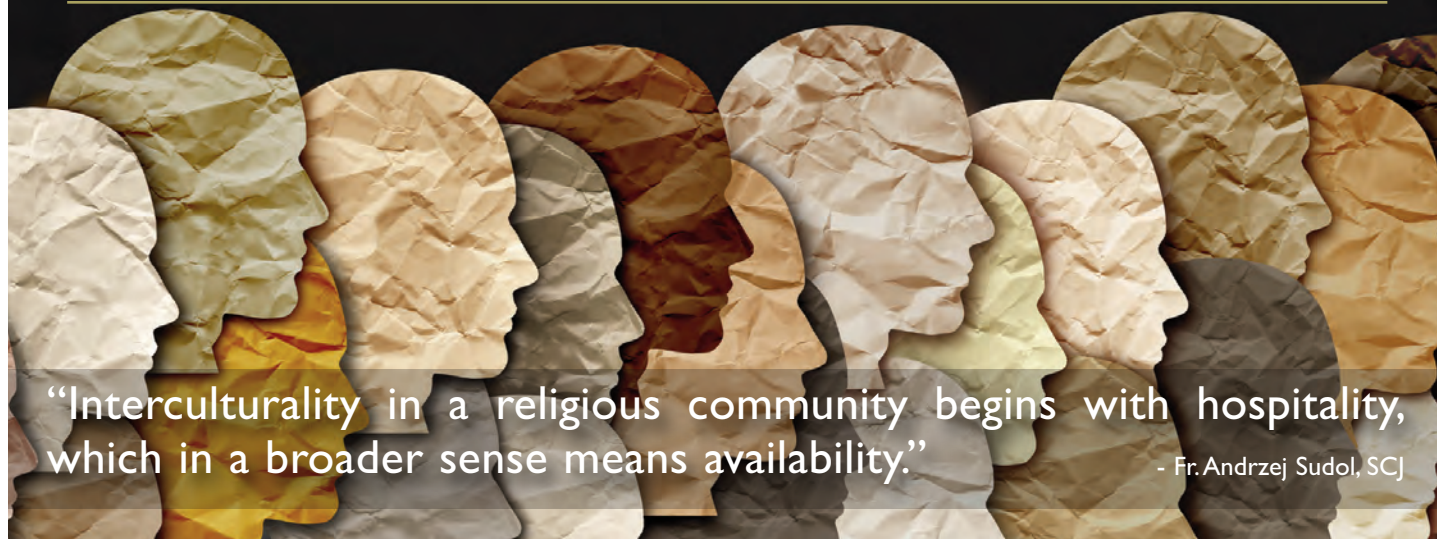




SCJ News

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



“Interculturality in a religious community begins with hospitality, which in a broader sense means availability.”

- Fr. Andrzej Sudol, SCJ

To pray, live and minister in a multicultural world

He is a Polish priest who has served on three of the five continents on which the Priests of the Sacred Heart (Dehonians) are located.

For Fr. Andrzej Sudol, SCJ, interculturality is more than terminology, it is a way of life. Helping others to live and minister as members of an intercultural community is a passion for him, so much so that it was the focus of his thesis for a Doctorate of Ministry (D.Min.) from Catholic Theological Union in Chicago. He successfully defended it on April 29. Due to the pandemic, the defense was done via Zoom. Several SCJs, including Fr. Ed Kilianski, SCJ, were able to view it from their own laptops.

The title of Fr. Andrzej’s thesis: “Challenges and Opportunities of Initial Formation for Interculturality in

the Congregation of the Priests of the Sacred Heart in the United States Province.”

He began his studies at CTU in 2015 after serving as a formation director in the Philippines and India. Of course, his own formation was in his native Poland. By the time he entered



Fr. Andrzej Sudol during his doctoral defense; due to the pandemic, it was done via video conference

the doctoral program at CTU he had already been a part of three distinct formation cultures, and then he was asked to assist with a fourth: the formation program for the US Province. His doctoral studies went to part-time status so that he could balance his time with the formation program. He is currently the assistant novice master and postulancy director.

