

**Homily by Fr. Jim Schroeder, SCJ**  
**Sacred Heart Community at SHML**  
**March 14, 2024 (Founder's Day)**

**Ex 32.7-14; Jn 5.31-47**

Today we celebrate the birthday of our dear Founder, Leo Gustave Dehon, who took the name of John of the Heart of Jesus. In his Notes on the History of My Life, a reflective memoir on his diary, or Daily Notes, he writes very little. He merely says: "I was born on March 14, 1843. It was Tuesday of the second week of Lent, with Easter that year falling on April 16<sup>th</sup>. March 14<sup>th</sup> is the feast day of St. Matilda, the queen of Germany." It's about his baptism that he gets more eloquent:

"I was baptized on March 24<sup>th</sup> in the poor church of La Capelle by the honorable and venerable Father Hecart, who already was pastor there for twelve years, and who prepared me for First Communion.

"March 24<sup>th</sup> was the feast day of the young child martyr St. Simeon. But above all, certainly, it was the first Vespers of the Feast of the Annunciation. I was happy later to unite the memorial of my baptism with that of the Ecce Venio of our Lord. The Ecce Venio of the Heart of Jesus protected and blessed my entry into the Christian life. . . . Our Lord, no doubt, did not want me to go without seeing in that his Providence in light of my present vocation as a Priest-Victim of the Heart of Jesus."

When I first saw today's readings, I thought, "Oh, no, these have nothing to do with the birthday of our Founder." However, in one of those special moments of inspiration, which I attribute to the Holy Spirit speaking to us through our unconscious, I realized the following. Leo united his whole life with the Ecce Ancilla of Mary, the full but passive acceptance of the action of God the Spirit, with the Ecce Venio of Jesus, the full and active readiness and willingness to work to bring about the Reign of God in souls and in societies. Part of that work was to make reparation, to pray to God for those alienated from Him, and to work to repair the break in their relationship. Another essential part of that work was to strive with others to Tikkun olam, to Repair the World, to remedy the sin and lack of love in the world and in the church. Reparation in a spiritual way is nothing without reparation, or repair work, in the human world.

In our first reading today, Moses hears from God how their people had grown depraved, and had alienated themselves from God, and angered God. Moses prays, actually he strongly

debates with God, seeking reparation or reconciliation. So the Lord relents and drops his threats. This is reparation in a spiritual way, in the way of prayer, a way that Leo promoted.

In our gospel Jesus is trying to prove himself to the Jews. He says he has his own testimony and the testimony of John, BUT he has a testimony much greater than that of humans, he has the testimony of the works, the signs he performs. We say that actions speak louder than words. So, the actions of Jesus of healing, curing, raising from the dead, feeding, teaching, spreading Good News, all show that he is sent by the Father and doing the reparative work of God in healing the world. This is what Leo did in going among the poor, raising funds, building housing, organizing workers, opening a credit union, teaching, engaging the wealthy to act justly and help their workers, etc. These are the true acts of reparation.

As we enter Eucharist now, let us thank God for the example of Moses, and of Jesus and of Leo, and ask for God's help to make reparation as they did.