

# Spiritual Path for Dehonian Associates

## Third Meeting

### **Baptism:** Laity in the Church, Dehonian Associates

#### **Objectives**

1. to maintain a sense of welcome and belonging among the participants
2. to refresh and enhance the significance of Baptism and the responsibility to live this Christian identity
3. to embrace one's Spirit-given gifts and use them in the service of those who are in need
4. to understand that helping to bring about God's reign on earth, specifically as prophets of love and servants of reconciliation, is the Dehonian Associates' way of answering the call to holiness
5. to explore what the Dehonian Associates *Rule of Life* says about Baptism and its significance
6. to celebrate Dehonian spirituality that has the capacity to nurture and sustain a relationship of love and union with God

#### **Preparation and Notes**

1. If possible, arrange the seating in a circle with a low, circular table placed at the center.
2. Place on the table a candle and a small bowl of blessed water. The candle should already be lit when the participants are gathering.
3. Choose a CD with soft, instrumental background music and decide on the best way to play the CD [either with a CD player or on a computer]. Have this music playing while the participants are gathering.
4. Have sufficient copies of the prayer card [image of Jesus' baptism on one side and the prayer on the reverse side] available for the participants.
5. Make sure someone can introduce and lead the sung mantra, "You are God's work of art."
6. *Before the meeting*, ask one of the participants to prepare the reading from Fr. Dehon and three other participants to prepare the readings for the closing prayer.
7. The meeting should last no longer than two hours. It is important not to exceed this time limit. Meetings that last longer than advertised tend to be the last ones some people attend. The meeting should include a 10-15 minute break. One is suggested in the outline, but the dynamic of the group will suggest the most appropriate time.

## Welcome

A greeting and a welcome back, preferably from an SCJ, to all those attending the third meeting. If some participants are attending for the first time, welcome them warmly and invite the members of the group to introduce themselves to each other.

## Prayer

- **Instrumental background music:** *if the music is not playing, begin it now without introduction. Allow about a minute before beginning the Centering exercise.*
- **Centering exercise:** *slowly move through these suggestions, allowing time for the participants to follow your suggestions.*
  - ✓ As we begin a short time of prayer, I invite you to quiet yourself and relax.
  - ✓ It may help to close your eyes.
  - ✓ It may help to fill your lungs with deep breaths, and then exhale slowly.
  - ✓ Find a comfortable position in your chair; let the chair safely hold you.
  - ✓ As best as you can in this moment, enter into the depths of your heart, which is a place where God dwells.
- **Guided meditation:** *slowly move through these steps, allowing time for the participants to follow your suggestions.*
  - ✓ Having arrived at the depths of your heart, or as close as you can come in this moment, what do you notice? It could be an image, a feeling, a color, or nothing at all, which is itself an image.
  - ✓ In this sacred space, I invite you to hold in your heart the moment of your baptism. If you were too young to remember, trust your imagination.
  - ✓ Hold in your heart all who were present at your baptism: parents, godparents, family members, the faith community, and the priest.
  - ✓ What does it feel like to have water poured on you? to be anointed with oil? to be clothed in a white garment? to be given a candle representing the light of Christ?
  - ✓ What does it feel like for God to claim you as a daughter or son?
  - ✓ Take a moment to thank God for the gift of your baptism. Then allow God to thank you for your willingness to follow Christ as best you can.
  - ✓ Gently bring your awareness back to this circle. When you are ready, open your eyes.
- When everyone has opened his/her eyes, turn off the music.

- Distribute the prayer card and invite the participants to pray this in unison:

**Lord Jesus,  
you call me by name  
to tell me how much I am worth in your eyes.  
May this whisper of your love  
also reach all my brothers and sisters.**

**Select from our midst  
priests who will guide your people;  
religious who will be faithful witnesses of your love;  
and lay ministers to lead the Church.**

**Open the hearts of young adults  
to the challenge of living their love  
in the faithfulness of their lives.  
Grant unity to all these disciples of your love.  
Amen.**

## **Review of Second Meeting**

- Each person shared how s/he knows God's will and how s/he tries to live it.
- Oblation means "offering." Fr. Dehon wanted to make his whole life an offering to God.
- Following Fr. Dehon, Dehonian Associates want to make an offering of themselves to God, in whatever circumstances they find themselves.
- To do this, they choose "to will only what God wills" and "to accept all with love."

## Sharing

- Invite each participant to share their reflection upon these two questions:
  - ✓ What does it mean for you to be God's son or daughter?
  - ✓ As God's daughter or son, what specific task has God called you to accomplish?
- After each individual shares, s/he blesses her/himself with water from the bowl while the group sings this mantra:

Refrain

You are God's work of art, cre -

at - ed in Je - sus the Christ.

