Angola, where we were sent by our jobs. On March 22, 1969, our son (Carlos Manuel) was born, in Lisbon; on November 12, 1970 our third child (Teresa Margarida) was born in Luanda in Angola. Also, in Luanda, on October 23, 1971, our daughter (Ana Maria) was born. Isaura asked for a leave of absence (Junta Automatica de Carreteras) so she would be able to take care of the younger children. Having obtained the leave, she was able to attend to them until their professional studies were completed”.

In 1974, (April 25) the Portuguese Revolution took place, and on June 25th, our fifth child (Maria Bernardette) was born. Given the dangerous circumstances, it was necessary to make rapid decisions for the safety of the children and the parents. After a short stay in Portugal, between July 1974 and January 1975, they all arrived in Sao Paulo, Brazil on January 25th (The feast of St. Paul). “I had to restart life without money (only 30 escudos) and practically without clothes. I abandoned my medical studies and my employment at the Bank of Angola. I began work again as a travelling salesman, then as a taxi driver, also as a small business owner and manager of the business department of a small company. In starting over, I received the welcome of a cousin who also owned a small business; this was very important. This is where I quickly learned whom I could count on for help. There was little time to eat and rest because the day began very early and ended very late; each minute counted... With the burden of my job and hard work, I did not pay attention to the family and never took time to pray.

When we had the opportunity to have our own business, we, the parents, seized the opportunity, working day and night. I, the father, began my day at four o'clock in the morning. Every afternoon, from 2 to 6, I would go to the market to get fruit and vegetables for the small Quitanda (a kind of popular restaurant which includes a bar). I would open up at 6 in the morning, to offer and serve a small breakfast to the employees of the surrounding businesses. My wife would be there very early and was on duty all day”.

At 9:00 in the morning, the father would start his job at a company, where later, because of his competence, dedication and business abilities, he was made a sales representative to contract customers. At the end of the afternoon, at 6PM, after he finished his job at the company, he drove a taxi in the city for several hours until 1:00 o'clock in the morning. Pertaining to the mother's work, she would close the restaurant, the Quitanda, at about 11:30 PM; but she still had to prepare for the following day. So she did not go home until midnight. During the day she would ask her older children, ages 7 and 8, to attend to any customers, since business was pretty slow

The mother would do the house work: sweep, tidy up, wash, prepare breakfast, lunch and supper. At the end of the night, after they had eaten, they prayed the rosary. Sometimes some were asleep but the ones who remained awake prayed together. The older children helped in preparing the meals,

taking care of the younger children, and as they grew older, the younger ones were initiated into the work routine and the struggles of their parents. On weekends, there was more time for them to spend together and, on those occasions, after breakfast, they would spend the afternoon on family matters. On this matter, when something was not right, they would try to listen to each other and that seemed to make everything all right.

At that time there was great unrest in Sao Paulo. There were many break-ins and street crimes; and their house was broken into almost every week and more than once. Construction of a subway in the city relocated many of the businesses, and the restaurant lost many customers, and eventually closed. Also, at that time the owners of the house where they lived did not renew their lease. Then they sold the place to make way for a more modern building. The family needed to look for another place to live. So, after much discussion, in 1982, the decision was made to return to Portugal. This would give the children a chance for a quieter life. On July 10, 1982, they landed at the airport in Lisbon, all, except the father, who stayed in Brazil to finish his exams to be certified in Economics. He completed this on November 30, 1982.

These were trying times: again without a house, with very little hope of reconstructing everything again and working for the State. There was little hope for a calmer life. In the first year, during vacation, they were welcomed at the House of St. Vincent de Paul and stayed until September of the next year in Santo Domingo de Benfica, they stayed in the house of a relative, who had immigrated to the United States. In that year, mother reinstated herself to public service. It was a very difficult year for everyone to adapt: from social habits to the life style, the language, and the school. They were in crisis and it was necessary for them to get up early to go get milk for the family so they could have breakfast. Two or three of the children would go and get in the lines at the bakery and other stores, due to the rationing of some of the food. However, in all of this, the family was hopeful that working together they would succeed. We did not have a clothes washer, so that year, at winter time, all the clothes had to be washed by hand by mother and the older sister.

The family's day was work and prayer. At the end of the day, they would gather together to pray the rosary and read the bible, to give thanks to God for everything He did for them and ask that He bless all their efforts and struggles, especially those of the parents. In spite of everything, the father was reinstated at the bank in 1985. The following year (1986), they bought a house in Queluz, which was remodeled. The father and the two older sons did the work on the weekends. At that time, things began to be better. We had more stability and tranquility. The parish was welcoming and became a very important part in the Christian formation of the family. Especially Father Alberto Neto earned their great affection and respect.

In 1987, we bought a bigger house, allowing more space for everyone. Later on, they bought another house in the same neighborhood for more space. In this constant struggle, making an effort to give their children the opportunity to study, the parents were able to help their children obtain their degrees and support all their decisions and their career choices. This was not always easy, accepting and loving them as they are. In all the difficulties, prayer has been a safe refuge to see how God is so great in the small things and in all the day to day worries. He always has an answer in time of anxiety. We are also grateful, as well, because through friends, the constant presence of the love of God is felt. And it is this love which this family experiences, that they wish to share and

give testimony day by day, in their family, and in new families that, besides their own, will be formed.

F. A moment of prayer or celebration

1. Song

2. Introduction

Christian life begins at Baptism. Each Christian grows and nurtures in his faith until he or she chooses their career and life style. Having the option to live a Christian life as a basis, he continues to contribute to the betterment of society and of the Christian community, with its capabilities and possibilities.

3. The Word of God

“There are different gifts but the same Spirit; there are different ministries but the same Lord; there are different works but the same God who accomplishes all of them in everyone. To each person the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one the Spirit gives wisdom in discourse, to another the power to express knowledge. Through the Spirit one receives faith; by the same Spirit another is given the gift of healing, and still another miraculous powers. Prophecy is given to one; to another power to distinguish gift of tongues, another that of interpreting the tongues. But it is one and the same Spirit who produces all these gifts, distributing them to each as he wills. The body is one and has many members, but all the members, many though they are, are one body; and so it is with Christ. It was in one Spirit that all of us, whether Jew or Greek, slave or free, were baptized into one body. All of us have been given to drink of the one Spirit” (1Cor 12, 4-13).

4. Story: *See God face to face*

There was once a carpenter who told his boss that he wanted to retire. The boss asked him to build only one more house. Against his wish, he did the will of his boss. He built the house using poor materials. When he finished it, the boss inspected it and offered him the house, since it would be his last construction. If he had known that he was constructing his own house, surely it would be different and it would have been better. Everyone is a carpenter in his own life. Life is a project that we should accomplish with love and care.

5. Psalm 1 – True Happiness

Happy the man who follows not the counsel of the wicked
Nor walks in the way of sinners, nor sits in the company of the insolent,
But delights in the law of the Lord and meditates on his law day and night.
He is like a tree planted near running water,
That yields its fruit in due season, and whose leaves never fade.
(Whatever he does, prospers)
Not so the wicked, not so; they are like chaff which the wind drives away.
Therefore in judgment the wicked shall not stand, nor shall sinners, in the assembly of the just.
For the Lord watches over the way of the just,
But the way of the wicked vanishes.

6. Symbol: *The Creed*

Open the missal to the page of the Creed, to demonstrate that The Creed is the symbol of the Christian faith.

7. A moment of sharing (prayer, reflection, intercessions)

8. Shared Prayer. Words to share

- I believe in Jesus Christ, one like us, different than us, the Messiah, the anticipated, the Anointed, who is in our midst.
- To anoint is the same as to cover with oil those who hold important positions: kings, priests and prophets. The people expected a more important person who was the Anointed One.
- Then he called himself Jesus, the Anointed.
- Through Baptism, we are also his children.
- First the people called themselves disciples, Christians, because they announced Jesus Christ. Little by little they were called Church which means a people living in union with one another.
- In the Church, we are all the same. We are all children of God. Each one of us has a different function just like the members of our body.

Add other phrases

9. Final Hymn

Literature

Meeting V

FROM THE DEVOTION TO THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE HEART OF JESUS

The objectives of the meeting

- Definition of “spirituality”
- Study different spiritualities
- Become aware that spirituality is a symbol of the spiritual life
- Reflect our spirituality in our celebrations
- Live our spirituality in everyday life
- Meditate on the spirituality of the Heart of Jesus

The outline of the meeting: strategies and activities

Review the devotion and spirituality of the Heart of Jesus.

The development of the meeting

A. Welcome

Once the participants have been greeted and welcomed, they are asked to be seated, while meditative music is played in the background which invites them to a quiet, centered state.

B. Theme of the reflection: *From the Devotion to the spirituality of the Heart of Jesus*

We begin with a reflection on this theme, prepared by the facilitator; make a PowerPoint of the texts and afterwards the participants discuss. Groups can be formed, and each group discuss one theme, followed by sharing in the whole group. Further points can be found in the appendix.

1. Questions

People have always asked profound questions like Why are we here? What is our role in relationship with other human beings? How can we assure a hopeful future of Mankind? What awaits us after this life? In the context of these questions, we begin the theme of spirituality.

The term “spirituality” applies to many different situations: we speak of spirituality of work, of business, of the earth, Franciscan spirituality, Dehonian spirituality. This diversity can lack focus; the word has no single meaning. First, let us say that each person has a spirituality. Thus we can say there are seven billion spiritualities, one for each person on the earth. It is very personal, coming from one’s personality and experience.

Leonardo Boff (a Brazilian theologian) was amazed that large businesses were interested in topics like spirituality, the meaning of life, and the universe. This suggests that the material goods they produce, are not sufficient for happiness. There is a great void within the human person which raises questions such as gratuity, spirituality and the future of life and the earth. If we search for a

book on spirituality, it is more likely to be found in the esoteric section of the bookstore, not in the religion section. More people shop in the esoteric section than in the religious section. Why? Religion, as a gathering of doctrines, rituals, and practices, which seeks to establish contact between the human and the divine, supposes a belief that life has meaning, and the structuring of life in accord with those beliefs. Religion contributes to the happiness of person and groups, giving meaning to human existence, (Student manual, Catholic Religion 7th year – Portugal, 56-57).

Religion does not offer magical solutions, nor does it excuse people from using their freedom, or from fulfilling their obligations. Esoteric studies, on the contrary, offer amazing and exciting solutions. A society in which one forgets the relationship between rights and responsibilities, religion becomes hated and disagreeable, because it goes against the dominant logic, which barely has rights. Esoteric beliefs do not ban anything, do not threaten anyone, do not ask anything, but they satisfy our curiosity, entertain, and at times offer surprising and exciting solutions. For many people, religion is demanding, boring, and disagreeable. Sincerely, spirituality has many meanings and our minds cannot always keep from mixing up all its meanings.

2. The definition of spirituality

Spirituality is a wider concept than religion. It is a human phenomenon. It belongs to human nature. Spirituality requires thought and feelings and clear concepts. Spirituality and intelligence are connected. This is not to say that more intelligent people are also more spiritual; but spirituality is not the same as naiveté or ignorance. To experience the world as something more than immediate stimulation is a form of advancing in spirituality.

Therefore, one could say that spirituality is that human activity and disposition, in which a human being seeks meaning in his or her life, a purpose and values which surpass the satisfaction of needs and desires which are encountered in the ordinary lives of most people. Spirituality represents a higher level, or, we could say, a deeper level in human life.

Spirituality produces an interior transformation. If it does not transform, it is not spirituality. A cloak which does not cover is not a cloak. If dogmas, rituals and even morality are made absolute, religious institutions become a tomb of the living God.

For Leonardo Boff (2008) religion has become divorced from spirituality. Rather than charismatic and spiritual people, we have produced bureaucrats. Instead of shepherds in the midst of the people we have spiritual authorities. They do not wish to be creative, but rather obedient. They do not seek spiritual maturity, but infantile subordination. The result is mediocrity, accommodation. In the absence of prophets, the word becomes mute.

Spirituality deals with experience, not with doctrines or rituals, which are institutional paths which can aid our spirituality. They spring from spirituality they can support our spirituality, but they are not spirituality in themselves. Spirituality springs from gratitude and willingness; from the capacity for kindness and compassion; from respect for what is real and for what one hears; from the real message which is heard and must be passed on.

Spirituality is a dimension of every person; that dimension we share and manifest through our capacity for dialogue which each one has with their own heart, with their own deepest self, and

which is expressed in love, understanding, listening to the other, in responsibility, and in care as a fundamental attitude.

3. Christian spirituality

Spirituality is life lived according to the spirit, a form of life which allows itself to be led by the Spirit of Christ. It is common to present spirituality as a synonym of life, under the action of the Spirit. In this way, spirituality embraces the whole of human life; not only the spirit, but also the body; not only one's individual life, but one's social relationships, as member of the Church and of the human race. All this is included when we speak of "life guided by the Spirit."

This understanding overcomes the obsolete dualism between body and soul, material and spiritual. Spirituality affects all that a man or woman is. When we live our spirituality, we will be fulfilled and be completely ourselves. Spirituality well understood and well practiced fulfills our humanity, and completes our most authentic human desires. Spirituality is the concrete way to live the Gospel, inspired by the Spirit, in any situation. Julio Lois says: "*Spirituality is the concrete way in which believing Christians live the Gospel, moved by the spirit.*" Spirituality, according to Hans Urs von Balthasar, (a Swiss theologian) is "a basic existential attitude, uniquely human, which is the result and the expression of one's religious life, or, in general, of one's existence." Basically it is a way of life in accordance to the Gospel.

4. Devotions

Prayer occupied a fundamental role in the first Christian communities, sanctifying the basic moments of the day. Those prayers included the Lord's Prayer, kneeling prayer as a sign of penitence, and standing prayer, with arms open, symbolizing the cross, during Easter time. By the fourth century a cult of martyrs developed, with painted or sculpted images in the catacombs serving to increase devotion, through prayer. Once the persecutions had ceased, those who were distinguished for their virtue were honored, as were hermits, monks, and angels. The cult of Mary also began in the early centuries, especially after Nestorius had denied that she was the Mother of God.

Also in the fourth century began the veneration of images, genuflections, kisses, candles, flowers, burning of incense, and other practices. Pilgrimages to shrines of martyrs (St Cyprian, St. Martin of Tours), the catacombs, and to the Holy Land also began at that time.

In the Middle Ages the veneration of images, and of relics of saints, continued to develop.

When the bodies of saints were re-interred from the catacombs to the basilicas, a greater interest in the bodies of the saints, and personal objects, began. The Synod of Paris in 822 lamented that people did not pray unless there was a relic present.

Saturday became a day dedicated to our Blessed Mother. The tombs of St. Peter, St. Paul, St. James of Compostela, and of St. Martin of Tours, as well as the Holy land, became the goals of pilgrimages. The devotion to the Five Wounds (Passion of Christ) and to the Blessed Sacrament achieved great prominence in the Low Middle Ages, which continues to the present day. Veneration of saints and relics continued to spread, especially after the Crusades and the conquest of Constantinople (1204).

The Hail Mary was added to the traditional prayers. From this developed the devotion to the Rosary and the Scapular and other popular Marian devotions. The angelus also appeared in the Middle Ages in the 13th century. Devotion to the Heart of Jesus and to the Eucharist (frequent communion) as well as the devotion to Mary was fostered. May became the month of the month of the rosary, and frequent pilgrimages to Marian shrines, especially Lourdes and Fatima began to take place. Modern devotions tend to be less exuberant, becoming more trinitarian and Christological, Marian and ecclesial.

5. Apparitions

The devotion to the Heart of Christ teaches us to interpret everything in the light of love. It is always the mystery of love which is revealed to us in the Heart of Christ. God reveals himself as love. In God's loving presence, one does not feel repelled, but invited to goodness. The great characteristics of this love can be summed up in two points:

The first, is kindness, in the necessity for union. The history of humanity shows us a God who invites people to be united with him, so that humanity can be united in a communion of love. The Bible is full of images which show the nature and the intimacy of union (the temple, the olive, the body). It has also images of a personal character (the covenant, friendship, the Reign of God, marriage).

The second characteristic of the spirituality of the heart of Jesus is the necessity of interiority. The face of Christ, his wounds, and the blood of Jesus are testimonies of love which envelop every spirit. The mystics tell us that love cannot be achieved except through self-giving, going out of oneself, to identify with the other, in a union of two. The encounter of the human heart with the Heart of God causes a transformation. St. Paul says "it is no longer I who live, it is Christ who lives in me." (Gal. 2,20) This vital identification, the sharing of hearts, is the presence of Christ in our hearts and of ourselves in the Heart of Christ.

The identification of the human heart with the heart of Christ is a tradition since the revelations to St. Margaret Mary and St. Gertrude.

6. The Heart of Jesus

In the twelfth century, a new form of spirituality began, based on the Heart of Jesus. The saving Heart of Jesus is seen as the symbol of the love which God has for us, the human race.

