



# SCJ News

A newsletter of the U.S. Province of the Priests of the Sacred Heart (Dehonians)

## Together we build “Sacred Bridges”

“Sacred Bridges” was the theme of the 2019 Mission Education conference. Held approximately every three years, Mission Education is a time for employees and other collaborators in SCJ ministry to learn about Fr. Leo John Dehon, founder of the Priests of the Sacred Heart, as well as the congregation that carries on his dreams. It is also a time for co-workers across the country to get to know one another and learn how they are a part of the worldwide mission of the Priests of the Sacred Heart. This year’s Mission

Ed was hosted by St. Joseph’s Indian School in Chamberlain, SD, October 13-14.

“We are surrounded by Sacred Bridges but we have to look for them so that we can see them,” said Clare Willrodt, introducing the theme. Clare is director of public relations and outreach at St. Joseph’s.

A “sacred bridge” is a link between cultures, between people, between religions. Located near a bridge across the Missouri River that literally links western and eastern South Dakota, St. Joseph’s itself is a

sacred bridge that links Lakota culture and spirituality with many other cultures found in North America.

Mission Education opened with a Sunday liturgy that was immersed in Lakota spirituality. Participants smudged themselves with sage smoke as they walked into Our Lady of the Sioux chapel. A drum group played as student dancers dressed in traditional outfits made their way to the altar. Symbols of the Lakota people surrounded the fully packed chapel. Symbols were found on the walls, the windows and the altar.



Students and staff at St. Joseph’s Indian School join Mission Education participants at the Opening Mass. Fr. Praveen Richard, SCJ, was the homilist and Fr. Anthony Kluckman, SCJ, was the main celebrant.



A few photos from Mission Education (L-R): LaRayne Woster, St. Joseph's Native American Studies instructor with one of her students; staff from Sacred Heart Southern Missions and the Provincial Offices team up on a Native American art project; Fr. Anthony Kluckman leads the Four Directions prayer service for Native Americans Day. [View more photos at www.scjusa.smugmug.com](http://www.scjusa.smugmug.com)

The building itself is a sacred bridge between cultures.

A regular component of Mission Ed is an interview with Fr. Dehon. With someone playing the role of the founder, often using his own words from journals and other writings, it is an informal way for participants to learn about him. This year, the conversation was between "Fr. Dehon" (played by Joe Tyrell, a member of St. Joseph's staff), and Lucy Looks Twice (brought to life by LaRayne Woster, St. Joe's director of Native American Studies). Black Elk was a well-known Lakota medicine man and Catholic lay catechist whose cause for sainthood is being promoted. The conversation illuminated many of the commonalities the two had, the bridges that would have easily brought them together—including a love of horses—had they met.

The conference was an opportunity for participants to learn about a significant ministry of the US Province (St. Joseph's Indian School and the social and pastoral ministries supported by the SCJs in South Dakota) but also about Native American culture in general.

Many of the participants were from Sacred Heart Southern Missions in Mississippi. There, the second Monday of October means Columbus Day. But in South Dakota, it is celebrated as Native Americans'

Day. At the start of the day, Mission Ed participants joined St. Joseph's students and staff outside in the "Wisdom Circle" for a Four Directions Prayer Service to honor and celebrate Native American culture.

Following the all-school prayer, participants learned more about Black Elk through a presentation by Dr. Damian Costello, who wrote *Black Elk: Colonialism and Lakota Catholicism*. He spoke of how Catholicism became an integral part of Black Elk's life and how Christianity was in harmony with Lakota spirituality.

Throughout the two days, Mission Ed participants got a first-hand look at the many programs and components of St. Joseph's. Of course, there were visits to the classrooms, but there were also tours of the new healthcare center, student homes, the Akta Lakota Museum, and many people's favorite: the stable that hous-



"Fr. Dehon" meets "Lucy Looks Twice" (Black Elk's daughter) in a skit

es the horses used in equine therapy. Visitors learned about the symbolism found in the traditional dress worn by Native American dancers, much of it interwoven with prayer. They tried their hand at making Lakota toys and art, and received archery lessons from St. Joseph's students.

Through table visits, participants learned about the Sacred Heart Center in Eagle Butte, Native Hope (a Native American storytelling project), the St. Joseph's Thrift Store, the Lower Brule Pastoral Team and other ministries.

The conference ended with conversations in "Talking Circles." Following a Native American tradition where a special "talking stick" is passed between people, participants shared their impressions of the two days.

"Being here, I realized how we are all a part of the same mission," said a member of the SHSM staff. "We are in different places, we are doing different tasks, but in the end, our mission is the same: to continue the mission that Fr. Dehon started."

