



# SCJ News

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

## Proclaiming the gospel through interfaith dialogue

“ Studying other religions and cooperating with other religious communities is part of the effort to build a peaceful society and understand each other in the midst of religious plurality. ”

-Stefanus Sigit Pranoto, SCJ

“ **A**s a Catholic, Dehonian priest, I live my involvement in interfaith activities as part of the proclamation of the Gospel, where the Gospel must be preached to all people regardless of their religious background,” said Fr. Stefanus Sigit Pranoto, SCJ. “For me, studying other religions and cooperating with other religious communities is part of the effort to build a peaceful society and understand each other

in the midst of religious plurality.”

“This is a way for me to realize the hope of Fr. Dehon who wants the Dehonian to be a ‘Prophet of Love and Servant of Reconciliation’ in the community.”

A member of the Indonesian Province, Fr. Sigit recently completed a five-month ECS program (English and Cultural Studies) at Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology. The program was, in part, for his doctoral work on Islamic Studies.

“Born and raised in a society that has different religious backgrounds, I am interested in interfaith activities and learning about other religions,” said Fr. Sigit. “Together with other religious communities, I often join and host interfaith dialogues so participants can better understand each other.”

In 2015, he completed a master’s degree in Comparative Theology. The topic of his thesis: “Revelation from the perspective of Catholic and Islamic teachings.” Two years later he began his doctoral studies in the field of Islamic Studies at Sunan Kalijaga Islamic State University in Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

Fr. Sigit emphasized that he is not unique as a Catholic priest studying Islam. “There are already many priests who are experts in the Islamic faith,” he said. Several diocesan priests are in the same university program as Fr. Sigit.



Fr. Sigit studied in the English and Cultural Studies program at SHSST.



Fr. Sigit (left) with fellow students in Indonesia representing a variety of faith backgrounds.

## Increased intolerance

"In recent years in Indonesia there have been more cases of intolerance in the name of religion," said Fr. Sigit. "Some groups try to disrupt the peaceful situation that had been created. Catholics often find it difficult to obtain permission to establish a church. In some cases, worship is prohibited. Recently, a Catholic who died was prohibited from being buried in a public cemetery just because of religious differences."

Fr. Sigit noted that there are Islamic organizations that seek to maintain peace. "In Indonesia, there are two large Islamic organizations, namely Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), which play a significant role in maintaining harmonious relations in a pluralistic Indonesian society. There are many figures from these two organizations who continue to call for peace and tolerance. The Catholic Church and religious leaders from other faiths have worked in collaboration with them."

## Interfaith Dialogue

During the past year, Fr. Sigit has been active as a member of "Komunitas Bela Indonesia," an interfaith com-

munity that seeks to campaign for the values of Pancasila [Indonesian philosophy] as Indonesian ideology. "The community is found in 25 provinces in Indonesia," he said. "Its members come from various religious backgrounds, and most are young people. We hold dialogues and visit places of worship of other religions with the aim of getting to know those who are different. In addition, we try to use social media to campaign for peace by creating content about tolerance."

## Thank you!

"I arrived at SHSST on September 19, 2019, to study English," said Fr. Sigit. "I am very grateful to have had this opportunity. Besides learning English, I also got to know — a little — the SCJ reality in the United States. I feel a brotherhood with the SCJs here who, with an open heart, welcomed my presence. Therefore, thank you to SCJs of the US Province for accepting and giving me this opportunity!"

Fr. Sigit, 33, was born in Marga Agung (Lampung Province, Indonesia). He professed his first vows on August 1, 2007, and was ordained on August 11, 2016. He has worked in social communications and in pastoral ministry.

## New ministry, and new ways of ministering discussed at conference

The third in a series of yearly conferences for SCJs in the US Province who are in active ministry took place January 7-9 at the Provincial Conference Center. The theme: "Our Future: Together in Community and Ministry, Part III."

