

Spiritual Path for Dehonian Associates

Introductory Meeting

Objectives

1. to instill a sense of welcome among the participants
2. to honor each participant's story of attraction to Dehonian spirituality
3. to raise awareness of the international Dehonian Family and this history of Associates
4. to introduce the one-year discernment/preparation for possible commitment as a Dehonian Associate
5. 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 large candle, a picture of Fr. Dehon, a large sand tray, and a small candle for each participant. During the sharing, each participant will light a small candle from the large candle and place his/her small candle in the sand tray. This can be adapted by using votive candles in individual holders instead of a sand tray. This should be set up before participants gather and the large candle should already be lit when they enter the room.
3. Also place on the table enough copies of the *Dehonian Associates Rule of Life* for each participant to receive one.
4. 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.
5. Have sufficient copies of the prayer card [image of Fr. Dehon on one side and the prayer on the reverse side] available for the participants.
6. Make sure someone can introduce and lead the sung mantra, "May the love of Christ."
7. *Before the meeting*, ask one of the participants to prepare the reading of Grace Escobia's witness, or have the equipment ready to view the Video. Ask three other participants to prepare the readings for the closing prayer.
8. 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, the dynamic of the group will suggest the most appropriate time.

Welcome

A greeting, preferably from an SCJ, expressing delight in the obvious interest in and desire to live Dehonian spirituality among the laity, especially those gathered here.

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.*
 - ✓ 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.*
 - ✓ 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.
 - ✓ At this moment, what are your heart's desires—for yourself, your loved ones, and the world? Imagine God embracing all of your heart's desires. God may choose to respond in ways not to your liking, but God loving honors all that is in your heart.
 - ✓ At this moment, what are your heart's fears—for yourself, your loved ones, and the world? Imagine God embracing all of your heart's fears. God may choose to respond in ways not to your liking, but God loving honors all that is in your heart.
 - ✓ Take a moment to express your love for God who loves you and place your trust in this loving relationship, regardless of what life brings you.
 - ✓ Take a moment to bring your awareness gently 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,
 the desire I have for my own holiness
 and that of my friends,
 even the desire that the saints have
 for the holiness of the world,
 all these are nothing
 in comparison to the ardent longing of your Heart
 to make us holy.
 Lord, through your almighty power,
 give my heart the right dispositions
 so that it may be able to welcome the grace you bestow on it.
 Amen!**

Sharing

- Invite participants introduce themselves.
- Invite each participant to share her/his reflection upon three questions:
 - ✓ How did you come to know the SCJs?
 - ✓ Describe your experience of the SCJs.
 - ✓ What attracts you to the spirituality of the SCJs?
- After each individual shares, s/he lights a candle while the group sings this mantra:



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Presentation: International Dehonian Family

- Who is a Dehonian?
 - ✓ An individual or group who shares the faith experience and charism of Fr. Dehon, according to each one's state in life, principally by
 - a. acknowledging and living the centrality of the mystery of the Heart of Christ, revealing God's love, which is often rejected by sin
 - b. participating in the self-offering of Christ, celebrating the Eucharist and periods of adoration, sharing Christ's sentiments for the Father and for humankind, and cooperating in the building up of the reign of God
 - c. appreciating Mary as a model of availability in faith
 - d. sharing a passion for living the Gospel, and its commitment to justice, truth, solidarity, and learning
 - e. being prophets of love and servants of reconciliation, being attentive to the promotion of human dignity, peace, and interconnectedness
- History of the Dehonian Family
[See appendix for a comprehensive history of the Dehonian Family.]

When Fr. Leo John Dehon founded the Priests of the Sacred Heart and while he was still the only member of this new religious community, he sought the collaboration of clergy and laity by establishing the Reparatory Association of the Sacred Heart. Over the years, this Association adapted and changed, but its essential purpose remained the same. Members were to commit themselves to a life of prayer, sacrifice, and service so that they could help bring about the Reign of God in souls and in society. In 1923, this worldwide Association reached its peak of 50,000 members.