The foundation of the Sacred Scripture is found in the God of love (Jer 31,3; 1Jn 4,8). God directs humanity through love and mercy (Dt. 7,7) which culminates in the redeeming death of the Son of God: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son" (John3, 16). Thus Jesus reveals God's love for us: a love which gives its life for us (Eph. 5,2).

In the Gospel of John (19, 37-39) the evangelist asserts two things: from the open side flowed forth blood and water (blood signifying redemption, and water signifying life). Secondly, the evangelist invites humanity to stand at the foot of the cross and contemplate "the one who has been pierced." The open side of Christ is the sanctuary of love, and the portal to life.

6.1. St. John Eudes

St. John Eudes (1601-1680), formed in the school of Fr. Berulle (centered in the contemplation and imitation of the interior attitudes of Jesus and Mary) was the first zealous apostle of the liturgical cult of the Hearts of Jesus and Mary. In 1641 he founded two congregations of men and women, dedicated to the Sacred Hearts of Mary and Jesus. In 1643 he began to celebrate the feast of the Heart of Mary, joined to the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. In June of 1672 he began to celebrate the feast of the Heart of Jesus with its own Divine Office, Mass and Litany.

6.2. St. Margaret Mary Alocque (1648-1690)

This saint had a special privilege. The human heart of Jesus was revealed to her. She was called to proclaim the mystery of God's merciful and faithful love, insulted and rejected by humanity. Her writings not only call our attention to the physical reality of the Heart of Christ, they also present the symbolic value of the one who loves, and the greatness of his love. The personal encounter with the love of God, manifested in the Heart of Christ, seeks a personal response through a consecration to it.

Reparation is understood as opposition to sin, and service of merciful love.

The principal practices of reparation (adoration, Holy hour, First Fridays, statues and scapulars, consecration of individuals, of families, of nations, and pilgrimages to sanctuaries) became well-known to the Christian faithful. Fr. Ramière, with the Apostolate of Prayer, Fr. Dehon with the Apostolate of Reparation, and Fr. Mateo Craw-Boevey with the Enthronement of the Sacred Heart, contributed to the spread of this devotion. Changes in public attitudes affected the devotion during the 1950's.

C. Text of Fr. Dehon

According to Fr. Dehon, the Gospel describes the divine calls in different forms; personal calls, general calls, and calls in forms of parables. He says:

Personal calls: Jesus called the apostles to the apostolic life and the interior life: "Leave everything and follow me." "Come follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matt. 4,19). Then he calls James and John: "leave your families and your possessions and follow me." The common life with the divine Master symbolizes and produces in them the interior life. When disciples ask to go bury their dead, Jesus tells them "follow me, and let the dead bury the dead." (Matt. 8, 22) He also calls a youth, but he lacks courage: "If you wish to be perfect, go, sell what you have, give the money to the poor; and afterwards you will have treasure in heaven; and then come and follow me" (Matt. 19, 21).

General calls: God offers the grace of union, the gift of the interior life to persons of good will. Jesus says to his disciples: "If anyone wishes to come after me, let him renounce himself, take up his cross, and follow me" (Matt. 16, 24) Leave people behind, leave yourself behind, your own will, and earthly things, to follow Jesus: is this not the program of the interior life?

Jesus responds: "I am the bread of life. Who comes to me will not hunger and who believes in me will never thirst again." (Jn 6, 35). Fr. Dehon continues: whoever follows Jesus in the life of faith, receives from him the mystical food for the interior life. In the discourse of the Last Supper, he

explains the purpose of the Banquet: First promise of the Spirit: “If you love me, you will keep my commands and I will ask the Father and he will give you another Paraclete, who will always be with you, the Spirit of Truth, which the world cannot receive because it neither saw him or knew him. But you will know him, because he remains in you and is with you.” All these conditions for union with God can be summed up in these words, putting them in practice and living in love.

(Fr. Dehon, OSP V, pp. 233-235)

D. A moment of dialogue

- What are devotions?
- What is spirituality?
- What is the essence of devotion to the Heart of Jesus?

E. Oral or written testimony

Testimony about the devotion to the spirituality of the Heart of Jesus

- by Regina de Jesús Porto Rodrigues. Director of the Dehonian Missionary Group of Queijas- Portugal (to be read aloud or silently)

The devotion to the Heart of Jesus awoke in me the delight of silent prayer before the tabernacle. I began to meditate on the Corona of the Heart of Jesus and the Divine Mercy. I meditated on the daily readings of the Word of God, meditating in between. I also read the psalms. It was the confidence I felt in meditating on the psalm “The Lord is my shepherd, nothing shall I want” that the greatness of his Heart led me to interpret everything in the light of the LOVE OF GOD.

Before all, I want to refer to God’s relationship to us: God loves us just as we are ... accuses me of nothing ... God’s love is perfect! This led me to meditate on the human values of the Heart of Jesus. I will only mention goodness, respect, trust. With this trust I gained a desire for silent prayer, meditating on the greatness of the Love of the Heart of Jesus, meditating on his open side, from which flowed blood and water! It was a marvelous experience. It is good to feel surrounded by love and mercy! It leads me to complete trust... I felt the desire to be more. The retreats I made in Afragide were very important to me. I prayed countless times: “Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make my heart like yours.” I began to meditate: Jesus gave up everything for love, a TRINITARIAN LOVE – in goodness and kindness, an unconditional love, with which he gave himself up to the cross, for us!

I think we need to learn this same love, to offer ourselves for each other in soul and heart. For me, this is the mission I am slowly becoming aware of. It is a dedication without expecting a reward. God did not save us by the cross, but by love, through the cross. The Church must share this love with every creature. This is “the great commission” – “Go, and teach all nations.”

Without being aware of it, I felt united to the Dehonian mission. At times I asked myself: “What can I do? I will do whatever comes, but only for love.” One is not rich for what he has, but for what he gives. I am not talking about material things (though they are necessary) but of giving of ourselves. What can a person give to another? To give of oneself, joy, understanding, knowledge,

the capacity to listen, to give one's life. Thus the other is enriched, is valued. When one gives, they always receive back.

God gives us our existence because God is good. "Good always spreads itself." My own dignity is related to the necessity of the other person. We are at the service of others, with respect, trust, and love. To be in mission means to respect the other. Psalm 127 tells us that human effort is useless without God. Jesus also told us: "without me you can do nothing."
It is the Spirit of God that does all in all.

In that spirit, I pray: Lord Jesus, I trust in you!

F. A moment of prayer or celebration

1. Hymn

2. Introduction

The devotion of the Heart of Jesus appears when society is most divided and confused. It has always been a means to attract people to God and institute justice and peace between people.

3. The Word of God

"While he was eating with them, he bid them not to leave Jerusalem, but to await the Promise of the Father, which I spoke to you: John baptized with water, but you will be baptized by the Holy Spirit in a few days. Those with him asked: "Lord, is this the time when you will establish the Reign of God?" He responded: "To you has not been given to know the time which has been fixed by the Father's authority, but you will receive the Holy Spirit, which will come upon you, and you will be my witnesses, in Jerusalem, in Samaria and Galilee, and to the ends of the earth."

And having said this, he was lifted up in their presence, and a cloud covered him from their sight. While they were staring up into heaven, two men appeared to them, dressed in white, who asked, "Galileans, why are you looking up to heaven? This Jesus who has been lifted up, will come in the same way you have seen him rise." (Acts 1, 4-11)

4. Story: *Two types of persons*

It is possible to divide people into two groups, without making judgments about them. The first group does not believe in the transcendent, the supernatural, or religion or in God; it is limited to the human dimension. They can find happiness within their environment in which they live. They are like the frog who is happy in its cave, unaware of the world outside its little space. It asks the eagle to fly away, because it wishes it could fly. And the eagle goes. The frog remains on the ground. Is this not like the situation of those who do not wish to leave their little cave? And when they leave, they wish to be like God; they want to take God's place. They do not feel like children of God, God's heirs. They should live up to their potential, but they cannot. This is the great challenge. A second group of people does believe in the transcendent, the spiritual. Their happiness is not limited to this world, but extends to the divine world, which aids a person to surpass earthly reality. The human person is not God, but participates in the divine dimension. This divine dimension enlightens human life.

5. Psalm 127 – Human effort is useless without God

Unless the LORD build the house,
they labor in vain who build.
Unless the LORD guard the city,
in vain does the guard keep watch.
It is vain for you to rise early
and put off your rest at night,
To eat bread earned by hard toil—
all this God gives to his beloved in sleep.
Certainly sons are a gift from the LORD,
the fruit of the womb, a reward.
Like arrows in the hand of a warrior
are the sons born in one's youth.
Blessed is the man who has filled his quiver with them.
He will never be shamed
for he will destroy his foes at the gate.

6. Symbols: *Fire and a dove*

The Holy Spirit is symbolized by fire and by a dove. The Spirit is the one who raises up in the church different charisms and spiritualities to help Christians to focus their attention on Christ through different paths. The Spirit strengthens and animates us to live as Christians, within the Church.

7. A moments of sharing (prayer, reflection, intercessions)

8. Shared prayer. Words to share

- HOLY SPIRIT OF FREEDOM,
Which threatens our secure life, free me –
Grant me true liberty.

- HOLY SPIRIT OF JUSTICE,
Which does not give up in the face of injustice,
Forgive me.
Help me achieve justice.

- HOLY SPIRIT OF TRUTH,
Which destroys every lie,
Discomfort me
Make me serve the truth

- HOLY SPIRIT OF PEACE,
Which calms violence,
Fill me
Help me accept your peace.

- HOLY SPIRIT OF POVERTY,
Which destroys all security
Purify me
Help me to live in simplicity.

- HOLY SPIRIT,
The wind which blows wherever it wishes
Inflame me with the fire of your love
To renew the face of the earth.

(by Thiago Samé)

9. Final Hymn

Literature

Meeting VI

DIFFERENT FORMS OF LIFE IN THE CHURCH

The objectives of the meeting

- Deepen the understanding of the different states of life in the church: laity, consecrated religious life, and ordained priesthood
- Discover that the character of life in the Church is communion, NOT hierarchy
- Understand the mission of the Church through the manifestations of laity, consecrated religious life, and ordained priesthood

The outline of the meeting: strategies and activities

The fourth meeting described the character of the Church as the communion of all its members. It also develops itself through these different forms of life: laity, consecrated religious life, and ordained priesthood. The first activity will be: dialog about the different ways to participate in the Church: laity, consecrated religious life, and ordained priesthood. Clarify the function, charism, mission and work in the church.

It is also possible to ask the following questions to stimulate discussion:

- Is the Church a sign of communion in its different vocations, or a sign of hierarchy?
- In the Church, is the ministry of lay people appreciated?

Development of the meeting

A. Welcome

Display different photos of laity, consecrated religious, and ordained priests who are recognized by the group. Begin a dialogue about the mission which they fulfill in the Church; service to the most poor, etc..

B. Theme of the reflection: *Different forms of life in the Church: laity, consecrated religious life, and ordained priesthood*

This theme may be presented with a diagram or power point to aid understanding. They may participate in small groups with a large gathering afterwards to share the insights of the small groups.

Introduction. When we began to discuss the diverse forms of life in the Church, we must appreciate the complementarity of the forms of life. The Church is a communion of charisms and ministries, interrelated among themselves. If we wish to speak of the lay state, we cannot ignore the religious life and the ordained priesthood

1. The priesthood of the bishop, and the priests who surround him, form a “holy order” which does not constitute, properly speaking, a higher dignity of participation in the grace of Christ. The sacrament of orders is not, pardon the expression, a “super-baptism” which establishes a class of “super-Christians”. In the diversity of works and responsibilities, all are ruled by the same

spiritual principle: the following of Christ. All participate in the same life, all enjoy the same grace and the same sacraments.

2. Ecclesial character: The Second Vatican Council rediscovered the vocation of the entire people of God to sanctity, to mission, to ministry which is the responsibility of all the baptized; a participation in the common mission of the Church, and of equal dignity. This leads to a theology of the laity seen in a positive light; laity are not the “non-ordained”, but have their own identity. All this is authorized by the Council, which gave a new interpretation of the lay life.
3. Historic character: History has given form to the three states of life in the church which we can call laity, consecrated religious life, and ordained priesthood. All participate in the vocation of Christians but each follows their own vocation in the complementarity of charisms and vocations.
4. When we discuss this theme, it is important not to confuse “the baptized” with “the laity”. The state of all Christians is to be People of God, called in Latin “*crisifidelis*”, which makes us one people: laity, consecrated religious life, and ordained priesthood. All vocations in the Church arise from a single foundation, common to all the faithful.
5. Missionary character: The laity are involved in the world, in its most mundane aspects, and so the Council insists that the secular world is the specific locus on the lay vocation. The Reign ferments the world in its most internal structures through the “consecration of the world” achieved by the laity from within it (*Lumen Gentium*, chap IV). The council therefore, in LG 31, in its definition of the laity, clarifies that the lay person is NOT a religious or an ordained clergy, because the laity, “according to their position”, realize “the mission of the entire People of God, in the Church and in the world.”
6. The laity are those who ought to live the Gospel in the secular reality. They have their place in mission in the secular world; the secular is the proper place for their state of life. Since it is not possible to sum up all of the Christian experience in the world, it is necessary that each state of life be active in its own element. The secular world is not the sole place for the laity, the sacramental to the ordained and the eschatological to the consecrated life, but they must interact and complement each other. *Vita Consecrata* says:

“The laity, according to the secular character of their vocation, reflect the ministry of the Incarnate Word as the Alpha and Omega of the world, the basis and the measure of the worth of created things. Sacred ministers, on the other hand, are giving images of Christ as head and pastor, who gives his people in this time of “already but not yet” awaiting his glory.

And the consecrated life has the mission to symbolize the Son of God made human as the eschatological end toward which all is directed, the glory which outshines all other light, the infinite beauty which alone can satisfy the human heart.

Therefore, in the consecrated life one does not only seek to follow Christ with all one’s heart, as is asked of every disciple, but to live and express a faithfulness conformed to Christ in every aspect, in the global tension which anticipates, as far as possible, the eschatological perfection.” (VC 16; see also n. 31).

Conclusion. The conciliar doctrine of chapter five of *Lumen Gentium* assures us that all of the states of life in the Church are open to the fullness of the Christian life, so that all -- laity, consecrated

religious life, and ordained priesthood – are called to sanctity. In the communion of charisms and ministries, each one in its own place in the common mission of announcing the Gospel, all vocations are equally sanctifying, an complementary to each other, such than none is superior or more perfect than the other in the following of Christ. All of them strive to live the Christian ideal, so that “the characteristic of the ideal Christian is such that, there can be no differentiation between the specific vocations, estes, for conditions of life offered to Christians” (J. R. Villar).

C. Text of Fr. Dehon

The Heart of Jesus and youth

A young person approached Jesus, and asked: “Master, what must I do to obtain eternal life?” Jesus responded: “Why do you ask me what is good? There is only one good. So if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.” He asked: “Which? Jesus responded: “Do not kill, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false witness; honor your father and your mother, and love your neighbor as yourself,” The youth answered: “I have kept these; what do I lack?” Jesus replied: “If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your goods, give it to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then, come, follow me.” (Matt. 19, 16-21)

First Prelude: There is nothing as pleasant as youth, when it is adorned with honesty and modesty. Our Lord could not help but be attracted.

Second Prelude: But what dangers await the inexperienced! Let us pray for them, help them.

FIRST POINT: *graces of resurrection:* - The time of youth, no less than infancy, is loved by the Divine Master for its frankness, its ardor, its generosity and the hope it conceives. The graces of resurrection which are given in our mortal lives are given to youth; Lazarus was still young; the daughter of Jairus was twelve; the son of the poor widow of Naim was an adolescent.

What care and kindness Jesus shows in those circumstances! His emotion moves our hearts.

“Master, the one you love is sick” say the sisters of Lazarus. Jesus says, “He is asleep.” When Jesus saw Magdalene and the friends of Lazarus weep, he shudders, he is moved: “Where did they place him?” he says, and weeps; and the Jews say; “Look how he loved him”: and when Jesus reached the tomb, he cried out with a loud voice and Lazarus came out (John, chapter 11).

Jesus went to the house of Jairus, to the body of a child of twelve. He takes her by the hand and shouts: “Get up, child, I wish it!” and orders them to give her something to eat. (Matt 9, 18) When faced with the son of the widow of Nain, Jesus is moved with compassion. He tells the mother: “Do not weep.” He touches the bier, and shouts in a loud voice: “Young man, I say to you, arise!” And he restores him to his mother. (Luke 7, 11) Jesus loves the young, and wishes to win their hearts so he can give it to the Father.

SECOND POINT: *Cures and Callings:* - Is there a scene more moving than the healing of the daughter of the Canaanite woman? She is a pagan, who trusts in Jesus and comes to ask healing for her possessed daughter. Our Lord makes her wait, tests her faith, then allows himself to be touched, saying, “Woman, great is your faith! Your daughter is healed!”