"It has been my hope and the hope of the Provincial Council that each of these conferences can be another step on the path to learning, as a community, how to intentionally live, pray and work together better, recognizing each other's diversity but also our shared Dehonian values," said Fr. Ed Kilianski, SCJ, in his opening remarks.

In 2018, SCJs under 70 in active ministry came together for the first time to reflect on how they can better live and minister together in a US Province that looks much different than even just a few years ago. It is a province that is filled with diversity with Dehonians from all over the world bringing the flavors of their own cultures but united in one Dehonian charism. It is a province with men from Asia, Europe, Africa, South and North America. In ministry, it is a province that increasingly collabo-



Fr. Ed Kilianski

rates with others, including other religious and many lay people.

Sr. Cathy Bertrand, SSND, facilitated the gathering. She is a familiar face to SCJs for her many years of work with the community.

## Reflections and advice

“Be open to new possibilities,” was the common message that Dn. David Nagel, SCJ, Fr. Christianus Hendrik, SCJ and Fr. Jim Walters, SCJ, shared with younger Dehonians and students in a panel discussion during the first afternoon of the Provincial Conference. The veteran SCJs were asked to first talk about the ministries in which they had served, and then offer advice to the next generation who will carry on the Dehonian charism in the United States.

The ministries represented on the panel were diverse. Dn. David has been in food service, formation, development, education, and for the past 15 years, has served as provincial treasurer. Fr. Hendrik, originally from Indonesia, did retreat ministry and mission work (including a brief stint in West Papua where he contracted life-threatening malaria) before being called to the missions of South Dakota. Fr. Jim prepared to be a French and Latin teacher but had to quickly learn Spanish when the needs of the seminary unexpectedly changed. The language led him to a love of Hispanic ministry; he served in several Spanish-speaking parishes, and for many years has been the director of the Hispanic studies program at Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology.

“Always be open, always be willing to give things a try,” said Fr. Jim. “No matter how unfit or ill-prepared you may feel, you are following in the footsteps of others who felt just as unsure and eventually found their way, found a way to continue the work of



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our founder.”

“As you grow as a minister, you will discover new ways of doing things, you will bring new ideas to ministry,” added Dn. David.

## Hope for the future

“I have a great deal of hope for the future,” said Br. Duane Lemke, SCJ, during Wednesday’s panel discussion. After veteran SCJs were asked to offer advice to the next generation, a panel of four younger members of the community – Frater Paul Hoang, Frater Henry Nguyen, Br. Diego Diaz and Br. Duane Lemke – spoke about their hopes and vision for the province as they look at the future of the Dehonian presence in the United States.

“This province started with only five SCJs,” continued Br. Duane. “They did fantastic things, and we can do fantastic things. We are smaller in number than what we have been at other times, but this is what God is calling us to be at this moment. In our

conversations among each other I hear a passion to move toward the future.”

Several panelists spoke of hospitality, hospitality that they have felt from their brother SCJs but also the hospitality experienced by those impacted by SCJ ministry. “We must offer our hospitality in all that we do, especially to youth,” said Br. Diego. Hospitality is a way of helping young adults feel at home in the Church, he added.

“By creating opportunities for young people to come together we

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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also create opportunities in which we can share our charism," said Frater Paul.

Reflecting on what was heard in Tuesday's panel discussion, Frater Henry said that "we need to continue to be open to the Spirit, the Spirit is leading us. To thrive individually and as a province we need to be open to the possibilities presented to us, even when those possibilities might not seem like something that we want to do."

And finally, when asked about an experience that gave each panelist a clear sense of "being Dehonian," most spoke of a time when they realized that their concept of home was no longer just with their family of origin, but with their SCJ family.

"It was when I looked forward to 'going home' after a visit with my family," said one of the panelists. "I enjoyed being with my family, but I looked forward to going back to my 'home,' my home with my SCJ brothers.

“

**That's when I realized that I was a Dehonian.**

”



Conference participants pose for a group photo after the closing Mass.

