

Ordination as a Dehonian priest

“To all of those who are in formation, to those who are trying to discern God’s call, and to those who are thinking about a vocation I say: ‘Do not be afraid to say Yes to God!’ My decision to do so has been one of the best choices I have made in my life.”

- Fr. Juan Carlos Castañeda Rojas, SCJ

On February 16, 2019, Juan Carlos Castañeda Rojas, SCJ, was ordained to the priesthood in his hometown of Rionegro, Colombia, at the Cathedral of Saint Nicolas el Magno. Bishop Fidel Leon Cadavid Marín of Rionegro, was the ordaining bishop.

Thousands of miles from the place he now calls home – the US Province – the ordination brought Fr. Juancho full circle back to where his vocation first took root.

“It meant a lot to me to have my ordination in Colombia because it was there where my vocation began, my journey in answering God’s call,” said Fr. Juancho. “It was there where I said to my family and friends that I wanted to become a priest and dedicate my life to God.”



ABOVE - Fr. Juancho speaks at his First Mass; RIGHT - Fr. Duy places his hands on Fr. Juancho's head



The long distance call

When asked to reflect on his vocation Fr. Juancho, 36, often jokes about his “call” to religious life and the priest-



Fr. Juancho with SCJs who traveled from the United States to be with him at his ordination

hood being a long-distance one. Accepting that call “led me to one of the most important decisions I have made, one that would change my life forever.”

On January 11, 2006, he entered the English as a Second Language program at Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology. “There, I learned not just the English language

but also the culture and the Dehonian charism that taught me how to be a prophet of love and a servant of reconciliation,” said Fr. Juancho. “That is how my identity as a Dehonian began and it continued to grow during all my years in formation. There is nothing that brings me more joy than knowing that I am walking together with others following God’s call to become a Dehonian.”

Fr. Juancho talked about learning two new languages: English, but also “the Dehonian language of love and reparation. After taking my first vows, I knew that I was ready to entirely give my life to God and to serve the people of God, especially those who need us the most.

“Taking my perpetual vows was a confirmation of this burning desire. And that burning desire grew even larger after I was ordained a deacon and was able to begin my ministry experience at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Houston, Texas.

“It has been a transforming experience that has made my desire to become a priest even stronger. This too has helped me grow in my vocation so that I am truly ready to say ‘yes’ to God again as I receive the Holy Order of priesthood.”

Fr. Juancho professed his first vows with the Priests of the Sacred

Heart (Dehonians) in 2013 and was ordained to the diaconate in June, 2018. He earned his M.Div. from Catholic Theological Union in Chicago.

Don’t be afraid to say “YES!”

Fr. Juancho said that “many people from so many parts of the world have shown their love and support to me during my journey to become a priest. When I left home to follow my vocation, I was afraid of leaving behind my family and I felt alone. But God always puts amazing people in my path, and they have always helped me with their support.

“For that reason, to all of those who are in formation, to those who are trying to discern God’s call, and to those who are thinking about a vocation I say: ‘Do not be afraid to say Yes to God!’ My decision to do so has been one of the best choices I have made in my life.

“I am not going to say that the road is an easy one, because it is not. But even when the roads we walk are difficult the most important thing is to enjoy the journey. And you will not be alone on that life journey be-

Photo albums



There are three online photo albums from Fr. Juancho’s ordination weekend: the ordination itself, his First Mass at his home parish of San Juan Bosco, and his first baptism as a priest. View them at:

www.scjusa.smugmug.com



Fr. Juancho with his parents after his First Mass

cause you will make it with many other people who are also responding to God's call and to their own love of God.

Get out of the sacristy

Reflecting on the Fr. Dehon, Fr. Juancho said that "our founder, Fr. Leo John Dehon, instructed us to get out of the sacristy. To be honest, it took me some time to truly understand what He meant. Today I can say that getting out of the sacristy represents getting out of our personal comfort zones, getting out of ourselves by setting aside our own misconceptions and ideas. The sacristy is not just a physical space. It also is present in everything that is done out of our hearts because all that we do and all that we are comes from the heart of Jesus.

"Getting out of the sacristy and going wherever God may lead us is our call, a call that I answered by saying yes to God. Do not be afraid to say yes to God because the blessings that flow from this decision are countless. In the words of St. Therese of Lisieux: 'Holiness consists simply in doing God's will and being just what God wants us to be.'"

