



# Dehonians USA

PRIESTS OF THE SACRED HEART

September 1, 2022

Dear Brothers,

*When I sat down to write the attached letter, I wanted to continue to reflect on our shared experience at the Province Assembly of praying for and processing Anthony's absence. But when I learned of the death of Jim Schifano, I hesitated to send the letter, feeling that by doing so, I was not acknowledging another, equally difficult loss in our province. Yet while we grieve our brother Jim's passing, we are still in the process of coming to terms with the unknown regarding Anthony. With these thoughts in mind, I share the attached letter with you. Let us continue to keep each other in prayer as we deal with these challenging moments in our religious family.*

The Lukan account of the twelve-year-old Jesus remaining behind in the Temple without his parents' knowledge keeps coming back to me as we continue to wait and search for our missing brother, Anthony. A missing child is a parent's worst nightmare. I often wonder: What went through Joseph's and Mary's minds when they discovered that Jesus was missing? When they found Jesus in the temple, what was Mary's tone when she said to Jesus, "Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you"? Was her tone one of tenderness or frustration? The Greek word for "anxiously searching" (*odyman*) means "to cause pain, torment, anguish." One can sense that Joseph and Mary were in distress.

I can relate to the distress of Joseph and Mary when I lost sight of my nephew, aged seven, at the Houston Rodeo, where daily attendance ranged from 47,000 to 100,000 people. I took five of my nieces and nephews—aged 5-12—for a fun afternoon, but it turned out to be terrifying. I was the only adult chaperoning them. Searching for a child in an overwhelming crowd was hellish. Many questions raced in my mind: "What if I cannot find him?" "How am I going to explain it to his parents?" After 15 minutes of anxiously searching, I found him with a good Samaritan who was comforting him. He was crying. I was crying too.

During the Province Assembly, many of us participated in the "spiritual" walk by either searching for clues about Anthony's disappearance, or in Eucharistic Adoration, praying for him and others. The primary intention was to be in solidarity with Anthony, his family (biological and religious), and other people

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involved in the search. It was also hoped that the walk and Eucharistic Adoration would help us attend to our emotions. Those were the intentions of the provincial administration. But, as we know, the Spirit led us wherever we needed to be—spiritually and emotionally. This Spirit-led space might not be comfortable but could be transformative.

If you took part in the Province Assembly, what went through your mind as we prayed for Anthony? Powerlessness? Pointlessness? Vulnerability? Frustration? Below are some of the reflections shared by SCJs regarding how the Spirit led and stirred their hearts and minds during the spiritual walk and Eucharistic Adoration. I am grateful for their openness to sharing their reflections.

Missing our brother Anthony is a hard reality. However, as people of faith and hope, we commend Anthony to God’s care. But I also think of the words used by a parent who spoke of her missing child: “We have our right to hope until we find our truth.”

Fraternally,





## REFLECTIONS BY SCJS

**Tim Gray.** We walked alongside Rawson Road, vainly searching for signs of our lost brother Anthony. Instead, we found bottles, food wrappers, and the refuse of society, used and thrown aside. However, we also saw cornflowers, goldenrod, and Black-eyed Susans pushing through the trash. Life would not be denied. My hopes for finding my brother had been flattened, like the damp McDonald's boxes squashed into the dirt. Today I had expected to find nothing except a strip of gravel alongside the road. I found life, life I had not expected. It came, not from me and my efforts, as Sister Dianne had reminded us. It was there all the time, waiting.

**Paul Phong Hoang.** I felt a sense of solidarity with the community in the search for our lost member even though we knew beforehand that we most likely wouldn't find Fr. Anthony. This incident reminds me to be more patient, to be kind, and to appreciate other members in community who are still around whom I often overlook. Sometimes there are people, things, and moments in life that we fail to appreciate until they can no longer be found.

**Joseph R. Dean.** Shortly before the 16<sup>th</sup>, I had this sad feeling that Anthony Kluckman's disappearance was a sign of what God was allowing the Congregation to go through: dying one by one alone and abandoned. I thought of the line from Ps. 88: "companion and neighbor you have taken from me. My friends are in darkness." I was physically tired during the Adoration period. It was all I could do to "keep watch" and hold that line in tension with the Psalms' claim that God's steadfast love fills the whole world, and that we are meant to keep dwelling on that steadfast love.