## Steps forward in formation

**C**ongratulations to Kenneth Anyanwu and Celsus Robert who were welcomed into postulancy during the First Friday liturgy with the formation community on February 7.

Kenneth, originally from Nigeria, earned a master's degree in Jewish-Christian studies from Seton Hall University before applying to candidacy. "The fact that the SCJs are committed to continuing Christ's work of rebuilding our world into God's kingdom of justice and love is a strong connection for me," said Kenneth.

Celsus is a native of St. Lucia. Prior to candidacy, he worked as a long-term case manager at Kaiser Permanente Hospital in Los Angeles. He has undergraduate degrees in Social Work and Criminal Justice from Cheyney University (Pennsylvania) and an MBA in Healthcare Administration from California Southern University.

### Institution of Acolyte

Frater Henry Nguyen, SCJ, received the Institution of Acolyte during the opening Eucharist of the January Provincial Conference. A stu-



Fr. Ed and Frater Henry during the Rite of Institution of Acolyte



Kenneth, Fr. Andrzej and Celsus. Postulancy is a time of preparation for the novitiate year. Fr. Andrzej is the postulancy director.

dent at Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology, Frater Henry is 30 and professed his first vows in 2018.

Originally from Orange County, CA, before entering candidacy, he earned a bachelor's degree in psychology from California State University, Monterey Bay.

In his third year of theology, Frater Henry did an intensive CPE (Clinical Pastoral Education) program in San Antonio with CHRISTUS Santa Rosa Health System last summer.

"With this experience, my understanding of the theology of pain and suffering grew more and more as I made myself available in order to be present with the sick and dying and their families," said Frater Henry. He is scheduled to do his cross-cultural year in Chile, starting midsummer.

## "A kind and gentle soul"

### Remembering Fr. Paul Casper, SCJ

**F**r. Paul Casper, SCJ, died December 9. He was 89.

Originally from St. Paul, MN, Fr. Paul did his seminary studies at Sacred Heart Monastery and was ordained in 1957. As did many of the newly ordained, he spent his first years teaching in the minor seminary. He focused on Latin and religion, and also served as dean of students.

Leaving academics, he moved to South Dakota, where he served in a number of small towns. In 1979, he enjoyed a sabbatical in the Holy Land.

In 1987, Fr. Paul made his way to Wisconsin where he was associate pastor of Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary parish (now, St. Martin of Tours). He was also a "relief pitcher" of sorts, stepping in for other priests when they took vacations, retreats or study breaks.

In the Milwaukee area, Fr. Paul was active in ministry to incarcerated youth. Before entering full-time



Fr. Paul visiting with Fr. Bill Pitcavage prior to the 2017 SHML ordination anniversary liturgy. It was Fr. Paul's 60th anniversary of priesthood



Fr. Paul, having a little lighthearted fun

retirement, Fr. Paul also spent several years doing parish ministry in Mississippi, including service at Holy Spirit parish in Hernando and St. Joseph's in Holly Springs.

At the time of his death he was a member of the Sacred Heart Community at Sacred Heart at Monastery Lake in Franklin, WI.

### Final remembrances

"A kind and gentle soul," is how Fr. Paul Casper's niece described her uncle at his funeral on December 14. Hers was the first of many remembrances shared. "He saw the good in people that others missed," said another.

"He knew how to 'waste' time with people, to simply be present," remembered an SCJ. "He was truly a pastor; he changed people's lives by being a pastor to them," said a friend. "He put himself wholeheartedly into everything he did," added another.

"Joy, Fr. Paul embodied joy," said an SCJ, echoing the thoughts expressed by many.

## First Friday at Sacred Heart Monastery

**M**igration, immigration and respect for one another regardless of cultural background were the themes of the First Friday evening at Sacred Heart Monastery on February 7. Members of the North American Migration Committee facilitated the evening, beginning with Eucharist, and concluding with a presentation to the formation community.

