# **OSCJ News**

A newsletter of the U.S. Province of the Priests of the Sacred Heart (Dehonians)

Later Later

Fr. Greg Schill, Bishop Donald E. De Grood of Sioux Falls, and Fr. Thi Pham

### From Zoom to South Dakota, TWICE!

Zoom calls led to new assignments in South Dakota for two Mississippi Dehonian priests

s with many changes during the months of the pandemic, new assignments to South Dakota for two SCJ priests started with a Zoom call. With Fr. Greg Schill, it was a Zoom meeting with Fr. Ed Kilianski, SCJ, during the provincial visitation of the Mississippi community. It was then that he let Fr. Ed know about an assignment that he had become interested in only hours earlier. For Fr. Thi Pham, it was a Zoom call taken at the bottom of the Grand Canyon that led to a new assignment in a town that he had never

heard of until just a few months ago. Formerly members of the pastoral team in Mississippi, Frs. Thi and Greg are now both in South Dakota serving along the banks of the Missouri River, though in ministries approximately 150 miles apart.

## "I knew it was what I wanted to do. Providence?"

After 10 years in Mississippi serving in pastoral ministry, Fr. Greg Schill got to thinking that maybe it

was time to think of a new assignment. Thankfully, Fr. Ed Kilianski had the same idea.

"The night before Fr. Ed was scheduled to meet with me for the annual provincial visitation I was thinking about St. Joseph's Indian School and suddenly found myself up late that night researching, looking at St. Joseph's web page, its Facebook page, and other online information," said Fr. Greg.

"Early the next morning — with little sleep — it was time to meet with

Fr. Ed via Zoom," he continued. "I don't know why, but my gut told me that the position of chaplain at St. Joseph's was open. Before Fr. Ed even had the opportunity to ask me if I was interested in the position, or to let me know that he was considering transferring me to the

My time in Mississippi laid the groundwork for my priestly ministry

Fr. Greg Schill

school, I asked him about it.

"I will never forget his reaction. He was just about to ask me if I was interested in going to St. Joseph's. We both had the same idea, so it was an easy conversation. Of course, I told him that I was very willing to go. The idea had only come to me the night before, but I knew that it was what I wanted to do. Providence?"

Fr. Greg was ordained to the priesthood in 2011; just six weeks later he joined the Mississippi pastoral team that serves six parishes in the



One of Fr. Greg's favorite ministries at St. Joseph's is the Equine Therapy Program.

northwest corner of the state.

"My time in Mississippi laid the groundwork for my priestly ministry," said Fr. Greg. "Those ten years of parish ministry were very rewarding. I met and ministered to people of diverse backgrounds. I visited and administered the Eucharist to the homebound, presided at funerals. I was also involved in marriage preparation and weddings. I was very involved in the life of the parishes, in the many ministries that are a part of parishes."



Fr. Greg leads a prayer service at St. Joseph's Indian School.

Fr. Greg said that he greatly enjoyed the people he encountered through parish ministry, and it is the people that he misses in his new assignment. "I formed what will most likely be lifelong friendships," he said. "I miss the conversations over a cup of coffee, drinking the sweet tea that the South is known for, and tending to the community koi pond.

"I really enjoyed things like the parish festivals, even when it meant that I spent some time in the Dunk Tank. I enjoyed the Wednesday religious ed sessions, especially the 'open gym' time that the kids would take part in before class, playing sports and eating pizza."

However, Fr. Greg quickly fell in love with St. Joseph's Indian School after he arrived in July. He felt that it was a ministry and a place to which he was called.

"I have had a very warm welcome at St Joseph's," he said. "I have enjoyed meeting the students and going to the student homes for house blessings and dinners. I have had the opportunity to meet just

about every staff member. The most challenging thing for me is learning names, as I have never been gifted with learning names.

"As for my new position, my role as chaplain is to follow Fr. Dehon's call to his priests to 'get out of the sacristies' and go to the people, not wait for them to come to us," said Fr. Greg. "I make it a point to constantly visit the school classrooms as well as participate in activities such as in the student gym classes (I get a workout!). But it isn't just something that I 'should' do; I enjoy it.