"This was like a family reunion," said another. "I got to meet cousins who I never knew before."

In his closing comments, Mike Tyrell, president of St. Joseph's, reminded participants to continue to be "bridge builders," to continue the Dehonian mission of building sacred bridges between people and cultures.

# Two profess first vows!

*“Religious life is a call but also a choice. It is one thing to have a call but another to choose to respond to it.”*

- Frater Hubert Senam Kodjovi Liassidji, SCJ

Just before the start of academic year the US Province welcomed two new members. John Huan Nguyen and Hubert Senam Kodjovi Liassidji professed their first vows with the Priests of the Sacred Heart (Dehonians) on August 15 at Sacred Heart Monastery / Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology.

It was a multicultural gathering featuring a combined Togolese choir from the parishes of Christ the King in Moline, IL and St. Ambrose in Chicago. Readings and prayers were done in Vietnamese, French, Ewe (national language of Togo) and English. Dehonians from around the world, many at SHSST for the summer ECS / ESL program, were among the concelebrants, as was Fr. Stephen Huffstetter, SCJ, vicar general.

Fr. Ed Kilianski, SCJ, provincial superior of the US Province, received the vows. Fr. Francis Vu Tran, SCJ, district superior of Vietnam, was at his side. John Huan Nguyen is a member of the district. The new SCJs introduce themselves in their own words:

## Frater John Huan Nguyen, SCJ

The first phase of my life was interesting for me in school, but then I asked myself, “What is next?” I wondered if I would have a family, what my career would be. I went to college; my years there were exciting but still safe in the arms of my family. I had a lot of friends. But then my life changed because of a deep call in my heart: the call of Jesus.

I joined the SCJ formation program in Vietnam four years ago.



John and Hubert, our newly professed SCJs

After I completed a year with the community, I attended St. Joseph Major Seminary in Saigon to study philosophy.

In May of last year I left Vietnam and joined the ESL program [now ECS] at Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology and then entered the Novitiate. I reflected on my vocational journey with the Priests of the Sacred Heart, learning to be intimately united with Christ. The year was intense, but I am happy to be part of the community. The Novitiate can be difficult, but it was also a sweet stage of my life.

During this year I came to love and appreciate Fr. Dehon’s spirituality and his religious experiences. My love for the Sacred Heart has truly inspired me to continue with the community. I have learned and cherish the oblation and reparation prayers that we recite each morning and evening. They capture the essence of what it means to be a Dehonian within the context of today’s world. I want to dedicate my life to God through vows with Priests

of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

This past Novitiate year has been a great learning experience for me both culturally and spiritually. I have learned much about community life. Living in the Novitiate, I experienced God’s mercy and love through the formal teaching we received, but also through interaction with my brothers. Together, we discerned our vocation.

The Congregation of the Priests of the Sacred Heart has helped me to become more intimate with the Lord through Eucharistic Adoration, community prayer and my personal prayer.

For me, whatever happens is good because it is of God. I will always try to live well. I hope my life is a beautiful reflection of God. I believe that through difficulties and trials life becomes meaningful.

## Frater Hubert Senam Kodjovi Liassidji, SCJ

I’m originally from Togo in West Africa and I became American citizen on August 17, 2017. Born on November 3, 1980, from a faithful Protestant woman and a Catholic man, I am the fourth child of a family of five. I was raised by my mother, who taught me a lot about the Christian faith, though I did not have the opportunity to get baptized when I was a child.

While growing up I thought about becoming Protestant. But instead, I converted to Catholicism and was

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Priests of the Sacred Heart

baptized at the age of 19. After high school, I studied physics and chemistry at the University of Lome, where I got my degree in chemistry.

I moved to the United States in November, 2010, and worked at many places. I wanted to continue my studies, so I moved to Iowa and worked as a forklift operator while studying at Kirkwood Community College in Iowa City. I majored in chemical engineering.

Religious life is a call but also a choice. It is one thing to have a call but another to choose to respond to it. I chose to answer God's call and through formation with the SCJs, I discovered and continue to discover my true identity. I recognize Christ by serving and giving myself to the poor and the most needy people, and further, I become a disciple of Jesus Christ through the teachings of Fr. Dehon.

Even before I joined the SCJs, I had a special compassion towards the poor, the lowly, the orphans, the oppressed. How do we care for the poor? How can we be the voice of the voiceless? What am I to provide for the hungry? How can I help the abandoned and the marginalized people in society?

As I spent time with the SCJs, I have come to understand that the social action taught by our founder, Fr. Leo John Dehon, is a new way of evangelization.

