



# Dehonians USA

PRIESTS OF THE SACRED HEART

Feast of the Sacred Heart

June 16, 2023

Dear Brothers,

“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 of this 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.



*Photo by Br. Andy Gancarczyk, SCJ*

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

These questions touch on the three intertwined pillars of our life as religious: spirituality, community life, and ministry. Our life in Christ is the core of who we are as religious. For Fr. Dehon, his spirituality of the Sacred Heart orients how he responds to God’s love through a life of oblation and reparation. And he expected his sons to “unite their religious and apostolic life with Christ’s reparatory oblation to the Father for the sake of man” (Cst. 6).

This interior spiritual life is to be nourished by community life. “When two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Mt 18:20). We have lived in community long enough to know that at times, community life puts us to the test because of its evitable crosses and rough edges. In her reflection on working toward peace in the world, Mother Teresa said that we have forgotten that we belong to each other. The same can be said about our life as religious in

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community. Our community is supposedly a circle of kinship. But at times, we purposely let others stand outside of or refuse to enter this circle because of our differences and baggage. Community life may have evitable crosses and rough edges, but we accept the invitation to commit ourselves—or at least try—to the spirit of *Sint Unum* in community to help us better follow Christ.

As people nurtured by Christ and community life, we are sent into the world's streets to be his witnesses. For Fr. Dehon, an intense spiritual life, nourished in community living, leads to intense apostolic activity. His spirituality animated his social action, promoting people's rights and restoring people's dignity.

What's the meaning of life? Qohelet discovers that wealth, importance, and pleasure are vanities. In the end, they mean nothing and do not last. 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 Gera Juarez / Cathopic*

Whatever our definition of a meaningful life is, I hope that our spirituality, community life, and ministry as Dehonians lead us to a meaningful and fulfilled life of dedication as Dehonians. May the love of the Sacred Heart draw us deeper in communion with our Lord. And from this deepened relationship comes deeper meaning in life.

Happy Feast of the Sacred Heart!

Fraternally,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "V. Dehon". The signature is stylized, with a large, sweeping "V" and a cursive "Dehon" following it.