



Welcoming the Spirit



...preparing for our future

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XVII U.S. Provincial Chapter ❖ Priests of the Sacred Heart  
July 18 - 21, 2023

## Process and Procedures

### Introduction

The XVII Provincial Chapter of the US Province of the Priests of the Sacred Heart will use facilitated, heart to heart conversations to seek communal discernment on topics essential for our future. We believe that the delegates of this chapter, both as individuals and as a group, have intrinsic wisdom from which to draw.

The chapter will be made up of various parts and experiences: business, prayer, focused and deep conversation, provincial celebration, and informal exchanges. All parts are connected and are part of the whole.

Drawing on the experience of the two previous chapters and our assemblies, the parts will be seamlessly woven together with prayer and ritual integrated into conversations and business.

The XVII Provincial Chapter will not be a business meeting with prayer scheduled before and after. It is designed to be a spiritual experience with the potential of being both contemplative and transformative. The chapter holds the possibility of being a graced, freeing and healing experience for both individuals and the province. We will need to avoid our group's shadow side and to call forth all that is good and holy among us.

Our theme and goals of the chapter will serve as an important foundation in focusing both the preparatory efforts and the chapter itself. The chapter goals will help focus the work of the delegates with the help of the facilitator.

Theme: Welcoming the Spirit ...preparing for our future

## Goals

1. That celebrating our past, delegates leave the chapter hopeful for our future having identified next steps toward defining what it means to be Dehonian in the United States at this time and outlined ways to:
  - Become more intercultural as individuals, local communities and as a province;
  - Increase collaboration with the laity;
  - Intentionally share the Dehonian charism with others.

Recognizing the divisions that exist within society and the Church in the United States, we strive, as Dehonians, to build the reign of the Sacred Heart in souls and in societies.

2. That delegates accomplish each of the mandatory tasks of the chapter, including:
  - Election of delegates and alternates to the 2024 general chapter.
  - Review and acceptance of state of the province report.
  - Review and acceptance of Chapter Finance Committee report.

## Process Chapter

The way we decide to approach both the preparation for and the actual chapter experience will have an enormous impact on the spirit of our province. The level of participation during the preparation and during the chapter will help create and shape our future.

We are invited/encouraged to focus on our future possibilities not on present-day problem solving. Problem solving is the role of ordinary provincial administration. Provincial chapters can dream dreams and discern our future possibilities.

## Tools for Heart to Heart Conversation

In *Charism and Mission*, a day of recollection Paul J. McGuire, SCJ gave to the General Chapter of 2003, he noted that after World War II Cardinal Joseph Cardijn developed a pastoral strategy based on the three-step process of “observe, judge, act,” which was used in the Catholic Action movement. More importantly, P.J. noted, a half a century earlier Leo John Dehon developed his own way of proceeding: SEE, LOVE, and ACT.

In the *Notes on the History of My Life (III, 98)*, Leo John Dehon wrote: “Truth and charity have been the two great passions of my life, and I have but one desire, that they alone may be the two attractions in the congregation that I will leave behind, if this be God’s will.”

SEE – *to have an open mind*. Father Dehon, with his four doctorates, his many trips, and his multiple daily newspapers, was always eager to learn, to know what was going on around him, in others and in himself. He had an open, inquisitive mind into his final years. In this provincial chapter we want to see, to learn about each other, to know what each one holds at heart, to see with the eyes of each other.

LOVE – *to have an open heart*. As Yves Ledure wrote in *The Spirit and Life of Leo Dehon*, p. 61, “it is agape’s (love’s) task to give a heart to understanding so that it keeps the fragility of the human condition in mind and not just the theoretical principles of human reason.” We want to put ourselves in the other’s place, to empathize, to “walk a mile in his moccasins.” Our current logo calls us to have that open mind and heart for God and our neighbor.

