



A Year with Venerable Father Leo John Dehon

The fourth in a series of monthly biographical sketches as we prepare to commemorate the centenary of his death on August 12, 2025

Fr. Leo John Dehon: The Longing for Religious Community At 33, Father Dehon found life smiling on him: his ministries were a success, he was esteemed by his bishop and he was welcome throughout the city. But the busyness of his ministry left little time for a regular practice of prayer. After some attempts to find a Congregation devoted to the Heart of Jesus, he spoke to his bishop. The bishop responded that he could start a Congregation if it began in the form of a high school. In July 1877, Father Dehon started St. John's high school on an act of faith and confidence. Both faculty and students alike had warm memories of Fr. Dehon as an "unforgettable educator" and he was so good to his students that they called him the "tres bon pere," "very good father" in French. The following June on the Feast of the Sacred Heart, he made his first vows in the new Congregation, and was soon followed by others. Fr. Dehon also founded an association



where men and women, clergy and laity could join together in order to integrate the spirituality of the Congregation into their daily lives. His congregation, modeled after the love of the Heart of Jesus, became the new means for Father Dehon to realize his dream of uniting himself to the love of God while sharing that love with others. The good works and deep spirituality of the order became widely known, and eventually missionaries were sent to many parts of the world. Today, there are over 2,200 Priests of the Sacred Heart in more than forty countries on five continents. In his life, Fr. Dehon lived by Jesus' words from Hebrews (10:7): "Behold I come to do your will, O God." This is translated in Latin as *Ecce Venio*, and it was a motto he lived by. It starts with understanding Jesus' offering to do God's will, and then invites us to give our offering united with Jesus to do God's will. *Ecce Venio* encourages us to have a spirit of availability to do God's will, just as Fr. Dehon did.

Quote: "In difficulties, let us turn to the Heart of Jesus, and let us strive at every moment to do the will of God, even in little things, so that we may be able to do it in greater matters and become the instruments of his will."

Reflection Question: Are we available to do God's will?

Learn more about the Priests of the Sacred Heart (Dehonians/SCJ) at: www.dehoniansusa.org

