



SUPERIORE GENERALE
CONGREGAZIONE DEI
SACERDOTI DEL SACRO CUORE DI GESÙ
Dehoniani

Rome, 20 February, 2009

Prot. N. 0048/2009

Subject: 14 March, 2009, Birthday of Father Dehon

TO: SCJ Confreres
Members of the Dehonian Family

My dear brothers and sisters,

Greetings to you SCJ's on the anniversary of Fr. Dehon's birthday and to all you members of the Dehonian Family. This is a day on which to refresh sentiments of communion and collaboration. We gratefully recall Fr. Dehon's faith experience because it is the origin of our own shared vocation, our commitment, and our self oblation in service to the kingdom. His experience helps us make the Heart of Christ known and makes us open to the presence of the Spirit who enables us to be Dehonians in our present day by extending an invitation to men and women to walk the road with us.

For some time now, this day has been a day of prayer for Dehonian vocations. The congregation and the various forms taken by the Dehonian family experience a common vocation relating to a shared conviction that inspires their lives and works. There are a number of religious communities, schools, and associations related to Fr. Dehon. They tell us that the mission they are dedicated to is inspired by his teaching, his responsiveness, his commitment to the coming of the Kingdom of God that characterized his entire life. We see these institutes involved in sharing our life with so many different people and we are moved to live our own vocation as Christians and consecrated persons in gratitude for its gift. Let us give each other support by our example, friendship and prayer. The same Spirit that raised up Fr. Dehon will encourage many to follow in his footsteps.

As we participate in the charism of the Founder, we have the responsibility for being true witnesses of the precious heritage we have by fulfilling our mission. From this perspective, we need to pay attention to young people and their dreams because they are the future of the church and the world. We need to be engaged with young people so that they come to know Christ, Teacher and Shepherd, and are able to plan for the future in keeping with the ideals of his Heart. Vocations ministry is a sign of our own courage when we propose consecrated life to a world which tends to exclude God and religion from its outlook.

To make an explicit invitation to consecrated life takes courage; even more so when it manifests the value of profound, meaningful, life experience that should provide reasons for hope every single day. Let us unceasingly ask *the lord of the harvest to send laborers for the harvest* (Mt. 9:38), people who are fervent companions of Christ and are moved by their love for the Lord to go out without fear to the crossroads and byways to invite all to be seated at the table of fraternity and life that God himself has prepared.

On the day we recall Fr. Dehon's birthday we are united in prayer for the Twenty-second General Chapter which will be celebrated from May 17 to June 12; this also helps us be more aware of our apostolic identity. Fr. Dehon taught us: *we want to make union with Christ in His love for the Father and for people the principle and center of our life*" and " *to discover more and more the person of Christ and the mystery of His Heart* (Cst. 17). The theme of the Chapter gives a clear indication of the cornerstone of every Christian vocation and of our particular Dehonian vocation: ***For the love of Christ impels us. As ardent lovers of Christ uniting us in brotherhood, we proclaim the gospel.***

Christ whom we ardently love is the one who unites us in brotherhood, he is the source, the rationale, the energy for our being together. Christ is our Gospel, the good news of sharing with brothers and sisters who are in contact with throughout the many countries to which membership in the Dehonian family has led us.

May our prayerful trust on this day intensify over the coming months so that the Twenty-second General Chapter becomes an important moment for the growth of the congregation and a joyful Spirit-led event. Our personal prayer and trusting reflection will help us think through our actions and our apostolic commitments of service to the Kingdom. This will be an occasion of grace. May the Lord find us attentive and docile to his Word and ever ready to respond to the vocation to which we are called and make it fruitful. The following of Christ should be the center of our lives and should be the seal of our very being and our community and apostolic activity.

May Fr. Dehon, in the communion of saints, accompany and intercede for us.

Fr. José Ornelas Carvalho, scj
Superior General
and Council