In the 1960's, the Second Vatican Council ushered in a new understanding of Church and vocation, particularly that everyone is called to holiness and service. The vocation of the laity is just as important and necessary as that of priests and religious Brothers and Sisters. In 1983, the parish-based *SCJ Family Associates* formed in San Antonio and by 1995, the US Province of the Priests of the Sacred Heart began gathering its lay employees to help them understand the spiritual vision and mission of Fr. Dehon. Five schools in the United States that are sponsored by the Priests of the Sacred Heart have formed *SCJ Schools in Collaboration* for the same purpose.

SCJ missionaries have founded religious congregations of women in South Africa and the Congo, and SCJs have founded Secular Institutes in Spain, Portugal, and Brazil. Although they are not directly attached to the Priests of the Sacred Heart, they share the same inspiration.

Presently, the Dehonian Family is a “communion of vocations.” Individuals and groups are linked together by Fr. Leo John Dehon’s spiritual vision and mission, which is to make their prayers continual and keep themselves united with the Heart of Jesus, to make their works perfect by performing them carefully, and to accept their sufferings willingly and bear the cross joyfully for the advancement of the reign of the Sacred heart of Jesus.

- Present Forms of Dehonian commitment rooted in Fr. Dehon’s spiritual vision and mission:
 - ✓ **Priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus [SCJs]:** an Apostolic Religious Congregation
 - ✓ **Institutes of Consecrated Life**
 - ❖ Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart [south Africa]
 - ❖ Congregation of the Holy Family [Congo]
 - ❖ Reparatory Institute [Spain]
 - ❖ Missionary Company of the Sacred Heart [Italy]
 - ❖ Marian Fraternity of the Heart of Jesus [Brazil]
 - ❖ Missionaries of the Merciful Love of the Heart of Jesus [Portugal]
 - ❖ Sister Victims of the Sacred Heart of Jesus [France]
 - ❖ Sister Servants of the Sacred Heart of Jesus [France]
 - ✓ **Consecrated Individuals:** men or women who takes private vows
 - ✓ **Dehonian Associates:** Dehonian Associates are men and women, who, faithful to Christ, are committed to building up the reign of God in the midst of the world. Alive with the faith experience of Fr. Leo John Dehon, they are deeply conscious of their baptismal vocation and lay mission. They recognize in Fr. Dehon and his spiritual vision and mission, a personal call to a spiritual life. They come to Christ in the mystery of his open and compassionate Heart and unite themselves to his self-offering.

Dehonian Associates try to put this spiritual vision and mission into practice in their daily lives, whether in their family or in their profession, as well as in other groups of church or society.
- Questions/comments

Break [10-15 minutes]

Video Presentation: Personal Witness of Grace Escobia, Lay Dehonian from the Philippines and member of the International Organizing Committee for the Dehonian Family

“What does it mean to be a Lay Dehonian? To me, being a Lay Dehonian gives me an identity, an identity that is both a privilege and a responsibility. The *Ecce venio* of Christ [“Behold, I come to do your will”] and the *Ecce ancilla* of Mother Mary [“Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to your word”], and the *Vivat Cor Jesu* [“May the Heart of Jesus live!”] are the maxims that I have slowly absorbed in my active involvement with the Dehonian community and which I firmly believe will sustain me in my journey through a life of faith.

“My Catholic education instilled in me the commitment to faith, instilled in me a sense of conscience [social awareness and responsibility] and the importance of prayer and service from which we gather strength to face life’s challenges; to do more for God. Being involved with the SCJs and knowing their spirituality has given me a feeling of being at home. It is this sense of home that embodies everything about the Dehonian Spirituality that I have embraced as a way of living my faith and understanding the meaning of my existence.

