



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE GENERAL CHAPTER OF THE PRIESTS
OF THE SACRED HEARTS OF JESUS (DEHONIANS)**

*Consistory Hall
Friday, 5 June 2015*

[Multimedia]

Dear Priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus,

I am pleased to welcome you on the occasion of your General Chapter, which constitutes a privileged moment of deepening and growth of your religious Family, and I gladly welcome the occasion to express to the new Superior General, Fr Heiner Wilmer, my best wishes for the task to which he has been called by the confidence of the confreres. Through you I greet all Dehonians, who work, often in difficult conditions, in many parts of the world, and I encourage them to carry on with generous faith their apostolic commitment. During the work of the chapter, you focused your reflection on the community called to a reconciled life, to be able to share life and the Gospel with everyone, especially with those who are marginalized. From here the theme of your Chapter: “*Merciful, in community, with the poor*”. I would thus like to propose some suggestions for you to fulfil your pastoral work.

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy” (Mt 5:7). Religious life is indicated as a fully evangelical life, inasmuch as it concretely fulfills the Beatitudes. Thus, as religious men, you are called to be *merciful*. This means first and foremost to live in profound communion with God in prayer, in meditation on Sacred Scripture, in the celebration of the Eucharist, so that all of our life may be a journey of growing in the mercy of God. As we render ourselves aware of the Lord’s freely given love and we welcome it in ourselves, thus our tenderness, our understanding and our goodwill toward the people beside us grows in the same measure. The strength of renewal of your Institute and of your mission in the world necessarily embraces the loving solicitude for the situation of every individual religious, so that his consecration may increasingly be a source of the

living and sanctifying encounter with Jesus, whose pierced Heart is the source of comfort, peace and salvation for all mankind.

Religious life is a coexistence of believers who feel they are loved by God and who seek to love Him. Precisely in this common commitment you can find the deepest reason for your spiritual harmony. In the experience of God's mercy and his love you will also find the point of harmonization of your *communities*. This entails the commitment to savour ever more the mercy which the confreres apply to you and to give them the wealth of your mercy. In all of this the testimony of your Founder, the great Apostle of the Sacred Heart, is an example and a help to you.

Mercy is the composite of the Gospel, we might say it is the "face" of Christ, that face that He showed when He went to meet everyone, when He healed the sick, when He sat at the table with sinners, and especially when, nailed to the Cross, He forgave: there we have the face of divine mercy. The Lord calls you to be "channels" of this love in the first place toward *the last, the poorest*, who are privileged in His eyes. Allow yourselves continuously to question the situations of fragility and poverty with which you come into contact, and seek to offer in appropriate ways the witness of the charity which the Spirit pours into your hearts (cf. Rom 5:5). The way of mercy allows you to open yourselves readily to current needs to be present industriously in new Areopaguses of evangelization, privileging, even if it should have entailed sacrifices, openness toward those circumstances of extreme need that reveal themselves as symptoms of today's society.

Your Congregation's history is marked and made fruitful by so many of your confreres who have generously spent their lives in the service of the Gospel, living in docile communion with your pastors, with an undivided heart through Christ and with the spirit of poverty. May their evangelical choice shine on your missionary commitment and be of encouragement for you to continue with renewed apostolic impetus your specific mission in the Church. In the furrow of these testimonies, you will be able to give new impetus to the missionary promotion in the different contexts in which you are included.

I hope that the guidelines developed by the General Chapter may guide the Institute to continue its journey generously, on the path charted by the Founder. With these sentiments, while I evoke the heavenly protection of the Virgin Mary, I wholeheartedly impart to all of you and to the entire Dehonian family a special Apostolic Blessing.