Gratitude

Over and over Fr. Juancho uses the word "gratitude" when he speaks.

"I want to express my deepest gratitude to everyone who has been part of this incredible journey, the congregation of the Priests of the Sacred Heart, my family, formators, classmates, and all the people who in many ways have been present in my life during my journey to the priesthood," he said.

"I am very excited to go back to my ministry at Our Lady of Guadalupe in Houston and to serve people in new ways as a priest," he continued. "I am excited to be a prophet of love and a prophet of reconciliation in that great community."



Fr. Bill Pitcavage celebrating Mass at Sacred Heart Monastery.

Missionary, pastor, friend: remembering Fr. Bill Pitcavage, SCJ

Fr. Bill Pitcavage, SCJ, died at home of natural causes on March 22; he was 76. He made his first profession in 1969, and was ordained to the priesthood in 1976. He would have celebrated his 50th anniversary of vows this year.

Born in Port Washington, NY, he enlisted in the US Navy soon after high school. A hospital corpsman for six years, Fr. Bill spent the first half of his enlistment on an aircraft carrier based in Rhode Island and the second half in Washington, DC.

It was during his years in the Navy that he began to discern a call to religious life. In fact, he was prepared to join another congregation but after learning that they had lost all of his paperwork shortly before he was to enter, he decided to look a little further. His search led him to the SCJs' seminary.

"I felt that there was a lot of care and concern about my vocation, so I entered," he said. "I always continued to feel the same care and interest."

Fr. Bill earned a bachelor's in psychology from Loyola University in

Chicago and his M.Div., from Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology in Hales Corners, WI.

Along with his call to religious life and the priesthood came a desire to be a missionary. After a six-month internship at St. James Parish in Milwaukee, and a year-and-a-half at St. Joseph's Indian School in Chamberlain, SD, Fr. Bill received his first mission assignment: a year-long stint at the Catholic Technical School of Leribe in Lesotho.



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At the end of the assignment he returned to the United States to serve in vocations and as a hospital chaplain.

Fr. Bill went back to Africa in 1982 and was assigned to a parish in Middleburg, South Africa. Other assignments included St. Patrick's in Port Elizabeth. He remained as a missionary in South Africa for 18 years, eventually serving as superior of what was then the Region of De Aar, from 1986-1995. In South Africa he was also chairman of the diocesan Priests Council and national director of RENEW.

Fr. Bill left South Africa in 2000. He then served at St. Joseph's Indian School and St. James parish in Chamberlain, SD.

Since 2009 he had been in Hales Corners, WI, most recently as a member of the Dehon House Community, attached to the Sacred Heart Community at SHML.

From 2010-2013 he was a member of the Provincial Council.

Condolences come in from around the world

Condolences quickly poured in after Fr. Bill's death was announced. One of the first to respond was Bishop Zolile Mpambani, SCJ, bishop of Kokstad, South Africa. He and Fr. Bill had worked together for many years.

"What a sad occasion!" wrote the bishop. "I want to pass along my sincerest condolences to all the confreres in the US Province. Fr. Bill's passing will be sorely felt by many here in South Africa, from De Aar to Aliwal as well as Port Elizabeth where he did lots of work with the RENEW program. To me he was a confrere and a personal friend. I have already celebrated Mass for him this morning."

Photos, homily

Pics from the Funeral for Fr. Bill are at www.scjusa.smugmug.com. A link to Dn. David Nagel's homily at the Mass is in the feature about Fr. Bill on the province website:

www.dehoniansusa.org



Fr. Vien Nguyen in the classroom at Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology

Social media not just for selfies

It started with fish sauce and a desire to help people develop a curiosity about the Bible.

For years, Fr. Vien Nguyen, SCJ, had a Facebook account. As did many, he signed up for the social media platform when it first entered the cultural landscape.

"I was curious about it, but rarely looked at it," he said. "I never bothered to write a post."

That changed about a year ago.

Fr. Vien was coming to the end of his doctoral studies in Sacred Theology and began to think more seriously about an idea that been rolling around in his head for a while: in the midst of selfies, cat videos and political messages, could there be welcome space on social media for reflection on the Bible and the Church?

Fr. Leo John Dehon, founder of the Priests of the Sacred Heart, told his religious to "get out of the sacristies and go to the people."