Now, following my first profession of vows, I feel anxious and at the same time full of joy. I am anxious because I know it is a big commitment. Professing my vows is the beginning of a new journey, and this new journey I know will not be easy. But I put my trust in the Lord and his Mother. I am blessed and full of joy to profess my first vows as a member of this religious community. Led by the Spirit, I enter joyfully, full of hope, and I will continue to find lasting fulfillment of my commitment and see where God is leading me on this journey to become religious and priest.



The 2019-2020 Novitiate class: Thuan, Thien, Hung and Truc

## Four enter Dehonian Novitiate

*"The time of Novitiate constitutes a privileged period of initiation into the religious life of our Congregation... The novice shall involve himself in an experience of community and evangelical life; he shall be initiated in the practice of the evangelical counsels."*

SCJ Rule of Life, No. 98

**T**he day before John Huan Nguyen and Hubert Senam Kodjovi Liassidji professed their first vows with the Priests of the Sacred Heart, Thien Nguyen, Thuan Nguyen, Truc Van Tran and Hung Pham began their Novitiate year in preparation for their first profession. Fr. Ed Kilianski, SCJ, provincial superior, received the new novices during a ceremony in the Novitiate chapel on August 14.

All members of this year's Novitiate class are originally from Vietnam. Thien Nguyen came in contact with the SCJs when he was a university student. "The community life I found with the SCJs brought me a lot of fun and happiness," he said. After graduation he went on to a well-paying job. "I earned good money and had a full life in the material sense but deep in

my soul, I felt empty and unhappy. I struggled, but through prayer, I heard the call of God." In 2015 he pursued his vocation with the SCJ community that he had come to know when he was a student.

"I now realize that God always accompanies me in my life, and I have received a lot of blessings," he said. "I am very happy with my decision to follow Jesus in my life. I always believe in God's will and try to imitate the life example of Jesus and do the best that I can.

"Since I have been in the United States I have been very interested in the topic of immigrants and admire the silent sacrifices of those who help them. In the future I hope to also be an extended arm of Jesus, bringing God's love to those in need."

Thuan Nguyen learned of the

Priests of the Sacred Heart through a neighbor. As a university student he began to feel the call to religious life and contacted the SCJs' vocation director. After attending Mass with the community — Mass for the feast of the Sacred Heart — he felt at home and immediately applied to be a candidate.

"After finishing philosophy, I joined two of my confreres to go to the US Province to enter postulancy and the Novitiate because we did not yet have these programs in Vietnam," he said. "Entering the Novitiate, I hope to learn more about the three SCJ mottos: *Sint Unum, Ecce Venio and Adveniat Regnum Tuum*. Furthermore, I want to become an SCJ to live as Fr. Dehon lived.

Before applying to the Priests of the Sacred Heart, Truc Tran earned a degree in construction engineering. He says that he comes from a family that is very active in the local Church.

"For many years, my father has taught catechism for young people in our parish," he said. "My mother has a great love for the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which is part of my motivation in pursuing my vocation with the Priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. My younger sister is also pursuing a religious vocation."

Truc became a candidate in 2015. As did Thuan and Thien, he studied in the ESL/ECS program at Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology during the year prior to Novitiate.

"There have been challenges in being with a culture different from my own; but it has been good for me to study and learn to adapt to many things. The ECS program has helped me a lot with my English, but also with how to study. I have been able to prepare for postulancy and now Novitiate.

Hung Pham was also born in Vietnam but has lived in the United States for over 10 years. He earned a degree in Petroleum Engineering from the University of Houston in

2015. Before entering SCJ candidacy, he worked as a total petroleum hydrocarbon (TPH) analyst.

"I am excited about joining the SCJs and want to discover more about the SCJ Rule of Life," said Hung. "I would like to learn to be a prophet of love, a servant of reconciliation, and be attentive to humankind's appeals through Dehonian spirituality."

Hung began his studies in Chicago at Catholic Theological Union but during the past year was a student at Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology.

## Austen Ivereigh featured presenter at Dehon Lecture



Austen Ivereigh

Dr. Austen Ivereigh was the featured speaker at the Dehon Lecture at Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology on November 13. A journalist and the author of *The Great Reformer*, a biography of Pope Francis, Ivereigh was the opening presenter at last year's SHSST symposium "Discovering Pope Francis." His latest book, *Wounded Shepherd: Pope Francis and His Struggle to Convert the Catholic Church*, just went on sale.

The book was a starting point for his Dehon Lecture topic: "Wounded Shepherd: the Sacred Heart and the Reform of Pope Francis."

