



SCJ News

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

Lights! Camera! ***ACTION!***

It started as a way to open a window into the formation community at a time when — due to the pandemic — few visitors are allowed to come inside. Students at Sacred Heart Monastery created a couple of YouTube videos as a lighthearted way of introducing themselves to others discerning a vocation.

They asked each other questions such as, “What superpower would you like to have?” “When you were a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?” One student’s reply: “I wanted to be a DRAGON!” “What is your favorite way to pray, your favorite scripture passage?” “What has surprised you about the community?” “What are you grateful for?” “What would you like to hear God say to you at the gates of heaven?”

The students’ initial video received hundreds of views in its first day.



Frater Phong (Paul) Hoang sets up the camera for Michael Wodarczyk’s interview.

Next was a visit to the novitiate for an interview with members of the novitiate team (Frs. Byron Haaland, SCJ, and Andrzej Sudol, SCJ), as well as a video tour of the novitiate itself. And then the students moved to a culinary focus with members of the Sacred Heart Monastery community doing a blind taste-test of foods from Vietnam and Poland.

“It tastes like a smell!” said one of the testers after giving durian a try. His face indicated that it was not a smell he favored. “Socks? Dirty socks?” Durian is a tropical fruit na-

tive to Asia. It is prickly both in texture and in smell. The treats native to Poland, with a focus on chocolate and “adult beverages” seemed to garner more positive responses from the group.

The students are now focusing their cameras on several SCJs, asking questions about their ministries, the congregation, and their own vocation stories.

You can find the videos at www.youtube.com/dehoniansusa or simply search “DehoniansUSA” in YouTube.

Find us on YouTube at: www.youtube.com/dehoniansusa



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Our 2020-21 Formation Community at Sacred Heart Monastery: (standing) Fr. Zbigniew Morawiec, Michael Wodarczyk, Frater Thuan Nguyen, Jacob Smith, Jonathan Nguyen-Vuong, Celsus Robert, Frater Phong (Paul) Hoang, Fr. Joseph-Thien Dinh; (kneeling) Frater Thien Nguyen, Frater Hung Pham, Frater Kodjovi (Hubert) Liassidji, and Frater Truc Tran. At right: the masked, pandemic-appropriate version. Not pictured: Fraters Henry Nguyen and Long Nguyen who are both doing pastoral ministry in Mississippi.

Preparing for SCJ religious life

Although their YouTube videos give an introduction to some of the members of the formation community, each year we also ask our students 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.

"I am thrilled to see where this life as an SCJ will lead me. I know it will continue to allow me to help and serve those who are most in need," wrote Frater Henry Nguyen, SCJ, who is currently doing his pastoral year of

ministry in Mississippi. Originally, he was to have had a cross-cultural year in South America as a part of his formation experience, but as with many things in 2020, the pandemic got in



Celsus and Jacob often serve as music ministers at monastery liturgies.

the way. He is now getting to know our home missions.

Frater Hung Pham, SCJ, writes that he "wants to discover more about the SCJ Rule of Life and SCJ charism. I want to be a prophet of love, servant of reconciliation, and give attention to humankind's appeals through Dehonian spirituality. I also want to live in the spirit of love and reparation so I can dedicate myself more intimately to God and service to the congregation."

"I professed my first vows with the Priests of the Sacred Heart on August 15, 2019," wrote Kodjovi "Hubert" Liassidji. "SCJ formation has transformed me. I am in my second year as a temporally professed. Recently, I renewed my vows in Mississippi on the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The renewal of my vows in the presence of SCJs in Mississippi, and

with people from Sacred Heart Southern Missions, gave me strength, courage, and determination, not only to continue my journey to priesthood and religious life, but also to be more available to serve the poor, the homeless and the needy. I am in my senior year at Marquette University majoring in Philosophy and Theology."

"I had never heard of religious congregations until Fr. Quang [Nguyen] told me about the SCJs," wrote Jonathan Nguyen-Vuong. "I only knew the diocesan way of life, but now that I have begun living and studying with the SCJs I have a sense of calm. I understand the difference between diocesan priests and religious communities. During my Come and See Weekend (on my birthday!) I was attracted to the vows that the SCJs must follow, and the charism of the founder, Fr. Leo John Dehon. I have felt called to the priesthood since I was in fourth grade. I have a passion to learn more about God every day of my life and I know that learning about God will never be enough; I need to be a part of community life."