And that poor youth, only son of his father. The demon possessed him and gave him terrible torments. How did Jesus care for him, and with what authority prohibited the demon from torturing

him in the future! “Teacher, said the sorrowing father, look at my only son, and have pity on him!” “If you have faith” Jesus says. The poor father breaks into tears: “I believe Lord, but strengthen my faith!” And Jesus, in a threatening tone, shouted: “Deaf and mute demon, leave this child, I order you, and never return!”

The scene of the calling of the young man reveals much. He is good; he seeks perfection. He runs up to Jesus, heedless of human opinion, he is seized by affection for Jesus: “Good Master! He shouts. Jesus responds: “Only God is good.” The Jesus casts his eyes upon him, and loves him; he wishes to give him the grace of the apostolate. He invites him to perfection, to the abandonment of his riches. The rich young man doubts and walks away. How Jesus must have suffered!

THIRD POINT: *Means of salvation for the youth* -- In the Eucharist, the union with Jesus is primary. Our Savior who loved St. John, his youthful disciple, whom he wished to keep pure and holy, gives a special sign for his first Communion; he receives him on his breast. Our Lord shows also that the devotion to his Sacred Heart is a special safeguard for youth. At this special time they need affection, and relationship with the Heart of Jesus is the font of purity.

Another help is spiritual direction. Our Lord said to St. Paul (at that time, still Saul) “Go to Ananias” St. Paul gives this advice to youth: “submit to the elders, and practice humility” Youth should seek direction from the priests (1Peter 5,5) St. John counsels young people to seek the Word of God, that it will be their strength in resisting the assaults of hell. At their age the seductions of the world, and of Satan, are immediate. How will they feast on the Word of God? Enjoying when it is proclaimed by the priest, dedicating themselves to daily meditation, and to the readings proposed by their way of life.

Resolutions: - My Savior, with you, I will care for youth, I will pray for them. If I have responsibility for them, lead them in your ways. If I myself am young, I will seize the means of sanctification which the Scripture points out to youth: fervent communion, spiritual direction, meditation, and pious readings.

Colloquy with our Lord, friend of youth.

(Fr. Dehon, A Year with the Sacred Heart; August 9, OSP IV, 141-143)

D. A moment of dialogue

After the presentation or reflection on the theme: the different forms of life in the Church, and having read the reflections of Fr. Dehon, please discuss and compare the questions given previously:

- Is the Church a sign in which different vocations are shared, or only a sign of a hierarchy?
- Is the role of the laity valued in the church?

Each lay person can also compare their personal experiences regarding the life and mission of those lay people, priests, or religious whom they have known personally.

E. Oral or written testimony

Hope and Holy Joy (Ascen Bañares, Lay Dehonian – Spain)

Dear readers of the periodical Dehonian Family:

(I am Ascen, a lay Dehonian from Navarre, Spain). I will give my humble testimony of the experience I had during World Youth Day in Madrid. I say humble, but also intense in grace, satisfaction, and confirmation that the path I am following with our Lord, is worth the effort.

When the idea of attending a youth encounter surprised me, I thought about my first pilgrimage, in which I was surrounded by youth. The concept of sharing those days with some youth I had known from Taizé inspired me; I had no idea what I would be doing, but it was clear that I had to do it, so that this encounter would be a grace for all those attending.

So with great enthusiasm and joy I told my friends about my adventure, so they could wish me well. I was surprised when they severely criticized me for going! I was disheartened, and so I left with sadness. But the reception I received from the religious communities was incredible, and I began to feel that something great was about to happen.

I can say with all my heart that we have healthy, committed young people with values that made me feel safe and in good hands. They were prepared, having given up their vacations to do this work, which at times takes great effort, but they were constant and dedicated.

Groups of different nationalities began arriving, and we felt a common element: a healthy joy and desire to share their enthusiasm.

The night of the 14th began the presentation, which really was like a feast, a real fiesta. It became a torrent of joy and enthusiasm, a beautiful spectacle. One felt the spirit of being at home away from home, among friends, doing things one could not do at home. When you see such joy, such love of life among the youth, you believe there is still hope in the world.

We had so many celebrations, of different kinds, morning prayer, presentations of the Word, songs in the language of each country, dynamic celebrations of the Eucharist. The beauty of seeing so many priests at the altar; turning around to see so many attending, confirmed the valiant legacy of Fr. Dehon; “I leave you the most wonderful of treasures: the Heart of Jesus.”

A powerful moment was the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in St. Jerome Seminary (SCJ) in Alba de Tormes. The beauty of the place, joined to the beauty of the dance and music, created an environment of prayer to accompany Our Lord. During the prayer vigil, in the style of St. Theresa (of Avila) reminded us where to lay our foundation: “Do not be afraid, do not be worried, only God suffices.” The summer heat was tremendous, but our interior warmth surpassed it. To see faces shining with joy, the signs of gratitude for what we were experiencing was unforgettable.

I want to also tell you that we had the opportunity to enjoy other testimonies: one, from SCJ Bishop Virginio Bresanelli, titled “Faces to the wind” Among other pearls he shared with us, “Here (in Patagonia, Argentina) the trees buffeted by the wind become strong, extending their roots among the rocks; suffering heat and drought, they suffer, but do not break... And ourselves: Where do we put our roots? Do we sink them deeply, (in Christ) to survive in the arid society in which we dwell?”

The second testimony was from Fr. Beppe Pierantoni, a Dehonian priest, missionary in the Philippines. He was kidnapped for six months by guerillas. He told us that he found phrases in the Gospels that helped him keep faith. It was the invitation to abandon himself completely to the will of God. I do not want to forget the group of youth who have served as volunteers during these days. With their workshops they have made Christian virtues shine. They have done miracles. This, together with the beautiful sunshine and sunsets of Alba, have left a lasting impression on me.

And after the gathering of youth in Salamanca and Alba de Tormes, we went to the World Youth Day – a very different experience. We went from an intimate gathering of 320 persons to a movement of millions, equally intense. You have already seen the key moments on television. Even people not involved honked their car horns when we passed. Many adults who attended the Way of the Cross were impressed by the respect with which the youth prayed. The youth also sang in the Metro, to the surprise of many people.

These youth have brought to light the values which often go unnoticed, and have had a wonderful effect on many older people. It has been an experience of faith, of contagious joy, and an encounter of youth with the Pope, and above all, with Jesus.

F. A moment of prayer or celebration

1. Hymn

2. Introduction

In the Church, the Holy Spirit offers gifts and charisms to certain people so their lives can be a testimony to others. These gifts are for ministries to which all the faithful are called to fulfill in the Church, dependent upon one's talents. In this prayer, the Word of God invites us to seek the service which we can give in the church. We are all called to give unselfish service in the Church. What is our function in the Church? May we find it in this prayer and commit ourselves to service among our brothers and sisters.

3. The Word of God

“There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit. To one is given through the Spirit the expression of wisdom; to another the expression of knowledge according to the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit; to another mighty deeds; to another prophecy; to another discernment of spirits; to another varieties of tongues; to another interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit produces all of these, distributing them individually to each person as he wishes

As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit. Now the body is not a single part, but many. If a foot should say, “Because I am not a hand I do not belong to the body,” it does not for this reason belong any less to the body. Or if an ear should say, “Because I am not an eye I do not belong to the body,” it does not for this reason belong any less to the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of

smell be? But as it is, God placed the parts, each one of them, in the body as he intended. If they were all one part, where would the body be? But as it is, there are many parts, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I do not need you," nor again the head to the feet, "I do not need you." Indeed, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are all the more necessary, and those parts of the body that we consider less honorable we surround with greater honor, and our less presentable parts are treated with greater propriety, whereas our more presentable parts do not need this. But God has so constructed the body as to give greater honor to a part that is without it, so that there may be no division in the body, but that the parts may have the same concern for one another. If [one] part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honored, all the parts share its joy. Now you are Christ's body, and individually parts of it. Some people God has designated in the church to be, first, apostles;^{*} second, prophets; third, teachers; then, mighty deeds; then, gifts of healing, assistance, administration, and varieties of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work mighty deeds? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? Strive eagerly for the greatest spiritual gifts. But I shall show you a still more excellent way. (1 Cor. 12, 3-30).

4. Story: *The determination of Cesarina*

Cesarina was a youth who desired to seek her vocation. One day she told her father that she wanted to have an experience of Lay Consecrated Life. Her father, indignant, stood at the door of the house and said he would only let her out if she pushed him out of the way. She pushed him and followed her vocation. Years passed and her father never spoke to her again. Finally, his wife died, and he became the gardener of the convent where his daughter lived.

5. Psalm 137 – Lament for Zion

By the rivers of Babylon
there we sat weeping
when we remembered Zion.
On the poplars in its midst
we hung up our harps.
For there our captors asked us
for the words of a song;
Our tormentors, for joy:
"Sing for us a song of Zion!"
But how could we sing a song of the LORD
in a foreign land?
If I forget you, Jerusalem,
may my right hand forget.
May my tongue stick to my palate
if I do not remember you,
If I do not exalt Jerusalem
beyond all my delights.

6. Symbol: *Joined hands*

Pluralism and variety: hands from different lands united.

We are all distinct, we are not identical copies. We are different but we are all equal. Many things unite us. Hands express the diversity among us: races, countries, peoples ... but we are all men and women. In the Church it is the same; we are all Christians and belong to the church but each one has their own ministry and helps the Church in different ways: priests, religious, laity, acolytes, lectors, cantors, etc.

7. A moment of sharing (prayer, reflection, intercessions)

8. Shared prayer. Words to share

- What is my vocation?
- What is my life project, my mission, my vocation?
- Each human is a small god, they can choose (Leibniz)
- Vocation is to listen to the voice of God, to complete a mission.
- God calls us to life, to be Christians in different ways.

9. Final Hymn

Literature

Meeting VII

IDENTITY AND MISSION OF LAY PEOPLE IN THE CHURCH

The objectives of the meeting

- To discover and value the mission of the laity in the church
- Meaning of lay and presence in NT
- Discover the roots and significance of the Christian lay
- Appreciate the presence of the lay in the Church

The outline of the meeting: strategies and activities

The purpose of this seventh retreat is to value being a lay; each participant can give their testimony of being a dehonian lay. They will also share their commitment with the local church (parish).

The development of the meeting

A. Welcome

During the meeting, each participant will share their participation in the mission of the Church as a Christian and member of the church. They are invited to discuss between each other projects to be developed in their parish or discuss as a group the reflection of the meaning of Dehonian Lay people. As a group, they will also be advised to commit themselves to the development of a mission in their local church (parish or community).

B. Theme of the reflection: *The identity of the lay people in the church.*

This topic can be presented with a theme or a simple PowerPoint to help the participants better understand the topic. They will be allowed to work in small groups. Within the small groups, they will be asked to prepare a presentation that shows their similar findings.

Introduction. One of the most notable characteristics of the actual church is the assertion and the presence of lay people in the life of the church. The lay people are the figures behind the importance that the Church places on the community and their protagonists, on the sacrament of baptism and the priesthood service among the faithful, the various charities and ministries, and the recognition of the basic ecclesiastical communities and of new movements.

1. With such perspectives, it overcomes the image of the Church in which the clergy is the main presence. In the liturgy, all of the baptized and confirmed are active participants, especially in the Eucharist, which builds up the Body of Christ, and for that reason everyone is responsible to carry out the ecclesiastical mission. In the current ecclesiastical self-awareness, there is strong desire for a greater co-responsibility for lay people. On many occasions, this wish is expressed as a desire for powers or a demand for democracy. However, this is wrong and it ends by destroying the structure of the Church. Its authentic perspective should be the *ecclesiology of communion* and a complementarity of vocations and ministries.

2. An ecclesiology of communion should be a “global ecclesiology,” where every member sees themselves recognized in their uniqueness, vocation, and role. This principle is especially valid for the lay people.
3. The reading of the New Testament will surprise anyone who reads it, based on the categories explained later: it never uses the term “lay”, and the term *kleros* is applied to the community. Significant here is 1 Pe 5, 3: it asks the presbyters that feed the flocks of God “not to lord it over those in your charge – the *kleros* - but be examples to the flock.” Here, *kleros* designates the people of the promise and the salvific inheritance offered by God. It has been given to the community of the new covenant, the baptized. This designation implies goes together with the practice of the baptized and culminates in the priestly people, as we find it reflected in the *Letter to the Hebrews*. In this letter, the priests are only Christ and the baptized.
4. A bit later in history, there is an inversion of the terminology: *kleros* will be used to indicate all the ministries, while the rest of the baptized will be called *laikos*. If one accentuates the difficult interpretation of 1 Clement 40, 2-3, 5, the term lay does not appear until the 3rd century. Absent in St. Justin and St. Irenaeus, it appears with an imprecise and vague meaning in St. Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and Origen. *Laikos*, however, makes use of profane Greek etymology: it indicates a part or a sector of the population: the majority in relation to a more restricted group of leaders. For that reason, the derivation of the word *laikos* from *laos* is not correct, inasmuch as its content says “belonging to the People of God” while the suffix *-ikos* denotes a classification, a part.
5. *The theology of the laity* intends to demonstrate the belonging of lay people to the Church and their participation in Christ’s mission. *Vatican II* proposed a positive interpretation to the word “lay”. In order to understand the *Vatican II* in its totality, one must keep in mind two lines of thinking which do not always stand in harmony with each other. On the one hand, the second chapter of *Lumen Gentium* presents the Christian believer as a baptized person in all his or her dignity; in the light of the image of the Church as the “People of God” and of baptism, which presupposes a fundamental equality among all the members of the Church. On the other hand, the fourth chapter (LG 31) tried to define “lay”, but it deliberately (which leads to its inherent difficulty) limited itself to describe the lay person: outside of his/her baptism, and insertion in the church, in the participation in the triple priesthood of Christ (priest, prophet and king), a lay person belongs to the “secular sphere” as his/her distinctive sign, and vocation in the Church:

“The term ‘laity’ is here understood to mean all the faithful except those in Holy Orders and those who belong to a religious state approved by the Church. That is, the faithful, who by Baptism are incorporated into Christ and integrated into the People of God, are made sharers in their particular way in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly office of Christ, and have their own part to play in the mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and in the World..

The secular character of a lay is represented by proper and atypical neighbour. The members of the sacred order, even after worrying about profane realities...with reason to their particular vocation, ordain themselves to a sacred ministry as a profession...The religious, in their state, give a magnificent and extraordinary testimony stating that without

a the good-willing spirit, the world cannot be changed and offered to God. The lay people, as professionals, have a self-defined vocation to search for the Kingdom of God and to temporarily work and place order according to God. Living in the world...it is there that God calls them to realize their duty” (LG 31).

6. In the years immediately after the council, the reflection on the laity was greatly developed. However, it also faced – almost immediately - two major obstacles: from the practical point of view, it called forth practical problems in the community on various levels, the priority, the different levels of participation of the laity especially in the area of decisions: on a theoretical level, the pending definition of lay and its content caused remained questionable regardless of the positive traces that identified them.
7. The apostolic appeal *Christifideles layi* (1988) is the last standing position surrounding the topic, from the Synod of Bishops in (1987). Pope John Paul II kept in mind the theological appeals pointed out throughout the terminology: seek to use “pastors” or “ordained ministers,” rather than using “priests” with the sole purpose to recognize the real character of the baptized and lay people. From the content’s point of view, the lay people seek to enforce the positive aspects of the theological reality of the lay: their sole belonging to the Church and to the ministry, in order to be a true Church, and to define their participation through priesthood in Christ. In regards to the many tendencies previously stated, the papal document proclaims the importance of baptism and of the Christian novel, the secular dimension of the entire Church, the validity of the ministries and the new charismas. In the same way, the topic of the atypical lay arises. It upholds:

“the common baptismal dignity dons in the faithful lay a *distinguished approach, without separation*, from the Presbyterian and the religious. The Vatican Council II has pointed out this approach in the secular and stated: ‘The secular character is atypical of lay people.’ Like Paul VI used to say, the Church “has an authentic secular dimension, inherent in intimate nature and in its mission, floods the roots in the mystery of the Incarnate Word, and transforms to various forms in its members’.

Without a doubt, *all of the members* of the Church are participants of the secular dimension, but in different forms. In particular, the participation of the *faithful lay people* has an approach of proper action and function, that, according to the Council, is “appropriate and atypical” of them. Such approach is designed with the expression ‘secular character” (n. 15).

Conclusion. As we can see, lay people have a proper vocation and mission that comes from their baptismal consecration. Just as birth is a form of consecration that confers a primary dignity on people before being subject of rights and tasks or functions, in the same way with baptism: here one can distinguish the title that is the generation of supernatural life and the *state* that is the form of life given to the baptized in the Church.. For that reason, Vatican II dedicated chapter IV to the positive definition of the lay person, and then dedicated to it a decree that specified his/her apostolate: *Apostolicam actuositatem*.