With a population of 2.32 billion, Facebook has a lot of people; it seemed like a good place to live Fr. Dehon's directive. Which brings us

back to fish sauce, a primary cooking ingredient in Fr. Vien's homeland of Vietnam. Starting with something familiar, he wrote about the use of fish sauce in Roman times, trying to make connections between the time of Jesus with people today. Fish sauce was popular then as it is now.

"It was just a quick outreach, a way to help people become more familiar with the Bible," said Fr. Vien.

The response was very positive; people asked if they could share the post. He wrote more, making the posts public so that anyone could view them. Topics have included women in the Bible, scripture quotes, the Mass, and marriage. The last two, especially explanations about the Mass, have gotten the strongest response.

He writes the posts in both English and Vietnamese, but his focus is on the latter. "There are so many excellent biblical resources in English but not many in Vietnamese," he said. "I thought that this is a need that I could address."

And this is part of the fun for Fr.

Vien. He left Vietnam when he was 14, and after time in a Philippine refugee camp, his focus turned toward embracing his newly adopted home: the United States. This meant focusing on English and learning American culture. His language skills in his mother tongue, said Fr. Vien, are still those of a teen.

"But that is a benefit," he added. It allows him to write in an approachable style which many can easily understand, especially youth and young adults. "If I wrote in English and just translated the text into Vietnamese the language would be much different," he said.

With the focus on Vietnamese, he can incorporate humor "and even a bit of sarcasm," he said. "It is fun, but it doesn't necessarily translate well." The English reflection often ends up being a simple summary of the Vietnamese text without the humorous nuances.

But this too is helpful for his intended audience. It is a way for young Vietnamese Catholics, including many seminarians, religious sisters, and others pursuing advanced studies, to work on their English language skills without needing to make their way through a web of academic jargon.

The response to Fr. Vien's daily posts has been tremendous. However, it is not the number of "likes" that he finds to be significant. "It is the comments people have about each day's reflection, their interaction with each other." Fr. Vien likes to think that the posts get people to think about Scripture in a casual format and then challenge them to dig deeper.

He writes the posts every day and after about seven months he took a two-week break to reassess what he was doing. It was then that he realized that the reflections were having a significant impact. "People I met at functions in Houston and Chicago told me that they appreciated the posts, that they were understandable and interesting, especially information about the Mass itself, why we do what we do during the Mass," he said. Others contacted him as well,

asking him to continue. He returned to Facebook with the daily postings, often with a piece of art, and hasn't stopped since.

"It has been a way for me to develop the habit of writing regularly," he said. Fr. Vien has been working to develop his Vietnamese language skills for more substantial efforts, including a commentary – in Vietnamese – on the Gospel of Luke. Already, he has written 150 pages of what he envisions to be a 500-plus page book.

He hopes to later work with biblical scholars to fine-tune the text before seeking to publish the commentary. Again, he notes that there are many excellent texts in English, but not in Vietnamese. Writing in Vietnamese, instead of simply translating an English text, allows Fr. Vien to incorporate Vietnamese culture into the commentary, literally inculturating the text.

When asked if he has long had a love of reading and writing Fr. Vien laughs and quickly answers "No!" Except for an occasional John Grisham novel, for most of his life Fr. Vien only sporadically read for pleasure, much less wrote. But that changed when he began his doctoral studies. "It made me disciplined when it came to regular reading and writing, and spending time in the library. Eventually, I realized that I actually liked it!"

Now, he would like to better know Vietnamese culture through its literature, both classics and contemporary writing. "I want to know what is popular with young people, but I also want to learn about the ancient writings," he said.

Fr. Vien's Facebook posts can be found on his personal page (Vien Nguyen, SCJ). All are public so that anyone with a Facebook account can view them.

When he isn't writing, Fr. Vien, 45, is an assistant professor of Scripture Studies at Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology. His doctorate in Sacred Scripture is from Santa Clara University in California.



Next to the altar, the statue of the Sacred Heart stood, recovered from the rubble. A wounded statue, its head and right hand are broken. The left hand that indicates the pierced Heart has taken on greater prominence, reminding us that it is thanks to that wound that we are saved.

Archbishop Claudio Dalla Zuanna, SCJ

From tragedy, a renewed Christian community is born

On the night of March 14, a violent cyclone ravaged Mozambique. One of the most gravely impacted areas was the archdiocese of Beira, where Archbishop Claudio Dalla Zuanna, SCJ, is present. The archbishop previously served as vicar general of the Priests of the Sacred Heart.