Text: Ephesians 2:10, *Rite of Baptism*, David Haas, b. 1957

Tune: David Haas, b. 1957

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## Presentation: Baptism

[The information in brackets represents examples of possible answers.]

Our Dehonian Associates *Rule of Life* reminds each of us that “our life with Jesus is a story that begins with the grace of Baptism. It grows day by day as we are nourished by Word, Eucharist, community, and the many gifts God’s Spirit shares with us” [#14].

The grace of the sacrament of Baptism is an awareness of our identity and a reminder of our responsibility as members of God’s family. Let’s take a moment to reflect on how the rituals of Baptism begin to write the story of our life with Jesus. Most of us were baptized as infants and don’t remember our own baptism, but we have witnessed the baptism of others and can use the gift of our imaginations.

When our parents or godparents presented us for Baptism, the priest asked them, “What **name** to you give your child?” Or if we were baptized as an adult, the priest asked us, “By what name do you wish to be called?”

- ✓ What is the significance of a person’s name? [*A unique identity, the memory of a beloved ancestor, a patron saint as a model or mentor*]

- ✓ How do you feel when someone calls you by your name?
- ✓ What does your name(s) mean or signify? [*A book of baby names with their meanings might be helpful to have on hand.*]
- ✓ If you were named after a saint or family member, how does this person inspire you or mentor you?

The main symbol used in the ritual of Baptism is **water**.

- ✓ What positive images of water can you think of? [*Refreshing, cleansing, thirst-quenching, essential element of life*]
- ✓ What negative images of water can you think of? [*Destructive, polluted, overpowering, floods, tsunamis*]

The blessing of the water for the Baptismal ritual makes use of both negative and positive associations:

“We ask you, Father, with your Son, to send the Holy Spirit upon the waters of this font. May all who are buried with Christ in the death of baptism rise also with him to newness of life.”

Ritual of Baptism

Fr. Leo John Dehon speaks of Baptism using the same negative and positive associations with water:

“Hidden under the form of holy water, the Spirit of the Heart of Jesus plunges the soul into a purifying bath, frees it from the original sin and all actual sins (if any have been committed), and imprints a character upon the soul that makes it a participant in Christ’s priesthood. Baptism infuses into the soul the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity, adorning it with its admirable gifts and nourishing it with its precious fruits.”

Leo John Dehon, SCJ, *Love of the Sacred Heart*, III, 1<sup>st</sup> Mystery, 5<sup>th</sup> Meditation

Immediately following Baptism by immersion or the pouring of water, several symbols are used to express the significance and the consequences of the sacrament of Baptism.

First, the newly baptized is anointed with **Chrism** or scented oil that has been blessed for this purpose.

- ✓ What happens when oil gets on a piece of cloth? [*It penetrates, stains the cloth, leaves a mark.*]
- ✓ What do you notice about scented oil? [*A small dab fills a large area with its scent.*]
- ✓ Name someone in the Bible who was anointed with oil. For this person, what was the significance of being anointed with oil? [*Aaron—as high priest (Leviticus 8:30), Isaiah—as prophet (Isiah 61:1), David—as king (I Samuel 16:13), Jesus—for his burial (Mark 14:3-9).*]

In Baptism, the anointing with chrism is a sign of the dignity and responsibility of the baptized, who now take their place in the community of the people of God. They are marked or stained with a Christian identity which permeates everything they do. While anointing, the priest prays this prayer:

“The God of power and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has freed you from sin and brought you to a new life through water and the Holy Spirit. He now anoints you with the chrism of salvation, so that, united with his people, you may remain forever a member of Christ who is Priest, Prophet, and King.”

Rite of Baptism

In Baptism, we are commissioned to take up the roles of priest, prophet, and king. We’re probably not used to thinking about these roles or at least the titles as something we are called upon to live. So let’s look at each title and see how each one refers to us.

- ✓ When you think of a **king**, what comes to mind? [*Ruler, leader, powerful, rich, decisive, aloof*]
- ✓ How does the image change when you think of Christ, the King? [*Humble, servant, poor, shepherd*]
- ✓ What’s another word for “king”? [*Leader, shepherd, servant*]
- ✓ As a Christian, where and how are you called to be a leader or be a servant?
  
