



Dehonians USA

PRIESTS OF THE SACRED HEART

Feast of the Sacred Heart

June 16, 2023

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

“What’s the meaning of life?” is the question that Qohelet, the main character in the book of Ecclesiastes, is attempting to answer. Psychologists and scholars have different opinions about the meaning of “meaning.” Some contend that life is meaningful when everything makes sense based on predictable and reliable patterns of cause and effect. For example, the righteous are blessed; the unjust are punished. Life is meaningful when it has a mission and purpose, goals and aims that direct it. An example is the Israelites’ hopes of an eventual life in the Promised Land; a promising future inspired them to persevere as they sojourned in the wilderness. Life is meaningful when it is still valuable despite suffering and injustice in the world. For example, life is beautiful and worth living because of the people with whom we share it.

Qohelet discovers that wealth, importance, and pleasure are vanities. Ultimately, they do not last and do not mean much to him. For him, life without God is pointless, and fear of God is the way to gain wisdom and discover life’s meaning. Regardless of the contradictions, inconsistencies, and ambiguities in life, Qohelet asserts that life is still meaningful and worth living because life is a gift from God and that God is our living hope.



Photo by Br. Andy Gancarczyk, SCJ

What makes life meaningful for us? Is it our deepened relationship with God? A sense of belonging? Our commitment to the people with whom and for whom we serve? For some, our deepened relationship with

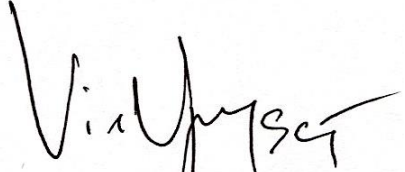
God gives us life’s mission and purpose. For others, life is meaningful when we are in love, get married, and bring a child into the world. Some find life meaningful when it is free of pain and suffering.

As Leo Tolstoy reminds us, “The sole meaning of life is to serve humanity.” For many SCJ collaborators, life is meaningful when what we do has a mission and makes a difference. Many of us choose to be part of the Dehonian mission because we believe in making a difference, transforming lives, and conforming the world to the Heart of Christ. In various ways, we convey to people that they are valuable and loved. This love is expressed in the Sacred Heart and we live it through our ministries.

Ministry, as many of us have experienced, is both giving and receiving. The people for and with whom we serve also minister to us. For example, those coming to us with material and spiritual needs show us the fragility and complexity of life and remind us of the need to care for one another. Students at times ask challenging questions that humble and invite us to continue the quest for knowledge. St. Francis of Assisi said it well that it is in giving that we receive.

On this Feast of the Sacred Heart, I express my heartfelt gratitude for your ministry, your collaboration with us Priests of the Sacred Heart. May you continue to find life’s meaning and purpose in your ministry.

Happy Feast of the Sacred Heart!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Vien V. Nguyen SCJ". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the "V" and "N" being particularly prominent.

V. Rev. Vien V. Nguyen, SCJ
Priests of the Sacred Heart
US Province