"We have 25 parishes in this area, practically all of them were seriously damaged. Three churches were literally razed to the ground. The houses of



Archbishop Claudio

the priests who work in these parishes were damaged; also the seminary, the diocesan radio station and many other diocesan structures were damaged. Even my house, where the curia offices are also located, is completely uncovered. We have taken refuge on the ground floor, but water comes down the stairs and is dripping from the ceiling in many parts..."

Two weeks after the storm, the archbishop wrote with an update. The following is from that letter.

"We celebrated a Memorial Mass for the victims; it is estimated that 600 died within the diocese, but we know of hundreds of bodies that have been found in areas where rivers flooded for thousands of square kilometers. During this memorial we asked ourselves what the voice of the Lord wants to tell us in this Lenten journey; for these people it has taken on a dimension similar to the crossing the desert, like the people of Israel.

"I presided over the celebration at the parish of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the largest religious building in the diocese. It had collapsed with the fury of the wind. Next to the altar, the statue of the Sacred Heart stood, recovered from the rubble. A wounded statue, its head and right hand are broken. The left hand that indicates the pierced Heart has taken on greater prominence, reminding us that it is thanks to that wound that we are saved.

"Even with the wounds that this cyclone has opened in our Church, society and lives, there can live opportunities. They are found in the reaction of the people, in the gestures of solidarity, in the participation in the Eucharist. We note that something new is already emerging: greater solidarity, greater attention to the poor, greater unity between celebration and life. Yes, from this tragedy a renewed Christian community can be born. Even through this wound, which Christ brings into his Body, into his People, we will be cured."



Fr. Gustave Lulendo signs paperwork during his installation ceremony as regional superior.

From ESL student to regional superior

What binds us is our common heritage as Dehonian religious, which has no particular face or color except to the extent that we are worthy spiritual sons of Fr. Leo John Dehon."

”

– Fr. Gustave Lulendo, SCJ

Earlier this year Fr. Gustave Lulendo, SCJ, was installed as regional superior of Canada. Originally from the Democratic Republic of Congo, he is a naturalized Canadian citizen. In the following Q&A Fr. Gustave, 45, reflects on his path to studies in North America and his growing role in the Canadian Region. His answers are paraphrased from the original French.

QUESTION: Your first visit to North America was as a student in the ESL program at SHSST. How did that come about?

FR. GUSTAVE: I have been fascinated by languages since I was a young child. French is the official language of DR Congo, but there are also four national languages. [Fr. Gustave speaks three of the four] As a student in Kisangani, I enrolled in an English language course at a local church, but without any objective other than to

expand my language abilities. I did my theological studies in Cameroon, a bilingual country [French and English] and was able to spend three months in an English program. In 2004, at the end of my theology studies, I asked to go to the ESL program at Sacred Heart in Hales Corners. I was granted permission and initially did a three-month summer session. I would later return to SHSST for continued ESL during my breaks from studies in Ottawa, Canada. In today's world, knowing English is especially important.

QUESTION: What led to your studies in Canada?

FR. GUSTAVE: In 2004, Fr. John van den Hengel spoke to the provincial superior of Congo during a major superiors meeting in Poland. Fr. John told him that the Canadian Region would welcome a Congolese confrere

for advanced studies in Canada. Fr. Wilson suggested that I go. After both the Canadian and Congolese councils agreed, I began a year-long process to obtain my student visa. My first request was rejected. I finally arrived on January 8, 2008, three days after the first class began at the University of St. Paul in Ottawa.

QUESTION: What was the focus of your studies?

FR. GUSTAVE: I earned two degrees from St. Paul University. Initially, I was working toward a degree in Moral Theology, which I obtained in 2010. My research project was on “responsible fatherhood.” Much of my work centered on the street children of Kisangani; the Priests of the Sacred Heart minister to these children through the St. Laurent and Bakhtia Centers.

After earning my master’s degree, I began doctoral studies, eventually doing my coursework and comprehensive exam through Dominican University College in Ottawa. I received permission to begin writing my thesis, which would focus on the limits and challenges of bioethics in the African context. For a variety of reasons, I did not see myself completing the work in a timely manner, so I returned to St. Paul to earn my ecclesiastical license, which would allow me to teach at the university level. In 2016, I completed that degree with a thesis titled: “Environmental Ecology and Human Ecology in interaction. A holistic reading of ‘Laudato Si’ by Pope Francis.”