"I studied Chemistry in Sai Gon [also Saigon or Ho Chi Minh City] University from 2011 to 2015. I lived in the dorm of Huyen Si Parish, which is available to students who live and study in Ho Chi Minh city. I liked community life there and I felt called to become a religious. I knew about the Priests of the Sacred Heart in Vietnam through my neighbor, who was student with the community. My first day as a candidate with the community was August 6, 2015; I had my first holy hour in the community. In that initial year, I studied English and Vietnamese in preparation for the entrance exam for Philosophy studies. After finishing Philosophy, I joined two of my confreres to go to the US Province to enter postulancy and the novitiate."

Read more about our students at:

[www.dehoniansusa.org/
feature-stories/
the-students-behind-the-masks](http://www.dehoniansusa.org/feature-stories/the-students-behind-the-masks)



Bishop Joe during a home Mass in South Africa.

Two former missionaries respond to the 20 Questions project

Bishop Joseph Potocnak, SCJ, and Fr. Mark Fortner, SCJ, are the most recent participants in the 20 Questions project. Each served much of his religious life as a missionary: Fr. Mark was in Indonesia for 30 years, and Bishop Joe spent 36 years in South Africa, 17 as the bishop of the Diocese of De Aar.

"What would people be surprised to learn about me?"

wrote Bishop Joe. "There are several things that I think are worth mentioning, things that people might not know. I served four years in the 1950s in the Air Force, 18 months on Kumejima Island in the East China Sea.

"When I became Bishop of De Aar, South Africa, there was the pandemic of HIV/AIDS and I was able to get a nurse, Sr. Cathy, a Sacred Heart Sister, to start hospices in our diocese. They were mostly home-care hospices. From the start in our diocese, approximately 40 towns in other dioceses began hospice programs.

"When Bishop Tutu retired, I attended the celebration of him in Kim-

berley with all the Anglican bishops, I was the only Catholic bishop there.

"I was stabbed once, and once hit on the head, rendered unconscious, and robbed. Thankfully, I have no lasting health issues from this.

"What makes me happy? Being a priest, interacting with the poor and the sick who have touched my life deeply. I do consider myself a son of



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.

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Postage prepaid.



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Priests of the Sacred Heart

Fr. Dehon. His community has given meaning and harmony and joy to me."

"Religion played an important role in our family," wrote Fr. Mark, who is originally from St. Louis. "My father was Baptist before converting to Catholicism during my seminary years, and my mother was Roman Catholic. I always felt their deep love for us children. My favorite book is Thomas Merton's *The Seven Storey Mountain* and my favorite color is a toss-up between blue and red. My least favorite chore is cleaning the bathrooms!

"What initially interested me in the SCJs were four things: first, the idea of living as a priest in a religious community; secondly, the spirituality centered in the Heart of Christ; third, our founder, Fr. Leo John Dehon, SCJ, someone passionately committed to social justice issues; fourth, the possibility of becoming a foreign missionary.

"Now, I continue to feel the excitement of how the congregation continues to develop and expand around the world. For me, calling myself a Dehonian makes being a Priest of the Sacred Heart more personal and connects me not only with our founder, but also with the names and faces of all the members of our worldwide Dehonian family."

To read the full responses of Bishop Joe and Fr. Mark, as well as access those of others, go to:

www.dehoniansusa.org/members/20-questions



Fr. Mark Fortner visiting with Bishop Aloysius Sudarso in Indonesia.



More than a just hashtag

It is an understatement to say that 2020 is a year like no other. The COVID-19 pandemic in and of itself is one of the most significant challenges that the world has faced in generations. However, it isn't just the virus that is the challenge. The inequity of how the virus affects people of color has been the catalyst that has brought to light many inequities. It is in the midst of the pandemic that the Black Lives Matter grew from a social media hashtag to a global movement.

The SCJs' general communications office asked several Dehonians in North America to share their thoughts on this time in history. We include a few of them here. Read all of the reflections on the general website at:

www.tinyurl.com/NORAMreflections

"We are called to live together in accepting our diversities"

Fr. Gustave Lulendo N'dotony, SCJ, originally from the Democratic Republic of Congo, is a naturalized Canadian citizen. A member of the Montréal community, he is the regional superior of Canada. Fr. Gustave writes:

Coming from a country that has experienced slavery, colonization, dictatorship and then war, it is quite natural to react to discrimination in all its forms, and to injustice, especially when it tends to be institutionalized. With the greater awareness of the Black Lives Matter movement following the death of George Floyd, we

have seen how humanity can react and respond to those who hold "anti-values." Black Lives Matter is no longer just a slogan but an action plan to denounce or even eradicate racism. Different voices have risen up, seeking to change things in the present, but above all, to create a better future for all humanity. Racism is only the tip of the iceberg which hides a great deal of discrimination. Fighting against this scourge in particular is a commitment to seeing things change.

