

# Commemoration of the Deceased Members of the Province

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Homily – June 20, 2018

Some of you might remember that I was asked to help prepare the liturgies for the 23<sup>rd</sup> General Chapter. The liturgy that we spent the most time preparing and the one that moved me the most was the liturgy commemorating the members of the congregation who had died during the previous six years.

There were 232 SCJs who had died between Chapters. There were 12 members of the US province and there were another two dozen or so SCJs who I knew to some degree because they were from Canada or because I met them over the years.

But there were almost 200 names that were little more than names on a list that I had gotten from the internet. Something was beginning to happen within me, however, as I prepared a slide for each one that included his name, his photo, his province, the date and place of death and his age. These were more than names and faces. These were my brothers.

During the liturgy itself, I became more aware that each name and face stirred up memories for at least one individual in the assembly hall. I realized that each one, in their own way, made a significant difference in the life of the congregation.

So in preparing the liturgies for this week, I decided that it was important to have a commemoration of those members who had died since the 15<sup>th</sup> Provincial Chapter. I don't usually pick myself to preside at liturgy, but Ed suggested that I preside at this one.

I asked David Schimmel who some help in locating quotes from Fr. Dehon concerning our deceased members and our need to remember them. He suggested two:

In 1912, when the congregation was only 34 years old, Father Dehon wrote to the congregation:

"Death in the Sacred Heart is a happy one. All our dead have offered their lives for the reign of the Sacred Heart, for reparation, for the Society, [and] for the sanctification of consecrated souls, so dear to Our Lord....

He continued:

"We have already sent into God's presence a vanguard of fifty religious.

It is our best endowment.

Many of these edifying lives and deaths deserve being recorded so that we can remember them..." [Circular Letter 39]

Dehon returned to the theme of remembering those who have died when he wrote 5 years later:

"The Sacred Heart has already given us a beautiful group of saintly souls who are the foundation of the Congregation. We should have collected more testimonials of their saintly lives. They are praying for us on high." [Daily Notes XLI:104 (1917)]

Our Constitutions remind us that

The fellowship which unites us finds its full realization in eternity. And so we stay united with our deceased brothers through prayer and in hope.

And so, as we celebrate this eucharist, we remember in a special way the 14 SCJs who have died since the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> Provincial Chapter but we also remember all 139 deceased members of our province.

Some of them may have been close friends, or classmates, or mentors.

Some may have acted as role models or played a significant role in your life.

Perhaps you had harsh words or a difficult experience with one or the other.

And perhaps some, you didn't know at all.

We remember each of them because they are our brothers – brothers who shared more than just the 3 letters after our names. We are WHO we are today because of the lives of those who have gone before us. They are the foundation for our future and, as Dehon wrote, they are our best endowment.

Each of them – and each of us – are united in faith, united in a common purpose.

Together, as sons of Leo Dehon, we desire to help others experience the same love and mercy of the Sacred Heart that we ourselves have experienced.

We want to bring that love and mercy to people who are broken and fragile; people who are longing to experience justice and to have their human dignity restored; people who need to be loved and nourished.

In today's Gospel, Jesus reminds us that whoever eats his body and drinks his blood will remain in him and he in them. And that whoever eats his flesh and drinks his blood will have eternal life.

And Paul, after posing the question *What will separate us from the love of Christ?* concludes that nothing – not even death itself – can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus the Lord.

So we remember and we pray for those who have gone before us in faith, confident, as the psalmist sings,

I believe I shall see, the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.  
Wait for the Lord. Have courage and wait.

# Commemoration of the Deceased

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## After homily

*Sing: Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom.*

We remember that in the year following the 15<sup>th</sup> Provincial Chapter

- Fr. Larry Rucker Rucker was called home to the Father on July 13, 2014.
- Fr. Frank Clancy was called home to the Father on May 17, 2015.

*Sing: Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom.*

We remember that in the second year following the 15<sup>th</sup> Provincial Chapter

- Fr. Don Barnd was called home to the Father on October 24, 2015.
- Fr. PJ McGuire was called home to the Father on February 22, 2016.
- Fr. Ray Vega was called home to the Father on March 6, 2016.

*Sing: Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom.*

We remember that in the third year following the 15<sup>th</sup> Provincial Chapter

- Fr. Pete Mastrobuono was called home to the Father on July 27, 2016.
- Fr. Mike Burke was called home to the Father on February 9, 2017.
- Bro. Gabe Kersting was called home to the Father on April 6, 2017.
- Fr. Vince McDonald was called home to the Father on June 19, 2017.

*Sing: Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom.*

We remember that during the last year

- Fr. Charlie Yost was called home to the Father on July 8, 2017.
- Bro. Ben Humpfer was called home to the Father on December 31, 2017.
- Fr. Steve Wiese was called home to the Father on January 13, 2018.
- Fr. Lenny Elder was called home to the Father on March 6, 2018.
- Fr. Joe Doscher was called home to the Father on May 14, 2018.

*Sing: Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom.*

Eternal rest grant unto them O Lord  
and let perpetual light shine upon them.  
May their souls, and the souls of all the faithful depart  
rest in peace. Amen.