He emphasizes that each culture within the congregation makes its own imprint upon its formation programs, but there is a unifying element in all that allows for interculturality: the Dehonian charism and each member’s identity — wherever he is in the world or wherever he is from — as a member of the Priests of the Sacred Heart.

If SCJs are to live and minister as intercultural communities within an international religious congregation, its members must be taught from the earliest stages of formation “what interculturality is, its dynamics, and skills,” said Fr. Andrzej.

It takes more than good will. “Candidates must be trained for interculturality,” he emphasized.



Fr. Andrzej was all smiles at the end of his doctoral defense.

“Most members of the province, of which one-third is international, welcome intercultural living in theory, but are unaware of the consequences,” wrote Fr. Andrzej in the first pages of his thesis.

The challenge is that interculturality requires more than just welcoming people from cultures different than one’s own. “Unfortunately, there is often an expectation that the new international members and candidates will give up their own culture and identity to assimilate,” wrote Fr. Andrzej. “This does not work well.”

Of the current active members of the US Province, over 30 were born somewhere other than the United States.

To live interculturality “is a challenging but prophetic undertaking made according to the spirit of our founder, Leo John Dehon, and resembles the history of this country built on immigration and diversity of cultures,” writes Fr. Andrzej.

The US Province itself, the anniversary of which was celebrated just a few days ago on April 25, was established by a multicultural group of immigrant SCJs.

So where does one begin to learn how to live interculturality?

“Interculturality in a religious community begins with hospitality, which in a broader sense means availability,” said Fr. Andrzej.

“Only the man who approaches others, not to draw them into his own life, but to help them become ever more fully themselves, can truly be called a father.” Fr. Andrzej used the quote from Pope Francis’ encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, to emphasize what is needed for interculturality.

“An attitude of an open heart and mind in the spirit of human fraternity and social friendship enables people to free themselves of the desire to wield power over others,” he wrote. “This open attitude and fraternal friendship allow us to acknowledge

and appreciate each person, regardless of physical proximity, origin, social position, and culture.”

His experience

When asked about his own experience as an international SCJ studying in the United States, Fr. Andrzej said that “It was a challenge to study the D.Min. at CTU since English is not my native language. But at the same time, it has been an excellent opportunity

to learn about cultural diversity and the multicultural reality of the Church in the United States.

“I am grateful to God and our congregation for this meaningful experience. I am blessed to minister as a formation director in the US Province. The thesis-project will help me to accompany our candidates in their journey to become Dehonians who are interculturality sensitive in their ministry and community life.”

“
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Frater Long Nguyen

Interculturality lived in South Dakota

*SCJ reminds us that
“It’s all God’s work!”*

Frater Long Nguyen, SCJ — an American of Vietnamese background — is the most recent addition to the multicultural community that serves the Lower Brule and Crow Creek reservations in South Dakota. He joins Fr. Jean-Claude Mbassi, SCJ, from Cameroon, and Fr. Christianus Hendrik, SCJ, originally from Indonesia.

The culture that he left — northern Mississippi — was one that was familiar to Frater Long, who grew up in Thibodaux, Louisiana. “I had a commonality with some of the people who moved up to Mississippi from Louisiana after Hurricane Katrina,” he said. “The rapport that I shared with parishioners was deep and life-giving.”

Although Frater Long admits that it is never easy to leave a culture that feels like home (“the distance from family and friends is challenging,” he said about Lower Brule), Frater Long looks forward to the possibilities his new assignment offers him.

“All of my assignments have afforded me opportunities to get to know people through the Church and the general community,” he said.

“Wherever a person is, there can be moments for leisure, personal and spiritual development, accessibility to diverse resources.

“My previous ministry experiences taught me to have great patience. I always try to remember what a friend reminded me, that ‘it is all God’s work. We are just along for the ride.’ You cannot reproduce what worked in one ministry and expect that it will automatically work in another.”

There is a commonality that Frater Long emphasizes in ministry wherever he is located. “It is presence; what is most significant to me is to always offer the ministry of presence.

“Ministry in the Great Plains is an opportunity to examine and try to understand what it means to be ‘present.’ Being present to people does not necessarily equate to grand results that we can see on paper, but it is one of the most important things that we can offer.”

