

Dehonian Associates Rule of Life

Faithful to the Charism of the Founder

A. Called and Sent Forth by the Spirit

1. Dehonian Associates enable more people to share on a personal and profound level the spirituality of the Priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus [SCJ], founded at St. Quentin, France, in 1878, by Fr. Leo John Dehon. He received the grace and mission to enrich the Church with a community alive with his Gospel inspiration. This community and the entire Dehonian Family are called to make this inspiration live by responding to the urgent needs of the Church and of the world.

B. Fr. Leo John Dehon's Faith Experience

2. We are rooted in Fr. Dehon's faith experience. St. Paul expressed the same experience when he wrote, *I still live my human life, but it is a life of 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 meaningfully expressed for Fr. Dehon a love whose active presence he experienced in his own life.
3. Fr. Dehon saw the very wellspring of salvation in this love of Christ, who accepts death as the ultimate gift of his life for people and as filial obedience to the Father. From the Heart of Jesus, open on the cross, human beings are reborn in heart, animated by the Spirit, and united with their brothers and sisters in the community of charity, which is the Church.
4. Fr. Dehon was very sensitive to sin which weakens the Church, especially when consecrated persons are involved. He was aware of social evils; he had carefully studied their human causes, both individual and social. But he saw the refusal of the love of Christ as the deepest cause of this human misery. Caught up in this often unrecognized love, he wanted to respond to it by being intimately united to the Heart of Christ and by establishing his reign in individuals and in society.
5. This union with Christ, which sprang from the depths of his heart, had to be actualized in his whole life, above all in his apostolate. This apostolate was characterized by the greatest care for people, particularly the most deprived, and by concern about actively remedying the pastoral inadequacies of the Church in his time. This union was expressed and centered in the Eucharistic sacrifice to such an extent that his whole life became one never-ending Mass.

C. At the Service of the Church

6. Fr. Dehon wanted to share this spirituality with the members of the Priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and with all people associated with them. The religious community he founded was originally called Oblates of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. He wanted them to unite their life with the reparatory oblation of Christ to the Father for people. This was his specific and original intention for those who would share in his charism. Fr. Dehon declared, *Our whole vocation, our purpose, our duty, our promises are found in these words: "Behold I come to do your will, O Lord," and "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, let it be done to me according to your word"* [Spiritual Directory I:5].
7. Those associated with him ought to be prophets of love and servants of reconciliation of people and the world in Christ [cf. II Corinthians 5:18]. Thus involved with Jesus to remedy sin and the lack of love in the Church and in 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.

Following Christ: At the Service of the Reign of God

A. Our Faith Experience

8. Within the Church, we have been initiated into the Good News of Jesus Christ: *We have come to know and to believe in the love God has for us* [I John 4:16]. We have received the gifts of faith, hope, and charity, which give meaning to our life and inspire us to follow Jesus in the midst of the challenges of the world. With all Christians, through the Spirit, we say that Jesus is Lord. In him the Father has made known his love to us, and he remains present in our world to save it. *No one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except in the Holy Spirit* [I Corinthians 12:3].

B. Witnesses to the Primacy of the Reign of God

9. Jesus, sent in the fullness of time, in obedience to the Father, gave himself in service for everyone. *The Son of Man has not come to be served, but to serve, to give his life in ransom for many* [Mark 10:45]. As one of us, the New Adam, he has revealed the love of God and announced his reign, a new world already springing up through groping human efforts. It will find its fulfillment when, much more than we can now imagine, Jesus will bring us face to face with God.

Yes, we know that all creation groans and is in agony even now. Not only that, but we ourselves, although we have the Spirit as first fruits, groan inwardly while we await the redemption of our bodies [Romans 8:22-23].

When finally, all has been subjected to the Son, he will then subject himself to the One who made all things subject to him, so that God may be all in all [I Corinthians 15:28].

10. Christ prayed for the coming of God's reign, which is already active in his presence among us. By his death and resurrection, he has opened us to the gift of the Spirit and to the freedom of the children of God [cf. Romans 8:21]. He is for us the First and the Last, the Living One [cf. Revelation 1:17-18]. He is the perfect human being and he is our brother.
11. In him, the New Human Being has been created in the image of God, in justice and holiness of truth [cf. Ephesians 4:24]. He helps us to believe that despite sin, failures, and injustice, redemption is possible, has been offered, and is already present. When he lived on earth, he was faithful, poor, and obedient. His way is our way.
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.

