

Homily given by Fr. Edward Kilianski, SCJ,
provincial superior of the US Province of the Priests of the Sacred Heart (Dehonians)
at Sacred Heart at Monastery Lake on the

Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus

June 19, 2020

Dear brothers and sisters,

This year, as we celebrate the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart in a time of darkness and uncertainty, we listen to the invitation of Jesus: “***Come to me, all you who are burdened. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart.***” Perhaps for the first time in our lives we do not need to search for the suffering that we hold in common across the world. It feels like a heavy yoke has fallen upon the shoulders of all of us and particularly on the shoulders of the most vulnerable – the poor, all victims of racism, migrants, the elderly and perhaps others.

We have been awoken, by the COVID-19 virus, and by the terrible state of our world. No one can deny that our blessed world is broken.

As we celebrate this feast of Jesus’s loving heart, listening to the cries of our world, let us enter into the pierced Heart of Jesus, experience the suffering of God’s people and of all creation, and be in solidarity with each other and with people who are suffering. Today we need to discover the ways for our time to show God’s love, the love of the heart of Jesus to our broken world.

In many ways, we who are Priests of the Sacred Heart have been in an ongoing dialog throughout our religious life about who God is calling us to be and what God is calling us to do. Sometimes we have done this with more clarity, sometimes with great courage, always with genuineness and a desire to follow Jesus’ lead. Discerning how God is calling us to respond to the needs of God’s people and living the charism and mission as followers of Leo Dehon with faithfulness is clearly our way.

Now, COVID-19 and the state of our world shouts to us to be attentive to this moment in history. I ask you today, on this solemnity, to live more humanly in the way Jesus lived, to be One Body in closer solidarity with each other. This is the opportunity to put real flesh on our commitment, an opportunity to change the way we look at the world, to ask ourselves how can we as Dehonians or as lay people respond in new ways to live in solidarity with each other and with those who are most suffering.

Perhaps we need to ask ourselves more clearly what is God’s plan for us? As we enter more deeply into the pierced heart of Jesus, filled with all the suffering of humanity that we see throughout our world, I pray each of us will contemplate what this suffering is saying to us from God’s perspective. Perhaps the readings for this feast are one way to start.

Our first reading reminds us that God created and loves **each one, and all creation is Sacred to God**. Deuteronomy tells us and we believe that each person has a place in God's heart and no one is left out for God *"has set his heart on you and chose you"*.

Sadly, when we look around we see that much of life **is not sacred**. We know people who are afraid to be on the streets because of the color of their skin with fear of violence or even death. We know people who are alone and hungry, without work, in fear of losing their homes, or perhaps isolated in a nursing home. We see people moving from country to country, walking from one end to the other, crossing large bodies of water, deserts and mountains to escape violence and to find safety in a new land. We hold people and their suffering before God, in our times of silence, before the Eucharist. We grieve because God's people and God's earth are suffering.

We need to pay attention to this moment when our hearts are filled with both fear and compassion, to allow this pain to enter into our own hearts and to transform us and help us.

What does **solidarity** look like today when we hear John's words: *"Beloved, if God so loved us we must love one another"*? What does love look like in this pandemic ravaged world? What does love look like when we watch death and violence on television and in the streets of our cities? What does love look like when we see children who are hungry and know that food is being disposed of because there is no market to sell?

This is a time to not just say that "God loves us"; it is a time to deeply incarnate God's love in very concrete ways in our world that is out of balance in favor of the rich and powerful. We need to ask ourselves what sparks our thirst in this moment of history. When we contemplate the love of God in today's world, do we see and discover new ways to make known the love of Jesus?

Each of us has different ways of responding to our reality, usually influenced by who we "rub shoulders with", how and to whom we minister, our age, our culture, and our connection with people. In solidarity, we need to understand and value the different faces of love, to learn from each other, and to come to accept and respect that each one of us brings something to the common good. Whether our way is demonstrating against the sin of racism or in spending time in Adoration, holding the suffering of our world with Christ, these are the ways that God is calling us to live this gospel with those who suffer and with each other.

We are both a humble and important part of creation. It is the time to listen in silence, to become more human and to act in the radical style of Jesus, to be in solidarity with God's plan and God's people, to fulfill Jesus's hope of *Sint Unum* that they *"may all be one, as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me"*.

Finally, on this Solemnity of the Sacred Heart, we are called to be meek and humble, to recognize our need of one another and our need of God. Who more than Jesus can teach us how to live in a deeper solidarity? Jesus' incarnation is the ultimate act of solidarity. Jesus humbly chose to become human, to make his home among us, to be in solidarity with humanity, to lay down his life for his friends, for us.

As we renew our commitment to follow Jesus as sons of Fr. Dehon, let us pray for each other that we will have the courage and humility to take up His yoke, to live the call to discover and make known the love of the Heart of Jesus in souls and societies, to act concretely where we are and as we are, each one and together as One Body of Christ. Amen.