



SUPERIOR GENERAL
CONGREGATION OF THE
PRIESTS OF THE SACRED HEART
Dehonians

Prot. N. 0432/2018

Asten, 6 December 2018

To all the members of Dehonian Family

Letter for Christmas 2018

Returning to Bethlehem

Dear confreres and all the members of Dehonian Family,

At this time of year, we often speak about paths. The voice of the prophets invites us to repair the ones that have suffered damage and to build new ones to continue to give direction to our life. In these days, the voice of the Gospel speaks more about the travelers than the path, of a young couple from Nazareth, magi come from afar and a group of shepherds surprised during their work. All of them traveled. None of them traveled alone.

For many, Mary and Joseph are simply fulfilling their duty, but even before that, they had certainly undertaken a moving journey. They were accompanied by the faith and intimate solidarity that united them, and especially by God's everlasting benevolence. The shepherds, on their part, felt invited to be witnesses of the Pastor who always acts for the good of His people. They overcame their fears and traveled during the night. They found a shared joy in a new era that that began before their amazed eyes that very night. The magi, the foreigners who came from the greatest distance, were wise enough to know that to reach their goal they needed to discern and be guided. None of these travelers was disappointed. The encounter with Jesus illuminated their faces and shined a great light upon their culture. Nobody felt like a stranger and no one thought of the other as a stranger. The only one who remained estranged from all this was Herod. He himself wanted to be estranged and remain excluded. He did not want to go beyond himself, and even less did he want to set himself on the road and start walking with the others. He was a prisoner of his power. All the others were able to enter Bethlehem, especially the simple ones, receptive to surprise, who had no ambitions of power or prestige, restless ones seeking the truth. It is they who teach us the path we must travel and inspire us to continue along the way.

The voice of the XXIV General Chapter that we celebrated just this year invites us to continue walking together, growing in the synodal culture. It means walking in the light of the Spirit,

each day creating more space for the Good News that comes to us from Jesus in everything we do. It is Jesus who gives life and flavor to our journey. "His way is our way "(Cst. 12). Fr. Dehon has left us this living legacy. We must welcome it, live it and share it.

In this month of December, we remember that 150 years ago Fr. Dehon was preparing to celebrate his first Christmas as a priest. His ministry in the Church was a continuous learning to walk with others and for others. If this is so, it is because he fully understood the road to Bethlehem.

Contemplating once again what happened there spurred the life of our Founder. Bethlehem, the Holy night of Christmas, was the starting point for him. There he learned to remain and to walk hand in hand with God, to go out of himself and go out to meet others. He directed his way to meet and accompany those he knew would be most in need of attention and care, especially the youth around him. He never forgot to search for new horizons: «*Où faut-il aller? Je suis prêt : "Ecce venio!"*». *Faut-il aller à Bethléem, à Nazareth, en Égypte, en Galilée? "Ecce venio!"*». ["Where must I go? I am ready: 'Ecce venio!'. Must I go to Bethlehem, to Nazareth, to Egypt, to Galilee? 'Ecce venio!'"] (CAM 1/63).

It is time to return to Bethlehem, to enter Bethlehem. We do not remain outside, as foreigners, or alone, because in Bethlehem we will always find closeness and tenderness, reparation and encouragement to keep going forward in the stages that will come. Bethlehem is a living testimony and a shared mission. "[...] May the world of our time, which is searching, sometimes with anguish, sometimes with hope, be enabled to receive the good news not from evangelizers who are dejected, discouraged, impatient or anxious, but from ministers of the Gospel whose lives glow with fervor, who have first received the joy of Christ ".¹

We wish you a merry Christmas and a new year full of hope and generosity to continue on the journey together. May we all be attentive to the Day of God who comes to dwell among us.

In the Heart of Christ,

Fr. Carlos Luis Suárez Codorniú, scj
Superior General
and Council

¹ Paolo VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 80 (citation from Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 10).