C. United with Jesus in His Love and His Oblation to the Father

15. We are called to serve the Church as Dehonian Associates. To respond to this call, we need to know something of Fr. Dehon's religious experience which he shared with his community, so that guided by the Holy Spirit, we may be united in our understanding of the mystery of Jesus Christ.

16. As did Fr. Dehon, we want to make union with Christ in his love for the Father and for people the principle and center of our life. With special love we meditate on these words of the Lord: *Live in me, as I do in you. No more than a branch can bear fruit of itself apart from the vine, can you bear fruit apart from me* [John 15:4]. Faithful to hearing the Word and sharing the Bread, we are invited to discover more and more the person of Jesus and the mystery of his Heart, and to proclaim his love which surpasses all understanding.
May Christ dwell in your hearts through faith, and may charity be the root and foundation of your life. Thus you will be able to grasp fully, with all the holy ones, the breadth and length and height and depth of Christ's love, and experience this love which surpasses all knowledge, so that you may attain to the fullness of God himself [Ephesians 3:17-19].
17. We are invited to live out our union with Jesus in our openness and our love for all, especially the lowly and those who suffer. How can we really understand Jesus' love for us, if not in loving as he did, in deed and in truth? In this love of Jesus we come to believe that unity among all human beings can succeed, and we find the strength to work for it.
18. The Father sent his Son, in accord with his plan of love formed before the creation of the world [cf. Ephesians 1:3-14]. *He handed him over for the sake of us all* [Romans 8:32]. By raising him, the Father established him as Lord, Heart of humanity and of the world, hope of salvation for all who listen to his voice. *Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered; and when perfected, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him* [Hebrews 5:8-9].
19. Jesus carries out this salvation by stirring up in hearts love for the Father and for each other. This love regenerates and is the source of the full development of persons and of human communities. It will be complete only when Christ will be recognized and loved by all.
20. With St. John, we see in the open side of the Crucified the sign of love, which, in the total gift of self, re-creates humanity in the image of God. We are strengthened in our calling by contemplating the Heart of Jesus, the special symbol of this love. We are actually called to enter into this movement of redemptive love by giving ourselves, with and as Jesus, for our brothers and sisters. *The way we came to understand love was that he laid down his life for us; we too must lay down our lives for one another* [I John 3:16].

21. Though entangled in sin, we share in Jesus' saving grace. Through serving in our different ways, we want to be in union with him, present in the life of the world. And in union with him, and with all of humanity and creation, we want to offer ourselves to the Father, as a living and holy offering that might be pleasing to him [cf. Romans 12:1]. *Follow the way of love even as Christ loves you. He gave himself for us as an offering to God, a gift of pleasing fragrance* [Ephesians 5:2].
22. This is how we understand reparation: as a welcome to the Spirit [cf. I Thessalonians 4:8], as a response to Christ's love for us, as a communion in his love for the Father, and as a cooperation in his work of redemption in the midst of the world. In our time, he frees people from sin and restores humanity in unity. He also calls us to live out a life of reparation which gives meaning to all that we do.
23. Thus, united with Christ, all our joys and sufferings share in the death and resurrection of Jesus for the redemption of the world. *Even now I find my joy in the sufferings I endure for you. In my own flesh I fill up what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ for the sake of his body, the Church* [Colossians 1:24].
24. Our love, motivating all that we are, what we do and suffer as we live the Gospel, heals humanity through our participation in Jesus' work of reconciliation, gathers it together in the Body of Christ, and consecrates it for the glory and joy of God.

D. Participants in the Mission of the Church

25. As Dehonian Associates, we share in Fr. Dehon's gift. We are called in the Church to live above all a life of union with the oblation of Jesus Christ.
26. Jesus calls us to active service in the Church. We want to be close to him, and we look for him wherever we find people healing and caring for one another. Jesus shared our joys and sorrows. He became one with the poor and lowly, and proclaimed God's love for them. *I assure you, as often as you did it for one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me* [Matthew 25:40].

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor [Luke 4:18].

27. To follow Jesus, we too must be close to people. We know what gets in the way of God's love today and we admit our need to embrace the burden of Jesus' cross as well as the deep joy of his resurrection. As Dehonian Associates, we share in the mission of Fr. Dehon's Congregation of the Priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.
- a. We celebrate the Eucharist and try to live always in Jesus' spirit of love and oblation.
 - b. We try to help the poor know how much Jesus loves them.
 - c. We try to encourage priests, Brothers, Sisters, and missionaries in their life and work among the poor.
 - d. We try to make our community good, just, and caring, by cooperating in the activity of the Church and the good works of our neighbors.