"Every person in this room has a story of immigration or migration, a story of encounter," said Fr. Richard MacDonald, SCJ, in his introduction to the evening presentation.

Lily Ooi, a Canadian member of the Migration Committee, gave a quick overview of "Migration 101," defining some of the terminology surrounding immigration, some of the reasons why people leave their homeland, and the challenges of starting anew.

Two SCJs shared their own migration stories: Fr. Quang Nguyen and Fr. Peter McKenna. Fr. Quang and his family were among the "boat people" who fled Vietnam. After several tries, and months in refugee camps in Singapore and then the Philippines, in 1988 he was one of the last members of his family to arrive in the United States. He spoke of being new to the cultures of the refugee camps in which he lived, and then the United States, but also of being new to the culture of the Priests of the Sacred Heart. "There weren't people who looked like me when I entered forma-



Lily defines terminology



Fr. Quang

tion," he said, noting that the Dehonian presence in North America at that time was primarily Caucasian.

"But now," he said as looked around the room, "it is wonderful-

ly different." Among the students, postulants, novices, formation team and committee members represented in the room were people from St. Lucia, Nigeria, Vietnam, Poland, the Netherlands, Argentina, Canada and Togo, as well as the United States. The issues of migration and immigration are a lived experience for many Dehonians in North America, reflecting the lived experience of the congregation throughout the world.

Another SCJ to share his story was Fr. Peter McKenna, a member of the Canadian Region who spoke of

his time serving at the Generalate in Rome. "There were 50 SCJs in the house and I was the only one for whom English was my mother tongue," he said. Everything from prayers, to meetings, to meals was in Italian. When others were on afternoon siesta, Fr. Peter took Italian classes. It wasn't until he stopped to help at a soup kitchen on the way home from class that he started to feel a sense of connection. The connection was with refugees seeking assistance at the center, people who were in Rome because of much different circumstances, but who, like him, struggled to find connection. "I was a refugee too."

"What does it mean to feel welcome, to be welcomed?" he continued. "We have to bloom where we are planted. What is God asking of you at this moment? How are you being asked to make life easier for a refugee, a migrant? God is asking you to offer a gift of yourself; what is it?"

Students and SCJs broke into small groups to reflect on what they heard, and talk about what they could do to help migrants.

Noting that students are pulled in many directions, including ministry, school and prayer, one group emphasized that no matter how busy a person is, there is always something that he can do. Being present and listening to another is a first step. It is important to not just be welcoming of others, but to learn about the cultures of others, especially those with whom one lives. Other suggestions included helping migrants fill out forms, volunteering with Catholic Charities, "or simply muting the television for a few minutes to call your government representative to express your concern about a migration issue, or send an email."

"Prayer AND action," said Fr. Jan de Jong, SCJ, a member of the migration committee. "It is who we are as Dehonians. We can't forget the 'AND.'"



Participants in the February First Friday gathering at Sacred Heart Monastery. The North American Migration Committee facilitated the evening.

# SCJ NEWS

## Building trust is key to student success

St. Joseph's Indian School was the focus of a recent article published by *South Dakota News Watch*. The media outlet did a three-part series regarding public education and Native American children.

"As South Dakota education officials work to close the achievement gap between the state's Native American students and their white peers, a private school just outside Chamberlain is finding great success with a unique set of programs and support," wrote Nick Lowrey of *SD News Watch*. "...The school's combination of support both inside and outside the classroom, as well as its culturally responsive teaching model, have greatly contributed to the success of its students, according to staff members."

The article continued: "Some lessons learned from the St. Joseph's model can be applied elsewhere, including at schools that aren't as well funded, said Mike Tyrell, president of the school's board of directors. One of the biggest is that taking the time to build trust between a student and their school and its staff is key to student success; another is encouraging a high level of parental involvement.