"I enjoy walking around the campus and saying hello to staff. I have also gone to Eagle Butte to visit the Sacred Heart Center, and twice now to Sioux Falls to meet staff at the Mission Advocacy Center. And just today I visited with a few new employees from the center who were in Chamberlain, learning more about St. Joseph's. I've enjoyed going to St. Joseph's Thrift Store in town as well as the school's Donor Care Center.

During Advent he plans to give a reflection for the school community on Fr. Dehon's work; this will be the 150th anniversary of the founder's Christmas sermon at his first parish assignment. "I hope to reflect on his sermon and how it relates to the challenges of social justice and why we as an institution at St. Joseph's do work that reflects the vision of Fr. Dehon," he said.

Besides visiting the people and ministries of St. Joseph's Indian School, Fr. Greg is also spending significant time visiting the Akta Lakota Museum, learning about not only the school's history, but more about Native American culture. "I need to know about these things in my role as the 'face' of St. Joseph's to our benefactors," he said.

After living in Chicago for his studies, and then only a half hour drive away from Memphis when he served in Mississippi, small-town Chamberlain might seem like quite a challenge to get used to for a new transplant. But Fr. Greg said that he







Fr. Thi with altar servers before Mass, at the entrance to Denali National Park during his sabbatical, and getting ready for a chilly paddle

feels at home. "I like the small-town setting and know that I am just two to three hours away from a major city [Sioux Falls or Rapid City]," he said. "And then there are the Black Hills - I look forward to hiking there."

"I definitely enjoy it here, at St. Joseph's," he concluded. "I enjoy the ministry, I enjoy the people. And I even enjoy cold weather, so I should feel right at home this winter."

#### A new adventure

"I love living here!" "Here" is Yankton, SD, and the quote is from Fr. Thi Pham. After completing a yearlong sabbatical ending in July, Fr. Thi unpacked his bags at St. Benedict's parish rectory in Yankton, where he now lives with Fr. Tom Anderson, a diocesan priest of Sioux Falls. Fr. Tom is pastor of St. Benedict and Sacred Heart parishes. Also on the ministerial team is another diocesan priest, Fr. Robert Lacey. He and Fr. Thi are associate pastors to the two parishes.

Fr. Thi's journey to South Dakota literally took him all over the country. Pursuing his love for the outdoors, much of Fr. Thi's sabbatical year was spent hiking and camping. His first contact with the bishop of Sioux Falls was on a Zoom call at the bottom of the Grand Canyon. The call was the result of an earlier conversation with Fr. Ed Kilianski. Fr. Thi told Fr. Ed that he was interested in ministry in South Dakota, a place that he only knew from summer assignments when he was a seminarian.

During his phone call with the bishop, Fr. Thi learned that there was a need for a priest in Yankton. Was he interested?

"Where the hell is Yankton?" was the first thought that popped into Fr. Thi's head. But soon he was rerouting his trip home from the Grand Canyon to allow for a stop in Yankton to take a look around.

His first impression? "Oh Lord, I really liked it," he said. "I had such a warm welcome; I immediately liked the parishes."

Yankton is a small town along the Missouri River, about 150 miles southeast of Chamberlain (also on the Missouri). Chamberlain is home to St. Joseph's Indian School and the nearest SCI community to Yankton. "It's good that I like to drive," said Fr. Thi, who goes to Chamberlain for community meetings but then leaves early "to avoid hitting the deer on the way home. I've done that and don't want to do it again!"

St. Benedict and Sacred Heart are Yankton's only Catholic parishes. Sacred Heart was established in the mid-1960s and is made up primarily of older residents descended from German and Czech immigrants. It has about 1,200 families. St. Benedict is smaller, with approximately 800 young families, including many children. The two share a school with campuses on each site. Grades pre-K to 4 go to St. Benedict; grades 5-8 go to Sacred Heart. There are about 400 students total. Every other week Fr. Thi teaches a religious ed class at the school.

