

## The deaf are “aliens in our midst

“I naively thought that I would bring the Word of God to the deaf community. They have shown me a God of patience, perseverance, trust, and deep faith in the face of life’s difficulties. I have received much more from them than I have given.”

- Fr. Guy Blair, SCJ

Fr. Guy Blair, SCJ, has spent many years ministering with the deaf and hearing impaired. In the April 13th issue of *Dehonian Spirituality*, he wrote about the deaf community being the “aliens among us.” His reflection is reprinted below:

**T**he “alien” [illegal or not], often makes the headlines these days. Well before countries began setting up borders and deciding who was an insider or an outsider, there was and remains a group of persons — the deaf community — as aliens among us. They are alien to our spoken language. That alienation is reflected in the arduous journey of education, in employment, in society, and in interpersonal relationships.

Fr. Leo John Dehon’s spirit was sensitive to the marginalized, to the alien. Our SCJ community continues to live in his spirit, reflecting in our ministries the inclusivity and tenderness of God’s Heart. I have enjoyed

working with the deaf community, although it has not been an easy journey — first to acquire fluency in sign language and then to enter a culture visually focused with social rules so different from the dominant hearing culture.

It is estimated that only 4% of the deaf community has an affiliation with a worshipping group. This statistic speaks to the marginalization the deaf face in faith communities even as the Gospel of the healing of the deaf man is proclaimed [Mark 7:31-37]. Communities often fail to notice the “deaf alien” among them or presume the story is metaphorical and applies to “deafness of the

heart.” It isn’t the ill-will of the parishioner which contributes to the marginalization of the deaf person; it more often is the result of decisions made at the diocesan level. Calculat-

ing the cost of the ministry for the small number of deaf doesn’t warrant the expense for many.

I have learned from the deaf community that “less is more” in the liturgy of the Mass. It isn’t only music, intrusive lighting, overabundant floral and candle arrangements which detract from the central event of signing in the deaf liturgy. It is

also our hearing culture’s love of repetition, long and “wordy” prayers, references to novels, movies, and literature. Rarely has any hearing parish-



Fr. Guy Blair

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ioner informed me that my homily was too long; however the deaf register their level of interest and endurance by simply closing their eyes! To the hearing person this might seem impolite, but to the deaf person, who must see to participate, this warns me, "Father, make an end to it!"

Many years ago, a deaf priest [a rare person indeed] taught me a valuable insight about the WORD among us. Jesus Christ, the Word, was not born as a Bible in the manger, but as a child, a human being.

It is all too easy for the hearing community to say ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ.

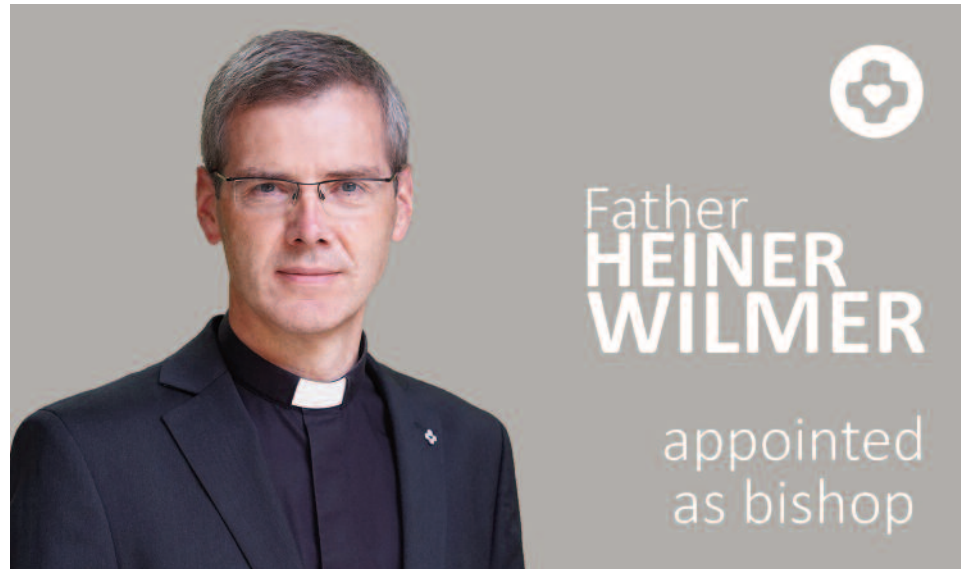
Until recently, the printed Word was a barrier for the deaf community. However, the Scriptures are now in a DVD format, signed in ASL [American Sign Language]. The miracles and teachings of Jesus are not simply signed in English as we would read them but INTERPRETED with deaf culture in mind, with facial expressions, body language, and cultural references easily recognized by the deaf.