This is Frater Long’s first assignment in South Dakota.

St. Joseph’s awards \$176,050 in scholarships

St. Joseph’s Indian School recently awarded \$84,350 in spring semester scholarships to Native American students across the nation, bringing the total awards for the academic year to \$176,050. This spring, the school provided 68 scholarships: 16 to alumni, 13 to family members of St. Joseph’s alumni, and 39 to others enrolled in a federally recognized tribe and pursuing higher ed.

The school created the scholarship program in 1985 to benefit Native American students pursuing higher education. Financial need and academic performance are the basis for determining the awards. Opened in 1927, St. Joseph’s Indian School is one of the oldest ministries of the Priests of the Sacred Heart (Dehonians) in the United States.



Bishop Joseph Perry speaking at the March 17th Dehon Lecture at SHSST

The continuing challenge of race and interculturality

Bishop Joseph Perry speaks at Dehon Lecture

“**W**e must shape our parishes and institutions to be oases of hospitality where all are welcome,” said Bishop Joseph Perry.

Bishop Perry, auxiliary bishop of Chicago, was the presenter at the March 17th Dehon Lecture at Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology. His topic: “The Canonization of Fr. Augustus Tolton: Significance for Race Relations and Interculturality.” It was an opportunity to speak about a man who embraced a church that did not always embrace him, a black man born into slavery.

It was also an opportunity to note the challenges of racism and separation that American society continues to grapple with today, including the Catholic Church.

Fr. Tolton, also known as “Fr. Gus,” is thought to be the first publicly known African American to be ordained as a Roman Catholic priest.

Fr. Tolton studied in Rome, where he was ordained on Easter Sunday in 1886 at the Basilica of St. John Lateran. He ministered in Illinois, serving at his home parish in Quincy, and later in Chicago. He was declared venerable by Pope Francis in 2019.

“Why declare him a saint?” writes Bishop Perry on the website for the archdiocese of Chicago. “Fr. Tolton is

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Priests of the Sacred Heart

Heart to Heart with Bishop Perry



Continuing the discussion

Following the Dehon Lecture, Bishop Joseph Perry sat down with Fr. Vien Nguyen, SCJ, for a “Heart to Heart” conversation about diversity in the Church and in society. He reflected on what it means to put what he called the “adjective” of “Black” or “Mexican” or “Vietnamese” in front of the word “Catholic.” For example, he and many other Black Catholics identify strongly with the “God of liberation” and the story of Exodus. However, while noting the nuances of the Catholic experience found among various cultural groups, Bishop Perry emphasized that the Church is a “catholic” church with a small “c”, meaning that it is a universal church with a kaleidoscope of diversity. **“The commonality is our catholic Catholicism,”** said the bishop.

Bishop Perry’s interview is available on the US Province YouTube channel, www.youtube.com/DehoniansUSA, or view it directly at: <http://dehoniansusa.info/perry>

priests – to create parish cultures that are “welcoming to all, that never treat anyone as a stranger or as someone who does not belong.”

Dr. Paul Monson, assistant professor of Church History at SHSST, and Celia Jackson, a retired attorney and former director of the Social Concerns Office for the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, were respondents to the bishop’s presentation.

Ms. Jackson spoke of the inconsistencies of a Church that has often excluded African Americans, yet helped immigrant communities, at times establishing national churches for immigrant Catholics. Many African Americans do not feel welcome in the Catholic Church, she added.

Dr. Monson reflected on Fr. Tolton’s personal history alongside the history of Catholic Church and society in general. Fr. Tolton studied in Rome because Black men would not be welcome in Catholic seminaries in the United States until the 1950s. With the support of his parish pastor and other priests in his hometown of Quincy, IL, Fr. Tolton was able to study for the priesthood at the Pontifical Urban College “de Propaganda Fide.” Dr. Monson noted that when Fr. Tolton returned to the United States he was not a priest of any diocese, but in reality, a Roman missionary sent back to minister in a homeland that did not fully accept him because of his color.

It was in Rome, said Dr. Monson, that Fr. Tolton experienced a global church that welcomed him.

