



June 30, 2020

Dear Brothers,

*“As the number of new coronavirus cases surges each day in many parts of the country, some states are hitting pause on their plans to reopen.” (NPR, June 25, 2020.) **It’s certainly not over yet!** We’ve seen the headlines, watched the news and heard the radio. The pandemic continues. The stock market goes up or down on any given day. We live in a time of uncertainty. Many of us continue to stay at home or to self-quarantine.*

With the Covid-19 pandemic, we are confronted once more with the **fragility of our lives**, and again we are reminded of our **common humanity**; that all of us are **interconnected** as brothers and sisters, that we are all one human family with God as our creator.

We know that **God does not abandon us**, God is with us even now in this time of trial and testing. In this moment, it is important for us to live in the hope that we have in Jesus Christ. Now is the time to intensify our prayers and our sacrifices for the **love of God and the love of our neighbor**. Let us draw closer to one another in our love for God, and rediscover the things that truly matter in our lives.

As **Priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus**, our Constitutions remind us that: *“Sharing our goods in fraternal love enables us to substantiate, in and with the Church, that we are a sign among our brothers and sisters. This **Gospel poverty calls us to free ourselves from the thirst for possession and pleasure**, which encumbers the human heart. It gives us the incentive to live in a love that is confident and given without asking for a return.” #46*

*“In this spirit, each one of us fully assumes his **personal responsibility** with regard to **poverty**. #47 This poverty demands that together we seek a **simple and modest lifestyle**; we acknowledge as well that **we are responsible before the community** for the use of our goods.”*

Earlier this month, Dn. David Nagel, our Provincial Treasurer, sent a memo to all entities of the province, that, in part stated *“As we look forward to the return of what we feel is **normal** there are still **many challenges facing us... Now is the time to build a new future** for our ministries taking into account what we have learned and experienced over the last few months.”*

Now is also the time for each of us to take a personal and communal look at how we are living our vow of poverty. David wrote that *“we **cautiously monitor donor giving**. Past donor giving patterns tell us we might see a dip in donations in three to five months. As long as there is **negative news** about finances or other world threats then **donations could be negatively impacted**.”*

We are financially dependent on the markets to help with charitable gift annuity payments to donors from the three development offices. Also, the province members who are not in active ministry are provided for through the Support & Maintenance Trust. The income from investments also helps with the funding of building projects and the overseas missions. When there are changes in the financial markets the Province and the Congregation are impacted.

As recommended by the Provincial Council at our budget meeting on May 5, 2020, **all province entities are to decrease** overall expenses by **10%**. We have also called for a limit on travel and attendance at outside

conferences, etc., and to use video conferencing when possible; our recent council meetings were held in this manner. Now, I am asking each of us to limit our individual spending.

The focus of the 2017 provincial visitations was our vow of poverty and I asked each member to answer three questions when considering the purchase of something: **Do I really want it? Do I really need it? Do I really have to have it?**

At Sacred Heart at Monastery Lake we see the many Amazon packages that arrive daily. We know that even though there is plenty of food in the kitchen and dining room that there are members of the community who regularly purchase their own. I imagine that this is not an uncommon experience in other communities in our province. And while it is **important to be generous**, there are SCJs who give significant donations to charities without being mindful of the fact that **we are supported** by our own benefactors whose donations are given with the intent of supporting our SCJ work, our SCJ ministries.

I am grateful that efforts have been made in our communities and by individuals **to live more simply** in light of our vow of poverty. However, during this pandemic, a time which brings financial insecurity to many, we must be even more **vigilant in how we use our limited resources**.

What I and the council are asking for is **greater accountability and transparency**, and that we continue this discussion — among each other and in community — about living our vow of poverty. We are asking for **more than a philosophical discussion**. We have worked hard in ministry, we have worked hard as religious, but that cannot be an excuse to spend whatever we want. **Our resources are limited** and may be even more so in the near future. We must **be responsible** and adequately prepare not only for our needs today, but for the future of our province.

Our Provincial Directory 49 states: *Our mutual search for “a simple and modest lifestyle” (Cst. 49) demands that, with prudence and generosity, we “...be ready to face the risks of insecurity” (GD 49) even when the risks entail hardship, inconvenience and lack of resources.*

We are **challenged to be prudent** with our resources, but at the same time we are also challenged to seek new opportunities to share God’s message of love. As Dn. David pointed out in his memo: *“The pandemic has brought to light new ways of socializing with one another; now we must use these changes as opportunities to bring God’s message of love to all people.”*

We are not simply facing a time of making do with less; we are trying to live our lives more fully, as religious, as Dehonians, as sons of Fr. Leo John Dehon.

“In grateful love we offer to you (Lord) our resources and our lives. We ask for the courage to live simply and to abandon anything that hinders the good news of reconciliation... May our poverty in service of the gospel become an offering of reparation to God.” (This Day of God.” Week IV: Wednesday). Be assured of my prayers and please, be safe.

In grateful love,



Edward Kilianski, SCJ
Provincial Superior