The actions of the person, of Jesus Christ, speak the message. In my life as a priest I have tried to allow my actions to "preach" the message — less talk, less homilizing — more action.

I naively thought that I would bring the Word of God to the deaf community. They have shown me a God of patience, perseverance, trust, and deep faith in the face of life's difficulties. I have received much more from them than I have given.

*Dehonian Spirituality* is a weekly e-publication of writings and prayers based in the Dehonian charism. Subscribe at the Dehonian Spirituality section of the US Province website:

[www.dehoniansusa.org](http://www.dehoniansusa.org)



## Superior general named bishop

**O**n April 6, 2018, Pope Francis appointed Fr. Heiner Wilmer, SCJ, as the new bishop of the Diocese of Hildesheim (Germany). Until his appointment, Fr. Heiner was the superior general of the Priests of the Sacred Heart (Dehonians).

The Diocese of Hildesheim, which includes the city of Hanover, is one of the oldest dioceses in the world. It was founded in 815 and is located in northern Germany; it is over 18,500 square miles and includes approximately 610,000 Catholics and 200 priests. The bishop-elect succeeds Bishop Norbert Trelle, who headed the diocese from 2006 until 2017.

Fr. Heiner was provincial superior of the German Province when he was elected superior general in 2015. He was born on April 9, 1961 in Schapen, Germany, was ordained in 1987, and professed his first vows with the congregation in 1982.

Prior to his service as provincial superior, Fr. Heiner held a number of positions in education. From 1998 – 2007 he was headmaster of Gymnasium Leoninum in Handrup, Germany.

Before that, he spent a year teaching German and history at the Jesuit's Fordham Preparatory School in New York (United States).

From 1995 – 1997 he served at Liebfrauenschulem, a school in Vechta, northern Germany, as a teacher of religion, history and politics, as well as a school chaplain.

Fr. Heiner has also taken part in several social initiatives with the poor and disenfranchised. In 2006 he spent three months in Caracas, Venezuela, doing catechesis among the city's barrios. From 1996–97 he worked to develop a training initiative for women at a penitentiary in Vechta (Germany).

During his year teaching in New York he served in the Jesuits' soup kitchen. And in 1993 he spent four months in Toronto, Canada, serving as a chaplain at "L'Arche Daybreak," a residential home for people with disabilities.

His studies have included French Philosophy at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, and Fundamental Theology at the University of Freiburg, where he earned his doctorate. The title of his thesis: "Mystik

zwischen Tun und Denken. Zum Ort der Mystik in der Philosophie Maurice Blondels" [Mysticism between doing and thinking. The place of mysticism in the philosophy of Maurice Blondel]

The bishop-elect is also an author with several published works.

### Ordination date set

The date of the episcopal ordination will be September 1 at the Cathedral of Mariä Himmelfahrt in Hildesheim. He will become the 71st bishop of the diocese.

The presider and ordaining bishop will be Archbishop Stefan Heße of Hamburg. Other concelebrants are to include Bishop Franz-Josef Bode (Osnabrücker) and Bishop Norbert Trelle (bishop emeritus of Hildesheim). The papal bull will be presented by Archbishop Nikola Eterović (apostolic nuncio).