“O God, we give you thanks for your servant and priest, Father Augustus Tolton, who labored among us in times of contradiction, times that were both beautiful and paradoxical,” begins the prayer for Fr. Tolton’s canonization. “His ministry helped lay the foundation for a truly Catholic gathering in faith in our time. We stand in the shadow of his ministry. May his life continue to inspire us and imbue us with that confidence and hope that will forge a new evangelization for the Church we love.”

a saint for doing things priests do, namely, care for people, ministering to their desperate needs, anointing them with the saving graces of the sacraments, forgiving their sins, preaching a word that works to transform the Church to its more authentic face before the world and describe for people how they can give an authentic response to God in genuine discipleship. But Fr. Tolton received no rewards or citations in life. Society and the Church did not allow Tolton to do these priestly things so easily assigned to him. He suffered genuinely in that these priestly things were administered from a black face, black hands and a black heart. 19th century America placed dark skin at the bottom of the color pyramid.

“This has become, unfortunately, an indelible stigma in the American psyche. Even certain scripture passages were manipulated to justify

people of African descent as preordained by God for perpetual servitude and haphazard treatment, thereupon, blackness dismissed as a universal symbol of inferiority...

“Tolton’s sanctity emerges from an experience of the cross. His goodness easily elicits our affection and our empathy, a goodness that attracted people of whatever background to his sermons and ministrations and counsel. He was a bright light in a dark time.”

In reflecting on Fr. Tolton’s life during his presentation, Bishop Perry said that the Church must also reflect on itself. He noted the disconnect of “singing songs and saying prayers about being brothers and sisters in Christ but then living separately and worshipping separately; our words ring hollow.”

He urged those present – especially the seminarians, religious and



Heart to Heart conversations

What does it mean to have a “heart to heart” conversation? For many, it refers to a sense of truth and openness in dialogue with another; a raw honesty often based in one’s faith or spirituality.

“Heart to Heart” is the name of a new interview series produced by the US Province video team; the team is made up primarily of members of the formation community at Sacred Heart Monastery.

Begun in March, Fr. Vien Nguyen, SCJ, has served as the series’ first interviewer, inviting a variety of guests — including SCJs, bishops, and lay people — to have “heart to heart” conversations about faith, spirituality and current events.

The videos are generally less than 15 minutes and cover topics such as “The Gospel of Inclusion” with Bishop Joseph Perry of Chicago (see page 4), the ministry of “Intentional Presence” with Fr. Frank Wittouck, SCJ, spirituality with Fr. John Czyzynski, SCJ and antisemitism with Bonnie Shafrin, director of the Lux Center for Catholic-Jewish Studies at Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology.

“We chose the title ‘Heart to Heart’ with the hope that the people we interview will give us their honest answers on a deep level regarding issues related to their vocation, ministry and faith,” said Fr. Vien. “With these dialogues, our viewers can see how

God works mysteriously — and not-so-mysteriously — in all of our lives.” Organizers hope that the guests’ personal stories touch viewers’ hearts.

“At a basic level, the title ‘Heart to Heart’ also makes sense because it is an expression of who we are as Priests of the Sacred Heart,” continued Fr. Vien. “These videos are a way not only to spark conversations, but also to share more about our religious community with those who might not know us, especially people discerning a vocation.”

When asked about favorite moments from the interviews, Fr. Vien cited several.

“In my interview with Fr. John Czyzynski he said that he experienced God’s love, God’s image in his parents,” said Fr. Vien. “In subsequent interviews, I see the truth in that. God



works in and through people.

“Bonnie Shafrin, director of the Lux Center, shared her experience of being called a ‘Jesus-killer’ when she was just six years old, and that her friends’ parents would not allow their children to play with her because of her family’s Jewish faith. It was heart-breaking for me to hear that.

“I like the way Bishop Joseph Perry connected the African-American experience of slavery to the Israelites’ experience of oppression in Egypt, and how God was personally involved in their liberation.”

Fr. Vien said that he has enjoyed interviewing fellow SCJs, learning stories about them first-hand that he had never heard before, such as the story of Fr. Frank Wittouck unexpectedly dangling from a helicopter, or of Fr. Jim Walters being challenged by a Native American when speaking the Lakota language.