QUESTION: You are now superior of Montréal, and represented the region as a delegate to the 2018 General Chapter. What have those appointments meant to you?

FR. GUSTAVE: My appointment to the Montréal community was a surprise

for the simple reason that I had never lived in this community. At the same time, it was a great mark of confidence on the part of the confreres in Montréal because without knowing me thoroughly, I was accepted as a member of the community in a leadership position. There has been a good sense of collaboration and community among us that is based in fraternity.

My election as a delegate to the General Chapter was another sign of the confreres’ confidence in me, to be their representative at a meeting of this magnitude.

QUESTION: And now, just over ten years after you first set foot in Canada, you have been named the region’s superior. Please share a bit about this.

FR. GUSTAVE: My appointment as Canada’s Regional Superior is a concrete sign of our Sint Unum. It is a special event at an individual level but also at the congregational level. For me, this clearly shows that internationality and fraternity are not mere slogans but realities that we are experiencing.

I hesitated to accept, but through my confreres I understood that it is by walking together that we can follow the model of service given to us by Christ. I think that this role of superior will help me to better know the confreres as well as their needs, their projects and their expectations for the future of our entity. Because of that, I remain confident in the future and I am very optimistic about where Providence will lead us.

This new role that I am called to exercise in the Canadian Region remains under the mark of service and not of power. I consider myself simply a confrere, first as a member of my community in Montréal and then a guide for the needs of the Canadian Region. My African origins do not have an impact in the acceptance or the exercise of this function, because, as I said before, I have always consid-

ered myself first as a Dehonian among Dehonians before thinking of my African origins.

I do not consider myself a missionary in Canada but instead, as a member of a large religious family, as I said, as a Dehonian among Dehonians. I do not represent Congolese culture in Canada, but live Dehonian values, as a Congolese and a Canadian, in a North American context.



Fr. Gustave

QUESTION: You recently became a Canadian citizen; was this because of your growing commitment to the Canadian Region?

FR. GUSTAVE: I have thought about becoming a Canadian citizen since my first moments in this country; I began to adopt it as mine. Having Canadian citizenship and a passport is the culmination or materialization of an experience that has already been begun and lived.

Canadian citizenship has nothing to do with my function as regional superior. The confreres placed their trust in me because of who I am. I cannot say it enough: what binds us is our common heritage as Dehonian religious, which has no particular face or color except to the extent that we are worthy spiritual sons of Fr. Leo John Dehon.

Read the full interview

The full interview with Fr. Gustave, in which he discusses his vocational call, can be found on the US Province website under the “NEWS-Feature stories” tab at the top of the page:

www.dehoniansusa.org

SCJ NEWS

Congrats Fr. Steve!

Fr. Stephen Huffstetter, SCJ, former provincial superior of the US Province, has been named vicar general of the Priests of the Sacred Heart.

Originally elected to the General Council in 2015; last year Fr. Steve, 59, was elected to a second term. Prior to his election as provincial superior in 2013, Fr. Steve was executive director of St. Joseph's Indian School in Chamberlain, SD. Originally from South Bend, Ind., Fr. Steve earned degrees from Loyola University and Catholic Theological Union in Chicago. He holds a D.Min. in cross cultural ministry.



Fr. Steve

Centro Studi Dehoniani on Twitter

The Centro Studi Dehoniani (Dehon Study Center in Rome) is now on Twitter with the following name: @dehonianscsd.

Through Twitter the center plans to offer followers quotes from Fr. Leo John Dehon as well as significant Dehonian calendar items and alerts about new content offerings from the CSD.

ESL becomes ECS

Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology's ESL Program (English as a Second Language) recently underwent a name change to more accurately reflect its wider mission. It is now the "ECS Program," which stands for "English and Cultural Studies." Students don't just learn English, they learn about North American culture and the Church in the United States in the context of a seminary setting. It also expresses the fact that many students are learning English not as just a *second* language, but perhaps as a third or fourth. More about the program, including a link to an FAQ document, is available from the NEWS-Features link at the top of the US Province website:

www.dehoniansusa.org



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Our ministries are diverse, as are our members. Yet our goal is the same: to work with a common heart in service to God's people, reflecting the love of Christ as experienced by our founder, Fr. Leo John Dehon

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