### Next steps

As soon as Fr. Heiner was named bishop-elect he ceased to be superior general of the Dehonians. Fr. Carlos Enrique Caamaño Martin, SCJ, who had been vicar general, now serves as the superior general until a new administration is elected.

One of Fr. Carlos Enrique's first tasks as superior general was to convoke a General Chapter at which the new administration will be elected. The XXIV General Chapter will be held in Rome, July 14-27. This is approximately the same time period that the General Conference in Manila was to have taken place. Due to the need for a General Chapter the General Conference was cancelled.

Before the General Chapter takes place, each entity must have its own chapter to select its delegates. The US Province will hold its chapter on the afternoon of Monday, June 18, prior to the Province Election Assembly.



The Fr. Gregory Bezy Volunteer House just a few steps away from completion

## SHSM volunteer house dedicated

**S**acred Heart Southern Missions' Gregory Bezy Volunteer House in northern Mississippi was dedicated on April 27. Among those who took part in the ceremony were Bishop Joseph Kopacz of Jackson, representatives from the SHSM Board of Directors and SHSM staff, Fr. Ed Kilianski, SCJ (provincial superior), and our two novices, Henry Nguyen and Paul (Phong) Hoang, who were in Mississippi on a ministry visit with their novice master, Fr. Byron Haaland, SCJ.

Each year SHSM hosts hundreds of volunteers from all over the country. Many are high school and college students who want to make a difference in the lives of the poor. Often, volunteers find that those whom they have helped have made a difference in their lives as well.

"In volunteering, they find that they too have been changed," said Fr. Jack Kurps, SCJ, SHSM executive director. "Their hearts have been changed by their experience. They learn what it means to be a Christian."

Fr. Jack continued, saying that "We pray that this is a place of joy and peace; a place where people can be renewed and refreshed; a place

where people can reflect on their experience of helping others and come to know more about their faith and how God works through each one of us."

Bishop Kopacz reflected on Sacred Heart Southern Missions' 75 years of ministry in northern Mississippi.

The house should be ready to receive its first group of volunteers in June.



Bishop Kopacz

The SCJ NEWS is published by the U.S. Province of the Priests of the Sacred Heart (SCJs). Articles, photos and suggestions are always welcome. Editorial offices: P.O. Box 289, Hales Corners, WI 53130-0289 (414) 427-4266. Email: [comdir@scjcommunications.org](mailto:comdir@scjcommunications.org) Mary Gorski, editor. Postage prepaid.



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Priests of the Sacred Heart



Fr. Leonard pictured with friends at his jubilee last year.

## Fr. Leonard Elder: missionary and pastor

**F**r. Leonard Elder, SCJ, died March 6, following complications from a heart attack. He was 76. Raised in Kentucky, Fr. Leonard went to Divine Heart Seminary in Donaldson, IN, and entered the novitiate with the intention of pursuing ordained ministry.

But instead of professing his first vows, he enlisted in the U.S. Air Force. In some ways, his time of military service was an extended period of discernment. After four years with the Air Force he said, "I asked to return to the community as a religious brother."

His first profession was in 1967.

As a brother, he served in formation, and then for nine years as a missionary in Zaire (now, the Democratic Republic of Congo). It was in Africa that he once again felt the call to ordained ministry. "God, through the voices of many people where I served, called me to pursue studies for the priesthood," he said.

He returned to the States and earned his M.Div. at Sacred Heart

Seminary and School of Theology in 1996. He was ordained shortly after.

Fr. Leonard said that what he enjoyed most about his years in Africa "were the challenges; learning new cultures, languages, and the daily struggles to overcome the lack of almost everything I was accustomed to using. However, joined with those challenges was discovering a people eager to celebrate God's love and to share in their lives and struggles."

In 2014, he returned to Congo when SCJs from around the world came together to remember and celebrate the lives of 28 members of the Priests of the Sacred Heart (Dehonians) who were martyred during the country's Simba Revolution.