C. Text of Fr. Dehon

Reign of the Heart of Jesus

The kingdom of Jesus has always been a kingdom of love. It was through the cross and through the Eucharist that He wanted to conquer the world. More than anything, he wants to build a kingdom of love and mercy. It is for that reason that He gave us His heart, a heart filled with love, a heart injured, a heart wounded for us.

The Social Reign of the Sacred Heart

In the eternal design of the providence, all of the divine works have but one single purpose: the kingdom of Our Lord Jesus Christ. On the contrary, all the attempts of hell have not stopped the coming of this kingdom and held people back from becoming part of the ranks of the fallen angels. The order for the soldiers of Jesus Christ is that of the apostle St. Paul: «*Oportet illum regnare – It is right that He reigns*» (1Cor 15,25) and the cry of the enemies of the divine King are: «*Nolumus hunc regnare super nos – We do not want Him as our King*» (Lc 19,14).

The arduous combat between these two sides will have their end with the triumphant return of Jesus Christ, a sure triumph, that Our Lord guarantees: *Confidite, ego vici mundum – Have faith, I have already defeated the world* (Jn 16,33). The supernatural means, chosen by God, for this battle are ordinarily new devotions: the devotion to the Cross, to the holy name of Jesus, to the Blessed Sacrament, to the Virgin, etc. And for our time, it is the devotion to the “Sacred Heart of Jesus”.

Our Lord has raised this devotion when Protestantism, Jansenism, philosophism and secret societies began with an infernal audacity to undermine the foundation of his divine throne. By responding to this sectarian hatred, St. Margaret Mary heard him say: “*Jesus Christ will reign despite his enemies. He will reign by way of his heart.*” Our Lord wants above all to be honoured by a devotion to his Heart so that he may reign in souls: “*The final goal of the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is to convert souls to his love and to make his divine Heart our master and patron.*” (Charter 85)

It would be an error however to think that his reign is only an interior reign. The divine plan, the devotion to the Sacred Heart, presupposes much more than what is commonly thought.

Our Lord wants above all to use the devotion of his sacred heart to install in every nation his social reign. Solemnly recognized by Constantine, this reign suffered ups and downs all through the centuries because of an anti-Christian politics. In order to maintain the nations under the yoke of his Gospel, Jesus could have used the arms of a victor; but in his boundless mercy, this king made use only of his adorable heart, a heart whose image represents the new standard destined to save society. *In hoc signo vinces.*

It is normal, in a family, for the Father to tell the oldest of his children his concerns, and to hope that his eldest will keep harmony with the others. This is what Our Lord has done with the devotion to the divine Heart: it is to France, oldest daughter of the Church, that he gave what may be called his divine letter of the social reign, a message for Louis XIV, in 1689. In this letter he showed that

he gave his divine mandate to all the nations and that he gave to this king the name of “*Oldest Son of the Sacred Heart*”, indicating in this way to all nations his Divine Heart.

(Fr. Dehon, *The Kingdom of the Heart of Jesus*: OSP V, pp. 639-641)

D. A moment for dialogue

A reading of some numbers from Catechism of the Catholic Church: paragraphs 897-913, to initiate a dialogue and reflection on lay people and their mission in the Church.

The vocation of lay people

898 “By reason of their special vocation it belongs to the laity to seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God’s will... It pertains to them in a special way so to illuminate and order all temporal things with which they are closely associated that these may always be effected and grow according to Christ and maybe to the glory of the Creator and Redeemer.” (LG 31).

899 The initiative of lay Christians is necessary especially when the matter involves discovering or inventing the means for permeating social, political, and economic realities with the demands of Christian doctrine and life. This initiative is a normal element of the life of the Church:

Lay believers are in the front line of Church life; for them the Church is the animating principle of human society. Therefore, they in particular ought to have an ever-clearer consciousness not only of belonging to the Church, but of being the Church, that is to say, the community of the faithful on earth under the leadership of the Pope, the common Head, and of the bishops in communion with him. They are the Church.

900 Since, like all the faithful, lay Christians are entrusted by God with the apostolate by virtue of their Baptism and Confirmation, they have the right and duty, individually or grouped in associations, to work so that the divine message of salvation may be known and accepted by all men throughout the earth. This duty is the more pressing when it is only through them that men can hear the Gospel and know Christ. Their activity in ecclesial communities is so necessary that, for the most part, the apostolate of the pastors cannot be fully effective without it.

E. Oral or written testimony

Being a lay dehonian (Sera Gomez, Dehonian Lay)

Presentation

My name is Sera. I am from Alba de Tormes, Salamanca, España. I have been a lay dehonian since the year 2000, when the beginning of lay people in Spain began. My son Eduardo, a religious dehonian, was the medium for unification. Because of him, I was offered the opportunity to form a group of laity linked to the seminary San Geronimo de Alba in Tormes. I agreed because of the bond between the religious of the seminary and I had, and because I wanted to be a Christian and

learn about P. Dehon and live in the spirituality of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. I also participate in the Bible study group of the parish and I am a worshiper, (a group of people that come together once a month to worship the Eucharist). I study the Gospel to strengthen my Christian life and I am a worshiper to feed to be fed by the Eucharist and to enrich myself. The Eucharist enriches every aspect of my life, and enriches the missions of the Church and of the world. I want to succeed in my job. I am a local police official in my town: Alba de Tormes. I am a social education and succeed in the intervention for the education in various environments: the needy, the old, the young, the marginalized, etc.

Dehonian Laity in Society

Spain's society is a laicist society that it is sometimes against religion, wanting to remove it from the public ambit or shove it aside. We have a hostile environment against religion. It is hard being a Christian today. You find obstacles as a Christian. There many people that are good, but they wish to know nothing about the Church, so the church tells them nothing. We need more vocations in the Church, priestly and religious. We also need good lay people that are molded. Lay people are needed to be present in the Church, but for that we must mold them. We must be messengers of the Good News, be apostles of the changing Church and of its uncertain future. We must not hide in the Church, but instead transmit our contentment of being Christians to the people that surround us.

How does being a dehonian laity help my person?

Personally, it gives me spiritual richness. It is a way of living a dynamic lifestyle, it is a treaty with people, with young adults, close and happy. The closeness, simplicity, and happiness gives meaning to an inhumane world.

The dehonian spiritual way of life touches my way of working and my relationships with people. This spirituality, this way of dehonian, makes me feel close and compassionate for the people. It makes me available to help those who need it the most through my line of work as a local police office. I am conscience that I need to help the youngest and live ECCE VENIO, which means being available and having solidarity for the people that surround me: the poor and needy.

Does the dehonian spirituality allow me to live a different kind of spirituality from the one found in a parish or ecclesiastic environment?

Since I participate in the parish life, through Bible studies and being an active member of Worshipping and Sunday Eucharist, I believe that both ways of live complement and enrich my life as Christian, giving my life meaning. The lay dehonian should be the roots of the parish and from there share those dehonian values with the people and work so they can seek God; And to transmit the Good News from the heart.

F. A moment of prayer or celebration

1. Hymn

2. Introduction

Service (washing of feet), imitating Jesus Christ, is the central focus of our Christian life. Our Christian life calls us to serve those that need our help most. We do this by placing our faith in Christ, who as our master and Lord, washed the feet of his disciples. Our life is to be aware of the

needs of others. "Washing feet" should represent our attitude and our most important preoccupation as laity committed to the Church.

3. The Word of God

After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. He told them---"The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road. "When you enter a house, first say, 'Peace to this house.' If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; if not, it will return to you. Stay in that house, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house. "When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is set before you. Heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'The kingdom of God is near you.' But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, 'Even the dust of your town that sticks to our feet we wipe off against you.

Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God is near.' I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town. "Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths. "He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me; but he who rejects me rejects him who sent me."

(Lk 10, 1-16).

4. Story: *The rhythm of the turtle*

In the world of animals there lived a proud hare, boasting of its great velocity to everyone. For that reason, the hare constantly laughed at the slow turtle.

"Look at that turtle. Hey turtle, don't run so much or you'll get tired," said the hare laughing at the turtle.

One day, talking among each other, the turtle thought of an unusual bet against the hare.

"I'm sure I can beat you in a race," said the turtle to the hare.

"Beat me?" answered the hare.

"Yes, beat you. Let's place out bets on that rock and see who can win the race," said the Turtle. The confident hare accepted.

All of the animals gathered to witness to the race. The beginning and end of the race were marked, and once ready, the cheers of the crowd could be heard throughout the location of the race.

Confident in his quick pace, the hare gave the turtle a head start and decided to take a nap. The hare believed that he had more than enough time to beat the turtle. After a while, the hare began jogging while the turtle walked slowly, but without stopping. Without a doubt, the hare was ahead of the turtle. The hare then decided to take a break on the side of the road, so he sat down to rest.

When the turtle walked past the hare, the hare took the opportunity to make fun of the turtle's slow walk, but not stopping. Once again, the hare jogged past the turtle, leaving the turtle in the dust. Confident in his speed, the hare decided to lay down under a tree and took a nap.

Meanwhile, step by step, slow but never stopping, the turtle continued walking until it arrived at the end mark. When the hare woke up, it ran all with all the speed in the world, but it was too late, the turtle had won the race.

That day was a sad day for the hare and he learned a valuable lesson: never make fun of others.

From this parable, we can also learn. The lesson is that the excess of confidence and laziness can affect our goals.

5. Psalm 15 - The road of the just

LORD, who may abide in your tent?
Who may dwell on your holy mountain?
Whoever walks without blame,
doing what is right,
speaking truth from the heart;
Who does not slander with his tongue,
does no harm to a friend,
never defames a neighbour;
Who disdains the wicked,
but honors those who fear the LORD;
Who keeps an oath despite the cost,
lends no money at interest,
accepts no bribe against the innocent.
Whoever acts like this
shall never be shaken.

6. Symbol. Service: The basin and the towel

The basin and towel: These two symbols represent the service of all Christians: lay people, religious, and those ordained in the Church. We all follow Jesus and his example. The commandment that he gave us in the last supper: love one another like I have loved you. That love is reflected and expressed by washing the each other's feet in the act of service and availability.

7. A moment for sharing (prayer, reflection, intercessions)

8. Shared prayer. Words to share

- The church is a body with many members; everyone's different, everything's necessary.
- The laities are the fermentation and salt of the world. (LG 31, 33).
- The laities are called to be signals in the world. (AA2).
- The laities serve society through the Gospel and the Church.
- The laities promote human dignity.

9. Final hymn

Meeting VIII

HUMAN, CHRISTIAN, AND DEHONIAN VALUES

The objectives of the meeting

- Remember the greatest values
- Reflect upon the greatest dehonian values
- Applying dehonian values

The outline of the meeting: strategies and activities

In this gathering we will try to clarify and meditate on our values. We will begin with human and Christian values in order to move forward to dehonian values. We will have the word of the Lord, who is the root of all values, present at all times.

The development of the gathering

A. Welcome

In order to create welcoming environment, the living room will be prepared with details, placing different values on the walls of the classroom or living room. We will include thoughts of Fr. Dehon that will help us with our reflection.

B. Theme of the reflection: *Human, Christian, and Dehonian values*

This topic begins with a moment for reflection. It must be prepared by the host: create a powerpoint of the text so that the participants may comment on it. Group work is also encouraged; each group will focus on a single point and then present the point to all participants.

1. Human Society

Richard Rorty, a contemporary American thinker claimed that our society behaves like a machine, robot, or a puzzle, where each piece is on its own. For that reason, our society is a broken society. He says that now is the time for humanism, today's society needs a soul. The reality is that our society is like a machine without oil, or like a car without an engine. We have the illusion that the car will keep running without gas. Yet, it does not move.

The heart of Jesus speaks to St. Mary Margaret of Alacoque about human indifference with God. Indifference and rude behavior keeps us away from others and does not conform to the greatest values. Indifference corrodes the heart and slowly tears apart relationships in the same way the sun slowly melts ice. In fact, there are many disappointments regarding the representation of the people and of society due to a logical type of utilitarianism (hedonistic, pragmatic, and materialist). Many times, human actions, guided by individual satisfaction provoke a reduction that impedes us to see the numerous manifestations of gratitude, altruism, and solidarity that are present throughout the contemporary society of relationship. How many times do we think in negative ways regardless of how positive our current situation is?

2. Human values

In the devotion to the Heart of Jesus, we must keep in mind the relationship of God with us. The heart of Jesus said to St. Margaret Mary of Alacoque: I love everyone, but everyone does not love me. I only receive ungratefulness. We must see the first part of the confirmation of St. Margaret: love, give, continue; we did not complete the second part, which is ungratefulness. We are not alone to the anticipation of receiving. And when we receive, it is our obligation to thank and recognize the gesture shown to us.

This leads us to the “greatest value of the heart of Jesus”. If we begin with the human values, we must relate to the kindness, courteous, delicate, respectful, and considerate behavior of each. Here, we only respond to kindness.

Kindness in words produces trust, kindness in thoughts produces depth. Kindness in donations or gifts produces love. Kindness as a definition manifests the certainty of being wise in our lives. It is necessary that we learn kindness so that we may offer it to one another with an honest heart and soul.

The kind person practices being good in a welcoming, serene, and peaceful manner. Spontaneously, the kind person tends to be nice. This person creates an atmosphere of trust and works to see the best in others. Titus, a roman emperor, considered his days wasteful if he did not perform good deeds for others: “amici, diem perdidit” (friends, I lost a day).

There is a law of life that states: life is only won when we have placed our life to the service of good will, creating a relationship with others and having strong ties among each other. As a given, God grants our existence through kindness; there is no kindness through envy because envy is bad. Kindness can only create kindness. Kindness and the good are born from one another.

The greatness of human beings consists in welcoming the dignity of each individual regardless of their background and origin. In the Gospel, individual dignity can only be cultivated through one another while watching: the self promotion of dignity is needed. My dignity depends on my relationship with others with my vocation to serve others.

3. Spiritual values

If we continue with spiritual values, we cannot cease to point out spirituality, as an experience with God, is the central purpose of religion, at the heart of all rites. We are called to be apostles of love as explained by the African concept Ubuntu “we are who we are through others”, as an offering, complete uninterested love, and not a love of maltreatment, bad language, and contempt.

It is not enough to belong to a Christian community or of an institute. We must allow people to experience the good and the beautiful in the Christian community, in the institute, and give testimony of that experience to the world, to Christians.

The mission requires welcoming the moments of kindness by God.

3.1. The art of loving

It is not love as we want it. It is loving according to the new commandment: “love another like I have loved you” (cf. Jn 15, 9-17). God saved us not only through the cross, but above all by his love for human kind, which was given through the cross.

According to E. Fromm, the satisfaction of individual love cannot be attained without the capacity of loving our neighbor, without courage, without faith, and without discipline.

If love is an art form, knowledge is needed. The first step to take is to be conscious that love is an art in the same way that living is an art. Love is an activity, not a passive affect. The active character of love can be described as giving, without expecting anything in return. I am loved because of who I am; I am loved because I am. It is an infantile love, when I love because I am loved. I love because I depend on you, I need you. It is a mature love when I am loved because I love. I need you, because I love.

Love is not a relationship with a specific person. It is an inclination towards the character that shows the feeling to the world as a whole rather than showing it to a particular person. If a person loves but a single person, but shows no sympathy for the rest of the world, than that person does not love, that person is selfish. One must remember that the proof of the intensity of love is not to love anyone beyond the person loved. If we truly love someone, then we must love everyone, including the world and life.

3.2. Giving

Giving is not just the act of giving but the letting go of everything. (Cf Mt19, 16-26).

To give is to abandon certain things and sacrifice. Giving is greater than receiving. Giving, not because it is expected, but because in the act of giving, my energy and vitality is expressed. He who gives more is richer than he who has much. Whoever risks giving is rich.

So what does a person give to another? That person gives something of themselves, their life, their happiness, their interests, their understanding, their knowledge, their humor, their sadness, etc. When one gives truly,, one does not expect anything in return. To give means enriching the other person, valuing their emotions.

If love does not create love, then love is impotent and unfortunate. The capacity to give depends on the development of the character of others.

3.3. Respect

Responsibility can turn to domination and possessiveness if there is no respect. Respect is not fear or subjection. According to the root of the word, *respicere*= *look towards, look forward to*, respect denotes the value of seeing a person just as he or she is, to be conscious of their unique individuality. Respect means being concerned that the other person grows and develops in his or her selfhood. Respect implies absence of exploitation. It is to will that the loved person grows and develops as to whom they are, with their own means and without frustration. Respect exists only if the person reaches autonomy. Respect must be based on freedom.

4. The great dehonian values

Spirituality is experience of a life of faith; it is an encounter with God, This experience is supported through retreats, meditation, adoration, the word of God, sacraments, prayers, rules and structures. If these are words without a heart, they cannot be true nor can there be spirituality. The first and main element is a relationship with God without which nothing is interesting, nothing has value. Always remember that spirituality is not only a worship involving God. Spirituality is an experience of the gifts of God, of his grace, welcomed by us, and which is made visible in worship. Spirituality is the internal journey of God with us and through this God is our God. We can summarize the main lines of dehonian spirituality in the following points:

4.1. Love

We understand love as the capacity to see the needs of the other, to sympathize and to suffer with the other, but also to help them to overcome situations. In love, we find a movement to remove selfishness from our world and earth in order to be completely available for others. We must work as a community with God and with our brothers” (CM- Rdv, n6). Be a witness of this cosmic communion: God, humanity, universe. This love creates a solidarity with all humanity. (CM- Rev. n10).