- ✓ When you think of a **prophet**, what comes to mind? [*Someone who communicates God’s word particularly when the message is difficult to hear or rejected*]
- ✓ Name a prophet from the Bible. What was his message? [*Elijah—“you have forsaken the commandments of the Lord” (1 Kings 18:17-18), Jeremiah—“Return, faithless Israel...I am merciful” (Jeremiah 3:12), Isaiah—“Proclaim a year of God’s favor” (Isaiah 61:2), John the Baptist—“Proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins” (Mark 1:4)*]
- ✓ What message did God the Father want his Son to proclaim? [*“Love one another” (John 14:12-15)*]
- ✓ As a Christian, how and to whom are you called to speak God’s word?
  
- ✓ When you think of a **priest**, what comes to mind? [*God’s minister, prays to God for people, presides at the Eucharist and other sacraments*]
- ✓ What did Jesus do that identifies him as a priest? [*He offered himself as a sacrifice to God*]
- ✓ What do you think “priesthood of the faithful” means? [*sharers in the priesthood of Christ*]
- ✓ As a Christian, where and how are you called to be a priest? [*To make an offering of yourself to God in whatever circumstances you find yourself.*]

After being anointed, the newly baptized is clothed in a **white garment**.

- ✓ When you get “all dressed up” for a special occasion, how do you feel?
- ✓ What do your special clothes say about you to others?
- ✓ What is the significance of a special garment for Baptism? [*Clothed in Christ*]
- ✓ What is the significance of a “white” baptismal garment? [*Clean, new, pure, unstained*]

When you are dressed in white clothing, the priest says this prayer:

“You have become a new creation and have clothed yourselves in Christ. Receive this baptismal garment and bring it unstained to the judgment seat of our Lord Jesus Christ, so that you may have everlasting life.”

Rite of Baptism

Now clothed in Christ, you are given a **lighted candle**.

- ✓ What is the purpose of a candle? [*To give light, to give off a soft glow*]
- ✓ Why is light important in a dark room? [*To be able to see*]
- ✓ As a Christian, what does it mean to be “a child of the light”? [*To be the light of Christ in the world, to let your light shine for all to see*]

When you or your parents or godparents are holding the candle, the priest prays:

“You have been enlightened by Christ. Walk always as children of the light and keep the flame of faith alive in your hearts. When the Lord comes, may you go out to meet him with all the saints in the heavenly kingdom.”

Rite of Baptism

Fr. Leo John Dehon speaks of the baptismal candle, not so much as light but as fire:

“The fire [of divine love] which our Lord has come to bring and which he wishes to enkindle will not be lighted in your heart, or at least it will not be maintained and nourished unless you yourself wish that it be enkindled, encourage it, and foster its ardor by your cooperation. You have received the germ and first spark of it in Baptism. Our Lord placed it in you out of pure goodness. It was impossible for you to merit this grace, but our Lord has commanded you to cherish and nourish it constantly.”

Leo John Dehon, SCJ, *Life of Love*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Meditation

This spark that Fr. Dehon talks about is the call to holiness. God calls everyone to holiness, not just priests, religious Brothers, and religious Sisters. Everyone is to bring that holiness to each situation of his or her life. Lay people bring their holiness to all the ordinary aspects of their lives—their work, their relationships, their marriage, their children—and nurture holiness in all

these people and places. This is the vocation of the laity—to make the world holy. As the People of God, the laity has a mission in the Church and in the world. Every baptized person has something to contribute. St. Paul reminds us of this when he writes,

“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good...the same Spirit allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.”

I Corinthians 12:4-11

For Dehonian Associates, helping to bring about God’s reign on earth is their way of speaking about making the world holy. In the Dehonian Associates *Rule of Life*, we read,

“With all Christians we are invited to become better people by following closely in the footsteps of Jesus [cf. I Timothy 4:7]. *It was for this you were called since Christ suffered for you in just this way and left you an example, to have you follow in his footsteps* [I Peter 2:21]. Rooted in our baptism and confirmation, our consecration as Dehonian Associates is a special gift to glorify God, to follow Jesus more closely, and to help bring about his reign.”

*Dehonian Associates Rule of Life #12*

The best way to collaborate in establishing God’s reign on earth is through prayer and specific actions that benefit individuals, the Church, and society. This is easier to do at the local level, but sometimes we are called to work on issues that affect people we do not know or situations that are not ours. As baptized Christians and Dehonian Associates, we are called upon to be prophets of love and servants of reconciliation. We commit ourselves to be attentive to the world’s needs, especially the promotion of human dignity, peace, and universal connectedness.

