



CURIA GENERALE

**CONGREGAZIONE DEI SACERDOTI
DEL SACRO CUORE DI GESÙ**

Rome, December 19th, 2010

Prot. N. 0275/2010

Message for Christmas 2010

The Word Became Flesh

Dear Brothers and Friends of the Dehonian Family:

We desire to communicate with you at this Christmas and at the same time recall those facts and events that, throughout this year, helped us experience in our daily lives the Word who became flesh.

True Words

In our letter sent on the Feast of the Sacred Heart we referred back to that most generous gift from Fr. Dehon: ***I leave you that most precious of gifts, the Heart of Jesus*** (Cf. *Spiritual Testament*). This reference was more than simple pious attention-getting; it was a golden nugget from his personal experience that led him to found the Congregation. To speak of the heart does not mean an aspect or part of the person but its entirety, its essential totality, its very inner self as opposed to that which appears on the outside, the superficial. Someone's heart is his or her deepest secret which is known only to the degree that the person chooses to reveal by communicating with another.

Fr. Dehon's bequest was designed to share with us his experience of God's love with Jesus as witness. Jesus himself is our gift. The letter sent you on March 14, birthday of Fr. Dehon, and written in a kind of autobiographical style gave us an opportunity of approaching the person of the Founder once more and to learn what motivated and sustained him throughout his life, his faith experience.

Incarnate in Jesus Christ

By speaking of the Sacred Heart, Fr. Dehon wished to invite us to focus our eyes on the ***humanity of Jesus*** as the Word made flesh who had come to dwell among us (John 1:14). In his

actions, one can see deeply into God's solicitude for mankind. Jesus reveals his closeness to every person no matter what race, culture, or social status. It is from this humanity that Jesus becomes Emmanuel (God with us) and at the same time is the revelation of God's love, a model one can imitate, and the path every man and woman in this world can follow.

Renewed in our Six Year Plan

Our Planning Letter, set forth at the outset of our six year term is intended to serve as a tool for coordinating our activities and was sent to all our various communities and presented during the visits that the members of the general administration made throughout the congregation, especially in Asia and in some European countries. As its unifying principle of inspiration, it focuses on Christ and our experience and witness of him in our community and apostolic life. Among the several initiatives found in it for consideration, three underlying elements are of major importance and ought to be developed that our congregation may grow: spirituality, formation and education, and internationality. These are not three separate activities or fields for apostolic activity, but rather hubs or focal points we must have and develop in every single planning initiative and undertaking.

Met With Every Day of Our Lives

The Word made Flesh casts his light on the path we trod by tiny steps and the apt responses we make to the various challenges, problems and situations we encounter along the way, even as an institution. At the meeting of the major superiors held this past October, we ran up against several, for example, the problem of aging in several entities, the support (including financial support) for formation in our newer entities, the role of the superior in animating and directing the local community, and the thorny issue of sexual abuse. These are open topics that require attentive examination, confrontation, and supervision so that our witness can be effective.

Become "Good News" for Those in Need

What we are called to contemplate at Christmas is that Jesus is not only the best of human beings but the ***new man in the fullness of the Spirit***, Son of God. He is not just the perfect outcome of a process of making a perfect human being, but an entirely and radically new intervention on God's part, who creates a new humanity by sending out his Spirit. This is good news for women and men walking in history with respect to the deepest investigations they make about life, love, relationships, and duty. The "Good News" links together in the most lasting relationship: matter and spirit, history and transcendence.

Enriched by Joy in What Takes Place

We feel we are on the road and always looking for the "hidden" God, for the Jesus of Nazareth whom we have met and always meet anew. This is a journey that many in the congregation are making and for this reason we give thanks. We are pleased for those who made their first profession this year and for those who were ordained. And for all those who celebrated a profession or ordination jubilee, we give thanks to the Lord. We thank you for your years of service all these many years on behalf of those who needed your presence. Along with such occasions for joy, we recall the episcopal nomination of another SCJ, our Brazilian brother Vilsom Basso. His readiness to be pastor of a local church is another concrete way of fulfilling God's will. We

companion him with our prayers, and we pray as well for those others who have been called by the church to serve a part of it directly through the episcopal ministry.

With hope we observe new foundations just taking their first steps: Paraguay and Chad. In trust we companion the developments of our presence in Vietnam. All this requires attention to formation and the capacity to make investment in preparing persons who are open and able to walk with the congregation in new milieus. A sign for great hope is the energy given to reflection and expansion that is taking place on various continents: the congress on *Missio Cordis* in Latin America, preparations for continental conferences, and the course for formation directors taking place in Rome.

Shown True by Users

Family recollections extend to those who have returned to our Father's house, young and old alike. Many entities have experience of this. Family members, friends, religious confreres have all left us; each of us has someone to think about. We wish to remember Fr. Augustin Ihwa Litindi, a young priest from the Congo province who died here at Rome. He is the first African buried in the tomb that contains the remains of several of our superiors general. This kind of event is another example of internationality and mission effort.

Sustained by Solidarity

Finally, we wish to make our own the attention God gives to the cries, the groans, the silent grief of persons and peoples who are poor, wounded, oppressed, and disadvantaged. He takes to heart their condition; he is present as the God of liberation and life. He constantly encourages, sustains, and companions the demands of dignity, justice, and equality.

This disposition of a God made visible and tangible in Jesus unceasingly invites us to act in like manner. During the course of this year, the efforts we sought to make in solidarity for those people afflicted by natural disasters in Haiti, Chile, Madeira, and Indonesia, have been beautiful and authentic. Lesser involvements were no less important.

Made Obvious by our Prayer

Now, again, we recall the God who became a baby and was born for us all. Come again, Christ Jesus! Come to those places where humanity has been silenced and become desolate, where the weakest are excluded and put to death, where social injustice is found on a grand scale. Come among us, into our communities, into the Dehonian family. Come to seek us out and console us; make level our roadway and fill it with hope. Enlighten our entities and those continental gatherings that will take place next year so that our responses be ever closer to what you will. In your dealings with us, allow us brothers and sisters to experience that You are God with us, the *Word* made flesh.

We wish each one of you a Blessed Christmas and a New Year 2011 filled with blessings.

Fr. José Ornelas Carvalho, scj
General Superior
and his Council