Although it is his face that is in front of the camera right now, Fr. Vien emphasizes that the interviews are definitely a team effort. “There is a lot of work that goes into each of the videos,” he said. “Just setting up the scene and adjusting the lighting and sound all takes time.” And after that comes significant work in front of the computer, editing. “I am grateful to our video team; everyone contributes toward the production of the interviews.”

The “Heart to Heart” videos are available on the US Province YouTube channel at:

www.youtube.com/DehoniansUSA.





Fr. John with the Vietnamese students during one of the video conferences.

Not your average school year

Much of the news that appears in province communications in late spring is about education: graduations, advanced degrees, and end-of-the-year celebrations and activities. And it would be an understatement to call this past year a challenging one for teachers, administrators and students in the midst of a pandemic that constantly called for adaptations.

"To everyone who has worked hard to keep our province schools going in the midst of this pandemic, to ensure that our students and teachers have had safe learning environments, thank you from me and the Provincial Council," said Fr. Ed Kilianski, SCJ. "I am sure that there is much work that I never see, people quietly just doing what needs to be done. Know that I have been praying for all of you during these difficult times and am grateful for your service in the name of the Priests of the Sacred Heart."

We noted Fr. Andrzej Sudol's doctorate at the beginning of this *SCJ News*; the following is news of a few more of our spring Dehonian grads:

Loyola graduates

Congratulations to Fr. Edgard Biankeu, SCJ, a member of the Cameroon Province, who graduated from Loyola University in Chicago with a master's degree in Christian Spirituality with a focus on spiritual direction.

"Young Cameroonians suffer much loss and



Fr. Edgard

Closed borders open educational opportunities

While the pandemic has closed most borders, it has opened up a world full of educational opportunities. The District of Vietnam has five SCJs preparing for final vows. Fr. Francis-Vu Tran, SCJ, district superior, reached out to Fr. John van den Hengel, SCJ, to see if he could provide a few sessions for the program. Fr. John is a member of the Ottawa community in the Canadian Region, about 8,500 miles (13,700 kilometers) away from the students' desks in Vietnam.

With the help of the internet, Fr. John held four video-conference sessions for the Vietnamese SCJs between April 13-22. Time zone differences had the students and teacher meeting at the same time, but at different ends of the days. The students were in front of their computers at 8:00 pm, while Fr. John was next to his at 9:00 am.

The topic of the sessions focused on the social work or the social spirituality of Fr. Leo John Dehon.

"It was interesting to note that the Vietnamese had little awareness or understanding of the French context

out of which Fr. Dehon came and which determined much of his activity and vision," said Fr. John.

"All of the Vietnamese had their formation in the Philippines and so language was not a problem," he continued. Two of the Vietnamese — Vincent Thoan Van Do and John Hung Dinh — had done a pastoral year in Toronto. Paul Linh Hai Le had spent time in Dublin. "It was quite a cosmopolitan group!"

Fr. John said that "the challenge of such a presentation is to allow the Vietnamese to get beyond the literal vision of Fr. Dehon and his engagement in the social sphere and to interpret it within an Asian context with a totally different history and culture! How do you translate Fr. Dehon's notion of 'pure love,' which animated his social engagement, into the complex environment of Vietnam?"

The Zoom sessions allowed for interaction between the students and presenter, "but it would have been a joy to have been able to sit in the same room in Ho Chi Minh City and to probe their vocation to the charism of Leo Dehon," added Fr. John.



Fr. Louis

trauma due to the ongoing social crises in our country," said Fr. Edgard, talking about why he decided to pursue his studies. He hopes to work with young people, especially Dehonian stu-

dents preparing for religious life and ministry, and offer them psychological and spiritual guidance to address trauma that they have experienced. His dream is to "create a spiritual center that can offer activities such as prayer, retreats, art, dance and storytelling to help people heal and discover God in their lives."

Although his graduation was in August, 2020, Fr. Louis Mariano Fernandes, SCJ, recently completed his internship for his degree in Pastoral Counseling. "The course consisted of the dynamics of personal, group, couple, and child counseling with multiple therapy orientations," wrote Fr. Louis about the degree shortly after his graduation last year. "It was a study of basically varied therapeutical approaches towards mental health and behavioral problems."