E. Attentive to the Appeals of the World

28. Jesus gives himself in love totally to the Father and to people. This gift of Jesus' love stirs our hearts to live with him the same oblation of love. This life of oblation with Jesus leads us in a faithful search for the will of the Father for us and for the world. This life attunes us to the Father revealing himself to us in small and great events and in human hopes and achievements.

29. We know that today's world is in the middle of an intense struggle for liberation— liberation from all that harms the dignity of people and threatens their most profound hopes for truth, justice, love, and freedom.

Beneath all these demands lies a deeper and more widespread longing. Persons and societies thirst for a full and free life worthy of human beings...the modern world shows itself at once powerful and weak, capable of the noblest deeds or the foulest. Before it lies the path to freedom or to slavery, to progress or retreat, to brotherhood or hatred. Moreover, humanity is becoming aware of its responsibility to guide aright the forces which it has unleashed and which can enslave it or minister to it. That is why humanity is putting questions to itself [Gaudium et Spes, 9].

30. Through all these questions, we begin to understand what people are truly longing for, without succeeding in fully expressing it. We share these hopes of our brothers and sisters as the possible beginning of a more human world, even if they may also include the risk of failure. In faith, we associate them with the coming of the reign that God promised and realizes in his Son.

31. Far from making us strangers to people, our consecration to the Heart of Jesus puts us into greater union with them. By trying to make our world a better place and by our fidelity to God in the Church, we can be an effective sign that it is the reign of God and his justice which should be sought above all and in all.
32. With the grace of God, through our consecrated life, we would like to bear prophetic witness, by involving ourselves without reserve for the coming reign of God in Jesus Christ.

Following Christ: In Order to Continue the Community of the Disciples

A. Called to Profess the Beatitudes

33. We consecrate ourselves to the Sacred Heart of Jesus in order to unite our whole life with the oblation of Christ. He helps us love in the spirit of the beatitudes. Our effort to live this way is a witness for others, and a never-ending task.

By Living a Faithful Life

34. Christ gave himself entirely to the Father and to people in a love without reserve. By our consecration, we promise to follow Christ faithfully in his love for God and for every person, and in his way of being present to people. This fidelity frees our heart and opens us both to the Holy Spirit and to our neighbor. In this way we form true communities where we can all grow fully and where a new family, founded on the spiritual power of love, can take root.
35. In following Fr. Dehon, we have a mission to give witness to the love of Christ in a world searching for a unity difficult to achieve, and searching for new relationships between persons and groups. Our consecrated fidelity moves us to share in building up a new humanity, open to communion in God's reign.

By Being Poor in Accord with the Gospel

36. Christ made himself poor to enrich us all out of his poverty. *You are well acquainted with the favor shown you by our Lord Jesus Christ: "How for your sake he made himself poor though he was rich, so that you might become rich by his poverty" [II Corinthians 8:9].* He invites us to the beatitude of the poor, trusting completely in God our Father.
37. This Gospel poverty calls us to free ourselves from the thirst for possessions and pleasure which weigh down the human heart. It calls us to a confident and generous love that is not concerned with being repaid.

38. We do our work honestly and as well as we can, whether it demands complicated training, patient endurance, or personal sacrifice. We accept it as a way to make our world a better place for God's reign. We do not waste the earth's resources nor do we willingly take from our community more than we give. We acknowledge that we are called to serve rather than to be served, conscious of the suffering of so many people today.
39. These sufferings in individuals and in communities are a constant call for conversion of our hearts and minds. If we take this call seriously, we shall be ready to share the gifts God has given us with our Church and community, and we shall not be afraid of the poor and the needy. We will support and share in the ministry of those who serve the ones who most need recognition and love.

By Being Open to God in Obedience

40. Jesus gave himself in love to the will of the Father. He was attentive and open to the needs and expectations of people. *My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work* [John 4:34]. Our consecration unites with Jesus as we offer ourselves to God and seek to do his saving will. *On coming into the world, Jesus said, "Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you have prepared for me; holocausts and sin offerings you took no delight in. Then I said, as is written of me in the book, I have come to do your will, O God" ...By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all* [Hebrews 10:5-7, 10].
41. We strive to be attentive to what the Spirit suggests to us through the Word of God received in the Church and through the events of life. Thus in a world searching for freedom, we want to witness to the true freedom Christ has gained for us, which is only reached by saying "yes" to the Father.
42. In Fr. Dehon's view, the *Behold, I come to do your will* [Hebrews 10:7] defines the fundamental attitude of our life. It unites us with Christ's oblation for the glory of the Father and the redemption of the world.