"Students need to be able to trust their environment and if our (students) feel safe in their environ-

ment, they can excel in their learning," Tyrell said. "Education is super important for the Native American kids that we serve, it's an avenue for success, it's an avenue for our kids to succeed and live up to their potential. So, it behooves us to do the best we possibly can to educate our kids."

## 75th anniversary of Sacred Heart Church

On November 26, approximately 30 people came together in Walls, MS, to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the dedication of Sacred Heart Church. One of the first Catholic churches in northern Mississippi, it was an initial steppingstone to what is now Sacred Heart Southern Missions, an SCJ apostolate that includes six parishes, two schools and a wide variety of social service programs across northern Mississippi.

The church, located across the street from the SHSM offices, has been remodeled and repurposed as a small, open-concept prayer space. The original parish community merged with St. Anthony's in Tunica to form Good Shepherd congregation in Robinsonville.

Representatives from several of Sacred Heart's founding families attended the 75th anniversary Mass celebrated by Fr. Jack Kurps, SCJ, SHSM executive director.



The dedication of Sacred Heart Church in Walls, MS – November 26, 1944



Fr. Quang and Alejandro at Come and See.

## Come and See!

Fr. Quang Nguyen, SCJ, is pictured above with Alejandro, one of our visitors at Sacred Heart Monastery for February's "Come and See." Come and See is an opportunity for young men discerning a vocation to religious life to literally "come and see" the Priests of the Sacred Heart and its formation program.

**To learn about future Come and See weekends, contact our vocation office at 800-609-5559 or by email at: [vocationcentral@wi.twcbc.com](mailto:vocationcentral@wi.twcbc.com).**

## Meeting an SCJ legend

Fr. Stephen Huffstetter, SCJ, vicar general (and former US provincial superior) visited the South African Province in December to take part in its election assembly. It was an opportunity for him to meet for the first time Fr. John Strittmatter, an American SCJ who has devoted most of his life to the people of South Africa.

"The Pennsylvania native was sent as a missionary to South Africa from the US Province over 50 years ago," wrote Fr. Steve. "We swapped stories of SCJs we mutually knew — fellow seminarians for him, mentors and teachers for me."

Fr. Steve continued, noting that "the Republic of South Africa has been an important part of the US Province's missionary outreach for many years. I

first remember hearing about this apostolate as a teenage high school student at Divine Heart Seminary. On a visit home, one of our alumni and a former superior general, Bishop Joseph DePalma from the De Aar Diocese, celebrated Mass for us. He impressed on us the difficulties of ministering to the various groups of faithful separated by the apartheid system, but also the faith, resilience and beauty of the people.

“Over the years, I heard many similar stories from missionaries. Besides parishes, we staffed trade schools in Aliwal North and in neighboring Lesotho. A seminarian a few years ahead of me served his apostolic internship overseas and his letters home kindled my interest further.”



Fr. Steve with Fr. John Strittmatter

Driving to Aliwal North, where the assembly would be held, Fr. Steve described “rolling grasslands populated by grazing cows, horses and sheep, I passed through many landscapes that reminded me of parts of South Dakota. A unique feature was the abundance of termite mounds. Like many rural communities that rely on farms and an agricultural economy, the area has been hit hard by a long-lasting drought. There is little industry and people patch together a number of part-time jobs or do piecework to earn what they can. Unemployment is at 29% and the best students in the schools usually migrate to South Africa’s urban centers, creating a brain drain.”

The visit was Fr. Steve’s first to South Africa.

### Visit us online!

Besides the *SCJ News*, news and pics are regularly published on our province website at [www.dehoniansusa.org](http://www.dehoniansusa.org) and on our Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/PriestsoftheSacredHeart](https://www.facebook.com/PriestsoftheSacredHeart). We are also on Instagram at [DehoniansUSA](https://www.instagram.com/DehoniansUSA). Our online photo albums are at: [www.scjusa.smugmug.com](http://www.scjusa.smugmug.com).



## DEHONIANS 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

**Learn how to join us in community and ministry**

**800-609-5559**

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