Following ordination, Fr. Leonard served in pastoral ministry at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton and Christ the Redeemer parishes in Houston, and at St. Joseph's parish in Holly Springs, MS, where he continued to live in retirement while doing part-time parish ministry.

## Friends come together to honor Fr. Charles Yost

**F**r. Charles Yost, SCJ, died last July. A member of the Sacred Heart Community at SHML, he had been retired for many years but continued to be active in ministry until the last months of illness. Often, he celebrated Mass at Good Shepherd Chapel for the lay residents of Sacred Heart at Monastery Lake. That's where Pat and Tom Brown met him.

**"It's because of him that we are Catholic,"** said Pat.

She and her husband, Tom, moved to SHML shortly after they retired. She was a medical transcriptionist and he had spent over 50 years as a church music director, though not in a Catholic parish. His last assignment was at a Methodist church in suburban Milwaukee. It's where he spent most Sundays for 27 years until his retirement.

A priority for Tom and Pat following their move to SHML was to



Fr. Jim Schroeder helps with the construction of the ambo.

find a church. "We were seekers," said Pat, "and Fr. Yost recognized that."

They loved the liturgy of the Episcopal Church and considered worshipping at the Episcopal Cathedral in downtown Milwaukee. But it is a long drive from SHML, "and the parking is lousy," said Tom.

While seeking a church, the Browns began attending Mass at SHML. The commute was easy – just an elevator ride to the first floor. "We enjoyed Fr. Yost's homilies; it was a good match for us," said Pat.

Fr. Yost noticed Pat and Tom, and also noticed that they didn't go to communion. "Why?" he asked.

"We aren't Catholic," said Pat.

And thus began a friendship that eventually led to the Browns converting to the Catholic faith. The ceremony took place at Good Shepherd Chapel, the chapel at which Tom now often serves as cantor. His face is familiar to many SCJs since he sometimes helps at province liturgies.

The Browns also befriended several other SCJs, including Fr. Bill Pitcavage, Fr. John Czyzysnki and Fr. Jim Schroeder. Fr. Jim and Tom have a common love of opera, as did Fr. Yost.

Following Fr. Yost's death, the friends, along with a retired diocesan priest at SHML, Fr. Richard Robinson, created an informal committee to discuss possibilities to honor him. Tom and Pat had become quite interested in the St. John's Bible, a one-of-a-kind illuminated, handwritten Bible commissioned by the Benedictine Monastery at St. John's University in

Collegeville, MN. The unbound pages were completed in 2011 and are on display in a museum at the university.

"Fr. Yost had such a love for books, this seemed like a wonderful way to honor him," said Pat.

A seven-volume reproduction of the St. John's Bible was purchased to be gifted to the Priests of the Sacred Heart and the residents of Sacred Heart at Monastery Lake in memory of Fr. Charles Yost.

The books are on display in the SHML lobby on a newly

constructed ambo built by Frs. Byron Haaland and Jim Schroeder.

The ambo was Fr. Byron's idea. When he learned of the gifting of the books in Fr. Yost's memory "he said that the books required something special," said Pat. An artist and craftsman, Fr. Byron decided

*"We were  
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*-Pat Brown*



Fr. Byron Haaland next to the ambo he designed to display the St. John's Bible.

that he – with the help of Fr. Jim – would create that "something special."

A brass locking mechanism is a part of the ambo to ensure the safety of the books. They are available for viewing at any time.



Tom and Pat Brown



## New website for US Province

**T**he US Province has a new website with the address [www.dehoniansusa.org](http://www.dehoniansusa.org) (Dehonians USA). The old addresses, [www.sacredheartusa.org](http://www.sacredheartusa.org) and [www.scjusa.net](http://www.scjusa.net), will redirect to the new site, but users are encouraged to replace them in their bookmarks.