Fr. Thi has been involved in parish ministry before, most recently in northern Mississippi. He spent seven years on the Northwest Mississippi Pastoral Team, several of those years

as team moderator. In the summer of 2020, he went on sabbatical.

What does Fr. Thi miss about Mississippi? He mentioned the people, the many parishioners whom he came to know. But he also spoke with pride about the projects and activities of which he had been a part. Three churches were remodeled when Fr. Thi was on the pastoral team. As team moderator, he was very active with these and other projects. "I enjoyed being a part of the process and seeing the plans outlined on paper become a reality."

In Mississippi Fr. Thi also loved to cook - not just for his religious community, but for hundreds of people at parish banquets and events. In Yankton, he has put his chef's hat back on, often cooking for himself and area priests, as well as for fundraisers. He recently auctioned himself off to cook a meal for the highest bidder. Proceeds went to the parishes' schools.

Fr. Thi laughed while talking

about parishioners in Yankton who asked if he would be able to find in-

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gredients for some of his favorite foods. Although he is from Vietnam, Fr. Thi was raised in the United States. "People assume that my favorite foods are Vietnamese," he said, "but I love beef!"

So he is right at home in South Dakota where people often share gifts of locally raised or freshly hunted meat and fowl. The recipients of his auction dinner were served a full course meal featuring Beef Wellington.

A quick note about that trip to the Grand Canyon, as well as many of the other outdoor adventures that Fr. Thi enjoyed on his sabbatical. He credits an SCJ priest for his love of the outdoors: Fr. Jerry Schaad. Provincial Treasurer for many years, Fr. Schaad died in 2001, almost 20 years after celebrating his 25th jubilee of religious life by riding a bicycle from Hales Corners, WI, to Hyder, Alaska... and back!

"Fr. Schaad made a big impact on me," said Fr. Thi. "We would do puzzles together in the recreation room when I was staying at Sacred Heart Monastery, and he would tell me stories about his cycling trips. That stayed with me. I think it was what first interested me in bicycling, camping and other outdoor activities."

And perhaps one of the reasons why Fr. Thi found himself jumping from rock to rock in the Grand Canyon last summer, trying to get cell phone reception for his Zoom call with the bishop of Sioux Falls, a call that led to a new adventure in a small South Dakota town that – until a few months ago – he had never even heard of.

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## To have a missionary spirit

The idea of "encounter" is key, says vicar general "We learn from others, we see God in others"

at Sacred Heart Monastery, the formation community invited Fr. Stephen Huffstetter, SCJ, to speak about what it means to be a missionary, to have a missionary spirit. Originally from the US Province, Fr. Steve is now vicar general of the Priests of the Sacred Heart (Dehonians) based at the Generalate in Rome. After a year-long delay due to the pandemic, he was finally enjoying a return to North America, taking the opportunity to visit SCJ communities and ministries, as well as his family.

What does it mean to have a missionary spirit? For Fr. Steve, the idea of "encounter" is key. "We learn from others, we see God in others," he said.

Fr. Steve cited three scripture passages when speaking specifically to what it means to be a Dehonian missionary.

"The first is from Luke 9:3," he said. "It basically says, 'Just go.' Take nothing for the journey. Fr. Dehon's first missionaries weren't always well prepared, but Fr. Dehon told them to 'just go,' adding that if they listened to the people, they would learn what they needed to serve them."

The next passage Fr. Steve cited



Fr. Steve

was Matthew 10:19: "When they hand you over, do not worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say. You will be given at that moment what you are to say."

"God will give you the words," said Fr. Steve, adding that while it is important to prepare as much as one can, it is also important to be flexible and not be overly worried about how one will be received. Prepare, but trust in God.

And finally, Fr. Steve said that to have a missionary spirit is to be willing – at times – to feel like a "little child." (Matthew 18:3). He spoke of his own experience in Rome, feeling like a frustrated child, struggling to learn a new language (Italian). "It is



important to not just do what we are good at, or what we are comfortable with," he said. "We have to be open to going where we are not comfortable so that we can learn and be supportive of others, and respect those who are different than ourselves."