- Questions/comments

**Break** [10-15 minutes]

## **Reflection from Fr. Dehon**

Taken from *Notes on the History of My Life*

“I was baptized on March 24, 1843, on which were prayed the First Vespers of the feast of the Annunciation. Later I was happy to connect the memory of my baptism with that of our Lord’s *Ecce Venio* [which means, “Behold I come to do your will.”]. I drew forth a great confidence from this coincidence. The *Ecce Venio* of the Heart of Jesus has protected and blessed my



entrance into the Christian life. Our Lord doubtlessly will not begrudge my seeing here a mark of Providence, considering my actual vocation of Priest-Victim of the Heart of Jesus.

“I have always had a ceremony on the anniversary of my baptism. In college, I liked to renew the promises. On every one of my vacations, I used to make a pious pilgrimage to the sacred font of my baptism and felt an anguish of heart when the old urn was concealed by an altar and then disappeared completely.

“I was given the name of Leo Gustave. I loved my saintly patrons and for thirty years I have invoked them daily. For patrons I took St. Leo the Great, whom I consider the most powerful among the saints bearing this name, and St. Augustine, because the name of Gustave is not the name of a saint but only a derivative of Augustine. How happy I am to have such noble and great patrons, two of the greatest doctors of the Church! I hope they will later receive me as a friend; I have so often shown them marks of friendship and confidence.

“It seems to me that I received many graces from them. I read their lives with great enjoyment and edification, especially that of St. Augustine. In St. Leo I love above all, his great theological doctrine, his beautiful style, charm and dignity; in St. Augustine his penitence and his tears, which I would like to make my own, his great heart, and his ardent love for our Lord.”

- Provide a few moments of quiet to allow the participants to reflect on these words.

## Reflection on Dehonian Associates *Rule of Life*

- Invite the participants to reflect upon selected numbers from the Dehonian Associates *Rule of Life*, which focus on Baptism. With each number, ask the participants to follow along in their personal copy of the *Rule*. The amount of time available and the level of response will suggest how many of these you can discuss. With each number, ask the following questions:
  - ✓ What does this paragraph mean to you?
  - ✓ Give a specific example of how you might live this out in your daily life.

**12** With all Christians we are invited to become better people by following closely in the footsteps of Jesus [cf. I Timothy 4:7]. *It was for this you were called since Christ suffered for you in just this way and left you an example, to have you follow in his footsteps* [I Peter 2:21]. Rooted in our baptism and confirmation, our consecration as Dehonian Associates is a special gift to glorify God, to follow Jesus more closely, and to help bring about his reign.

**13** Our life makes sense, because it is a real and joyful union with Jesus. With him we try to keep his great commandment to love one another as he and the Father love us.

**14** For each of us, our life with Jesus is a story that begins with the grace of Baptism. It grows day by day as we are nourished by Word, Eucharist, community, and the many gifts God's Spirit shares with us.

**7** Those associated with Fr. Dehon ought to be prophets of love and servants of reconciliation of people and world in Christ. Thus involved with Jesus to remedy sin and the lack of love in the Church and the world, they shall render the worship of love and of reparation that his Heart desires through their whole life, their prayers, works, sufferings, and joys.

### **Prayerful Celebration**

- Begin by singing the mantra, "You Are God's Work of Art."
- Reader One: **I Corinthians 12:4-7**  
Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.
- Sing mantra, "You Are God's Work of Art."
- Reader Two: **Dehonian Associates Rule of Life #14**  
For each of us, our life with Jesus is a story that begins with the grace of Baptism. It grows day by day as we are nourished by Word, Eucharist, community, and the many gifts God's Spirit shares with us."
- Sing mantra, "You Are God's Work of Art."
- Reader Three: **Fr. Leo John Dehon** [from *The Life of Love towards the Sacred Heart of Jesus*, 9<sup>th</sup> Meditation]  
Recall the grace of Baptism. You have become God's dearly beloved children. You also became children of the Church; you have entered into the participation of all its wealth, its joy, its feasts, its treasures. You have been admitted into the Communion of the Saints. You have received a sacred character which gives you the right to continual graces, if only you correspond to them.
- Sing mantra, "You Are God's Work of Art."

- Invite spontaneous prayer by participants. This can take the form of a word or phrase that they take with them from the meeting, or a prayer of petition, thanksgiving, or praise. Allow enough quiet time to encourage the introverts to take part.
- When this sharing seems to be finished, sing mantra, “You Are God’s Work of Art.”
- Join hands and pray together the “Our Father.”
- Make any necessary announcements for the next meeting.
- Invite participants to take with them the prayer card. Remind them to bring the Dehonian Associates *Rule of Life* with them to the next scheduled meeting.