“Dehonian Spirituality adorns and beautifies my vocation, and my duty and commitment in the secular world. It shapes my identity [“Who am I?”], my purpose and place in living [“Why am I here?”], and how I live my life [“What values do I hold?”]. The Dehonian Spirituality of love and oblation, availability and self-surrender, and reparation struck a chord in my heart. The charism of Fr. Dehon has enhanced the good in me and strengthened my relationship with God and loving devotion to his Sacred Heart: loving him more deeply, knowing him more clearly, following him more closely.

“What strikes me most about Fr. Dehon is his passion for God and his commitment to social justice. And this, my brothers and sisters in Christ, will guide me as I continue to practice my legal profession, as an educator, in my advocacies, in the different religious congregations which are my clients and whom I bestow free legal services, as well as my involvement in the parish managed by the SCJs and in the formation house. All is in the service of God and for his greater joy and glory.”

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

Presentation: The Spiritual Path

- One-year discernment/preparation for possible commitment as a Dehonian Associate
- Monthly topics:
 1. Introductory Meeting: Sharing how you came to know the SCJs and what is your experience of them? What attracts you?
 2. Oblation: A daily offering of self to God in order to advance the reign of the Heart of Jesus in souls and society.
 3. Baptismal Call: Laity in the Church, Dehonian Associates.
 4. Eucharist as One Never-Ending Mass: Food for the journey—sacrifice, meal, adoration.
 5. Prophets of Love, Servants of Reconciliation: Growing into this identity.
 6. Union with God throughout the day in every activity: prayer and work.
 7. Participation in the Reign of Justice and Charity: local and worldwide needs, in collaboration with SCJs.
 8. Fr. Dehon’s Faith Journey: his life, his words, his work
 9. Heart of Jesus: The person and the symbol
 10. Dehonian Associates Around the World: International connections.
Commitment ceremony
- Basic structure of monthly meetings, but the order may vary:
 - a. Welcome
 - b. Centering and guided meditation
 - c. Review of last meeting
 - d. Eliciting the experience of the participants concerning the current topic
 - e. Presentation
 - f. Questions/Comments/Discussion
 - g. Break
 - h. Witness of a Dehonian Associate
 - i. Words of Fr. Dehon
 - j. Questions/Comments/Discussion
 - k. Prayerful Celebration
- Questions/comments

Prayerful Celebration

- Begin by singing the mantra, “May the love of Christ.”
- Reader One: **The Gospel of John 17:21-23**
“As you Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.”
- Sing mantra, “May the love of Christ.”
- Reader Two: **Dehonian Associates Rule of Life #46**
“We try to open ourselves to the love of Christ and we hear his prayer for us, *that they all may be one*. We do our utmost to make our families and faith communities authentic centers of Gospel life, particularly by openness, sharing, and hospitality.”
- Sing mantra, “May the love of Christ.”
- Reader Three: **Fr. Leo John Dehon** [from *My Spiritual Testament*, 1914]
“I leave you the most wonderful of treasures, the Heart of Jesus. He belongs to all, but he has special affection for those who are consecrated to him and who are entirely devoted to his worship, to his love, and to the reparation he has demanded.

“It is this idea that the beautiful decree of Pope Leo XIII of the twenty-fifth of February, 1888, expressed, ‘This Institution will be like a bouquet of flowers for the Heart of Jesus, if its members are united and entirely devoted to the Sacred Heart, and if they establish the reign of his love in themselves and among the people whom they will evangelize.’ In interpreting the word of David, we can say, ‘The Heart of Jesus is my portion. How beautiful is my share of the common heritage!’ You understand that such a beautiful vocation requires a great fervor and generosity.”
- Sing mantra, “May the love of Christ.”
- 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, “May the love of Christ.”
- One by one, invite each participant to receive the *Dehonian Associates Rule of Life*, using these or similar words: “As you consider walking the Dehonian Spiritual Path, may this *Rule of Life* enlighten you, encourage you, and open you to the expansive love of Christ.”
- At the conclusion of this ritual, sing once more the mantra, “May the love of Christ.”
- Join hands and pray together the “Our Father.”