However, having a missionary spirit, emphasized Fr. Steve, doesn't require one to go beyond one's borders.

"It means going out to be with those who are of a culture different than one's own." He spoke of his experience of working with the physically disabled (and realizing that a part of welcoming people to the Church with a big "C" is making sure that they can actually get into the church with a little "c"), with the homeless at a soup kitchen, with the Lakota Sioux in South Dakota, and with people in a variety of age groups.

"There is no one white culture, no one Black or Hispanic culture," he said. There are many cultures within a larger culture; having a missionary spirit requires one to recognize this and always be open to learning.

Talking about increasing international communities in the congregation, Fr. Steve said that while Dehonians value internationality, there is still much work to do. "We sometimes put people together from a variety of cultures and think they will work it out and be an international community just because they are together."

To make international communities work, they must be intentional, meaning that members of an international community must have a missionary spirit open to learning about and respecting each culture within the community before the community can in turn minister to others.

Fr. Steve's closing advice to the students? "Never stop learning," he said. "The end of initial formation is not the end of formation. Take care of yourself, and continue to be open to and learn from others. Have a spirit of 'Ecce venio,' like Fr. Dehon."



Our 2021-22 Formation Community

## Preparing for religious life as a Dehonian, an SCJ priest or brother

ach year we ask our students in formation to introduce themselves in their own words. Reflecting the diversity of the Priests of the Sacred Heart (Dehonians), as well as the Church itself, they represent a wide variety of cultural, educational and professional backgrounds. Yet they all have the same call to follow in the footsteps of our founder, Fr. Leo John Dehon.

This year's formation program includes students at Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology, Marquette University, three in the Novitiate, and two in pastoral ministry in South Dakota.

Our newest candidate is Alfonso Pizano. "Overall, I'm just an ordinary guy with a disciple's heart," he writes. "I'm grateful and eager to see what God has in store for me as I discern his will in my life all for his greater glory!

"I'm 42 years old and was raised in the California sunshine in the city of Whittier (Los Angeles County). I have a bachelor's in English from Mount St. Mary's University, and a master's in Education from Loyola Marymount University. I also studied for a second mas-



Alfonso Pizano

ter's in Philosophy at Fordham University in New York. I am currently working on an MDiv at Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology while I discern and prepare for Catholic priesthood with the Priests of the Sacred Heart.

"Before joining the Priests of the Sacred Heart, I was a Catholic elementary school teacher and have taught everything from 1st to 8th grade. In addition to teaching at various Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, I've taught in San Francisco, Phoenix and Guadalajara, Mexico. My work experience also includes a long stint at Disneyland, where I peddled souvenirs, danced as a snowman in the 'Christmas Fantasy Parade,' piloted the Monorail, and sailed submarines on quest to find Nemo.

"Along with my passions for teaching and Disney Parks, I love going to the movies. Disney and Pixar films hold a very special place in my heart. I enjoy the theater and took great advantage of Broadway while I was a student in New York. I saw about 40 plays and musicals while I was there."

Read about all of our students at: www.dehoniansusa.info/
2021Students

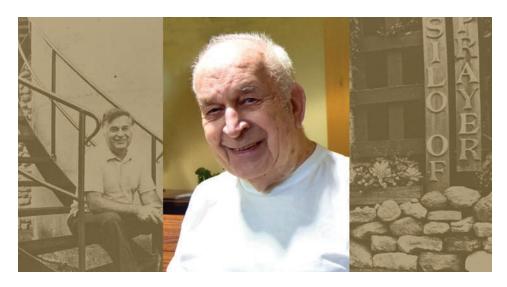
#### Do you feel called?