4.2. Oblation

Oblation is a concrete gesture of this love because it gives or allows one to give oneself fully and unconditionally to God. But we cannot give ourselves entirely to God meanwhile listening to the desperate cries of humanity and continuing going our own way and concentrating solely on our personal problems. We must alleviate the pain felt by others. Oblation is this giving of ourselves to our brothers out of love of God. It means to bring God to our brothers and our brothers to God. It means raising the life of our brothers and sisters to God, “to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship,” (Rom 12, 1). *Ecce Venio* (Here I am, I come, O God, to do your will) and *Ecce Ancilla* (Here I am, the servant of the Lord. Be it done to me according to your word) are the great models of the communion of our will with the will of God. Our life is a complete gift of our whole person, of every part, not just of reason, but also of the heart. This availability of Jesus and Mary characterizes the dehonian style which receives the grace (kairos) of God in particular through the Eucharist, to fight against a time (chromos) which mechanizes human existence.

Also, the Rules of Life of SCJ (Constitution, n 6) goes in this direction:

“In founding the Congregation of the *Oblates*, the Priests of the Sacred Heart, Fr. Dehon wanted its members to unite, in explicit form, their religious and apostolic life, with the reparatory oblation of Christ to the Father.

This was his *specific and original intention and the character proper to the Institute* (cf LG and PC) and the service it is called to render to the Church. In Father Dehon’s own words: “*our whole vocation, our purpose, our duty, our promises, are found in these words: Ecce venio, ... Ecce ancilla...* (Directoire spirituel, I,3)

The spirituality, much loved by Fr. Dehon, is “the contemplation of the pierced Heart.” From its contemplation flows the emotions like the total gift of oneself, gratuity, mercy, patience, pardon,

reparation, tenderness especially for the needy. As a result, the pierced heart of Christ is a symbol of love, of the gift of self, which recreates men and women in God's image.

4.3. Our Mission in the World

The mission consists of creating an itinerary, a path or project together with our brothers and sisters, especially with those that are closest to us. It is not to accommodate ourselves or to become sedentary. It is to become nomads. On this path, we must create spaces of communion in a shared consciousness and concrete situations. We must get rid of what is broken, conflicts, tensions, what creates distance by creating spaces of communion. Only in this way can the fruits of love be manifested in our hearts (CM- Rev, n 8-9). Thus the basic values of our mission come to the fore: communion, oblation, simplicity,, solidarity, sharing, and missionary spirit, professional competence, civic sense, moral integrity, the spirit of justice, serenity, and strength of spirit. (CM – Rev, n 11, 14) This mission becomes operative in evangelization and the promotion of human dignity (one cannot speak of the Gospel to those who are hungry or thirsty), in spirituality and in giving witness. (CM- Rev, n 12).

The service in the world is either prophetic or it is not a service, an adhesion to the plan of God (CM- Rev, n12) undertaken with stability and consistency; it is like being both inside and outside of the world being like salt, light and yeast (ChL, n15) in order to raise human dignity (CM – Rev, n 14).

We live our vocation to transform the world in a spirit of service without ambition or a search of power, but with mutual love; We do this not in frenetic competitiveness or in a constant struggle, but with a humanization of structures, not in corruption or bureaucracy, but by promoting justice; not by playing different interests against one another or through influence seeking, but with genuine brotherhood and dialogue (CM – Rev, n 15); we say no to our heart filled vinegar and yes to our heart filled with tenderness, understanding, and love.

C. Text of Fr. Dehon

A circular letter of Fr. Dehon to the Congregation on March 14, 1912, the date of his 69th birthday.

XV. *Resolutions*: Our resolutions come from the counsel of the Pope and from our Constitution.

We have a threefold goal: an ardent apostolic zeal, reparatory adoration and daily oblation of ourselves to the Sacred Heart.

Ardent zeal- We love working for souls by teaching, by preaching, in missions, according to the needs of the Congregation and in the places in which obedience places us. Our Constitutions tell us which works we ought to prefer: the teachings of children, especially also seminarians, who, like Samuel, are God's favorites. the preaching of the spiritual exercises; the ministry to children and the humble, the workers and the poor, and the foreign missions that require dedication and sacrifice.

The reparatory adoration of the Blessed Sacrament- to this we must hold on firmly. They are our everyday royal audience. It is our vocation. We must be like the friends of Bethany where Jesus went for a rest. I explained to the Pope that we are not only apostolic, but instead that we have a mixed life, like other congregations, like the Picpus Fathers and the Franciscan missionaries of Mary. However, he insisted on making use of his written recommendations. It is therefore necessary that we examine to see what we will do when the time comes. In any case, we ought to have our days of exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and everyone ought to spend at least half an hour a day next to Our Lord. Stewards have the privilege of using part of their day to be present in the chamber of the King of kings and they are proud to do so. We are the stewards of the King of kings and are part of his guards of honor.

The daily oblation of the Sacred Heart- this oblation is called for by our Constitution, and by the act of oblation which we add to our vows. It is a daily offering, cordial and sincere, of all that we are, our actions, our work, our suffering, in a spirit of sacrifice and immolation, for the reparation to the Heart of Jesus and for the salvation of souls. And it is worthwhile that the oblation done in the morning be renewed in the course of the day.

What resolutions can we make? They are inspired by the Holy Family. We are a family of brothers; we must be a united and holy family because we are the children of God, brothers and sisters of the Savior, and spiritual sons and daughters of the Blessed Mary.

The church has chosen, in the liturgy, an image of a holy family drawn from a page in the letter of St. Paul to the Colossians:

“Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if one has a grievance against another; as the Lord has forgiven you, so must you also do. And over all these put on love, that is, the bond of perfection. And let the peace of Christ control your hearts, the peace into which you were also called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as in all wisdom you teach and admonish one another, singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” (Col 3, 12-17).

Can we imagine anything more beautiful than this image of a holy family? You must meditate about this often. With St. Paul add: “*orantes simul et pro nobis...*” Pray for me as well, so that God can give me his grace to lead you in a correct manner and in doing so, move you forward in the path of virtue.

I am old, and I want to finish my exhortation with the words expressed in his old age by the apostle St. John: “Love one another.” I implore you, using St. John’s words: Let there not be division among you. Let us work together above all to remain united. Let us bear patiently the offenses and affronts of others. Let us love all nations. There will not be any nations in heaven. Let us be brothers of the Savior and sons of Mary. Let us love one another in the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Pray for this old man who sends you his blessing with all his heart. Pray a lot for him because he is in need of divine mercy.

Honor and glory to God through the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary for ever and ever.

John of the Heart of Jesus

(Fr. Dehon, Souvenirs, XV: OSP VII, p. 227-229.)

D. A moment of dialogue

After the presentation of text of the theme and the thoughts of Fr. Dehon, it is time for a dialogue and a sharing. The following questions can help to start the conversation:

- What dehonian values are fundamental for me?
- What other values can I suggest?
- To what extent are those values lived?

E. Oral or Written Testimony

A lay person on dehonian spirituality (Helena Calado – Portugal)⁶

I was born into a family who practiced both human and Christian values in an atmosphere of friendship, but which was overshadowed by the death of my parent's only son, my brother, among eight daughters. Religious practice consisted of participating in Sunday mass, catechism, and praying with my mother before going to sleep. On the wall of the living room there was an image of the Sacred Heart, a symbol that my parents chose to accept Jesus as a person. Without a doubt, the greatest influence that I received was through my father, a Christian who rarely practiced his faith. My father transmitted human values; he respected the workers who depended on him; my father would wait for the workers to complete the collection of the resin, and he would then prepare the meal for the workers. My father taught me about friendship, honesty and hard work.

As a result, these values were instilled in me so that in the deepest sense when I came in touch with the Gospel, I recognized these values as coming from the gospel. The devotion to the Sacred Heart has accompanied me throughout my life. When I visited the church with my godmother, I enjoyed going up to the altar with the image of the Heart of Jesus to pray. When I was between 11-12, I went to a seminary to study. There, I found an environment that taught me thoroughly the word of God and of Jesus. At that point in my life, I had a great devotion to the Heart of Jesus by way of the apostleship of prayer. I was also invited to participate as members of that apostleship.

Towards the end of my seminary years, my father passed away. My inner strength depended on the relationship with God who, at different moments, had demanded that I nourish myself with the Eucharist, almost every day, with meditation which I practiced often in the seminary, with the sacrament of confession and the writings of human and Christian formation.

At the end of my studies, I was asked to go to the area of Coimbra, in one of those villages where no one wanted to go. There, I experienced many hardships because of a lack of communication and lack of food. However, I can say that God was always there. At the end of the school and the next

⁶ Helena Calado is a member of ALVD (an association of volunteers inspired in the charisma of Fr. Dehon), in Portugal.

year, I entered the novitiate to become a religious. It was a huge decision. I suffered much because my family did not agree with my choice, but because I was an adult, I chose this life for myself.

I remained a number of years and I can say that those years were rich in prayer, liturgy, sharing, community life, a spirit of openness and an experience of life in a school community. It was during this time that I met Chiara Lubich, who guided me through another way of spirituality: a concrete love for all our brothers, the recognition of the presence of Jesus in every person, and the sharing of the Word of Life and the meaning “that we are all one”.

For various motives, I had to leave the religious community and instead, I joined the state’s education system where I worked for two years. It was during this time that I stumbled upon the Fr. Dehon’s spiritual teachings through the encounters of spiritual dehonian formation: love, reparation, oblation, directed by Fr. Aderito Barbosa. These various topics touch the urgent needs of our world, of humanity: reconciliation and forgiveness which are the fruit of the merciful love of God, social commitment, the formation of clergy, the holiness of the Church, the call to sanctity, the devotion to Mary and the missions. All of these are important for our time, for they help humanity to remember God. It was the confirmation that the devotion to the Heart of Jesus identifies God as love, but also that in real love for all we need to accept them as brothers.

Here are some thoughts of Fr. Dehon that I think are of great value today:

“Look at everything you have struggled for in life, if one day you find it destroyed, rebuilt it again with the instruments that have the proof of time.

The love of God makes our heart great. Trust in yourself, even if everyone doubts you and accepts your doubts. Fill every minute by giving value to your every second.

F. A moment of prayer or celebration

1. Hymn

2. Introduction

We conclude this encounter with dehonian values with a small celebration.

3. The Word of God

At that time Jesus said in reply, “I give praise to you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to the childlike. Yes, Father, such has been your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him.

“Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened,* and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for your selves. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light.” (Matt 11.25-30)

4. Story: *The emperor and pauper*

The emperor was walking through his patio of his palace with clothes made of silk when a man with tattered clothes approached him. It was evident that this high-class individual was not going to look

at this poor man. But this man continued trying to talk to the emperor. The emperor continued walking, ignoring the presence of the poor man in tattered clothes. Finally, the poor man placed himself in front of the emperor, unbuttoned his clothes, and said:

“When we were both in battle, I placed myself between you and the sharp object that was close to stabbing your chest. I saved the emperor from death. I saved his life and now he does not have time to listen for a petition of a small favor”

- Who is the emperor?
- Who is the man in tattered clothes?

5. Psalm 103- Lord, Bless my Soul

1. Bless the LORD, my soul;
all my being, bless his holy name!
2. Bless the LORD, my soul;
and do not forget all his gifts,
3. Who pardons all your sins,
and heals all your ills,
4. Who redeems your life from the pit,
and crowns you with mercy and compassion,
5. Who fills your days with good things,
so your youth is renewed like the eagle's.
6. The LORD does righteous deeds,
brings justice to all the oppressed.
7. He made known his ways to Moses,
to the Israelites his deeds.
8. Merciful and gracious is the LORD,
slow to anger, abounding in mercy.
9. He will not always accuse,
and nurses no lasting anger;
10. He has not dealt with us as our sins merit,
nor requited us as our wrongs deserve.
11. For as the heavens tower over the earth,
so his mercy towers over those who fear him.
12. As far as the east is from the west,
so far has he removed our sins from us.
13. As a father has compassion on his children,
so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him.
14. For he knows how we are formed,
remembers that we are dust.
15. As for man, his days are like the grass;
he blossoms like a flower in the field.

16. A wind sweeps over it and it is gone;
its place knows it no more.
17. But the LORD's mercy is from age to age,
toward those who fear him.
His salvation is for the children's children
18. of those who keep his covenant,
and remember to carry out his precepts.
19. The LORD has set his throne in heaven;
his dominion extends over all.
20. Bless the LORD, all you his angels,
mighty in strength, acting at his behest,
obedient to his command.
21. Bless the LORD, all you his hosts,
his ministers who carry out his will.
22. Bless the LORD, all his creatures,
everywhere in his domain.
Bless the LORD, my soul!

6. Symbol. Love; Heart

Heart: the place where are found our deepest and most intimate feelings. The heart (love) is the dehonian value par excellence. It summarizes all of our dehonian spirituality. With the heart, we express the love that God has for each and every one of us, and the love that we should offer to God and our brothers.

7. A moment for sharing (prayer, reflection, intercessions)

8. Shared prayer. Words to share

Thoughts of Fr. Dehon:

- The church should form pious souls, but also make social justice reign.
- God does not know what to do with our knowledge and our work if our heart is not in them
- Let us do everything with good will. God does not want ill mannered servants.
- Humility is the foundation of all virtues.
- Obstacles make us strong and purify us.
- There is no love without pain.
- The love of God makes the heart of men and women grow.
- There is a part of my life known only by me and a part known by others.

9. Final Hymn

Literature

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Meeting IX

THE PARTICIPATION OF LAITY IN THE DEHONIAN CHARISM

The objectives of the meeting

- To discover the different charisms
- To study the Letter of Communion and the profile of the Lay Dehonian
- To know the branches and groups in your country

The outline of the meeting: strategies and activities

This meeting has as scope to create awareness among the laity that they are part of a larger family who refer to the dehonian charism. We recall moreover that when Fr. Dehon founded the Congregation he was responsible for an association which comprised not only laity but also diocesan priests.

The development of the meeting

A. Welcome

B. Theme of the reflection: *The participation of laity in the dehonian charism*

The theme should be well prepared by the leader: s/he can present it in a power point to which the participants can later comment. It can also be done by working in small groups who reflect on a point and then share their reflections with the larger group.

1. The laity

The participation of laity in the different charisms is a universal phenomenon. It has led the Pope to say in the document *Vita consecrata* that *with it has begun a new chapter, rich in experiences, in the story of the relations between consecrated persons and the laity (n.º 54). This phenomenon is marked by new paths of communion and collaboration which ought to be encouraged (n.º 55).* These are not a paths in which there is a relation of submission but of carefully balanced collaboration and esteem.

John Paul II affirms that *the states of live are interconnected and organized for one other..., they are at the service of the growth of the Church. (ChL n.º 55)* One Institute has the possibility of associating with it other faithful (men, women, married or single),dedicated to the search of Christan perfection, according to the spirit of this institute and participate in its mission (CJC, n.º 725). However at the origin of this is Christ and the Church of Jesus Christ, with baptism as its constant referent.

Bishops, priests, religious and laity share the same way of approaching the heart of Christ, to discover the love of God and his presence in the Church. The commitment to the kingdom of God

(justice, truth and solidarity) implies the union in the oblation of Christ for forgiveness and availability.

The discovery of sharing the same design of the evangelical life of Fr. Dehon, participating in the same heritage, creates not an association or a federation, but a family (Dehoniana,2001,1,53-62): a family, agreeing like a community of different vocation and sharing the same spiritual heritage. There is here a communion of vocations in the same dehonian project (Dehoniana, 1991, 1, 75). At the origin of the dehonian project lies the spiritual vision of Fr. Dehon which guides the rest. What we have in common is the way of approaching the mystery of Christ. The term family allows us to make a reference to a common spiritual father and a desire for communion within the Dehonian Family.

2. Fr. Dehon and the Dehonian Family

In Fr. Dehon we find already the Dehonian Family in embryonic form. it is found in the relation between Fr. Dehon and the Sister Servants of the Sacred Heart (Sr. Ulrich). Subsequently, we find it again in the relation with the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Jesus of Namur, known as the Sisters Victims (Madre.Veronica). Mother Veronica guided several priests, who gravitated in her orbit, to the SCJ Congregation. Among them was Fr. André Prévot. Fr. Dehon always showed a care to have lay people associated with his project (Dehoniana 1984, 64, 232-235).