B. Called to Live in the Community of the Church

43. We are called to follow Christ, and in the world to be witnesses and servants of unity among people. We do not seek to avoid the responsibility and sacrifice that comes with involvement in the life of a community. We see it as a gift of the Spirit. We seek the inspiration for this life in the community of the disciples united around the Lord, and in the first Christian communities. *They devoted themselves to the apostles' instructions and the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and the prayers* [Acts 2:42].

At the Service of the Church's Mission

44. Our consecration shows how we are to live an apostolic life. It points to the presence of Christ and the coming reign of God. Our sense of community is strengthened by our service in the parish and neighborhood. Not afraid of change, we join and support sincere efforts at reconciliation and communal regard.

45. Each one of us should know that our work, whatever we do, is valuable for the whole community. Each of us should recognize the value of the work that others do.

Devoted to the Communal Life [Acts 2:42]

46. Our life in the family, parish, and neighborhood is not only a means to an end. Although always in need of improvement, it is the fullest realization of our Christian life. We try to open ourselves to the love of Christ, and we hear his prayer for us, *that they all may be one* [John 17:21]. We do our utmost to make our families and faith communities authentic centers of Gospel life, particularly by openness, sharing, and hospitality.

47. Though we have our share of sin and weakness, we want to help create an atmosphere in which we all can make progress. How else to attain this, if not by deepening in the Lord even our most ordinary relationships with each of our brothers and sisters?

48. Our charity must be an active hope for what others can become with our support. Our charity will be sincere if we honestly and simply try to listen to and understand one another.

49. Through community, which even survives conflicts, and through mutual forgiveness, we would like to be a sign that the unity for which people thirst is possible in Jesus Christ. We would like to be servants of this unity.

50. Each of us must accept others as they are with their personalities, their duties, their talents, and their limits. Each of us must be open to the challenges that come to us from others who care enough to question us.
51. All these are requirements for true dialogue, mutual respect, love, unity, and co-responsibility. All this helps us grow individually and as a community. In all this we bear witness to Christ in whom we are brought together.
52. At the heart of the family and church community, we surround with special charity our sick or aged brothers and sisters. Particularly through them the Lord inspires us to true oblation, and reminds us of the fragile nature of our human condition. He wants to be recognized and served in them in a very special way [cf. Mathew 23:40].
53. Also we do not forget that our community finds its full realization in eternity. And so we stay united with our deceased brothers and sisters through prayer and in hope.

Faithful to Prayer [Acts 2:42]

54. We recognize that we can be faithful to our consecration only if we are prayerful people. To this Christ invites his disciples, and above all his friends. *He told them a parable on the necessity of praying always and not losing heart* [Luke 18:1]. *Be on guard, and pray that you may not undergo the test* [Matthew 26:41].
55. And so we regularly listen to God's Word and reflect on Christ's love, revealed in the scriptures and in the lives of people. Thus we hope to receive a spirit of wisdom and revelation, in order to discover and truly know Christ the Lord, and the hope his call opens for us [cf. Ephesians 1:17-18].
56. By welcoming the Spirit who prays in us and comes to help us in our weakness [cf. Romans 8:26 ff], we want to praise and adore, in his Son, the Father who each day accomplishes his work of salvation among us, and entrusts to us the ministry of reconciliation [cf. II Corinthians 5:18]. *The Spirit too helps us in our weakness, for we do not know how to pray as we ought* [Romans 8:26]. *All who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God...You received a spirit of adoption through which we cry out, "Abba! Father!"* [Romans 8:14-15]. Helping us to progress in knowledge of Jesus, prayer strengthens and gives direction to the life of our families and faith communities.

57. As Jesus loved to maintain union with the Father, we shall set aside times of silence and solitude to let ourselves be renewed in intimacy with Christ, and to unite ourselves with his love for people. Without this spirit of prayer, personal prayer breaks down. Without communal prayer, the community of faith becomes weak.

C. Faithful to the Breaking of the Bread [Acts 2:42]

58. Our whole Christian life finds its source and summit in the Eucharist. Celebrating the memorial of the death and resurrection of the Lord is for us the privileged moment of our faith and of our calling as Dehonian Associates.

59. Called to participate in this sacrifice of the New Covenant, we unite ourselves with the perfect oblation that Christ presents to the Father, in order to share deeply in it through the spiritual sacrifice of our lives. *I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship [Romans 12:1].* As proof of the love of Christ, who delivers himself up so that the Church might be one and thus proclaim hope for the world, the Eucharist has its effects on all that we are and on all that we do.

