

## “ST. PAUL AND OUR DEHONIAN LIFE”

The South African Province’s annual retreat for the year 2022 took place from 14-18 March at Regina Pacis Retreat Centre, Lady Brand, Free State Province of South Africa.

The retreat was preached by Fr Charles Brown SCJ from the US Province of the Priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus who is currently in the country. The Lenten retreat was themed: "St. Paul and Our Dehonian Life", based on Philippians 2:6-11: Lyrics, Spirituality and Action.



The retreat was attended by nine members of the province.

This year's retreat started on a very special day for us as Dehonians. The 14th of March is the birthday of our beloved Founder, Rev. Fr Leo John Dehon who was born in 1843 in La Capelle, France.

Some of the themes of the first day of the retreat were: Setting up the Conversation between St. Paul and Our Charism; Key to Understanding Pauline and Dehonian Spiritualities.

On the second day, the preacher shed more light on Paul's world and Spirituality and the Gospel of Jesus Christ: 'This Day of God' for St. Paul and the Dehonians.

On the third day, more emphasis was put on Paul's view of the human person and the Dehonian sense of Human Dignity and the Pauline 'Church' and Dehonian 'Community'. The fourth day had St. Paul's model of Dehonian Ministry and the Defining Pauline/Dehonian Qualities.

On the last day, the retreat Master concluded with the text of St. Paul to the Philippians 2:6-11. What was unique about this retreat, as the theme suggests, was its Dehonian character in the sense that all two sessions of each day started and ended with Oblation and Reparation Prayers. The latter and the former are unique and proper to the Dehonians. Also on a daily basis there was a reading from the writings of Fr Dehon and some passages from the Rule of Life (Constitutions).



All in all, the RSA Province is grateful to Fr Charles Brown SCJ for that wonderful nourishment and sharing of his precious time.



Below is a verbatim of a few questions that were asked to Fr Charles Brown SCJ at the end of the retreat who is not a stranger to Africa and South Africa in particular:

1. When did you work in South Africa and how was your experience?

Between 2000 and 2010, I was blessed and honoured to serve on the faculty of Sacred Scripture at St. Joseph's Theological Institute at Cedara, KZN. I will always say that those years were some of the very best years of my priesthood so far! I was virtually always received here in South Africa with kindness and grace; the work at Cedara was full of nuance and challenge; my experience in RSA SCJ community was lovely, hospitable, and kind.

2. Do you have any special Lenten message to your RSA Confreres?

Continue to press forward into the future! Carry the message of Fr. Dehon into new times and places—to new people—here in Southern Africa.

3. What would St. Paul say to the Dehonians today?

St. Paul would say, "Dear brothers in Christ: as you are now doing, so keep even more offering your lives for the people of God! In the name of Christ Jesus, listen to their daily needs—spiritual and physical—and bring the love of Christ directly to their needs!"

4. How did you find the retreat?

Being among my dear Dehonian Confreres (some of whom I've known for years), and reflecting together on the Scriptures and our SCJ charism, has been for me a graced time: a time of dialogue, challenge, and fraternal care. I am so very grateful to have been asked to direct these sacred days of Lenten retreat. Thank you!