



Dehonians USA

PRIESTS OF THE SACRED HEART

May 20, 2024

Dear Brothers,

In religious life, we are familiar with terms such as “associate,” “affiliate,” and “family,” to name a few, that are connected to lay associations. The purpose of lay associations is for a religious community to embrace and support the lay faithful who wish to formally associate themselves with the religious community to enrich their spiritual life and be deeply involved in the ministry of the Church, e.g., evangelization and works of charity. Third orders and religious affiliates that are familiar to us include the Secular Franciscan Order, Maryknoll Lay Missioners, Lay Dominicans, and Lay Carmelites. Depending on each religious community, associates can be involved in community life in various ways, from being prayer partners to holding leadership positions in a community’s ministries.

It has been said that our Dehonian charism is God’s gift to the Congregation and the Church, and that it needs to be celebrated and shared not only among members of the Congregation but with other clergy, religious, and the laity. In founding the

Congregation, Fr. Dehon

was aware of the importance of the involvement of the clergy, religious, and the laity working together in furthering the Reign of the Sacred Heart. The same year that he founded the

Congregation, he also

founded the “Reparatory Association of the Sacred

Heart,” which was open to all. This association later became known as the “Association of the Sacred Heart in Souls and in Society,” with a double mission of living the spirit of love, oblation, and reparation and building the Kingdom of God in souls and in society. According to Bishop Virginio Bressanelli, the Association



Dehonian Associates in Mississippi

grew significantly, with 20,000 members in 1912. The primary driving force of this success was the Holy Spirit, not Fr. Dehon nor us.¹

Bishop Bressanelli also notes that throughout the history of the Congregation, Dehonians have shared Fr. Dehon's charism and spirituality with clergy, religious, and the laity in various ways. For example, in 1929, Msgr. Franz Demont, SCJ, founded the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart in South Africa. In the Congo, Msgr. Camillo Verfaillie, SCJ, established the Congregation of the Holy Family (Jamaa Takatifu). In Brazil, the Fraternidade Mariana do Coração de Jesus (Marian Fraternity of the Heart of Jesus) was founded by an SCJ. In Italy, Fr. Albino Elegante, SCJ, founded the Missionary Company of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Different lay groups within the Congregation also emerged, drawing inspiration for life and commitment from Dehonian values.



Dehonian Family in the Philippines

In our province, we have the Dehonian Associates. As we look to the future, we are committed to continuing and expanding this program beyond Mississippi. What does it take to ensure the program's success? Is it intentionality? A program that satisfies people's spiritual hunger? I don't have the answers. But with Ms. Monica Misey stepping into her new role today as director of the Dehonian Associates for the US Province, I hope that she can help us share Fr. Dehon's charism beyond our religious community and advance the Reign of the Sacred Heart, certainly under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Fraternally,

¹ Virgilio Bressanelli, « The Dehonian Family and the Communion Charter – Meeting <http://www.dehonianadocs.org/dehoniana/DEH2003-08-EN>