

June 7, 2024

Dear Brothers,

As I traveled from Hales Corners to Houston for Paul Phong Hoang’s ordination, I saw a billboard along I-294 with the image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus accompanied by the words, “June is devoted to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.” In an increasingly secularized world, this was a rare sight and a significant reminder of the enduring significance of the Sacred Heart devotion.

The Sacred Heart is a window into the deeper self-emptying or kenosis love among the persons of the Trinity, as the heart of the incarnate Christ is the heart

of the Trinity. In his apostolic letter *Misericordiae Vultus*, Pope Francis writes, “With our eyes fixed on Jesus and his merciful gaze, we experience the love of the Most Holy Trinity.” Similarly, Hans Urs von Balthasar maintains that our understanding of God’s love in Christological terms is insufficient. The kenosis love of the Father is seen by his self-expropriation. The consubstantial Son is the only-begotten Son of the Father. The Son gives his very self to the Father by his

humble obedience to the Father’s will. The Son took on the flesh of humanity and embraced the cross to show the world the Father’s merciful love. The love of the Father and Son brings forth the Holy Spirit, whose mission is to teach and guide believers and to point them to the Father and the Son.

As believers, we are not mere spectators, but active participants in divine life and love, as expressed in Jesus’ prayer to the Father in John 17: “I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us” (17:21). We are not just invited but entrusted with



a role in God's redemptive mission. This is a profound invitation and a responsibility to follow Christ's example of self-emptying love. Balthasar argues that human beings cannot truly progress in love until they embrace a degree of self-surrender, which becomes a source of energy that further impels the progress of love.<sup>1</sup> The words of St. Francis of Assisi best summarize this point: It is in giving that we receive.

As sons of Fr. Leo John Dehon, we are not just called, but urgently summoned to embody God's kenosis love in a world marked by division along political, theological, and economic lines. In the face of our society's increasing secularization, our participation in God's redemptive mission takes on a greater urgency and intentionality. Through our acts of oblation and reparation, we pray that we and our collaborators can make a meaningful impact on those searching for God's love and those we are accompanying in ministry.

Happy Feast of the Sacred Heart.

Fraternally,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "V. Dehon". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "V" and a small "Dehon" following.

---

<sup>1</sup> Gill K. Goulding, *Pope Francis and Mercy: A Dynamic Theological Hermeneutic* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2023), 77.