The new site incorporates the official “popular” name of the community, “Dehonians,” as well as the logo for the new congregational Mission Statement, “Open Heart and Mind.” Although it works well on a laptop or desktop computer, the new design is specifically mobile-friendly, allowing a person to easily thumb through stories and resources.

Much of what is available on the old province website is still found in the new design. From the homepage, users can access the weekly news (*Fridge Notes*), feature stories, a “Meet Our Members” section, Dehonian Spirituality (the publication itself as well as resources from the Dehonian Associates office), photos, and several vocation-related links.

Links to areas within the site are found at the top of each page and links to external sites are in a red bar above the logo. These include links to the Dehonian Social Justice website, the US Province Blog (Walk With Us), the Canadian Region’s blog, the province Facebook page, and a “Donate” button that leads to the Province Development Office’s secure donation site.

In the mobile version, these external links are accessed in the navigation box (a box with three red bars in the upper right corner of the mobile site).

At the bottom of all pages in the site is a link to the Google Calendar for the US and Canada, which includes the birthdays of SCJs in North America, as well as the dates of assemblies, meetings, jubilees and other significant moments.

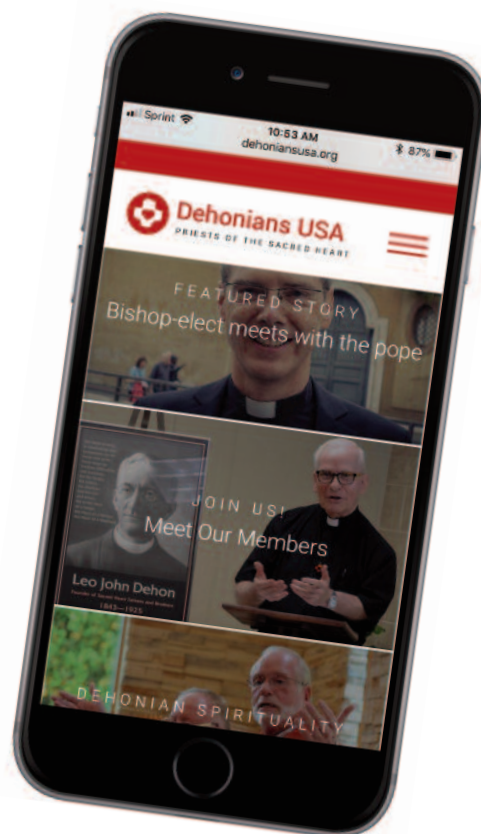
One of the new features of the site is an interactive prayer section. This is found near the bottom of the homepage. Any-

one is welcome to share a prayer request in this moderated section of the site.

Would you like to subscribe to the *Fridge Notes*, the weekly news of the US Province? A subscription link is on the general “News” page as well as at the bottom of each weekly news posting. The *Fridge Notes* is sent by email most Mondays.

You are also invited to subscribe to *Dehonian Spirituality*, an e-publication of prayers and reflections based in the Dehonian charism. It is sent by email most Fridays. A subscription link is at the top of the Dehonian Spirituality page. An archives of the newsletter is available in the “Resources” link under the Dehonian Spirituality tab, or from the Dehonian Spirituality landing page.

Have questions about using the new site? Can’t find a link? Have a story idea to share? Send an email to: [comdir@scjcommunications.org](mailto:comdir@scjcommunications.org).



# SCJ NEWS

## Why am I a brother?

May 1, the feast of St. Joseph, was the second annual Religious Brothers Day. Br. Diego Diaz, a Dehonian from Argentina studying ESL at Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology, wrote about his vocation on the province blog.

"Many ask me why I am a brother and not a priest," he began.

"On this day dedicated to the vocation of religious brothers, I'd like to share my responses to the question."

Br. Diego notes that his initial response is that "I am a religious brother because the first call of Jesus is to create in the world a universal brotherhood where we are all brothers and sisters in the same God."

What are his other responses? Visit the US Province blog to read the rest: [www.scjusablog.org](http://www.scjusablog.org).