60. In celebrating the Eucharist, we are united with the whole Church in memorial of and presence to its Lord, and we welcome him who brings us together, who consecrates us to God, who sends us back to the world in the service of the Gospel. *This is my body that is for you...This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this...in remembrance of me...For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes [I Corinthians 11:24-26].*

61. In very close relation with the Eucharistic celebration, we meditate on the riches of this mystery of our faith in adoration, so that the body and blood of Christ, food of eternal life, may transform our beings more deeply. *Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; for my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me and I in them [John 6:54-56].* In this Eucharistic adoration, we want to deepen our union with the sacrifice of Christ for the reconciliation of people with God.

62. Eucharistic worship makes us attentive to the love and faithfulness of the Lord in his presence to our world. Sharing in his thanksgiving and intercession, we are called to serve by our whole life the Covenant of God with his people, and to work for unity among Christians and among all peoples. *Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake in the one bread* [1 Corinthians 10:17].

D. With the Virgin Mary and the Saints

63. As Mother of Jesus, Mary is intimately united with the life and redemptive work of her Son. Through her maternal intercession she is present as Mother of the Church to us who work with Jesus for the re-birth of people. She stands out among the poor and humble of the Lord, who confidently await and receive salvation from him. In her words, *Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to your word* [Luke 1:38], she inspires us to openness in faith. She is the perfect image of our consecrated life.

64. We also see ourselves as intimately united with those saints who in an obvious way lived our life of union with the Heart of Jesus, particularly, St. Joseph, St. John the Evangelist, St. Augustine, St. Gertrude, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Ignatius, St. Francis de Sales, St. Margaret Mary, and St. Therese of Lisieux.

The Call to Our Life

A. The Ministry of Sharing our Spirituality

65. It is the same Spirit who distributes the various gifts and ministries at the service of the people of God. Therefore we want to respond to this action of the Spirit by helping each person, young or adult, to find where God is leading him/her in this world, which is still in great need of hearing the Good News of Jesus Christ.

66. Called as we are to live out Fr. Dehon's charism today, we shall respond to Christ's words, *Ask the harvest Master to send workers to his harvest* [Luke 10:2]. We know that it is the example of our life, the spiritual joy, the strong will to serve God and our brothers and sisters, which attract others to share our spirituality.

67. And so in all our personal relationships with others and in every circumstance in which we find ourselves, we try to deepen and share our human and Christian values. We shall be attentive to this deepening, especially in regard to awareness of others, generosity, honesty, openness, and clear and loyal responsibility. In all this we extend to one another the Lord's invitation, *Come, follow me* [Mark 1:17].

B. Becoming a Dehonian Associate

68. If the love revealed in the Sacred Heart of Jesus inspires an individual to respond to and unite with that reconciling love as a Dehonian Associate, s/he may request to enter into a period of preparation for approximately one year. During this time, the individual will participate in ten monthly study and prayer meetings. S/he will receive the *Dehonian Associates Rule of Life* and *Prayer Book*, and learn about the spirituality of Dehonian Associates.
69. At the end of the preparation period, those who are ready will consecrate themselves to the Sacred Heart of Jesus as Dehonian Associates. As much as possible, other Dehonian Associates will be present at this ceremony.

C. The Life of a Dehonian Associate

70. Dehonian Associates are characterized by the following attitudes and practices:
- a. They make every effort to live in their daily lives the spirituality of uniting themselves to Jesus in his reconciling love for the Father and the world, as described in this *Dehonian Associates Rule of Life*.
 - b. They renew every day their consecration by offering a prayer of oblation found in the *Dehonian Associates Prayer Book*.
 - c. They are faithful to the Dehonian Associates monthly gatherings for study and prayer.
 - d. They support spiritually everyone preparing to become a Dehonian Associate.

Conclusion

71. By making our lives conform to this *Rule of Life*, we shall be confirmed in fidelity to our calling and our mission as Dehonian Associates. Our spiritual lives share in the evolution, the trials, and the searching of the world and of the Church. And so our life is constantly called into question. We are bound to re-think and to find new expression for our mission, and its forms of presence and witness.
72. Assured of God's unfailing faithfulness, rooted in the love of Christ, we know that our consecration as Dehonian Associates, to stay vital, requires faithful encounter with the Lord in prayer, continuing conversion to the Gospel, and availability of heart and attitude to welcome the reign of God in our midst.