**David Szatkowski.** As we walked and looked for signs of Anthony and where he might be, I reflected on our powerlessness to find him, despite our efforts. For me, it was a reminder that it is the Good Shepherd who eventually must be entrusted with finding the lost (Jn 10:18; Lk 15:5). By searching for Anthony, we participate in the work of the Good Shepherd, but the finding does not depend on us but on Christ. For me, this was a time to learn to trust in Christ's saving action in ways I do not see or understand. But by looking for Anthony together, we also seek Christ the Good Shepherd together. By seeking Christ together, we also learn to trust him together.

**Michael Wodarczyk.** During the assembly, I attended the holy hour for Fr. Anthony. It was good to see the community come together to pray and to help search for Fr. Anthony. I hope that we see the fruits of our prayer and search soon.

**Bob Bossie.** I was surprised that our walk in search of Anthony helped me feel closer to him. While I have known him since our days at Kilroe seminary in the late 1960s, I was never that close to him. But I came to respect and appreciate him more when visiting St. Joe's several years ago and watched his interaction with the students. He showed real warmth and caring for them, especially one day during his homily at Mass. That was a side of him I hadn't noticed before. On the walk, I found myself praying to him to help us find him. I even said those words out loud at one point: "Anthony, where are you? Help us to find you." I know in some way our walk was pointless, but maybe it was important just for me to feel that connection with him. Clearly, we have long been brother SCJs. May God guide his every coming and going.

**Yvon Sheehy.** Twelve of us gathered in solemn prayer and in solidarity with all others doing exercises to help us reflect on the life of Anthony Kluckman. There were moments of prayer coupled with reflections. I realize along with all others that there is no closure for the time being. We have questions. We seek answers as to why and we want understanding as to why all this happened. Living without answers to our questions and observations is difficult. Letting go in God's hands and just letting go is hard. Our time in prayer helped me realize that we are not alone. There is sadness that a brother in community is missing. Letting go in God's hands will help us to take on the days forward while we keep praying, we keep remembering and we keep a sense of togetherness.

**Rafael Querobin.** Walking with other SCJ brothers around Monastery Lake was a significant experience during this time of anguish and uncertainty. As I live far from Milwaukee, I was not directly involved in the search process of our confrere Fr. Anthony. However, my walk with Joseph-Thien and Paul Phong was an expression of solidarity. The reflection we listened to that morning about vulnerability helped me rethink many things about my journey in this world. I prayed for Fr. Anthony, his family, and the SCJs involved in this long process of finding our brother.

**Wayne Jenkins.** Anthony loved to watch any sporting event in the evening. After breakfast, he would consult the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* for the listing of the day's sporting events. After supper, he would go to the recreation room to watch sports. I miss sitting and watching with him the sporting event.

**Joseph Mukuna.** As expected, we could not find Fr. Anthony. However, on our way back, I started reflecting on the sense of the search and found out that while searching for Fr. Anthony, I was searching for myself, considering that Fr. Anthony and I are connected through our vows as SCJ. The search for Fr. Anthony refreshed in me the sense of living together and what it involves—mutual support, compassion, and love. It also invited me to permanently look for the face of God in the confreres I live with daily and care for them as much as possible. I continue to pray for Fr. Anthony as I believe he prays for us too.

**Henry Bui Nguyen.** I recall looking outside my window for days and seeing the search teams look for Fr. Anthony with uncertainty. Then as I reflected on the spiritual walk we had dedicated to Fr. Anthony, I finally felt in solidarity with all those involved in his search. Although we haven't made progress, I find comfort in knowing so many are with us in prayer.

**Brian Tompkins.** The symbolic walk to me was a way of coming together to help a grieving community and to have God accompany us in our search for Fr. Anthony. One has hope. One loses hope. Faith informs the first and the sense of loss informs the latter. Hope wins and we therefore continue to pray for Fr. Anthony's return: A conclusion to our search and our prayers answered.

