



Dehonians USA

PRIESTS OF THE SACRED HEART

“What is the politics of the Gospel? What were the social goals of the Savior? He came to uplift the humble.” Fr. Leo John Dehon, “Christian Democracy,” 1900

Dear Brothers,

At the IX General Conference, “Dehonians in Social Commitments: The Impact of God’s Love for Our Society,” major superiors in the Congregation listened, reflected, and dialogued on ways SCJs are being attentive to the needs of the Church and the world and responding to them concretely in faithfulness to the Gospel and the charism of Fr. Dehon. We acknowledged the richness of the diverse social commitments in the Congregation carried out by Dehonians and Dehonian collaborators. In addition to daily Eucharistic celebration and adoration, the days consisted of personal reflections, group discussions, and presentations on the biblical and theological foundation of social justice, the Church’s social teaching, and the challenging social realities in Fr. Dehon’s time and ours.

I would like to highlight a few points discussed at the IX General Conference:

- **SPIRITUALITY.** “Our Institute is rooted in Father Dehon’s faith experience” (Cst. 2). We need to study and deepen our knowledge of Fr. Dehon, and our social commitment must be rooted in our spirituality, particularly oblation and reparation. Reparation as “regenerative” (i.e., new beginning, new potential, lifegiving) was frequently mentioned throughout the Conference. We need to rediscover “the beauty of living *reparation* as a source of joy for the experience of the salvation received and then offered to others.” It is necessary that we share our charism and spirituality with lay coworkers.
- **COLLABORATION.** We are not social workers but protagonists of change. We need cooperation within the Congregation at all levels (i.e., among entities and with the laity) and with ecclesial and non-ecclesial organizations working in the fields of social justice and service to the poor. We stressed the “community dimension” of social commitment. A social commitment should not be any one SCJ’s initiative or project but rather a communal one that

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requires broad Dehonian involvement. Together, we advance social change and promote the dignity and integral development of the human person.

- **FORMATION.** We need to recover the richness of our SCJ charism among ourselves and pass it on to the younger SCJs. To do so, we stressed the need for ongoing formation to foster our potential and social commitment. We also recognize the urgent need to rethink the formative environments of those in initial formation. Formandi are to be exposed to social justice issues and encouraged to live the ideal of regenerative reparation.

Many of these topics were echoed in the discussions that took place during the Provincial Council's recent Planning Retreat in South Dakota.

Attached is the final message of the IX General Conference. I encourage you to read and discuss it among yourselves at the dinner table or in community meetings. I offer a few questions for reflection or discussion:

1. What is distinctive about our charism and spirituality?
2. What makes a ministry Dehonian?
3. How would you envision the US Province collaborating with others in social justice and service to the poor?
4. The message calls for both initial and ongoing formation of our vocation as Dehonian religious in spirituality and social commitment. How can SCJs be more engaged? Do you have any suggestions?

Our Province Assembly, scheduled for August 16-18, 2022, will continue the theme of social commitments rooted in the example of Jesus and in the footsteps of Fr. Dehon. You will receive more information from the planning committee in the coming months. Your reflections now are initial preparations for that assembly.

Yours in the Sacred Heart,

