



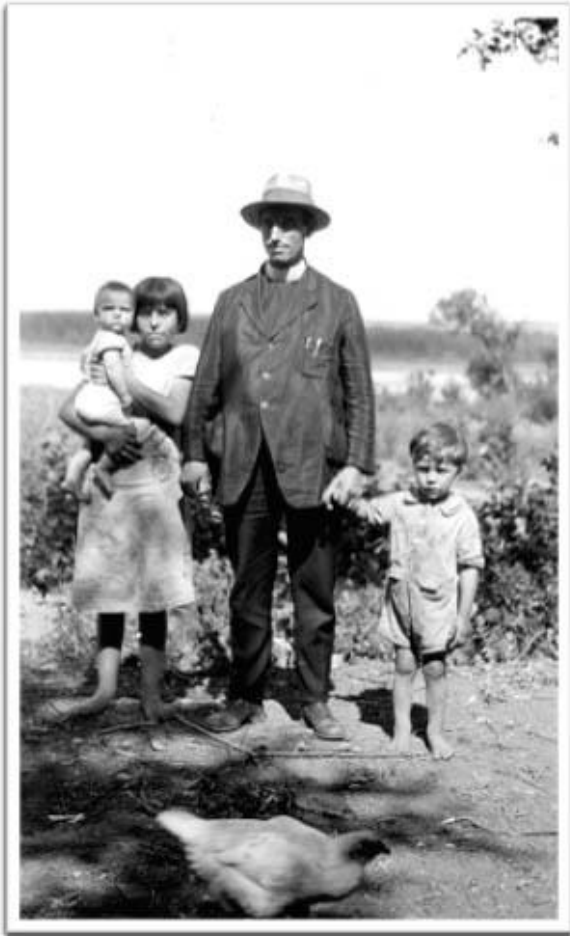
# Dehonians USA

PRIESTS OF THE SACRED HEART

April 25, 2024

Dear Brothers,

I left Vietnam when I was 14 years old, and it took me 17 years to finally return to the country for the first time. Before the trip, I had dreams about returning home and being happy in familiar environments, e.g., being in a childhood classroom with all



of my classmates, going to church (which I dreaded as a child, especially at 4:30 am), playing games with friends on the way to or from church, and seeing familiar faces. Surprisingly, after this first trip back to Vietnam, I never had similar dreams again.

I can't fathom the challenges and sacrifices that early missionaries in the congregation and the Church endured when serving overseas. Their decision to leave their home country, fully aware that they may never return or see their loved ones again due to slow and arduous modes of transportation, was nothing short of radical. Even if they were to return home, it would be after years of being away. In those years, they missed countless precious family moments: births, baptisms, weddings, and deaths. Some even struggled to readjust when returning home for vacation or rest, as the world they knew had changed. They, too, had changed. They became people caught between two worlds.

*Fr. Mathias Fohrman, first SCJ to minister in the US*

For many missionaries, past and present, the land they are sent to would become their new home for the rest of their lives. It requires them to adapt to new cultures and languages and work with people of another culture with different worldviews. The

challenges they face and the mental exhaustion of navigating life in a new cultural and ecclesial context can be overwhelming. Adaptation can be complex. It's no wonder that missionaries at times, if not often, experience confusion, disorientation, and loneliness.

Over the past decade, the US Province has welcomed Dehonian missionaries from various parts of the congregation. As we continue to invite our brothers to minister in our province, we need to support and give them the necessary time to prepare well. In an August 27, 2020, article in the *National Catholic Reporter*, Bishop Shawn McKnight of Jefferson City, Missouri, reminds receiving communities of their obligation to international priests and religious. He states, “That we receive them well, appreciate them for who they are, where they come from, and their faith motive for coming. That we help them enter into our culture, not expecting them to become Americans, but to integrate, and to support them.”<sup>1</sup>



*Powwow on the Plains in 1924*

*Left to Right: Matthias Fohrman, Charles Prantaver, Henry Hogenbach, Charles Keilman, John Emonts*

As a province, we have taken upon ourselves the crucial task of welcoming, preparing, and supporting our international confreres for ministry in the province. We ensure that they have the necessary preparation time to succeed and integrate. As we journey with our international Dehonians, we are called to be acutely aware of the challenges they face, including being in a foreign context, feeling like an outsider, overcoming language barriers, and navigating a clash of worldviews.

I extend my gratitude to you, as well as our collaborators, for continually working toward creating a welcoming spirit toward our international brothers.

Fraternally,

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ncronline.org/news/filling-vital-us-ministry-roles-foreign-born-priests-need-deliberate-support-thrive>