It is not only a question of protecting a minority judged by the color of its skin, but of the commitment of all of humanity against discrimination based on sex, religion and race, just to name a few. It is the aim of a humanity concerned with making the earth a common place where everyone has the same fundamental rights which promote their dignity. To remain silent to this phenomenon is to accept exclusion and deny a category of people the right to exist.

By vocation, we are called to live together in accepting our diversities – which can become opportunities – rather than dwelling on what differentiates us.

As Priests of the Sacred Heart, we are heirs to a tradition based on love and acceptance of the other as a gift. The Sint Unum dear to our founder, Fr. Dehon, can thus become a spring-



Fr. Gustave

board and a response to the question of discrimination. This requires education, and the commitment of all to concrete acts in their daily living.

"Love one another; as I have loved you." (Jn 13, 34-35) It is up to everyone to live this, wherever they are, if we want to experience humanity as the family that it is.

"Do not be conquered by evil but conquer evil with good"

Fr. John Czyzynski, SCJ, former provincial superior of the US Province, is now a retired member of the community at Sacred Heart at Monastery Lake in Franklin, WI. He writes:

The protests that are going on in the United States and around the world have made me reflect a lot about what is going on. For me, the peaceful protests make all kinds of sense. People have seen enough, and it is time to do something to bring about change. I can easily understand and support people peacefully marching in the streets, calling for reform.

What complicates the issue is the violence and looting that at times accompanies the peaceful protests. How can I make any sense out of that? As I read and reflect about the protests that have turned violent, I see different groups of people, different motives behind the destruction.

I think that there are good people who have suffered for years from systemic injustice. They have tried — to no avail — to bring about peaceful change. They have given up on the system. They tried doing things following proper channels and no one seems to be listening. In their rage and desperation they have turned to violence. They are screaming out to us: "If you won't listen to us when we use words, all we have left to get attention to our plight is to upset what



Fr. John

everyone sees as normal." "Normal" being a way of life that is often enjoyed by only some citizens and not others. As much as I don't like it, I can understand *some* of the violence as seen from this perspective.

I plead with those creating violence to stop, to not be an obstacle for those trying to protect the dignity of their brothers and sisters. I don't know if their hearts are open to hear me, but I hope that they are.

Knowing that desperation can lead some to violence I share a variation of what St. Paul says to the Romans (Romans 12:20-21):

"If your enemy is hungry, feed him, if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; if you do this you will heap burning coals upon his head. Do not be conquered by evil but conquer evil with good."

"This sad reality should particularly touch our Dehonian hearts"

Fr. Willyans Rapozo, SCJ, a member of the Toronto community who is originally from Brazil writes:

We have recently witnessed a number of racist and xenophobic events in North America which have caused deep indignation and raised protests throughout the world. This sad reality should particularly touch our Dehonian hearts. Following the example of Fr. Dehon, a man of God who in his time became a prophetic voice defending the most vulnerable, we cannot be quiet in the face of any social injustice. In fact, the Founder once said, "If social injustice is not sin, then sin does not exist."

As Dehonians, we are called to repair broken hearts, and God continues to send us to wherever human dignity is being disrespected. We see the face of Christ in the marginalized. He is being persecuted, beaten, and killed in Black and Native Americans, migrants and homeless children, LGBTQ+ and single mothers, all sisters and brothers who are victims of any form of discrimination and violence. Let us be creative in finding ways of

"leaving the sacristy" and reaching out to those who are being exploited. Let us truly be "prophets of love and servants of reconciliation" welcoming the outcast and showing through our words and actions how much they are loved.



Fr. Willyans

"Leaving the sacristy means going out to the world with all its challenges"

Fr. Rafael Querobin, SCJ, originally from Brazil, is associate pastor of Our Lady of Guadalupe parish in Houston, Texas. He writes:

Our ministry in Houston is dedicated almost exclusively to people of Hispanic background. We don't have many African American people who attend our parish regularly. I can now understand what it means to have the same faith but not pray together. I am happy to hold a vital ministry with people who speak Spanish. At the same time, I feel that our assembly is not complete. Language can be a dividing element, like any other thing that sets us apart. I have many questions, but not many answers.

The Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston is doing beautiful work to show its concern for Black rights. I attended an event in memory of George Floyd at the school he studied at here in Houston. It was a beautiful but also challenging experience.

As Dehonians, we need to overcome fear and be open to participating in events and discussions of this kind. Leaving the sacristy means going out to the world with all of its challenges.



Fr. Rafael

Ministering in a silent language

Many people think of picking up a new skill as they enter retirement: learn a musical instrument, start to paint, become a gardener or even learn a new language. It was the last – a new language – that Br. Leonard Zaworski, SCJ, settled on. But the language that he would learn was one that no one would hear: Braille. He shares his story in his own words:

I've been volunteering with ABLE (Audio and Braille Literacy Enhancement) at the Main Branch of the Milwaukee Public Library since mid 2012, when I began my online Literary Braille course.

My lessons continued for months. I worked on assignments, emailing the completed lesson to my instructor, and then going on to struggle with the next one. I was certified as a Braille Transcriber by the Library of Congress on February 27, 2013. Then my real training began. I was given a 500-page book on birdcalls!!!

Braille characters include 64 distinct patterns of six dots, including space, 26 alphabet characters, 10 numbers (with number indicators), adding up to 280 commonly used characters, along with indicators, word signs, punctuation signs, special symbols, contractions, and short-form words. There are more or less 572 total characters, plus those created by the transcriber. Braille is regulated by the 350-page, *Rules of Unified English Braille*, put out by the Braille Authority of North America, BANA.

Actually, Braille itself is not the most important part of transcribing a document. How everything is formatted on the page tells the Braille reader what is important on the page, indicating the main text, notes, footnotes, boxed notes, photos and drawings. And this, for the most part, is the responsibility of the Braille transcriber. Every literary type has its own formatting possibilities (poetry, plays,

textbooks, tests...) which is regulated by the 400-page, *Braille Formats: Principles of Print-to-Braille Transcription*, also put out by BANA.

And then, there are the language codes for Spanish, French, German and Latin with their own formatting rules.

I completed my course in Music Braille, online, and received my Library of Congress Certification for Associate Transcriber of Music Braille, in February, 2016, which allows me to transcribe single line voice and instrumental music. Throughout these months of the pandemic I have been working on a Braille Mathematics course.

During the school year ABLE becomes very busy transcribing for students of every level in the schools throughout Milwaukee. When the transcriber gets an assignment with instructions and deadlines, we have to decide what goes on what page, and how. After the assignment is transcribed into Braille, it has to be checked for errors. The transcriber proofreads the document about three times, once every several hours, or days, before sending it to the ABLE office to be embossed. When they receive it at the office, a proofreader goes over it again. If there are errors, it is sent back to the transcriber for correction. In my case, I'm the only Music Transcriber, so I need to be extra careful.

ABLE started 55 years ago when Sr. Melmarie Stoll took a six-year-old blind student into her classroom. At that time there were no materials available in Braille with which to teach. Sr. Melmarie brought together a

small group of trained Braille students and began transcribing textbooks for students in two Milwaukee area schools.

Now with a staff of 10, and many volunteers, ABLE services the state of Wisconsin and beyond, Brailleing menus for restaurants, requested books of all kinds, church bulletins and ceremonies, music, materials in Spanish, German and French and math.

Eight years ago I was trying to find a meaningful ministry. Entering into retirement was easy at first. After spending 12 years in India, I enjoyed being back in the United States. A few years before I retired I spent a year in Baltimore when my mother's health began to deteriorate and I took a year-long course in Digital Media at Johns Hopkins University. One of the

things that stuck with me from the course was the constant concern about how to include elements in whatever projects we worked on that would serve the needs of people who are sightless.

When I discovered ABLE online and learned that it was possible to do Braille transcriptions on a computer, I called the Braille office and was invited to visit. Now here I am. It has been very challenging, but I found that I am good at it. I am very happy to have had the opportunity to work and learn alongside people who are blind, who witness to me their courage, patience, and strength of character. And I look forward to how I might continue to contribute to ABLE in more ways.

Pictured behind the title is the soprano part for the song "All Things Bright and Beautiful" transcribed into Braille.



Br. Leonard

SCJ NEWS

A new General Councilor

Fr. Charles Aimé Koudjou, SCJ, of Cameroon, has been appointed as the fifth member of the General Council.