The Association of Reparation which began at the same time as the Congregation in 1878, consisted of associates and aggregates among them the mother of Fr. Dehon. From the beginning of the SCJ congregation, Fr. Dehon always spoke of the existence of associated diocesan priests and laity. (Dehoniana 2001,1.54). The Associates dedicated themselves to several activities (caritative e print). The aggregates were more involved in prayer and sacrifice. Thus, Fr. Dehon called together groups, one that was more spiritual (prayer and sacrifice) the other more dedicated to action. It is also interesting to note the liturgical form of the aggregates. The Aggregates received a cross with a heart, as was given also to the religious. Theirs was an act of consecration. Later they became two, one for feast days the other for ordinary days. All, however, received the scapular and a medal of the Sacred Heart.

In 1923 a distinction was made between the aggregates and the associates. In that year the Association took the name *Adveniat Regnum Tuum*, thus bringing together more than 50.000 person to pray and sacrifice for the spread of the reign of God, the triumph of the Church and the increas of priestly and missionary vocations.

The Review, *The Reign of the Sacred Heart in Souls and in Societies*, was destined also for lay people. It is clear that both were important initiatives within the life of Fr. Dehon (Souvenirs, 1912). The first important initiative was to bring priests and laity to the Heart of Christ, to adoration and to love. The second was to help the coming about among the population the increase of justice and Christian charity.

3. Charism

When we speak of the Dehonian Family, we recognize a father, Fr. Dehon. He is our spiritual father. As brothers, we do share in the same spirituality. It is not any kind of activity which

characterizes us. It is the spirituality and the mission we inherited from Fr. Dehon which characterizes us. The mission did not consist in a specific activity, but in the project of building the reign of the Heart of Jesus in souls and in societies in the service of the mission of the people of God in today's world. (LG 12) It was a mission, Eucharistic adoration and service to the little ones. It was a mission of proclaiming the love of God and God's tenderness. "Learn from me for I am meek and humble of heart." (Mt 11,27) It is from this that they derived the values, such as gratuitous love, abandonment, trust and availability and the *Ecce Venio* and the *Ecce Ancilla*.

This requires a style of life that is personal: attention and heartfelt welcome of people, mercy and compassion. Spirituality and mission thus materializes in apostolic activity which focuses on the proclamation of a merciful and gracious God, quick to forgive and reconcile. These are signs which express the dehonian spirituality: a Gospel life style, Eucharistic adoration, the mass of the Sacred Heart, the first Friday of the month, the image of the Sacred Heart, Léo Dehon day (March 14), images of Fr. Dehon.

The vocation of every dehonian is to be prophets of love and servants of reconciliation.

4. The Charter of Communion and the Lay Dehonian

In a meeting held in Rome from October 8 – 14, 2000 two documents came out: The proposal of the life of the lay dehonian and the Letter of Communion of the Dehonian Family.

The final proposals were summarized in 17 points (Studia Dehoniana, 2001/44, 257-261).

The first important point was about the spirituality and mission. It underlined that the charism can be shared with other groups (VC 54). Then, it presented a synthesis of the heritage of Fr. Dehon: the contemplation of the Heart of Christ (the revelation of the love of God, the love denied by sin); the participation in the sacrifice of Christ (in the Eucharist and adoration), and the welcoming of Mary as mother and model, feeling with the Church (the proclamation of the Gospel and working for Justice, truth and solidarity), the coming of the kingdom of the Heart of Jesus (prophets of love and servants of reconciliation), being attentive to the appeals of humanity (promotion of human dignity, peace and universal brotherhood).

In the second point, it presents the Dehonian Family, recognized by our brothers and sisters, part of the Dehonian Family (dehonians, lay people, institutes of consecrated life who live the charism of Fr. Dehon); it also gives the criteria of belonging and it recognizes Fr. Dehon as the father and guide who leads to Christ.

The third point presents the Communion and Organization: the moments of coming together and the necessity of organization.

In the fourth point one finds a reference to the Lay Dehonians: as they drink from the dehonian spirituality, they ask the religious and other persons to prepare them personally for formation.

The lay dehonian devotes him or herself seriously and permanently for a first and ongoing formation by welcoming and translating the charism in a spirituality and mission in the world and

today's culture (nr. 17). Rather than identifying oneself with the structure of the Congregation, the lay person identifies with Fr. Dehon and his charism.

5. The Association of Reparation founded by Fr. Dehon

5.1. First steps

Fr. Léon Dehon (1843 -1925, founder of the Congregation of the Priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, was a great apostle of the Heart of Jesus and of reparation. He lived the first years of his priesthood in the city of Saint Quentin, France, initiating a great number of social initiatives by promoting human development and Christian life of young people and workers.

Having given concrete form to his ideals, he received permission of the Bishop in 1877 to found the Congregation of the Priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, consecrating and offering himself to the love of God in Christ and for repairing the sins of the world, which are an offense of the love of God but also an affront to the rights and dignity of the human person.

This ideal of love and reparation, however, he did not reserve to priests and members of his Institute. For this reason, in the same year of 1878 he founded the reparatory association of the Heart of Jesus, with the idea of letting diocesan priests, consecrated persons and lay people share in his charism.

The development of this Association was slow, but it took off, so that on February 8, 1899 he received the official approval and recognition of his bishop, Mgr. Thibaudier. When Fr. Dehon in 1877 founded his congregation he did it by bringing priests and faithful to the Heart of Jesus, living them a daily tribute of adoration, reparation and love.

Moreover, from the beginning he wished that also lay people would participate in this spirituality and the objective of the Institute. Thus, already in 1878 this became a "reparatory association" or a "spiritual association," for people who were not members of the Congregation and yet wanted to live in the same spirit. The objective of this association was to pray with their own prayer and work, and with their own way of living sacrifice and reparation, seek the coming of the reign of the Sacred Heart and the blessing of God for priests.

From the beginning, the reparatory association consisted of two distinct groups. The first group consisted of "associates", the second group of "aggregates." In both groups one found priests and lay people. The largest part of these were the "associates". The aggregates lived the spirit of the Institute, as a sort of third order, and especially in the beginning of the Congregation, many of them made the "vow of victimhood", that is, they gave themselves in complete abandonment in the hands of the Lord, accepting whatever trials and sacrifices he might send them. Among them was the mother of the founder.

When Fr. Dehon began the reparatory association, he did nothing new or something that could not be found elsewhere in the Church of his time. There existed already an association with approximately the same scope.

The first person who according to the documents in our archives joined as “aggregate” of our Institute was Mr. Lecot, who belonged to the Conference of St. Vincent de Paul in the parish of Saint Quentin. Fr. Dehon says in his “Notes sur l’histoire de ma vie” that Mr. Lecot on April 11, 1880, acquired for him and his Institute a garden that was joined to the mother house. As an aggregate he took the name of Joseph of Arimathea.

Among the women there was the mother of Fr. Dehon and family members such as his aunt and godmother, M. Juliette Vandelet, the wife of Felix Penant and also the mother of a son who became priest, then there was Lady Demont-Buffy, the cook of the sister of his mother. Then there was Madame Herr, the mother of the future SCJ priests, Ernest and Léon Herr, and Ms Lecot.

The aggregates received the Cross of the Sacred Heart, the same that was given to the members of the Institute. They made the act of oblation to the Sacred Heart with the Priest or the Sacred Heart and Sister Servants of the Sacred Heart.

From the time that the aggregates were considered like a Third Order, each one upon entering the Association received a religious name¹. By the end of the 1880s there was already a good group of aggregates. On the list there were almost a hundred persons. The Institute had only three professed and seven novices. For this reason, Fr. Dehon could write in his diary: “The aggregation of lay people brings a lot of prayer, good works, and, from time to time, economic help.”⁷

5.2. The tasks of the associates

According to the new statute, the scope of the Association was the reign of the Sacred Heart in hearts and societies. It had two levels: the association of prayer and the one of action.

The members of the first level, that is, the ones of action, accepted to:

- To recognize publicly the laws and the rule of Christ. They accepted to respect them for themselves and have them accepted as much they were able, respecting always the humility and sweetness of the Heart of Jesus.
- To see to it that the divine laws would be respected in their own family and by those persons who depend on them, especially the commandment to make holy the day of the Lord.
- To fight against bad press and to promote the Catholic press.
- To call together, when possible, each month the associates for a Mass and to hold a meeting to plan the means to be adept in one’s own environment to hasten the return to God and to establish the reign of the Heart of Jesus.
- To practice and spread as best as one can the devotion to the Heart of Jesus, as the most efficacious way to achieve the salvation of the fatherland.

The associates of the second level promised to undertake:

- To offer each morning their prayer, works, sufferings, one’s life, in union with the Heart of Jesus in the spirit of love, reparation and intercession.

⁷ NHV. 7, XIV, 60.

- To accept during the day, in the same spirit, the sacrifices and trials that the Lord may send; in one word, to offer oneself as a victim to console the Heart of Jesus and to obtain his reign in our midst.
- To have a great devotion to the Eucharist and to make an hour of adoration with a reparatory communion each first Friday or first Sunday of the month.
- To practice the virtue of humility and purity of heart and live in a spirit of generosity and sacrifice.
- To consider oneself each Friday, especially the first Friday of the month, as a victim chosen to expiate the sins of the nation and to do under take penance for that intention.
- To spread the devotion to the Sacred Heart.

It is clear that those of the second level accepted to undertake also what pertained to the first level; in fact all had the same goal: the personal holiness through the devotion to the Sacred Heart and the coming of his reign in souls and society. All were expected to be apostles..

5.3. Symbols of the Sacred Heart⁸

As to the organization: they are to wear a scapular of the Sacred Heart, when they participate at Mass or make a visit to the Blessed Sacrament or if they unite in a spirit of reparative adoration as is done in Montmartre, Saint Quentin and in other sanctuaries.

In parishes, where there are many associates, it would be good to have a council, headed by the parish priest. There the association would seek to spread the devotion and work for the reign of the Heart of Jesus especially through good publications. Moreover, there are two acts of consecration: the first one more solemn and extensive, the second for each day.

The pamphlet for the second level, that of the aggregates, is entitled: “The Militia of the Victims of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, in union with Oblate Priests and the Sisters Servants of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Love and reparation to the Sacred Heart. Prayers and immolation for consecrated souls.” The term “Oblate Priests” sets them apart. It was a bit ambiguous to use this term after the *Consummatum est*.

The regulations say that, in the end, through the admission to the Association and through its spread, they ought to make a reference to the Superior of the Oblate Priests of Saint Quentin. Women can go to the Superior of the Servants of the Sacred Heart.

5.4. "Love and reparation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus"⁹

The final paragraph of the rule speaks about the union with the **Missionaries of the Sacred Heart**. Those who truly love the Sacred Heart also love the Church and souls. These are interested in the progress of the Church and share in all its trials. The associates ought to be interested in the missions, to read their reports and to partake in the works that help the missions. Whoever does not love the Church ardently cannot say that he or she loves the Heart of Jesus. Especially our sacrifices can help the missionaries. It would be good to have a close communication with a missionary or a particular mission: “The associates adopt a mission!”

⁸ Cf. General Archives, General Curia (Rome), Associatio Reparatrix, rose boite.

⁹ Cf. General Archives, General Curia (Rome), Associatio, Reparatrix, rose boite.

There follows a supplement with advice for the members of the Association to be particularly generous: "*The fervor of charity, the generosity in sacrifice, the purità of heart and humility are virtues that ought to typify them. In order that their prayer will be continuous, they will unite themselves to the Lord by way of ejaculatory prayers. They will accept freely the sacrifices that the Lord will send them.*"¹⁰

C. Text of Fr. Dehon

Homely at the wedding of Damey

(Clermont [Oise], 3 November, 1891)

To honor marriage, our Lord wished to show the feelings of his Heart through the bonds of family and of friendship. He did not come, as is sometimes believed, to break these bonds or to mitigate them, but to elevate them to the supernatural order and to make them bonds of grace. Perhaps it is not always sufficiently noted what parts of his grace our Lord has dispensed to his own. Four of his apostles James minor, and Judas Thaddeus, James major and John were relatives, another two were cousins. Our Simon, the spouse, and the just Joseph were also among his first disciples. John the Baptist was a relative. Mary of Clopas, Maria Salome and the other Mary, relatives of St. Joseph were together with the most holy Virgin, companions during part of his public life and his faithful friends at Calvary.

The mystery of Cana is so rich in teachings and grace. Our Lord there blessed both marriage and the family. He prepared the grace that was intended for every marriage and all the families of the new Law. You were there, dear spouses, before his very eyes and his blessing includes also you.

[...]

Jesus was there with his disciples, for that reason he loved this particular couple in a special way, as he loved John and Lazarus, filling them with grace.

Are not also you, dear spouses, like the spouse of Cana, privileged by Providence? As to the young spouse, he was prepared and assisted by Mary. She raised them with piety and religiously like a parent – and in this cloister imitated the Blessed Virgin – and she took care of him with tender affection and helped him with her motherly advice, all to prepare them for a Christian marriage. And also you, dear spouse, are favored by our Lord who cares for you with a particular tenderness: he has received in his adopted family a Christian example and a guide of deep dedication.

But these analogies are not unique; the sign from the wedding of Cana, the fruit of the presence of our Lord, is the miracle, the transformation of water into wine, the miracle and joyful symbol, the omen of every grace. As to the wine, it was a power and a joy. These are also the graces for this marriage. The joy will be the blessing of the family, in the charm of a house where there reigns peace and union, and from which will bloom amiable sprouts.

¹⁰ They who wish to know this document better can find it in *Dehoniana* 86 (1995/1) p. 7-11. It corresponds to no 864.5 of B.61/7 in the Dehonian Archives in Rome.

The strength will come from the sap of Christian life infused with the zeal of the apostolate, because it is necessary, my dear groom, that you be an apostle.

The supreme pontiffs, our guides in the faith, have recalled frequently that the Christian press is one of the most fruitful apostolates. It was necessary so that you may be an apostle. His best friends have asked him with great insistence so that it was difficult not to go for it. You have chosen the apostolate of the press. Follow this apostolate with faithfulness and courage, because the Christian press is truly an apostolate. It has often been said that if the Apostle Paul had lived in our time he would have been a journalist or he would have at least helped a newspaper to defend the truth. Also I believe this to be true. In his time he sowed words and letters: he spoke from morning to night. He wrote frequently. The Athenians gave him the nickname: “Sower of words.” Were not St. Augustine and, later St. Francis de Sales, forerunners of Christian journalism? The first did it in Africa to publish his responses and his theological poetry to refute the Donatists, and the second did it by distributing in Valais his controversies in daily broadsheets.

May you have the zeal of St. Paul, the spirit of St. Augustine and the meekness of St. Francis de Sales. Travel on their path. They are seeds of the Christian ideal which can germinate in civility and salvation. Always defend the Church, your made. Serve with nobility of mind your fatherland, keep your distance from fatal ways, in which you may get lost, to bring it to religion which contains the promise for this life as also for the life to come.¹¹

D. A moment of dialogue

After the presentation of the text of the theme and of the thoughts of Fr. Dehon, there can be time for a dialogue and a sharing. You can use the following questions:

- What do we know of the dehonian charism?
- How do the different parts of the Dehonian Family live the dehonian charism?
- How does my group live the dehonian charism?

E. Oral or written testimony

Testimony of a consecrated person of the Dehonian Family (Lurdes Xavier MAMCJ - Portugal)

I got to know the dehonian spirituality through Fr. Guilio Gritti, a Dehonian priest, who gave me to read some parts of Fr. Dehon's Spiritual Directory. In it there is a chapter on the “spirit of our vocation.” In prayer I began to read it and meditate. I was very pleased by what I read and I felt a personal attraction to this spirituality which from that point on I sought to know and deepen.

Several aspects appealed to me and they continued to be points of reference for my life. I became more and more aware of the great love of the Sacred Heart, a love which often is not responded to also by those to whom the Lord showed great love. What struck me especially is the Lord's response: a love that is pure and disinterested.

¹¹ This homily of Fr. Dehon is found in: AD B 7/3.D – Inv. 43.04. Fr. Dehon refers to this wedding in his *Journal* cf. NQT V/1891, 97v.

I began to ask myself “What is the response that you want to give?” And so, despite my limits, I sought to place myself at the disposition of Jesus asking what he wanted from me.

As Fr. Dehon taught us, the response to the love of the Sacred Heart passes through the life of oblation, in a generous gift to what the Lord wants, always seeking to say, as did Jesus, “Ecce Venio” – “Behold I come to do your will” or as did Mary: “Ecce Ancilla” – “Behold the servant of the Lord, let it be done to me according to your word.”

It is a way that I seek to take, because these words are not pronounced only by mouth but come from the heart, in every situation and event.

This way of oblation has led me to seek to live my days in an attachment to an abandonment to the will of God, accepting in a spirit of love and reparation all the events of the day. Moreover, the more I journey in this spirit of abandonment, the more I feel that through me there is a source of peace and serenity.

It has been a great joy to me to have known Fr. Dehon in the reading of some of his books; what has particularly struck me was his determination to follow his vocation and also his example to accept the will of God with humility, especially in moments of great suffering, as, for example, when the congregation was suppressed by the Holy See.