A member of the District of India, Fr. Louis expressed his gratitude to many for his studies, including the Provincial Council and members of the US Province. "I remain grateful and indebted to the US Province for their generosity towards me," he wrote.

Focusing not just on the what, but the HOW of education

"I am the son of educators," said Br. Diego Diaz, SCJ. "Helping people to learn — especially children — has been important to me since I was very young.

It was this passion for teaching, but also in finding ways to help people to learn, that interested Br. Diego in the field of Psychopedagogy, an area of study that focuses how people learn, and how to create environments that can aid in the learning process. In



Br. Diego

early April, Br. Diego completed his final project toward his master's degree in the field. The basis of his master's project was on Sacred Heart Southern Missions' summer programs for children. Br.

Diego said that summer camps can be an ideal learning environment because "they allow the emotional space for learning, playing and socializing; it is a holistic approach to learning."

"The pedagogy of the heart was essential to Fr. Leo John Dehon, our founder," said Br. Diego. "A pedagogy of the heart means a holistic approach; it means approaching the entire person, not just a student's academic needs. Teaching our students in this way will help them to use a holistic style in other areas of their life."

Commencement at SHSST

Finally, congratulations to the graduates of Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology. Among them were two from the District of India, Brs. Thomas Raju and Prem Kaleel Raguman, who completed their master's degrees through the Adveniat Regnum Tuum Pathway, an MA program designed in partnership with the District of India and SHSST. Commencement took place on May 7; Fr. Ed Kilianski, SCJ, was the main presider at the ceremony.



SHSST grads



JPR director retires

April 30 was Mark Peters' last day as director of Justice, Peace and Reconciliation for the US Province; he began his retirement the next day. Mark had been with the Priests of the Sacred Heart since January, 2014, when he was hired as the first non-SCJ director of JPR.



Mark Peters

"Retirement beckons, with all its freedoms and possibilities," he wrote in the JPR newsletter. "I'm grateful to the province for the privilege of being able to devote the last years of my career to justice ministry. I consider myself to have become a 'Dehonian,' lucky to have discovered your Founder rather late in life, but amazed at how much he anticipated so much of what this ministry has become since its very beginnings under

Pope Leo XIII...

"God bless you all as you continue to 'follow the Founder... in establishing the Reign of justice and Christian charity in the world.'"

And in South Dakota, another retirement

In April, Fr. Anthony Kluckman, SCJ, celebrated his final Mass at St. Joseph's Indian School before packing his bags and heading to Sacred Heart at Monastery Lake to begin his retirement.

In an interview on the occasion of his 50th anniversary of profession (2016), Fr. Anthony was asked what he enjoyed about his work at St. Joseph's. "The kids," he said. "I am able to see the students in church on Sundays but also go into the homes for prayer. I am a referee at the games and participate in a wide variety of activities that take place here. I can show the students that I too am human and make individual connections for those who may need to talk about things. St. Joseph's also has a great staff who go the extra mile, which in return, makes me go the extra mile."

As someone who has rarely said "no" to a task, Fr. Anthony was asked what it means to be in service to others. "It means to help people move

closer and closer to God," he said. "To be flexible and to have a willingness to go where you are needed. I may have a plan on where I am going, but I have to be open to where God wants me to go.

"The key is to not focus on the door that closes, but rather look around for the doors that may be open."

International community grows in Lower Brule

As we noted in the feature on Frater Long Nguyen on page 2, the pastoral team in Lower Brule, SD, includes an international community of Dehonians. Among them is Fr. Jean-Claude Mbassi, SCJ, who joined the community in March. Originally from Cameroon, Fr. Jean-Claude is 46, and in his home province served in a variety of ministries, including work with at-risk youth, prison ministry, and interreligious dialogue. From 2011-2018 he was also a member of the Provincial Council in Cameroon.

"I am pleased to share with people of other cultures my world vision, my heritage, and my lived experience," said Fr. Jean-Claude. "At the same time, I am pleased that they will add their pieces of cloth to the quilt that is my life, my commitment, and my ministry."



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