"I welcomed my appointment with surprise and astonishment," said Fr. Charles. "Surprise because I was far from imagining such a thing, and astonishment that it relates to me personally. For a long time, I remained 'speechless' as the English say. Fr. General reassured me that it is not a job that is entrusted to me, but instead a call to participate in the work of a team, to share with others, in humility and availability, to be a close to others, to be there for them as they are there for me, for us."

Born on May 5, 1975, in Bamendjou, Fr. Charles made his first profession in 2000 and was ordained a priest in 2008. He has done advanced studies at the Gregorian in Rome and the Catholic University of Leuven in Belgium. Prior to his appointment, Fr. Charles served in parish ministry and formation.



Fr. Charles

Tragedy in Venezuela

Fr. José Manuel de Jesús Ferreira was killed by gunshot October 20 during a robbery attempt at his parish of San Juan Bautista, in San Carlos, Cojedes, Venezuela. He was 39, professed first vows with the Priests of the Sacred Heart in 2004, and was ordained to the priesthood in 2009. At the time of his death he was a priest with the diocese of San Carlos. More information about him and his tragic death is on the general website, www.dehoniani.org.



Fr. Juancho arriving at the airport in Quito, Ecuador.

"It feels good to be back with my SCJ brothers!"

After months of delay due to the pandemic, Fr. Juan Carlos Castañeda Rojas, SCJ, arrived in Ecuador on October 19 to join the Dehonian mission there. "It feels good to be back with my SCJ brothers," he said.

"I have always said that God works in mysterious ways and this time, once again, the change in my life is not an exception to that rule," he continued. "When we believe everything is going well in our lives, there is often something that may show us that we are not in complete control of our future. A year ago, I went to Colombia to get my religious worker visa and in my heart, I felt everything was going to be easy and it would take just a couple of weeks

to get the visa. However, once again I was reminded that it is God who has a plan for all of us even when we do not understand it at the moment.

"I recognize that God opened a new door for me at a time when I was feeling like so many doors in my life had closed. Thus, I was able to travel to Ecuador and return to community living. I was welcomed to the novitiate house in Quito."

Thank you!

In October, David Schimmel retired from his position as director of Dehonian Associates for the US Province. During his years as director, David edited the weekly e-publication, *Dehonian Spirituality*, developed a wide variety of materials on the Dehonian charism, taught classes on the founder at the novitiate, created presentations on Sacred Heart spirituality for a variety of age and academic levels, worked with Schools in Collaboration in designing Dehonian curricula, represented the province at international lay Dehonian gatherings, assisted with Mission Education, and developed the Dehonian Esprit de Coeur (alumni association).

Much of the work that David has produced, including back issues of *Dehonian Spirituality*, bulletin inserts, seasonal e-blasts, youth materials, and the ten-part "Spiritual Path" are available in the Dehonian Spirituality section of the US Province website, www.dehoniansusa.org.



David Schimmel cracks a smile during a retirement lunch at the Provincial Offices.

Top 100

Sr. Norma Pimentel, MJ, has been named as one of *Time Magazine's* 100 most influential people.

"Sr. Pimentel has been on the front lines of mercy for three decades, supporting migrants who are seeking refuge in the U.S. along Texas' border with Mexico," wrote Julian Castro, former Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. "As executive director of Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley, she directs efforts to provide shelter, food, sanctuary and comfort to people often treated as less than human. Her organization has housed and assisted well over 100,000 people at the border."



Sr. Norma

Sr. Norma has spoken at several province events; last year she was the featured speaker at the Dehon Lecture.

A year later

It has been just over a year since a groundbreaking ceremony was held for the new Family Violence Women's Safe Shelter in Eagle Butte, SD. The shelter is a ministry of the Sacred Heart Center, which was begun by the

Priests of the Sacred Heart and continues to be sponsored by St. Joseph's Indian School.

As with many projects during this year of COVID-19, unexpected delays have slowed construction, but even in the midst of an early autumn snow, the building continues to take shape.

"It's easy to see progress when you observe walls and trusses being erected and sheathing added to cover them," said Greg Fischer, executive director of the center. But now, much of the vital work that isn't easily seen is underway, such as plumbing and insulation. Duct work and the installation of the fire system was expected to take place by mid-November, as well as sheet rock. Windows, doors, shingles — it is expected that all of this will be in place by early December.



The Sacred Heart Center's women's shelter pictured at the end of October.



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

**Find out how
you can join us!**

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