## Importance of being present

"I realize that what is important isn't WHAT I do but HOW I become present to others," wrote Novice Henry Nguyen in a reflection about his work at the St. Ann Center for Inter-

generational Care in Milwaukee.

"Being at St. Ann, I see the goodness and innocence of others. It has also allowed me to be a 'prophet of love' to those I accompany. By allowing myself to be open and to be present to others, I receive their joy..."

"Coming to St. Ann's with an open mind and heart can be challenging, and I knew it would be. But being there helps me to be moved by the Spirit every time I'm there as I am learning to be patient and to be more readily available and to listen to others."

Read the rest of Henry's story in the "Features" section of the Province website: [www.dehoniansusa.org](http://www.dehoniansusa.org).

## North American retreat

From May 7-11, SCJs from Canada and the United States gathered at the Siena Center in Racine, WI, for the second of two Dehonian retreats. The first was in suburban Toronto in August, 2017. The retreats were initiated by the North American councils during one of their joint meetings, and focus on five themes from Dehonian Spirituality: God's love, union with

Christ, oblation, reparation and social spirituality.

The retreats were led and organized by Fr. Jim Schroeder, SCJ, Fr. John van den Hengel, SCJ and David Schimmel (director of Dehonian Associates for the US Province).

A third retreat will be held in August for those in formation.

## Native Hope 1st recipient of Johnny Klingler Award

The Provincial Council has affirmed the selection of Native Hope in Chamberlain, SD, as the recipient of the 1st Annual Johnny Klingler, SCJ, Social Action Award. The award was created last year at the recommendation of the Justice, Peace and Reconciliation Commission to honor Fr. Johnny for his decades of commitment to social action and to recognize individuals or groups who exemplify the Dehonian charism of dedication to "ministry to the lowly and the humble, the workers and the poor" (Rule of Life #31).

In creating the award, the JPR Commission hopes to lift up efforts that touch people's hearts, transform



Br. Diego Diaz



Participants at the May 7-11 North American Dehonian Retreat: Open Hearts / Cœurs Ouverts



[www.nativehope.com](http://www.nativehope.com)

personal attitudes, and spur others to action through direct service, education, advocacy for the voiceless, or empowerment of those who are marginalized.

Established in 2015 as an apostolate of the Priests of the Sacred Heart, Native Hope's mission is "to dismantle barriers and inspire hope for Native voices unheard." That includes a Fellowship Program to empower creativity and leadership in Indigenous Peoples and their communities, celebrating education as a lifelong undertaking that raises self-esteem and opens new horizons for youth, honoring and embracing Native culture, and addressing the real issues of teen suicide, domestic abuse, and sex trafficking that plague life on the reservation.

To learn more about Native Hope, visit the organization's website at:

[www.nativehope.com](http://www.nativehope.com)

## Discovering Pope Francis

Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology will host "Discovering Pope Francis: Theological, Philosophical, Cultural and Spiritual Perspectives" October 8-11, 2018. The symposium will feature groundbreaking presentations and panel discussions by world-class scholars examining the pastoral theology of Pope Francis from his European and Latin-American roots to his Papacy today. Among the speakers:

Bishop Robert Barron, auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles and the founder of Word on Fire Catholic Ministries; Massimo Borghesi, professor of moral philosophy at the Department of Philosophy, Social, Human and Educational Sciences at the University of Perugia (Italy) and author of *Jorge Mario Bergoglio: Una Biografia a Intellettuale*, an authoritative intellectual biography of the pope; Rocco Buttiglione, a member of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences and professor of political science at Saint Pius V University in Rome; Cardinal Blase Cupich, archbishop of Chicago; and Archbishop Christophe Pierre, apostolic nuncio to the United States.

Early bird registration is \$175 until July 1; the cost will be \$195 after that.

For more information go to:

[www.shsst.edu/FrancisSymposium](http://www.shsst.edu/FrancisSymposium)



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