

Homily of Fr. James Schroeder, SCJ, with the Sacred Heart Community at SHML on March 14, 2023, the 180th anniversary of the birth of Fr. Leo John Dehon. Fr. Jim writes that he “used mostly what was a translation I did of Dehon's reflection on the Annunciation in his Year of the Sacred Heart.”

HOMILY:

“I was born March 14, 1843. It was a Tuesday of the second week of Lent.” Leo Dehon wrote this in his *Notes on the History of My Life*. However, he immediately jumps to his birth in the church, his baptism on March 24, noting the importance that it was on the First Vespers of the Feast of the Annunciation. He wrote, “The Ecce Venio of the Heart of Jesus has protected me and blessed my entrance into the Christian life.” He believed that the Lord wanted him to see in that, the care of His Providence, in light of his vocation as a Priest-Victim of the Heart of Jesus with an attitude of oblation.

In his *Year of the Sacred Heart*, Dehon offers us an important reflection on this that I would like to share with you:

“Ecce Venio, Ecce Ancilla Domini: these words trace in us our rule of life. In these words are found the vocation of those vowed to the Sacred Heart, with their purpose, their duties, their promises. This sentiment, this disposition, these words spoken and felt suffice in all situations, in all events, for the present and for the future.

“Here I come, O my God, to do your will. I am here, ready to act or to suffer, to undertake or to sacrifice everything you ask of me.

“The will of God is made known in every instant; and if at any moment uncertainty or obscurity fills the heart and the spirit, let us persevere with patience and confidence in this state, until divine wisdom and goodness let God's light shine anew.

“A soul that is offered up, a victim, knows he has nothing more to choose or desire for himself, his choice is made, his destiny is set. When, how, and in what circumstances his sacrifice will be fulfilled, that is the free choice of the One to whom he belongs completely.

“And so in this way let us practice total abandonment, letting Him do what He will, looking on Him who has gone before us on the way, who has made it doable, who has left behind Him the bloody prints of His own steps.

“The hairs of our head are counted. God even looks after the needs of the birds, He will not forget us. He will care for all our needs at the right time. If we give ourselves to him, he will give himself to us, too, and then what could be missing for us? When Mary gave herself by her Ecce Ancilla, she received the supreme grace: The Word became flesh and dwelled in her.”

As we enter into Eucharist now, let us close with Dehon's prayerful resolution: "Ecce Venio. I give myself and abandon myself to you, Lord, I unite myself with your Ecce Venio and with the Ecce Ancilla of your divine Mother. I want to have no other will than your own, no other rule than your good pleasure. I want at every moment to see your holy will and to conform myself to it." Amen. May this be our birthday gift to you, dear John of the Heart of Jesus.