ACT – *to have an open will, to let go of fear and the past, to move into something new*. P.J. quotes Leo as writing, “When the heart is deeply impressed, all the other faculties either fall silent, or cooperate with it. . . The best way to allow the grace of the Heart of Jesus to act in us is to give precedence to the activities of the heart. . . Grace always acts on the heart. It acts on the will only after having passed by way of the heart.” Leo, wrote Ledure (p. 22), “liked to imagine a ‘conversation,’ as he called it, taking place among the divine persons. As he sets the scene, the Word is addressing himself to the Father in an attitude of total giving, ‘Here I am, send me’ to accomplish the work of redemption.” Our Rule of Life says that this *Ecce Venio*, this union with Christ’s oblation to the Father, is the one thing necessary in our life as SCJs. It is Christ’s and our response of action to bring the reign of God to souls and societies.

What response will we make after all our observation and reflection and love during this chapter?

## Communal Discernment

Discernment is a gift of the Spirit that orients persons to be attentive to the presence of God in our midst. In discernment, persons sift through the many spirits that vie for our attention to hear the One True Spirit. It implies a willingness to be transformed individually and as a group.

In communal discernment, bonds of partnership are formed and re-formed, woven together with our charism and our traditions and with questions of who we are called to become at this time as individuals and as a community. Communal discernment invites heartfelt deep conversation, fostering shared hope, shared vision about an evolving future. It invites constant movement from I to WE.

In communal discernment, “heart to heart” conversation pools the wisdom of our personal efforts so that together we can discover God’s intentions. This is a process not just between you and God, but between you and others, within and among whom God is revealed. It is about the people of God, the world, the earth, the cosmos.

Communal discernment is not a side-by-side experience where you share what you found by yourself in prayer. It is an ever-deepening conversation about your faith and your experience of

one another. It implies an openness to what another may have to say to me, or what I may feel drawn to say to another, and it invites a high level of letting go.

Discernment is not a once and for all activity, or process, but a way of life. It takes practice. It invites us to slow down, to be more reflective, more able to listen... to see with new eyes, to approach life with an open mind, open heart, and open will... TO SEE, TO LOVE, TO ACT.

## Principals for Communal Discernment

1. All of the information is available to everyone in the discernment. There is no secret information.
  - Each delegate will be asked to share pertinent information and to be appropriately transparent.
2. We are all committed to the integrity of the dialogue. As far as possible each speaks his truth to persons and then attempts to let it go.
  - Each delegate will be asked to speak up and to speak honestly to each other while attempting to listen deeply to the opinion of another, especially if it differs from his own
3. We commit ourselves to having the meeting at the meeting. While we can reflect with others what we are experiencing, we do not meet in little groupings to campaign for a particular “cause” or point of view.
  - Each delegate will be asked to be and create *cor unum* – one mind and one heart, even when tempted to participate in “sub groupings” that may support one’s way of thinking.
4. All discernment takes place in real time – in the time that is available. These days will come and go. We may not leave completely content about where we are at this point, but it is where we need to be for now.
  - Each delegate will be asked to live with the ambiguity and uncertainty that this kind of process involves.
5. Communal discernment does not necessarily produce the absolute best result, but the best result given the circumstances.
  - Each delegate will be asked to call upon his sense of inner freedom to help him live with the “less than perfect” outcome or direction.
6. If we come into the discernment like a “rock” and go out like a “rock” we have spiritually disqualified ourselves from communal discernment.
  - Each delegate will be asked to be attentive to his inner disposition and to free himself from the voices of fear, judgment, and cynicism.

7. We challenge ourselves to move from the “I” to the “we.” This means that delegates may have to let go of their personal preferences. It is okay to have them, but delegates must let them be influenced by prayer and dialogue.
  - Each delegate will be asked to surface the questions that need to be asked and to hear responses that may not be to his liking, but are for the good of the whole.

## Organization of the Chapter

### 1. The President of the Chapter

The provincial is the president of the provincial chapter. After he convokes the chapter, he and his administration appoint a Chapter Preparatory Committee, begin the process of election of delegates, retain the services of a facilitator, provide for the preparation of a “state of the province” report, conduct the election of a Chapter Finance Committee and determine issues/concerns they want discussed at the chapter.

