

Homily: 2026 Jubilees

Theme: The Search and The Response

Readings: Micah 6:6-8; Colossians 3:12-17; Luke 24:13-32

Introduction

Today, we celebrate the jubilees of our brothers. I find myself being awed by the sheer scope of their collective commitment to the Church and the Congregation. Frank Presto and Charles Brown, *Golden Jubilees*; Rafael Querobin and Jean-Claude Mbassi, *Silver Jubilees*. We have 60 years of dedication from Joseph Dean, Anthony Kluckman, and Gregory Speck. The heavyweight division includes 70 years from John Czyzynski and 75 from Richard Johnston. If we add it all up, it totals 475 years of collective commitment.

Let's think about that for a moment. In our modern world that favors fast food and frequent upgrades, these men remained committed to their vows for nearly half a millennium. What a testament to their love for God and the Church! But I cannot stop pondering: how does one reach milestones such as 25, 50, 60, 70, or 75?

As Priests of the Sacred Heart—as Dehonians—this lifelong commitment ultimately comes down to two movements centered on the Heart of Jesus: the search and the response.

1. The Search

First, there is the search for God. One of my favorite Catholic songs is "There Is a Longing" by Anne Quigley. The refrain goes: "There is a longing in our hearts, O Lord, for you to reveal yourself to us. There is a longing in our hearts for love we only find in you, our God." That longing led our jubilarians decades ago to seek God in creation, the Sacraments, the community, ministry, and human connection.

But let's be real for a moment: the search isn't always easy or straightforward. When we read the writings of great mystics, such as St. John of the Cross, St. Therese of Lisieux, and St. Teresa of Calcutta, we find they experienced their "dark night of the soul" or spiritual desolation. We also see it in today's Gospel, where the disciples on the Road to Emmaus weren't joyfully strolling; they were downhearted, confused, and grieving.

In religious life, we have our own versions of the dark night of the soul and the Road to Emmaus. We all have days when we are deeply frustrated with God, the community, or even the provincial superior. Yet despite the scrapes and bumps along the way, the beauty of the search lies in realizing that the One who called us in the first place is incredibly faithful.

As Dehonians, we know that Christ's Heart doesn't close when we are frustrated or broken. It is precisely in our moments of frustration and brokenness that we see Christ's Heart open wider. Christ extends Christ's Heart to us. Jesus encounters us on our chaotic paths, breaks the bread, and rekindles our hearts with grace.

More often than not, He uses the community to do it. Yes, there might always be someone in the community who tests our patience, but God always rights the ship. There is always that confrere, or that unexpected person, who walks into our lives at just the right moment with a word of strength. God uses those small, grounded, human moments to remind us that we aren't lost. We are found.

2. The Response

That brings us to the second movement: the response. A divine call is rarely meant to be kept for ourselves. The call is almost always outward-oriented, focusing on the world and the community. The prophet Micah reminds us today that God asks us "to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God." What is asked of us is easier said than done. Have you ever tried to show tender compassion to someone who annoys you to no end? Or tried to "walk humbly" when you are 100% convinced that you are right and everyone else is wrong?

For a Dehonian, our response rests on two spiritual pillars: Oblation and Reparation. Oblation is offering ourselves to restore the reign of God. Reparation is the outward expression of that—healing the brokenness around us by pouring love into a wounded world. It's what St. Paul means when he tells us to clothe ourselves in compassion, humility, and patience.

To understand how this works, we can look at the geography of the Holy Land. Consider the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea. Both are fed by the same source: the Jordan River. But why is the Dead Sea completely lifeless, while the Sea of Galilee is teeming with fish and surrounded by greenery? The difference is simple: the Dead Sea has no outlets. Whatever it receives, it keeps. It hoards the water, and evaporation takes over,

leaving it stagnant and dead. The Sea of Galilee, on the other hand, takes in the water and lets it flow back out through its outlets. Whatever it receives, it shares. Because it allows the water to flow, it stays vibrant, healthy, and full of life. And wherever it goes, it gives life.

Conclusion

Our founder, Father Leo John Dehon, wanted us to live our entire vocation in that same flow of grace. He pointed us to two great Dehonian spiritual pillars: *Ecce Venio* ("Behold, I come to do your will") and *Ecce Ancilla* ("Behold, the handmaid of the Lord"). *Ecce Venio* is our Dehonian expression of absolute availability—our willingness to be an instrument of God. *Ecce Ancilla* is our deep, trusting acceptance of whatever God does in our lives.

Like the Sea of Galilee, we cannot hoard God's grace or keep our vows tucked away for ourselves. We have to let Christ's love flow *through* us to a world that, quite frankly, sorely needs it right now.

To our jubilarians: thank you. Thank you for your combined 475 years of searching, and for the daily, quiet "yes" that brought you to this day.

May we all, inspired by your commitment, continue this divine dance together—with much kindness, a commitment to walk humbly, and a shared, burning passion for the Heart of Christ.