Reading the spiritual writings of Fr. Dehon, I was fascinated above all to see his relation of true friendship and closeness with Jesus, the simplicity with which he related to him. Without doubt he is an example of light.

This Jesus we encounter alive and so close, loving and wounded in the Eucharist. For this reason, the Eucharist and adoration are really at the center of every day. The Eucharist is without doubt the most basic act, and daily Eucharistic adoration is lived as a response to the love of Jesus, but it is also the means to arrive more quickly at this love for hearts and society: It is there that one has contact with the strength and courage to meet ones brothers.

At the same time, it is impressive to see how Fr. Dehon, notwithstanding his intense and profound relation with Jesus, did not stop him from having a most intimate and open attention for the other and what is happening around him. He is attentive to the social problems and sought to find ways to resolve them. This is doubtlessly an openness to social reality and to his fellow human beings.

The example and the spirituality that Fr. Dehon has left us, has helped me to grow in my relationship with God. With a great simplicity and at the same time attention and availability for those who are close to me, I stay in touch with society and its problems, seeking to discover, as he did, the deeper causes of the evils that afflict it: discovering that at the root of all is sin as a refusal of this love of God. For this reason it is necessary to become engaged, to make known the merciful love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, to encourage others to be reconciled to the Father. This is the spirituality that I personally try to live. That is the reason for being part of a group of consecrated persons, the Missionaries of the Merciful Heart of Jesus. We seek to transmit this spirituality and to

present the example of Fr. Dehon to all the lay people who have contact with us, especially the collaborators with whom we have been meeting already for several years at their monthly meetings. The persons who participate assimilate more and more this spirituality. Often we are told how important this is for their daily life. It gives strength and light in situations especially when they are faced with major difficulties.

Dehonian spirituality is not a “disincarnate” spirituality. It gives meaning to concrete life, not only to consecrated persons but also to lay people.

F. A moment of prayer or celebration

1. Hymn

2. Introduction

After this good amount of time for reflection, we give space for prayer.

3. The Word of God

Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. The one who thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and has human approval. Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.

(Rm 13.11-14; 14.17-19)

4. Story: *A person standing on one foot*

A pagan came to Rabbi Samay, the head of the Jewish school, and told him that he would convert to the Jewish religion, if he was able to give him the content of religion during the length of time that a person can stand on one foot. In his mind the Rabbi called to mind the five books of Moses, thinking that he had enough to tell him. But he had to admit that he would be able to summarize the full content of the Jewish religion in two sentences. The pagan then turned to Hillel, the most famous Jewish teacher of the school and made the same request. Without a pause, Hillel said, “Do not to your neighbor what you would not have done to you. This is the law; the rest is interpretation.”

If this man were to come you asking the same question but now about the core of Christianity, what would you answer.

5. Psalm 26 – Trust in God in the face of danger

1 The LORD is my light and my salvation;
whom shall I fear?

The LORD is the stronghold* of my life;
of whom shall I be afraid?

2 When evildoers assail me
to devour my flesh—
my adversaries and foes—
they shall stumble and fall.

3 Though an army encamp against me,
my heart shall not fear;
though war rise up against me,
yet I will be confident.

4 One thing I asked of the LORD,
that will I seek after:
to live in the house of the LORD
all the days of my life,
to behold the beauty of the LORD,
and to inquire in his temple.

5 For he will hide me in his shelter
in the day of trouble;
he will conceal me under the cover of his tent;
he will set me high on a rock.

6 Now my head is lifted up
above my enemies all around me,
and I will offer in his tent
sacrifices with shouts of joy;
I will sing and make melody to the LORD.

7 Hear, O LORD, when I cry aloud,
be gracious to me and answer me!

8 'Come,' my heart says, 'seek his face!'
Your face, LORD, do I seek.

9 Do not hide your face from me.

Do not turn your servant away in anger,
you who have been my help.

Do not cast me off, do not forsake me,
O God of my salvation!

10 If my father and mother forsake me,
the LORD will take me up.

11 Teach me your way, O LORD,

and lead me on a level path
because of my enemies.

12 Do not give me up to the will of my adversaries,
for false witnesses have risen against me,
and they are breathing out violence.

13 I believe that I shall see the goodness of the LORD
in the land of the living.

14 Wait for the LORD;
be strong, and let your heart take courage;
wait for the LORD!

6. Symbol: *Written testimony of a lay dehonian*

The written testimony of a lay dehonian expresses the life, the very being of this person. There we are given his way of being and living. This testimony is an invitation to become part of the great Dehonian Family.

7. A moment of sharing (prayer, reflections, intercessions)

8. Shared prayer. Words to share

Lay Dehonians are:

- Members of the Church who, faithful to Christ, commit themselves to the construction of the reign of God in everyday reality.
- They who, after becoming aware of their baptismal vocation and their mission in the Church, live it in the power of the faith experience of Fr. Dehon as a response to their personal vocation.
- They who recognize in Fr. Dehon and his Church-approved charism, the point of reference for their spiritual life of coming close to Christ in the mystery of his open Heart and joining his reparatory oblation.

Lay Dehonians:

- live their vocation at a personal or group level as part of the Dehonian Family.
- give witness to the values of dehonian spirituality in everyday life, open to the signs of the time;
- live their mission with all its apostolic challenges in the local Church and fully inserted in the secular reality of the world. (*cfr. Christifideles Laici, n° 15*).

9. Final hymn

Other literature on this theme

Pope John Paul II. Christifideles Laici.

Fr. Guus Driedonkx scj, Associazione Riparatrice.

Meeting X

PILGRIMS

The objectives of the meeting

- To visit dehonian houses.
- To share with other laity or consecrated person Dehonian spirituality
- To reflect on the conditions of pilgrims

The outline of the meeting: strategies and activities

Visits to Dehonian communities

The development of the meeting

A. Welcome

Introduction.

B. Theme of the reflection: *Pilgrims*

The theme of the reflection ought to be well prepared by the animator/leader. He or she can present a power point text, which can then be commented on. It can also be done by creating workgroups who discuss one or the other point. Afterwards they may present their reflections in the larger group.

1. Being pilgrims

To go on a pilgrimage is to walk, to go. To be a pilgrim is to go on the way, to take as little as possible with you, to face difficulties, to move forward, to be attentive to others, to point your hand toward the exit, to get up when one falls. One walks towards a holy place. One goes in the direction of God.

The journey is not just a place where a person passes. It has a deep symbolic meaning: every human life is like a journey, a journey on foot. Human existence is to be always on a journey, to reach the perfection that is in God.

The pilgrimage has always been a significant moment in the lives of Christians. Remember the journey of a person of faith, following in the footsteps, the path, of Jesus Christ. Also he was a pilgrim. Pilgrimage is all about the energy to recognize and overcome human weaknesses, a constant vigilance regarding one's own frailty, an interior preparation for a change of heart. The pilgrimage is part of the human condition: the human being is a pilgrim, a wanderer in exile.

The pilgrim does not travel in luxury, nor in wealth, but in poverty, with a free heart, with a free spirit, with a free soul. This external poverty symbolizes the poverty of inner detachment from earthly things. It is the identification with the ideal to which all human beings tend. Being a pilgrim is to set out with others in the community. It is often difficult to have it happen in everyday life.

You do not go on pilgrimage alone! The difficulty of the route connects the pilgrims as a group and it makes them more supportive of the dangers and joys. And so one creates bonds of dependency and sharing. Together you create a new energy of hope lived communally.

A pilgrimage frees the person from his or her securities and egoism and opens him or her to others and to unknown horizons.

2. Pilgrims of God

The people of God, who in the Book of Exodus had a bitter experience of walking from slavery in Egypt to the Promised Land, saw their history as a journey.

In the Bible people think in concrete terms. So when they want to talk about either the behavior of God, or of people, they immediately think of a journey or an act of walking: "I am God Almighty, walk before me, and be blameless" (Genesis 17:1).

During a trip, often we are confronted with two diverging paths. We must choose which path to take. The Bible speaks of two paths to indicate the freedom of choice in life, either with God or against him. "My thoughts are not your thoughts, and your ways are not my ways" (Is. 55:8).

Historically, the Bible begins with a pilgrimage to a land, a culture and another people. The order of pilgrimage is given to the father of the people of Israel, as if to say that this people will essentially be a pilgrim people, always in exodus, on a pilgrimage, a journey. "Go from your country and your kindred, to the land that I will show you." (Gen 12:1). This feeling of being pilgrims, strangers, is deep in the consciousness of the people of Israel: "We are aliens and transients before you, as were all our ancestors." (1Chr 29.15)

In this Abraham was a man of faith, the model for pilgrims for all believers, as is stated in the Letter to the Hebrews: "By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to set out for a place that he was to receive as an inheritance; and he set out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he stayed for a time in the land he had been promised, as in a foreign land, living in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him in the same promise. For he looked forward to the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God." (Heb 11.8-10) "All of these died in faith without having received the promises, but from a distance they saw and greeted them. They confessed that they were strangers and foreigners on the earth, for people who speak in this way make it clear that they are seeking a homeland." (Heb 11.13-14)

Abraham, the father of this pilgrim people, is defined as a foreigner and a guest in the land of the Hittites. He must buy a piece of land to bury his wife and children. (Gen 23.4; 21.8-21, 28.2-4, 47.30)

The people of the Bible came to be in their pilgrimage and were formed during the painful pilgrimage between Egypt and the Promised Land, in the covenant of Sinai. One of the fundamental texts of the Bible is about the people's arrival and encounter with God at Mount Sinai; in this pilgrimage of liberation, the people received his law. Having left Refedim, they arrived in the desert of Sinai, and they pitched their tents in the wilderness: there Moses went up to God. From the mountain, the Lord called him, saying: "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the

Israelites: You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession out of all the peoples. Indeed, the whole earth is mine, but you shall be for me priestly kingdom and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the Israelites.” (Ex 19.3-6)

The Exodus is a model not only of the pilgrimage of Israel, but also of every believer on earth: the exodus is the exit, the journey, the temptation, the test, the sin and the entry into the promised land. So God's people have always been pilgrims in their homeland, because they never really owned the land: it took a long of time and hard struggle to conquer it. After they had installed themselves there, they sought an understanding with the peoples that lived there, but they made their life difficult. When the kingdom of Israel was divided, it was left with the poorest part. This, in turn, was occupied after several centuries. Even when they returned, they never really possessed the land again. For this reason the new slavery in Babylon was like a new exodus from Egypt, like a new pilgrimage through the desert. "Thus says the LORD, who makes a way in the sea, a path in the mighty waters, who brings out chariot and horse, army and warrior; they lie down, they cannot rise, they are extinguished, quenched like a wick ... Do not remember the former things or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert ... I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert.” (Is 43.16-20)

This is what it means to be a pilgrim people: always abused by their rulers. Israel is counseled to respect the pilgrims and the strangers who dwell among them. “You shall not molest the stranger, nor oppress them, because you have been strangers in the land of Egypt. (Ex 22.20; Dt.10.18; 24.17)

The Passover feast celebrated the pilgrimage in the desert and the victory over the forces that oppressed the pilgrim and stood in their way to the Promised Land. That is why it became the biggest feast for Israel. In the same way, through the victory of Jesus over his death, his earthly pilgrimage, Easter has become the feast par excellence of Christians. The Passover together with the Feast of Tabernacles and the Weeks or Pentecost was the reason for a pilgrimage to the sanctuary of Jerusalem: “Three times each year you shall make festival in my honor.” (Ex 23.14) “Three times each year, all your males shall appear before the Lord God.” (Ex 23.17; Lev 23.39-41).

Curiously, the term used to say “feast” (*hag*) translates also as “pilgrimage.” Hence, pilgrimage is a feast. To go on a pilgrimage in one's homeland gave to the pilgrim the awareness of total dependence on the Lord, starting from his sanctuary in Zion.

3. Jesus Christ, pilgrim of the Father among humanity

Jesus is the way, but he also came to teach how to walk. He came into the world to trace a way for all people and to teach all to walk behind him. The Gospel of Luke gives us an insight into this. It emphasizes the way of Jesus. The greater part of this Gospel takes place during the passage of Jesus to Jerusalem (Luke 9.51 – 19.44). It is symbol of his total gift of self to humanity.

Jesus is the Great Pilgrim, not only because he took on the human condition, accepting to be born, live and die as every human, but also because his pilgrimage was infinitely intense. He himself wanted to go on pilgrimage to Jerusalem, to the feast of Passover and to every other feast in which all men were required to participate after they reached the age of twelve: "Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it." (Luke 2.41-43; John 2.13; 5.1; 7.8-10,14, 37-38; 10.22-23; 12.12)

The whole public life of Jesus can be described as a pilgrimage of a prophet, who never tires to proclaim the kingdom, who has no place of his own, who does not own a home "where he can lay his head" (Mt 8.20; Luke 9.58). For this reason, the Gospels, especially Luke, always put Jesus on the "road", "on the way" to Jerusalem, where he will begin the final leg of pilgrimage on earth.

In this sense, one of the most important counsels that Jesus gives to his disciples is about the Christian pilgrimage: "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me" (Mt 16:24, cf. Mk 8:34, Luke 9:23).

From the cross, Jesus will continue his pilgrimage to the Father by way of the Ascension: "I came from the Father and I have come into the world; now I am leaving the world and am going to the Father"(John 16:28). However, he promises to take them by the same path, as pilgrims to meet the Father: "And when I go and I will prepare a place for you, I will see you again and take you to myself, so that where I am, you may be also. And to the place where I am going, you know the way."(John 14.2-4).

As leader of the new people of God, Jesus did not fail to go into the wilderness where he was tempted (just like Moses and the people of the Old Testament) and, as a model for all, he drew to himself all who wish to follow him through the pilgrimage of their own life. (Mt 4:1-11, Mk 1:12-13, Luke 4:1-13)

In the Gospel and Acts, more than a hundred times, Luke repeats the words that refer to the path and to walking. This is so because, like the Master, also the disciples must go and bring the Word and the testimony of Jesus along all the roads of the world. This is the only message that can save people from all evils.

4. To walk as the Church

According to the Gospel of Luke, Jesus completed his pilgrimage in Jerusalem, where he died, rose again and ascended to the Father. But before he left, he gave his disciples his will - the order to go on a "pilgrimage" to all the streets of the world, bringing the gospel to all peoples. And he gave them his Spirit, because, with his power to support them in the journey, they could accomplish this: "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1.8, Mt 28.19-20, Luke 24.48)

The lives of the early disciples were a pilgrimage on the streets of the world ... a geographical pilgrimage through the streets, by sea, but it was also a spiritual pilgrimage of the cross ... because of the martyrs who gave their lives for the gospel they proclaimed.

From the beginning, the Church of Jesus was called *the Path, the Way*. After Pentecost, this Church, animated by the Holy Spirit which descended on the disciples of Jesus, saw itself on the way, sent to walk the roads of the world to bring the message of the Gospel to all peoples.

The idea of the Way or the journey was crucial to the early missionaries of the Gospel. Moved by the power of the Spirit of Pentecost, they brought the message of Christ to all the world's roads.

For this reason, in the Acts of the Apostles, Christianity received as its first name the Way. The Church, as the gathering of the disciples who chose to follow the Way of Jesus, is simply called the Way. In the same way, referring to the persecution against the Christians, Paul says that they persecuted the "Way": "I persecuted this Way up to the point of death, by binding both men and women, and putting them in prison, as the High Priest and the whole council of elders can testify about me." (Act 22.4-5; 9.2; 19.9,23; 24.14)

Only through the power of the Holy Spirit can the disciples of Jesus follow his way and go out into the world, proclaiming Jesus Christ. The book of the Acts of the Apostles is the epic story of the announcement of the first disciples of the risen Jesus upon all the streets of the world. To them Jesus said, "You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Act 1.8, cf. Luke 24.47- 48).

Being a Christian does not mean simply to receive certain sacraments and to participate in certain religious festivals. To be a Christian is to follow the way of the cross which Jesus took first, and to see oneself as a missionary walking the way which the Lord will open up in front of each one of us. Those who take the way of Jesus seriously cannot stand open-mouthed "looking up to heaven" (Acts 1.11), living a superficial Christianity consisting only of sacraments, and prayer; He or she should feel responsible and committed to proclaiming to others the way which is Jesus Christ. Whoever does not proclaim this way is still very far away from the way of a follower of Jesus.

C. Text of Fr. Dehon

Fr. Dehon remembers his pilgrimage to Jerusalem

25 Mach 1865 – Jerusalem!

We wanted to go on foot the last day of our travel, as real pilgrims. Along the way we saw the fountain where Philip baptized the eunuch of Candace. Judea showed itself to us in the aridity of its deforested hills. We were deeply excited at the thought of seeing Jerusalem soon. We arrived at the Greek monastery of the Holy Cross. It is surrounded by a forest of olive trees. From there, it was said, the tree of the cross was taken.