Dr. Ivereigh talked about Pope Francis' formation as a Jesuit. There are many parallels in the writings of St. Ignatius and Fr. Leo John Dehon,

he said, adding that "Ignatius and Dehon both wanted their followers to focus contemplatively on the mysteries and events of Christ's life; to allow their woundedness

to be drawn into the Sacred Heart."

And in the Sacred Heart is joy.

"One of the greatest secrets of Pope Francis is joy," said Dr. Ivereigh. "The word 'joy' is found in so many of his documents. While he sees the poor as the wounds of Christ, he experiences also the joy of Christ's self-giving. As the ordinary, faithful people flock to him and he to them, he who has lived so contemplatively in the Sacred Heart of Jesus has such a heart for them that their joy has become his joy."

Afternoon respondents to Dr. Ivereigh's presentation included Fr. Stefan Tertünte, SCJ (director of the Centro Studi Dehoniani in Rome, speaking on the commonalities of Pope Francis and Fr. Leo John Dehon), Dr. Kurt Martens (Catholic University of America, talking about Pope Francis from the perspective of Canon Law) and Dr. Peter Casarella (University of Notre Dame, focusing on inculturation).

Fr. Stefan noted that Fr. Dehon and Pope Francis could both be referred to as "reformers." But what moved them to this? For Dehon, said Fr. Stefan, the question was not simply "What must I do?" but "How should I love?"

Love, for Fr. Dehon, was both a point of departure and a point of arrival.

"Reform is the fruit of conversion," said Fr. Stefan. "Fr. Dehon's conversion was to a self-giving love that had a particular sensitivity to the wounded of society."

Just as today, it is in the wounds of society, the wounds of Christ in society, that Pope Francis is found.



Fr. Stefan Tertünte

# 25 years of the Dehonian presence in India

**T**he first Dehonian missionaries arrived in India on October 6, 1994. For two days, October 5-6, the Indian District celebrated the 25th anniversary of their arrival with prayer, performances, historical presentations, and of course, food!

Dehonians from around the world, including Fr. Carlos Luis Suarez Cordorniu, superior general of the Priests of the Sacred Heart, and Fr. Pedro Iglesias Curto, secretary general, were present. Other visitors included Patrick van Ooij, the nephew of one of the founding SCJs of the district, Fr. Martin van Ooij, as well as several missionaries. For many, it was a homecoming, reconnecting with students who are now professed religious in full-time ministry, and others they had come to know during their days in India.

Among the North American SCJs at the gathering were Fr. Tom Cassidy, Fr. Dominic Peluse, Fr. Quang Nguyen, Fr. Gustave Lulendo and Br. Leonard Zaworski.

## Partnership with the US Province

The US Province has had a significant role in the development of the Indian District, both financial and personnel resources. With his photo prominently displayed in front of the



Fr. Dominic Peluse was among the representatives from the US Province



Dehonians pose for a group photo after Saturday's Eucharistic celebration.

stage during the weekend's events, Fr. Tom Garvey is considered one of the founding fathers of the district. But many other American SCJs have given significant contributions, including Fr. Charles Bisgrove, Fr. Tom Fix and Fr. Richard DiLeo. Br. Leonard Zaworski spent 12 years in the country developing social outreach; Fr. Tom Cassidy continues to assist with the formation program. Fr. Charles Brown and Fr. Jim Schroeder are among those who have taught in the district.

## Thank you SCJs!

Before the formal celebrations began, SCJs were invited to the village of Vempadu for what was billed as a "small gathering with parishioners." Arriving on a dirt road, the SCJs were swarmed by well-wishers. A parade with drums and flowers escorted them to the parish where they were thanked and honored for their service to the community. It is just one of many areas where the Dehonians

have had a significant impact in their 25 years.

## A "family" celebration

The first night of the weekend celebration was reserved for an anniversary Mass with the family: the Dehonian family. And during the Mass, that family grew by one. Following the homily, the district welcomed its first Lay Dehonian: Dr. V. Mrudula Raj (known as "Pinky" by most members of the community). Now a pharmacist, Pinky came to know the SCJs through



Fr. Quang Nguyen (USA) and Fr. Gustave Lulendo (Canada) were among the concelebrants

her parents, who taught Telugu (the local language) to SCJs in Eluru. Living close by, the family often joined the community for prayer and special events. Pinky missed the strong connection to the SCJs when she left for studies. It was then that she searched out information about Fr. Dehon, the founder of the community which she had befriended. "I was impressed by him," she said. And soon, she adopted Dehonian spirituality as her own. Fr. Carlos Luis received her first-year commitment as a Lay Dehonian.

After Saturday's Mass, the stage was set for performances by the various Indian communities. Many did intricately choreographed dance numbers, others put on short skits. And there was music; lots of music.

