

Synthesis statement regarding discussions on the State of the Province report U.S. Provincial Chapter, Hales Corners, Wis., July 7 – 11, 2014

INTRODUCTION – Delegates of the XV Provincial Chapter at the Provincialate Offices in Hales Corners, Wis., July 7 - 11, 2014, reflected on the State of the Province report written by Fr. Stephen Huffstetter, provincial superior. From that reflection, the chapter identified issues and possible tasks to be addressed by the province as a whole.

1. Community life and mission — Members discussed community life and mission in line with the themes of the next General Chapter, “Merciful, in community, with the poor,” and that of the Provincial Chapter, “Dehonians in community and mission.” On the provincial level, there was a call for renewal programs and/or retreats to enhance the human and spiritual bond among members. On the local level, members expressed a desire to intentionally interact and affirm each other on issues of common life, on human, emotional and physical health concerns, and on the gift SCJs have received in their charism. Building good relationships is key to developing the comfort and trust needed to challenge and affirm one another; possibilities for enhancing interpersonal skills should be explored. Community life is a core value of religious life; it must be given priority.

2. Life and Ministry — Several directions emerged. First, the province should consider establishing a personnel director and/or a committee for personnel and ministries. Second, accept the challenge of internationality (more specifically, welcoming and recognizing the international presence already among us as well as being mindful of the possibility of greater international collaboration). Third, prepare people in a timely manner for key ministries such as provincial treasurer and novice master, among others.

3. Vocations — The Chapter reiterated that vocational development is the responsibility of all communities and individuals. Suggestions made to promote vocations included wider efforts at youth ministry by enhancing what is being done in SCJ parishes, but also by creating national youth organizations, Dehonian youth gatherings, youth mission trips, campus ministry, and a presence at the next World Youth Day to be held in Poland in 2016. There was a call for greater use of social media and a more concerted effort at branding and marketing the SCJ charism. More prayers for vocations were encouraged as well as formation of families to help develop an openness to vocational development. The chapter asked that leadership prioritize vocational development not only to help ministries continue, but to enhance the community itself.

4. “Living simply” — “Living simply” requires more discussion and definition both because of the topic’s cultural implications, and as a way of identifying our real needs. Chapter members said that they interpreted “living simply” as living transparently with budgets, being accountable to one another, recognizing what we truly need to live, and knowing how to live with a sense of generosity. Living simply helps us to live in solidarity with the poor. There was a clear call for more dialogue on the implications of “living simply.” As noted in the first section regarding Community Life and Mission, good relationships are key to good dialogue. Continued efforts in building healthy relationships in community is vital. That said, “living simple” is not just an action of an individual; the province must explore what it means to live simply on the local, province and congregational level.

5. Sharing the Dehonian charism — Chapter delegates expressed their desire for a more concerted effort to propagate, display, make known and celebrate with others the Dehonian charism. Suggestions

to do this included creating materials based in the charism such as homiletic aids, as well as a prayer book and other materials for the laity (initially focus on benefactors, parishioners and employees; directors of Justice, Peace and Reconciliation and Dehonian Associates could be involved in this); holding “Dehon Days” on the local level and more frequent Mission Education Conferences; establishing a variation of the Dehonian Family and through it make use of the “Spiritual Path” (the Spiritual Path is a four-year guide developed at the general level as a formation tool for lay people seeking to learn about SCJ spirituality); making SCJ symbols (such as the SCJ logo) more widely visible; utilizing social media more fully; and establishing Dehonian youth programs. Also, there needs to be a dialogue on the role of coworkers and their relationship to the province; define the scope of their position when they represent the province and their level of participation in (being a part of) the mission.

6. Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology — The purpose of the discussion on SHSST was not to give a clear directive on the school but instead to raise questions that the chapter believes should be addressed by the province, including the function of SHSST and its role as a province ministry. Several of these questions centered on financial concerns: what is the financial commitment of the province to the seminary, what portion of the costs could or should be borne by sponsoring dioceses and religious communities; what can the seminary itself do to become more financially autonomous? Many expressed the desire to further develop lay education at the school, including an expansion of the master’s program. When asked to envision possibilities for the SHSST, ideas such as developing a lay formation center, retreat and/or youth center were raised. There was a clear affirmation of the ESL program and a desire to broaden the possibilities for internationality at SHSST. It was suggested that there be a conversation about having those in SCJ formation attend SHSST instead of Catholic Theological Union; factors to be considered include the availability of a diverse student population (male and female, possibilities for inter-community interaction) as well as resources in formation and ministry, and the availability of an SCJ presence. Students highlighted the need to live in an SCJ community with its own space and identity; there needs to be a strong SCJ component to the formation of SCJ students. Lastly, a committee should be established to review how the Dehonian charism is intentionally reflected in the school.

7. Internationality — Internationality is both a gift and a challenge. The gift is the hospitality of the other where the other enriches the community with another vision of being human, of God and of another expression of the Dehonian charism. Within this context, the Mexico project could enrich the province. Members should be encouraged to have international experiences, including long and short-term mission assignments, as well as renewal, formation and educational opportunities. The ESL program has been a great gift of internationality. It is important to be sensitive to the differences of others, and to allow for the challenge of international members to express themselves. Internationality should be appreciated as a goal in its own right.

8. Senior SCJs — The chapter affirmed the importance of the care that is given to the seniors. It also proposed the possibility of appointing a province director of senior life with an intergenerational commission to help the administration make decisions regarding the definition of senior life, the places where seniors can live and possibly work, and other senior life concerns. It is important to get input from the seniors themselves. Reaffirm the option for retired members to live and continue to serve in active communities. Also, possibilities should be explored to allow men to live in community as long as possible, knowing that this might mean hiring people that would offer assisted care.