- Make any necessary announcements for the next meeting.
- Invite participants to take with them, in addition to the *Dehonian Associates Rule of Life*, the prayer card. Encourage them to make use of the prayer card and to read the *Rule*, with the understanding that it will be explained over the next nine sessions. Ask them to bring the *Dehonian Associates Rule of Life* with them to every meeting.

Appendix: History of the Dehonian Family

After a great deal of consultation and discernment, Fr. Leo Dehon professed the three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience on June 28, 1878, and took the religious name, John of the Sacred Heart. With this public act, he founded the Oblates of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, an apostolic religious community that would later be known as the Priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. While still the only member of this religious community, Fr. Leo John Dehon sought the collaboration of clergy and laity by founding, under the authority of the local bishop, the Reparatory Association of the Sacred Heart.

Members of this Association participated, by varying degrees, in the spirituality and work of the Priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Characterized by adaptation, the Reparatory Association of the Sacred Heart changed its name eight times, reformulated its specific purpose occasionally, and for at least five years, lost its balanced emphasis on prayer and action.

As first conceived, the Reparatory Association of the Sacred Heart promoted devotion to the Heart of Jesus through the prayer and service of its members. The specific intention of its efforts focused on a holy and dedicated clergy, and the coming Reign of the Heart of Jesus. The Association's two degrees of membership differed only in the intensity of commitment. Both Associates and Aggregates committed themselves to a life of prayer, sacrifice, and service, but the Aggregates agreed to abandon themselves completely to the will of God and live, as Fr. Dehon described it, as victims of love.

Within two years, there were 100 Aggregates, including Fr. Dehon's mother and aunts, as well as relatives and acquaintances of the members of the fledgling community. The spiritual connection was strong. Communicating with an Aggregate member in 1919, Dehon wrote, "I call you sister, because you are part of the family."

On February 8, 1889, the local bishop officially approved the Reparatory Association and Fr. Dehon articulated its direction as working toward the establishment of the Reign of God in souls and in society. In that same year, he began publishing a magazine entitled, "The Reign of the Sacred Heart in Souls and in Society," in which he championed the social consequences of the devotion to the Heart of Jesus. In writing for the magazine, he occasionally spoke of the Association, indicated its purposes, and addressed its members.

Between 1897 and 1902, the local bishop named as director of the Reparatory Association a member of the Priests of the Sacred Heart other than Fr. Dehon. With the appointment of Fr. Blancal, SCJ, as director, Dehon's social commitment was lost. Working to transform a world

wounded by social sin was not as important as consoling the Heart of Jesus wounded by personal sin.

The next director, Fr. Prévot, with the blessing of Dehon, wrote a manual for the Association, entitled, “Love and Reparation.” In it, he meditated on the victim of love spirituality, which he considered the foundation of a fruitful apostolate, but did not stress the apostolate as a necessary commitment for members of the Association. By 1919, however, the dual commitment to prayer and service was reestablished.

In 1923, the Association needed to adjust its statutes to conform to the new Code of Church Law. It also dissolved the distinction between Associates and Aggregates. With the authorization of the Pope, it became a worldwide association “of prayer and sacrifice for the extension of the Reign of Jesus on earth, for the triumph of the Church, and for an increase in priestly and missionary vocations.” At this time, the Association reached its peak of 50,000 members.

Forty years later, the Second Vatican Council ushered in a new understanding of Church and vocation. In 1964, the Priests of the Sacred Heart dissolved the *Reparatory Association of the Sacred Heart* and created a lay association called *Dehonian Auxiliaries*. Yet, it would take another 30 years to reimagine its collaboration with laity as “a communion of vocations within the Dehonian Family.”

