



Dehonians USA

PRIESTS OF THE SACRED HEART

Feast of the Sacred Heart

June 24, 2022

“The Heart of Jesus, the love of Jesus, this is the entire Gospel. Jesus came to earth out of love for his Father and love for us” (Fr. Leo John Dehon, OSP V, 447).

Dear Brothers,

As we celebrate our patronal feast day, it is fitting to reflect on God’s unconditional, inexhaustible love for the world revealed in Jesus, to recall how Fr. Leo John Dehon responded to that love through reparation and social engagement focused on the poor and the oppressed, and to unite our hearts with His through the Eucharist. As eucharistic people, we are drawn to the depths of God’s total self-offering – agape love – for our salvation and transformed to live for God and others.

For SCJs, the Sacred Heart is our *fons vitae*. Fr. Dehon called the opening of the Heart of Jesus the greatest of all mysteries and the foundation of all others (OSP II, 379). Our Constitutions put it succinctly: “From the Heart of Jesus, opened on the cross, human beings are reborn in heart, enlivened by the Spirit, and united with their brothers and sisters in the community of charity which is the Church” (Cst. 3). Fr. Dehon saw in the Heart of Christ God’s agape love and embraced the spirituality of the Sacred Heart as the foundation of his interior life. He wrote, “I want to make my home in the Heart of Jesus to unite myself forever to his feelings, his joys, his sorrows, his acts of reparation, and his desires.... No, I can no longer live, I want the Heart of Jesus to live in me” (OSP II, 201). Fr. Dehon was making himself available to the God who comes to us.

In *Rediscovering Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus: A Heart on Fire*, James Kubicki notes that Sacred Heart devotion is not our devotion to God but God’s loving devotion to us. For him, God loves us first, and our devotion to the Sacred Heart is a response to God, who is love (15-16). Fr. Dehon would agree. He noted, “Divine love is a circle: it descends toward creatures and goes back again bringing them toward God” (OSP I, 35).

As SCJs, we are familiar with the spirituality of and devotion to the Sacred Heart, as well as its biblical and theological foundations. We know what we need to do to respond to God’s love in our vocations as SCJs. But how do the laity – especially children – understand and interpret the meaning and significance of the Sacred Heart? How do they

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respond to God's love in their lives? To get a sense of their understanding and interpretation, I turned to students in our SCJ schools. Here are some of their responses.

- ❖ “When I think of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, I think of Jesus’s willingness, patience, and courage to fulfill God’s plan, sacrificing Himself for us, so that we may have the chance to be with God and live out His Word. His courage, love, and patience are represented through the Sacred Heart of Jesus. We should be willing to sacrifice all that we can to live out what God wants for us. We can carry this into our lives by helping at home and being active in our school and church communities. I attend a school named after the Sacred Heart, and here we learn about respect, integrity, and mercy, all defining characteristics associated with Jesus’s Sacred Heart. I think the Sacred Heart of Jesus is an icon that reminds us that we should act like Christ and inspire us to make our hearts like Jesus.” – Kamila Lara, 7th grade, Sacred Heart School, Southaven, Mississippi.
- ❖ “When I hear the words ‘Sacred Heart,’ I think of Jesus and His heart of kindness which He wants every person in the world to have. I go to a school named Sacred Heart, where I learn to practice three things: knowledge, respect, and integrity. Jesus helped the less fortunate, knew how to solve each problem before him, and treated all, even those who hated him, with kindness and respect. At school, we learn to stay true to ourselves and others, help others with work or feelings, and be kind to each other, just like Jesus. I’m at the end of my time here at Sacred Heart. When I move to high school, I’ll remember these three things and have a heart like Jesus.” –Sydney Nathan, 8th grade, Sacred Heart School, Southaven, Mississippi.
- ❖ “A heart full of unconditional love.” – Ma Laina, 7th grade, St. Joseph’s Indian School, Chamberlain, South Dakota.

In these reflections, the students see the Sacred Heart as God’s passionate love for humankind and desire to have a heart like Jesus’s.

May the celebration of our patronal feast spark the eagerness to tell others of God’s devotion to us.

Happy Feast of the Sacred Heart!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Vier".