Right behind the monastery of the Holy Cross, Jerusalem appears with its domes and its battlements. We get on your knees and pray for a few minutes. It is the place of our redemption, the place where our Lord has shown his great love by giving His life for us.

Jerusalem is built on several hills and on three sides arise deep and colorful streams. To the east arises the hill of Olives with its white mosque with its green flanks. To the north, unfortunately, the Russian buildings exhibit an air of grandeur that so displeases the Catholics. The town is surrounded by grey walls, battlements, flanked by towers. A prominent west corner contains the Tower of David and the Jaffa Gate. That's where we headed. Inside, the streets have retained their medieval appearance; several are covered with ribbed vaults. It looks as if the Franks have abandoned their conquest. We took lodging in an Italian inn (La Casa Nuova), where the good Franciscans will give us hospitality for fifteen days.

The Via dolorosa- The Holy Sepulcher

March 26: The Via Dolorosa . The Holy Sepulcher. I continue my account from day to day. I consider these days as very important in my life. They have strengthened my faith very much! They have left me with touching memories! They give me useful tips for instructions and they will help me in my conversations and talks.

Our first day we reserved for the Via Dolorosa and the Holy Sepulcher. I give too great importance to archeology: but thanks be to God, I visited praying and was more a pilgrim than a tourist.

I attended mass said by a missionary from India in the Chapel of the Flagellation, a small shrine, venerated already for a long time, because it has preserved columns that go back to the seventh and eighth centuries. From there, passing through the gate of St. Stephen, we went to take a look at the Cedron Valley and the Mount of Olives. How many memories have accumulated in such a small space! Below, on the other side of the stream, a boundary wall encloses the olives of Gethsemane: It is exactly there that the Via Dolorosa begins . We retraced our steps, passing to the left of the temple walls, to follow the way of sorrows.

There at our left was the palace of Pilate. Now they are barracks. Christians have a small chapel there: on the right is the Chapel of the Flagellation; a little farther on is arch of the Ecce Homo and the triumphal gate in the Roman style; still farther away is a memorial of the first fall (of Jesus), of his encounter with Mary, the home of Veronica. A column marks the exact place of the judicial gate; after which there is the road that goes up to Golgotha.

Lord Jesus, in writing these memories, I make again in spirit the way of the cross and I offer you again all the merits of the Passion in expiation for my sins.

The Holy Sepulchre! What other building in the world is filled with such great memories? And there is the rock, on which Christ was crucified. There he was put in the tomb. He died for us, to atone for our sins, to save our souls.

In one visit it is not possible to meditate on these mysteries with sufficient calmness. At first, one is overwhelmed with emotion, annihilation, a mysterious tremor that takes hold of the humble pilgrim.

We must return to it often, to pray, to reflect, to go to communion, to participate in the Holy Mass, to enjoy the graces of this sanctuary. And, throughout one's life, the memories of these Holy Places will help in contemplating the mysteries of salvation.

A pavement lies before the Holy Sepulcher. The entrance is secured by a double arched gate. There is a beautiful portal, thanks to the Crusaders, but there are also remnants of Byzantine columns and Roman cornices. After Constantine, the church has been constantly renovated, using ancient ruins.

The interior of the church is very irregular. It is a gathering of several buildings. The great dome covers the Holy Sepulcher. The nave of the Greeks is to the east and it also has a dome. To the south is the chapel of Calvary, to the north that of St. Helena and the finding of the cross.

The great dome was in such a sad shape that it was raining inside as outside on the road. The reason: it has been impossible to arrive at an agreement between the Latins and the Greeks on who would do the restoration. In fact, over the centuries this poor sanctuary has become a shared territory and is disputed by the different rites and races.

The Latin Catholics and the schismatic Greeks have the greater part, but also several other rites have their own altars. The Holy Sepulcher is shared and different rites will celebrate their own liturgy of the hours. Unfortunately, the activities of all these races are policed by the Turks. What a painful impression it leaves when one sees the tomb of Christ left at the mercy of all these struggles and schisms that share the rights of the Catholic Church. There one gets a good sense of the patience of God and how time belongs to Him.

(Fr. Dehon, *Notes sur l'histoire de ma vie*, Vol. II)

D. A moment of dialogue

In one of the houses, take time for a moment of reflection on our state as pilgrims. .

E. Oral or written testimony

Meditation on the pilgrimage of Fr. Dehon to Jerusalem (Martina CM – Mozambique)

Reading the text of Father Dehon of his journey to Jerusalem, or rather of his pilgrimage to the Holy Land, I was reminded of my trip / pilgrimage in 2008, to the Holy Places and to other spots; I had the chance to see this beautiful city starting from the Garden of Olives. Until this day I have the memory imprinted in my heart and mind of this particular moment. We are pilgrims, walkers, who, in this time of challenges, continue to believe in the presence of God. It is a presence that invites us to be available to the Spirit who prompts us in our daily lives to be attentive and vigilant. Whoever walks tries to look to the essentials, leaving aside what they does not merit attention.

I write from Mozambique, Invinha - Gurué, where I live, and I find myself remembering what we experienced as the Compagnia Missionaria for more than 40 years. We started our presence in the Upper Zambezia in the 70s and afterwards we made a pilgrimage through most of Mozambique and afterwards of the world. We now find ourselves back where we started. The decision to return here came from an invitation of the bishop of Gurué, Dom Francisco Lerma, and a reflection which we made on our presence and our vocation. For various reasons, I am back here temporarily and I can

go back into the Christian community in an atmosphere of proclamation and missionary testimony which allows us to live again the first gift of our vocation as CM. Also Fr. Dehon had this missionary spirit which led him to send many missionaries to Africa already from the earliest years after the founding of the Congregation. Also Fr. Albino Elegante SCJ, 10 years after founding the CM, sent them to Mozambique. This missionary spirit characterizes our way of pilgrimage and communion with the people to whom we have been sent. Currently, the local church has its own diocesan priests and I have the opportunity to visit the Christian community together with the local priest and to share with them this desire of proclamation. Of course, there are various ways of living the proclamation, but personally I am grateful for this opportunity given to me to share again the missionary life with this Church, as it was in the past with the SCJ. The essential thing for me is this passion for the proclamation of the Kingdom, in every place and time, in various ways, and wherever the Spirit calls us – either in hidden form or explicitly. We can always announce – give witness - to the love we have received from God and that is felt in our hearts. Of course there are limits, inconsistencies and distances in our lives that separate us from the gospel, but we can always trust in His mercy and in the opportunity to start again each day in our faith that love is stronger than our sin.

And so with faith and hope, let us go forward as a pilgrim, walking together as the Dehonian Family. Our family combines the spirituality of the Sacred Heart and the desire to continue – as recommended by Fr. Dehon - to "go to the people."

F. A moment of prayer or celebration

1. Hymn

2. Introduction

In this meeting we seek to interiorize all we have reflected on.

3. The Word of God

“Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. Assuming that he was in the group of travellers, they went a day’s journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, ‘Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety.’ He said to them, ‘Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?’ But they did not understand what he said to them. Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart.

And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favour.” (Luke 2.41.52)

4. Story: *The cross of life*

This is a story of a man who got tired of his cross. He went to God and asked him for a lighter cross. God brought him into a room full of crosses and there he put his own cross on a wall and spent the whole afternoon choosing a lighter cross.

After many attempts he found the cross that suited him and he told God that he had found the right cross. And God said to him that the new cross of life, which he had chosen, was not any different than the cross which he had left behind because it was too heavy.

God gives each the cross we can carry...

5. Psalm 23 - The LORD is my shepherd

1 The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.

2 He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters;

3 he restores my soul.

He leads me in right paths
for his name's sake.

4 Even though I walk through the darkest valley,

I fear no evil;
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff—
they comfort me.

5 You prepare a table before me

in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me

all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD
my whole life long.

6. Symbol: *Pilgrimage: Stick and shell of a pilgrim*

The walking stick and the shell of a pilgrim: symbols of the wanderer, a pilgrimage, a journey. They help us to walk and are useful to achieve our goal. May we be able to find that our best support is the same Christ who helps us to walk and follow the path of LIFE.

7. Moment of sharing (prayer, reflection, intercessions)

8. Shared prayer. Words to share

Hymn for the mission

- Only God can give faith,

All: but you can give your witness.

- Only God can give hope,

All: but you can give it to your brother and sister.

- Only God can give love,

All: but you can teach others to love.

- Only God can give peace,

All: but you can sow union

- Only God can give strength,

All: but you can accompany the discouraged

- Only God is the Way,

All: but you can give directions to others

- Only God is the light,

All: but you can help to make it shine in the eyes of all

- Only God is life,

All: but you can make the desire come alive in others

- Only God can do what seems impossible,

All: but you can do the possible

- Only God is sufficient unto himself,

All: but prefers to count on you.

Before the final hymn, hand out the biography of Fr. Dehon and the book of prayers of the Dehonian Family.

9. Final hymn

Literature

OTHER SUPPORTING TEXTS

A. Story: A tale of the Ubuntu

During the World Peace Festival in Florianópolis (2006), the journalist and philosopher Lia Diskin , told what had happened to a tribe in Africa called Ubuntu.

She said that an anthropologist had studied the habits and customs of the tribe, and when he finished his work, he had to wait a long time for the transport that would take him to the airport to return home.

To pass the time, because he did not want to catechize the members of the tribe, he offered the children what he thought was a harmless game.

He bought sweets and candy, put it all in a nice basket, wrapped with a ribbon, and put it under a tree. He called the children and told them: “Run to the basket, and whoever arrives first will win all these sweets.”

The children got ready for the race waiting for the starting signal. When he yelled "Go!", all the children immediately joined hands and together they ran towards the tree with the basket. When they got there, they began to divide all the candies among them and they were all happy eating them together.

The anthropologist asked them why they had run together? If only one would have won, he said, he would have had so many more candies.

They said simply: " Ubuntu, uncle. How could only one of us to be happy, if everyone else would have remained sad? “

The anthropologist was stunned.

B. Story: A tale of a butterfly:

There once was a widower who had two daughters, to whom he was trying to give advice on various topics. One day he decided to send them to a wise man, so that they could learn more. The two sisters were wise and clever and they were tired of the wisdom of the wise man, because he found answers to all their questions.

One day one of the girls had an idea of how to leave the man speechless. She decided to share the idea with her sister. She said: “I will put a butterfly in my closed hands and I will ask the wise man: ‘The butterfly that I have in my hand is it alive or dead?’”

If he says it is alive, I will keep my hands closed until it dies. If he tells me that it is dead, I will open my hands so that she can fly away.

After a few days the two girls went to the wise and did as they had schemed. The girl asked the wise man: "The butterfly that I have in my hands is it alive or dead?"

The wise man replied: "It depends on you, for you are the one who is holding it in your hands."

C. God is the answer

You say: “It is impossible”.

God says: “All is possible” (Luke 18.27).

You say: “I am tired”.

God says: “I give you rest” (Mt 11.28-30).

You say: “No one really loves me”.

God says: "I love you" (John 3.16; John 13.34).
You say: "I can't".
God says: "My grace is enough for you" (2Cor 12.9).
You say: "I don't see a solution".
God says: "I will guide you on your way" (Prov 3.5-6).
You say: "I can't do it".
God says: "You can do everything" (Phil 4.13).
You say: "I feel distressed".
God says: "I will set you free from all distress" (Ps 90.15).
You say: "It is not worth the effort".
God says: "All things work together for good" (Rom 8.28).
You say: "I don't deserve to be forgiven".
God says: "I forgive you" (1 John 1.9; Rom 8.1).
You say: "I don't succeed".
God says: "I will fully satisfy every need of yours" (Phil 4.19).
You say: "I am afraid".
God says: "I did not give you a spirit of cowardice" (2Tm 1.7).
You say: "I am forever frustrated and discouraged".
God says: "Cast all your anxiety on me" (1Pt 5.7).
You say: "I don't have any talents".
God says: "I give you wisdom" (1Cor 1.30).
You say: "I don't have faith".
God says: "I have given to each a measure of faith" (Rom 12.3).
You say: "I feel abandoned".
God says: "I will never leave you and never abandon you" (Is. 49.15)

INDEX

SPIRITUAL PATH – LAY DEHONIANS.....	3
I. A BRIEF PRESENTATION OF THE ITINERARY.....	5
II. REMARKS OF A TECHNICAL AND PASTORAL NATURE.....	9
Year One Summary	11
Structure for every meeting	11
Meeting I - WHO ARE WE?.....	13
The objectives of the meeting	13
The outline of the meeting: strategies and activities.....	13
The development of the meeting	13
A. Welcome.....	13
B. Theme of the reflection: <i>Come and See</i>	13
C. Text of Fr. Dehon and The Spiritual Path.....	15
D. A moment of dialogue	16
E. Oral or written testimony.....	16
F. A moment of prayer or celebration	18
Literature	21
Meeting II - LIFE AS A GIFT	23
The objectives of the meeting	23
The outline of the meeting: strategies and activities.....	23
The development of the meeting	23
A. Welcome.....	23
B. Theme of the reflection: <i>Life as a gift</i>	23
C. Text of Fr. Dehon	27
D. A moment of dialogue	28
E. Oral or written testimony.....	28
F. A moment of prayer or celebration	29
Literature	31
Meeting III - BAPTISMAL CALLING.....	33
The objectives of the meeting	33
The outline of the meeting: strategies and activities.....	33
The development of the meeting	33
A. Welcome.....	33
B. Theme of the reflection: <i>Baptism as our vocation: holiness and mission.</i>	33
C. Text of Fr. Dehon	40
D. A moment of dialogue	43
E. Oral or written testimony:.....	43
F. A moment of prayer or celebration	44
Literature	46

Meeting IV - THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.....	47
The objectives of the meeting	47
The outline of the meeting: strategies and activities	47
The development of the meeting	47
A. Welcome.....	47
B. Theme of the reflection: <i>The Christian Life</i>	47
C. Text of Fr. Dehon	51
D. A moment of dialogue	51
E. Oral or Written testimony	52
F. A moment of prayer or celebration	54
Literature	55
Meeting V - FROM THE DEVOTION TO THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE HEART OF JESUS	57
The objectives of the meeting	57
The outline of the meeting: strategies and activities	57
The development of the meeting	57
A. Welcome.....	57
B. Theme of the reflection: <i>From the Devotion to the spirituality of the Heart of Jesus</i>	57
C. Text of Fr. Dehon	61
D. A moment of dialogue	62
F. A moment of prayer or celebration	63
Literature	65
Meeting VI - DIFFERENT FORMS OF LIFE IN THE CHURCH	67
The objectives of the meeting	67
The outline of the meeting: strategies and activities	67
Development of the meeting	67
A. Welcome.....	67
B. Theme of the reflection: <i>Different forms of life in the Church: laity, consecrated religious life, and ordained priesthood</i>	67
C. Text of Fr. Dehon	69
D. A moment of dialogue	70
E. Oral or written testimony.....	71
F. A moment of prayer or celebration	72
Literature	74
Meeting VII - IDENTITY AND MISSION OF LAY PEOPLE IN THE CHURCH.....	75
The objectives of the meeting	75
The outline of the meeting: strategies and activities	75
The development of the meeting	75
A. Welcome.....	75
B. Theme of the reflection: <i>The identity of the lay people in the church.</i>	75
C. Text of Fr. Dehon	78
D. A moment for dialogue	79
E. Oral or written testimony.....	79
F. A moment of prayer or celebration	80
Literature	82

Meeting VIII - HUMAN, CHRISTIAN, AND DEHONIAN VALUES	83
The objectives of the meeting	83
The outline of the meeting: strategies and activities	83
The development of the gathering	83
A. Welcome.....	83
B. Theme of the reflection: <i>Human, Christian, and Dehonian values</i>	83
C. Text of Fr. Dehon	87
D. A moment of dialogue	89
E. Oral or Written Testimony.....	89
F. A moment of prayer or celebration	90
Literature	92
Meeting IX - THE PARTICIPATION OF LAITY IN THE DEHONIAN CHARISM	93
The objectives of the meeting	93
The outline of the meeting: strategies and activities	93
The development of the meeting	93
A. Welcome.....	93
B. Theme of the reflection: <i>The participation of laity in the dehonian charism</i>	93
C. Text of Fr. Dehon	99
D. A moment of dialogue	100
E. Oral or written testimony.....	100
F. A moment of prayer or celebration	102
Other literature on this theme.....	104
Meeting X - PILGRIMS.....	105
The objectives of the meeting	105
The outline of the meeting: strategies and activities	105
The development of the meeting	105
A. Welcome.....	105
B. Theme of the reflection: <i>Pilgrims</i>	105
C. Text of Fr. Dehon	109
D. A moment of dialogue	111
E. Oral or written testimony.....	111
F. A moment of prayer or celebration	112
Literature	114
OTHER SUPPORTING TEXTS	115
A. Story: A tale of the Ubuntu.....	115
B. Story: A tale of a butterfly:.....	115
C. God is the answer	115
INDEX.....	117