Over the years, this Association welcomed diverse expressions and even inspired other affiliations. Former students of the seminary run by the Priests of the Sacred Heart, in Albino, Italy, first gathered in 1950 to form the *Dehonians Association*. The *Friends of Jesus* movement began in 1962 so that children could also participate in the spirituality of Fr. Dehon. In 1965, former SCJ religious and students, as well as their friends, organized the *Dehonian Union* within the South Italian Province of the Priests of the Sacred Heart.

The Portuguese Province adapted the Reparatory Association of the Sacred Heart to establish, in 1975, a group for 9-16 year olds, one for 16-25 year olds, and one for adults. Those who at one time lived as seminarians in House of the Sacred Heart, in Trent, Italy, formed the *Dehonian Association Fr. Franceschetti* in 1981.

In San Antonio, Texas, the parish-based *SCJ Family Associates* began meeting in 1983. The North Italian Province established *Sint Unum* in 1986 to support the recruitment of vocations—priests, religious, and lay—in the Church. The *Young Lay Dehonians* of Portugal began meeting in 1988.

For several years in the early 1990’s the United States Province experimented with a *Dehonian Lay Missioners Program*. Then in 1995, the Province gathered its lay employees for the first Mission Awareness Conference. Four years later, the Province established *SCJ Schools in*

Collaboration, a cooperative effort to promote the values of Fr. Dehon among students and staff.

Multiple adaptations of the lived spirituality of the Priests of the Sacred Heart are the mark of God's creative Spirit even when these expressions develop as autonomous Institutes. SCJ missionary Bishop Demont founded the *Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart* in South Africa in 1929 and shared with them the spiritual heritage of the Priests of the Sacred Heart. Similarly in 1936, SCJ missionary Bishop Verfaillie founded the Congolese *Congregation of the Holy Family*. In writing two formation books, "Total Gifts" and "Ecce Ancilla Domini," SCJ missionary Bishop Wittebols transmitted to these Sisters the spirit of Fr. Dehon. Blessed Anuarite Nengapeta, virgin and martyr, was a member of this Congolese Congregation.

In Spain, in 1950, Fr. Moya, SCJ, founded the *Reparatory Institute* of consecrated women living a secular life. Seven years later in Italy, Fr. Elegante, SCJ, founded the *Missionary Company of the Sacred Heart*, an international Secular Institute for women now present in eight countries. This Institute gave birth to *Family Members*, its own association of men and women, married and single.

In 1974, Brazilian SCJ Fr. Böing established the religious Congregation of the *Marian Fraternity of the Heart of Jesus*. In Portugal, Fr. Gritti, SCJ, founded the Secular Institute of the *Missionaries of the Merciful Love of the Heart of Jesus* in 1992. This Institute, with separate branches for consecrated men, women, and priests, also has an association of lay people who share their spirituality.

Two religious communities of women influenced Fr. Dehon and collaborated with him as he discerned the foundation of his Congregation. In his writings, Dehon refers to these two communities as "co-foundresses." For this reason, even though they existed before the Priests of the Sacred Heart, the contemplative *Sister Victims of the Sacred Heart of Jesus* and the apostolic *Sister Servants of the Sacred Heart of Jesus of St. Quentin* share not only the same spirit of reparation but also a familial association.

As evidence of God's continually creative Spirit, Silvia Bertozzi discerned her vocation while collaborating in ministry with the SCJs in Mozambique. On the Feast of the Sacred Heart 2008, she committed her life as a consecrated virgin in accord with the spirituality of Fr. Dehon.

Presently, the Dehonian Family is a "communion of vocations." The Priests of the Sacred Heart, Lay Dehonians, Consecrated Individuals, and Institutes of Consecrated Life are linked together by Leo John Dehon's spiritual vision and mission. In the words of the *Spiritual Directory*, they are to make their prayers continual and keep themselves in habitual union with the Heart of Jesus, to make their works perfect by performing them carefully, and to accept their sufferings willingly and bear the cross joyfully for the advancement of the reign of the Sacred Heart.