Candidates and seminarians for the Priests of the Sacred Heart live at Sacred Heart Monastery in Hales Corners (Franklin), WI. They do their theological studies at Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology and undergraduate work at Marquette University or Cardinal Stritch University in Milwaukee. Our Novitiate is located on a rural property approximately 15 miles south of Sacred Heart

Are you discerning a vocation to the priesthood and/or religious life? Do you feel called to a life of community, prayer and ministry based in the love of the Sacred Heart? Contact our vocation director at vocationcentral@wi.twcbc.com or call 1-800-609-5559.



Fraters Hubert and Henry



### "He had the gift of hospitality"

Remembering Br. John Monek, SCJ

n September 27, Br. John Monek, SCJ, died following several months in home hospice care. He was 92.

Originally from Pennsylvania, Br. John served in the U.S. military before pursuing his vocation as a religious brother with the Priests of the Sacred Heart.

He commemorated his 60th anniversary of religious vows on September 8. Most of his years of active ministry were dedicated to St. Joseph's in Baileys Harbor, Wis. Initially, it served as a novitiate for the province, and later as a retreat center. When the facility took on a new life in the diocese of Green Bay, Br. John retired and moved to the Milwaukee area. Since 2014 he had been a member of the Sacred Heart Community at SHML.

During his time at St. Joseph's, one of the projects that Br. John took great pride in was the creation of a "Silo of Prayer." "I got the idea when I was in the Southwest and saw an Indian kiva," he said. "I sat inside and thought that it was so peaceful and easy to pray in so when I got back, I turned the old barn silo into a kind of kiva. I liked the idea that instead of a missile silo we had a silo dedicated to prayer."

"He was one of the first SCJs I met," said Fr. Byron Haaland, SCJ, the homilist at the Mass of Christian Burial for Br. John. Fr. Byron would later spend many years ministering with Br. John at St. Joseph's.

"Br. John's gift of hospitality was paramount," said Fr. Byron. "And isn't that our vocation as Priests of the Sacred Heart? To always welcome, to open our doors, to open our hearts to people, no matter who they are."

The gospel reading for the Mass was the Parable of the Talents from Matthew. Fr. Byron said that it spoke to who Br. John was. "He was a man with not one, not two, but five talents, talents that he grew. He was a cook, a bookkeeper, a gardener, a builder, but most importantly, he was a builder of relationships. He had the talent of hospitality.

"Br. John took his talents and used them to bring about the reign of God in the hearts of people. He had forever in his heart No. 23 of our Constitutions, how we as SCJs understand reparation as a welcome to the Spirit, a response to Christ's love for us. For Br. John, everything was a response, a response to God in his life."

View a video of the Funeral Mass at: www.dehoniansusa.info/monek

## Welcome Fr. Ardi!

he newest member of the US Province is an SCJ who has actually been here for several years: Fr. Hendrik Ardianto, SCJ, or "Fr. Ardi" as he is known in his American home. Originally from Indonesia, Fr. Ardi came to the US Province in the spring of 2019 to study English in Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology's ECS program. He then served briefly in South Dakota before joining the pastoral team that ministers in northern Mississippi. As of October 11, he is now a member of the US Province. We asked him to share a bit about himself. Fr. Ardi writes:

"I was born in South Sumatra (Indonesia). I am the first child in the family; I have a sister and a brother. My mom and dad are teachers.

"I entered the minor seminary in 2004, and was ordained as a priest in February, 2018. I knew the Priests of the Sacred Heart well because the priests at my home parish were SCJs. Also, all of the staff at the seminary were members of the Priest of the Sacred Heart.

"I initially wanted to join the



Priests of the Sacred Heart because of their generosity and compassion for the poor, especially in South Sumatra. Also, I was attracted to the unique cross of the Dehonians. I loved to wear that cross even before I was an SCI.

"Soon after I was ordained I was assigned to the United States, where I would learn English and hopefully serve in the country. After a few months in South Dakota, I went to Mississippi on July, 14, 2020, in the middle of the pandemic. During this pandemic, it has been a challenge for me to get to know parishioners because I have to keep my distance from people and wear a mask. However, I enjoy doing ministry here because of the diversity. There are Anglos, Vietnamese, Filipinos, and Hispanic families. There are so many opportunities for ministry.