### 2. Participation in the Chapter

There are three ways to participate in the XVII Provincial Chapter:

- a. Chapter Delegates include *de jure* and elected delegates. They pledge to attend and to participate in all liturgies, sessions, processes and activities of the chapter. They have voice and vote.
  1. The provincial superior, provincial councilors, provincial secretary, provincial treasurer, novice master, and mission secretary are *de jure* delegates of the chapter.
  2. Each local community may elect as many delegates as it has members, but can only elect delegates from its own membership. If the local community decides to only elect one delegate, it must also elect an alternative delegate.
  3. A majority of chapter delegates will constitute a quorum.
- b. Observers to the chapter pledge to attend and to participate in liturgies, sessions, processes and activities of the chapter as they are interested and/or able. They indicate their pledge through a written form. They are seated at tables separate from the delegates. They do not vote in any of the deliberations of the chapter including choosing delegates to the General Chapter.
- c. Prayer partners of the chapter are unable to attend and participate in the sessions, processes and activities of the chapter. They pledge to pray for the chapter both, during its preparation and the chapter itself. They indicate their pledge through a written form. They may participate in the liturgies of the chapter.

d. A member of the General Council is welcome to participate as he chooses at chapter and committee sessions. He has voice but no vote.

### 3. The Facilitator

The facilitator attends meetings of the Chapter Preparatory Committee, oversees the processes to be used to encourage deeper conversations, and guides the delegates in the completion of the work of the chapter. The facilitator is not a delegate to the chapter and may not participate in the discussions or vote. The Chapter Preparatory Committee assists the facilitator in her preparation and provides feedback during the chapter.

### 4. Committees

a. The Chapter Preparatory Committee is appointed by the provincial and his administration to organize the chapter and its agenda, taking into consideration any directives from the provincial or general administrations. They assist the facilitator in the design of the chapter.

The committee makes provision for the worship and living conditions of the chapter delegates; makes provision for the working conditions and records of the chapter; and, other than for the Chapter Finance Committee, appoints delegates to any needed committee.

The provincial is a member of the committee.

b. The Chapter Finance Committee is elected by the chapter delegates from the list of delegates. Prior to the chapter, the chapter finance committee reviews the finances of the province. The committee issues a report of its examination to the chapter and makes recommendations as appropriate.

c. Other committees can be established as needed by the Chapter Preparatory Committee drawing membership from the chapter delegates.

### 5. Chapter Secretary and Tellers

a. The chapter approves a secretary by majority vote. The secretary is responsible for recording chapter proceedings and may be assisted by a recording secretary.

b. The chapter approves a minimum of two tellers by majority vote. Tellers shall take an oath not to reveal how any member voted on any written ballot. Unless chosen from among the chapter delegates, tellers do not vote.

### 6. Chapter Agenda

a. The Chapter Agenda is determined by the Chapter Preparatory Committee.

1. The Agenda must include those items mandated by law: the “state of the province” report, the report and any recommendations from the Chapter Finance Committee, and the election of delegates to the General Chapter.

2. Items submitted by the provincial and his council must be included in the Chapter Agenda.
  3. Items submitted by chapter committees must be included in the Chapter Agenda.
  4. Items may be submitted in writing by any member of the US Province but require the approval of the Preparatory Committee in order to be included in the agenda. The Preparatory Committee must inform the delegates of the chapter of any items it declined to include on the agenda and its reasoning. If requested by at least 1/4 of the delegates in writing, an item must be included on the agenda.
- b. The various processes used are designed to assist the delegates in their discernment. In a process chapter, affirmation of a particular direction is often determined in ways other than a formal vote.
  - c. Ordinarily, as has been our custom, we are seeking more than a simple majority on issues that will have a future impact on our lives together and ministry. As items are presented, before discussion begins, the Chapter Preparatory Committee will announce the level of support needed to approve the particular item.
  - d. Formal votes (which are different from “leanings” which indicate the present level of support for an item), with the exception of election of delegates to the General Chapter, are a simple “yes” or “no” and will ordinarily be done through a show of hands.
7. Election of Delegates to the General Chapter

Election of delegates and alternates to the General Chapter shall follow the procedure mandated by common and particular law.