### And then the guest list grew!

The guest list grew by several hundred on Sunday when Christu Dehon Nivas welcomed Bishop Rao Polimera, DD, bishop of Eluru, to be the presider of the Silver Jubilee Mass. Alongside him were many of the missionaries who had helped to build the district in its early years, as well as Fr. Carlos Luis, and Fr. McQueen Mascarenhas, district superior. Stretched out in front of the altar were rows upon rows of concelebrants, both SCJs and many friends of the community. And behind them, many, many others, including local religious communities and families.

"Your founder called you to be witnesses of God's transforming love



Fr. Carlos Luis welcomes Bishop Rao Polimera, DD, bishop of Eluru

in souls and societies," said the bishop during his homily. "Spread God's love with an open heart and mind throughout the world. The Dehonian spirit of love and oblation is an authentic service of the Church."

In his closing words to the bishop, Fr. Carlos Luis told him that the Dehonians had fallen in love 25 years ago, fallen in love with the people of India. "And our most beautiful blessing is our SCJ brothers who thrive here now."

Both evenings' events were held on the roof of Christu Dehon Nivas in Eluru with receptions in the courtyard.

### Photos, videos on web

An anniversary video was shown during the celebration. Links to that, photos, and a video of the jubilee song, "In Souls and Society," written by Fr. Michael Augustine, SCJ, are available on the US Province website:



[www.dehoniainsusa.org/feature-stories/celebrating-25-years-of-the-dehonian-presence-in-india](http://www.dehoniainsusa.org/feature-stories/celebrating-25-years-of-the-dehonian-presence-in-india)

## Dehonian commitment continues

**A**lthough the province no longer has a pastoral presence on the Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation in South Dakota, Dehonians continue their commitment to the people of the reservation through the Sacred Heart Center in Eagle Butte. In its 37th year, the center provides multiple social services, including an emergency shelter for domestic violence and sexual assault victims and a child services program which operates a state licensed group home for youth aged 10-17.

On October 29, the Sacred Heart Center had a groundbreaking ceremony for a new Family Violence Women's Safe Shelter. "Unfortunately, the number of victims of domestic violence and sexual assault is not declining in our service area," said Greg. "A new building is critical as a part of the process to assist victims."

The new facility will have enough space for victims to have their own rooms, including a private bath. The common areas will also be significantly larger. There will be an indoor play area for the children of victims. In addition, all staff will

have private offices. Plus, there will be a conference room as well as a small meeting room which can be used for meetings with victims, such as when a victim needs to meet privately with the police department.

Traditionally, most emergency shelters across the country are not able to house male victims, or a woman who has a teenage son. The new building will have rooms located separate from the main shelter which will allow the center to house these victims.

The Priests of the Sacred Heart are no longer on the Cheyenne River Reservation but the Dehonian commitment to its people continues.



Fr. Anthony Kluckman blesses the new site.

# Meet our students!

**T**his year, our formation program includes six candidates, six professed seminarians and four novices. They are men from a wide variety of cultural, educational and work backgrounds. Yet they all speak of their shared call to the spirituality found in the Priests of the Sacred Heart (Dehonians) and a desire to serve others.

First-year candidate Steven DiNello wrote that **“I have tried my hand at many different career paths, but since it has always been my dream to one day become a Catholic priest, nothing else fulfilled me nor brought me the kind of joy and peace that I am experiencing now that I have finally answered the call.”** Yet, he emphasizes that those “extra years of life experiences and discernment only help me more to embody the spirituality of the Sacred Heart that is necessary to become a true Dehonian.”

Jonathan Nguyen, at 18, our youngest candidate, said that he has a “passion to learn more about God



Members of our formation community at Sacred Heart Monastery

every day of my life and **I know that learning about God will never be enough; I need to be a part of community life.”**

Candidates and seminarians for the Priests of the Sacred Heart live at Sacred Heart Monastery in Hales Corners (Franklin), WI. They do their theological studies at Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology and undergraduate work at Marquette University in Milwaukee. Our Novitiate is located on a rural property approximately 15 miles south of Sacred Heart.

In the first pages of this issue, our newly professed SCJs and novices introduced themselves. To learn about the rest of our students, visit the Vocation section of our website: [www.dehoniansusa.org](http://www.dehoniansusa.org).

## What about you?

Are you discerning a vocation to the priesthood and/or religious life? Do you feel called to a life of community, prayer and ministry based in the love of the Sacred Heart? Contact our vocation director at **800-609-5559** or [vocationcentral@wi.twcbc.com](mailto:vocationcentral@wi.twcbc.com).

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