"I have been on the pastoral team for a year; we serve six parishes. My ministry here in Mississippi — during this pandemic of course — is mostly celebrating Mass on the weekends. I also have office hours from Monday to Friday at Queen of Peace Catholic Church in Olive Branch. This is often when parishioners come for blessings, confessions and anointing of the sick.

"The southern dialect and rhythm of speaking in Mississippi surprised me at first, especially when I meet parishioners, or just go to the market. But now I am getting used to it."



LEFT: Fr. Ardi blesses pets on the feast of St. Francis; RIGHT: blessing a new home.



#### **New on YouTube**

Have you visited the US Province YouTube channel recently? Our province video team continues to publish videos on a variety of topics. There are now ten installments of the "Heart to Heart" conversations. One of the most recent features Fr. Yvon Sheehy, SCJ, talking about his 22 years of ministry in South Dakota.

"I didn't intend to go there but I fell in love with it," he said. He was instrumental in developing team ministry on the Cheyenne River Reservation, allowing SCJ brothers and priests to live together and support each other as a religious community.

Of the Native Americans he served, he spoke with admiration of their trust and faith in God. "They always depend on God to help them through the hard times," he said. "They believe that God will take care of us."

Take a look at this and the many other videos posted during the past months. You can find us on YouTube by searching for "**DehoniansUSA**."

#### Reviewing the pope

Fr. Vien Nguyen, SCJ, recently reviewed Pope Francis, or more specifically, his writing. Fr. Vien's review of *The Gospel of Matthew: A Spiritual and Pastoral Reading, by Pope Francis*, was recently published by *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* (83.4 9 October 2021: 731-32).

"The book is aimed at a broad audience, and readers will find the book accessible, relatable, and practical yet inspiring and encouraging," wrote Fr. Vien. "It gives readers insights into the mission and substance of Francis's pontificate: his spirituality and pastoral sensibility, as well as his depiction of the main character, Jesus.

So how did it feel to critique the words of the Pope?

"The question 'Who am I to critique the Pope's pastoral and spiritual reflection on the Gospel of Matthew' did cross my mind," said Fr. Vien. "But this initial concern gradually gave way to contentment. First, the Pope is not going to read my review of his book. Second, the book is not an academic monograph, not a commentary in the academic sense, but rather a spiritual and pastoral reading of the Gospel of Matthew. In my analysis, I paid more attention to how the words of the Pope speak to me and encourage me to encounter Scripture, love Scripture, and live Scripture.

"Third, as I read and reread and reread the book, I saw more and more of the Pope's deep spirituality and pastoral sensibility. The presentation of Jesus that emerged from the pages of the book is one of mercy, compassion, and solidarity, which are very prevalent in our SCJ spirituality and mission."

#### **Devotion calls for action**

David Schimmel, familiar to many for his work as Director of Dehonian Associates for the US Province, was the afternoon respondent at the September 29 Dehon Lecture at Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology. He addressed the theme of the "Sacred Heart and Divine Mercy" by sharing his personal journey with the Devotion to the Sacred Heart.

"I found myself walking toward the Heart of Jesus in the company of Fr. Dehon, who taught me that devotion to the Heart of Jesus was a doorway to a relationship with the Divine," said David.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart is not a passive devotion. "The love that the Heart of Jesus has for me urges me to address the lasting effects of slavery, colonialism, racism, runaway capitalism, American exceptionalism, individualism, and clericalism," said David. And if the call to action seems hard, "the Heart of Jesus tells me to find a way to do my part."

Dr. Robert Stackpole was the morning presenter. A former Anglican priest, he converted to Roman Catholicism in 1994 and holds a Doctorate in Theology from the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas in Rome (the "Angelicum"). He is now director of the John Paul II Institute of Divine Mercy based in Stockbridge, MA.



## DEHONIANS Of Priests of the Sacred Heart

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

## Find out how you can join us!

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