

First Profession of Vows, Feast of the Assumption, August 15, 2018

Dear Friends,

I am sure that most of you have heard of the Chair of St. Peter, today I will speak to you from the Chair of Edward.

(I would like to begin first by extending a word of warm welcome to all you family, friends and religious priests, brothers and sisters of our two brothers preparing to make First Profession, all of whom have come to join us for this wonderful event, the first in our province in five years. I especially want to thank the parents of Duy Henry Bui Nguyen and Phong Hoang for sharing your sons with us. We are so very happy to have these two young men in the Congregation of the Priests of the Sacred Heart. You have raised them well and we profoundly thank you. On this occasion I would like to reflect on today's feast of the Assumption and how profession invites all to "follow in the footsteps of our Savior.")

Dear brothers, Henry and Phong, you have had quite a novitiate year and our presence here at your first profession is a fitting and beautiful way for all of us to celebrate this Feast of the Assumption. During the Year of Consecrated Life in 2015, proclaimed by Pope Francis, he quoted St. John Paul II with these words:

"You have not only a glorious history to remember and to recount, but also a great history still to be accomplished! Look to the future where the Spirit is sending you to do even greater things." (Vita Consecrata §110)

On the threshold of your first vows, which thrusts you forward into a new Dehonian future, you too will be conscious of being sent by the Spirit to do even greater things.

Our Rule of Life states our tradition and our history well: "Our Institute, founded in 1878, is rooted in Father Dehon's faith experience. Saint Paul expressed the same experience this way: *And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me* (Galatians 2:20).

The open side and the pierced heart of the Savior most wonderfully expressed for Father Dehon a love whose active presence he experienced in his own life." I pray, my brothers, that you will always experience that love experienced by Fr. Dehon and by each one of us.

From the Heart of Jesus, opened on the cross, human beings are reborn in heart, enlivened by the Spirit, and united with their brothers and sisters in the community of charity which is the Church (cf *Etudes sur le Sacré-Coeur*, I, p. 114).

Caught up in this often unrecognized love, he (*Fr. Dehon*) wanted to respond to it by being intimately united to the Heart of Christ and by restoring His Reign in individuals and in society."

So it begins for you, Henry and for you Phong as you profess your First Vows of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience on this Solemnity of the **The Assumption of our Blessed Virgin Mary**. We, as Priests of the Heart of Jesus, are continually called to rely on the intercession of our Blessed Mother, especially the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Again, our Rule of Life states: #85 “As Mother of Jesus, Mary is intimately associated with the life and redemptive work of her son. As Mother of the Church, through her maternal intercession she is present to all those who, engaged in apostolic mission, work for the rebirth of people (cf LG 65). *She stands out among the poor and humble of the Lord, who confidently hope for and receive salvation from Him* (LG 55).

By her *Ecce ancilla* she inspires us to availability in faith: she is the perfect image of our religious life. And so we shall deeply value praying to her and honoring her according to the spirit and the inclinations of the Church.”

Today’s gospel of the visitation portrays this union of mother and son going forth in mission. There is a profound similarity between Mary’s mission and that of our Dehonian charism. Mary was chosen by the Father, graced in her immaculate conception so she could say yes to His Divine plan, receive Jesus into her womb and then give him to the world for its salvation. This special bond with our Blessed Mother then suggests that your religious profession is like Mary’s “*Fiat*,” like her you are accepting and welcoming God’s plan for your life in the person of Jesus. Jesus called his disciples into an intimate relationship with him not only to welcome the Kingdom of God into their own lives, but also to put their lives at its service, leaving everything behind and closely imitating His way of life.

This more intimate union with Jesus that your vows express makes your profession a sacred moment of renewal for all of us, religious and laity alike. We all seek this deeper bond with the Heart of Jesus. As we pray for and with you, we also seek the divine help to leave behind whatever keeps us from a closer, more complete friendship with Mary’s son. I invite you then to proclaim the words of your profession as a sacred preaching to all your brothers and sisters gathered here with you. Your profession enables us all to renew our dedication to the Heart of Christ Jesus so that we can, “*Look to the future, where the Spirit is sending you in order to do even greater things.*”

As Mary proclaimed her Magnificat we too echo her words today: “*My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my Spirit rejoices in God my Savior. He has done great things for me.*” He is now doing great things for you. “*Holy his His Name.*” Amen.