

# ***Adveniat Regnum Tuum* in Father Dehon: Kingdom, reparation, and oblation**

*Fr. Victor de Oliveira Barbosa, SCJ*

## **Introduction**

Among the major categories of biblical theology and Christian spirituality, few are as central as the notion of the Kingdom of God. It runs through the entire Scriptures, from the prophetic promises of the Old Testament to Jesus' preaching in the Gospels, and constitutes the ultimate horizon of Christian hope.

When Jesus begins his public mission, according to the testimony of the Gospel of Mark, he proclaims: "The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the Gospel" (Mk 1:15). This proclamation is not simply one religious announcement among others. It reveals the fundamental conviction of the Christian faith: God is acting in history to definitively establish his lordship of love over humanity and creation.

The expression "Kingdom of God" should not be understood primarily in a territorial or political sense. Rather, it refers to God's saving action that transforms the world and leads humanity to full communion with Him. The Kingdom is the dynamism of grace that renews the human heart, restores relationships between people, and guides history toward its eschatological fulfillment.

For this reason, contemporary theology insists that the Kingdom is not only a future reality. It is simultaneously present and future. Present, because in Jesus the Kingdom is already manifest: in healings, in the forgiveness of sins, in the welcoming of the poor and sinners, in the revelation of the Father's merciful love. Future, because its fullness is yet to come, when God will be "all in all" (1 Cor 15:28).

In this sense, the Kingdom constitutes the heart of Christ's mission and the foundation of the Church's mission. As theological tradition reminds us, the

Church is not the Kingdom, but its sacrament and instrument in history. It exists to proclaim and serve the coming of the Kingdom.

This perspective also illuminates the spirituality of many religious families. Among them, the Congregation of the Priests of the Sacred Heart, founded by Father Leo Dehon, found in the invocation of the Our Father, "*Adveniat Regnum Tuum* – Thy Kingdom come," the synthesis of its spiritual and apostolic identity.

For Father Dehon, this expression was not only a prayer but a true program of life and mission. It expresses the deep desire that the love revealed in the Heart of Christ transform the hearts of people and the structures of society.

For Dehon, the Kingdom of God is not an abstract reality, but the concrete manifestation of the love of Christ that wants to penetrate people's lives and the organization of society.

The reflection I propose in this conference seeks precisely to deepen this perspective. We will do this in four main moments:

1. Father Dehon's understanding of the Kingdom of the Heart of Jesus in souls and in society.
2. The vocation of the Dehonians as witnesses to the primacy of the Kingdom, according to our Rule of Life.
3. The missionary dimension of this vision in the experience of the mission in Ecuador.
4. The relationship between the motto *Adveniat Regnum Tuum* and the charism of oblation and reparation.

## **1. The Kingdom of the Heart of Jesus in souls and in society**

To properly understand the meaning of the expression "Kingdom of the Heart of Jesus" in Father Dehon's thought, it is necessary to situate it at the heart of his spiritual experience and his theological vision of the mission of the Church. It is a formulation that synthesizes the particular way in which the founder of the Priests of the Sacred Heart understood the reality of the Kingdom of God.

Father Dehon does not start from an abstract theoretical elaboration. His thinking arises from a spiritual experience deeply marked by contemplation of the mystery of Christ's love. For him, the Heart of Jesus is the living symbol of this redeeming love that is fully manifested in the incarnation, life, passion, and total self-giving of Christ for humanity.

Therefore, when Dehon speaks of the Kingdom of the Heart of Jesus, he is essentially speaking of the reign of Christ's love. It is the progressive manifestation of this love in the lives of people and in the history of humanity.

This perspective appears frequently in the Founder's writings. He contemplates the Heart of Christ as the source of spiritual life and as the principle of humanity's renewal. In his spiritual texts, we find expressions that clearly reveal this conviction. For him, the Heart of Jesus is "the symbol of Christ's infinite love for mankind" and, at the same time, the revelation of the love of the Father who desires to save humanity.

The spirituality of the Heart of Jesus, therefore, is not simply one devotion among others. In Dehon's thinking, it has a profoundly theological and missionary dimension. To contemplate the Heart of Christ means to enter into the dynamism of divine love that wants to transform the world.

When analyzing the founder's spirituality, contemplation of the Heart of Christ inevitably leads to commitment to the Kingdom: Dehonian spirituality is born from contemplation of Christ's love and directs the whole of life toward the realization of his Kingdom in souls and in society.

This statement helps us understand a fundamental aspect of Dehon's thought: the inseparability of the spiritual and historical dimensions of the Kingdom.

#### *a) The Kingdom of the Heart of Jesus in souls*

First of all, the Kingdom of the Heart of Jesus is a spiritual reality that is realized within the person. It begins when human beings welcome the love of God revealed in Christ and allow that love to transform their hearts.

Father Dehon often insists on this interior aspect of Christian life. For him, the true transformation of society can only happen through the conversion

of the human heart. The Kingdom of God begins when Christ reigns in people's hearts.

This reign of Christ in the human heart should not be understood in terms of domination or power, but in terms of love. Christ reigns when his love guides the choices, thoughts, and actions of the disciple.

Dehonian spirituality insists particularly on the contemplation of the pierced Heart of Christ, symbol of love that gives itself to the extreme. In this mystery, Christians discover the depth of God's love and feel called to respond with love.

Thus, contemplation of the Heart of Christ leads to interior transformation: to contemplate the Heart of Christ means to allow oneself to be penetrated by his love and to allow that love to become the principle of new life.

The Dehonian spiritual life develops precisely in this horizon. It is marked by fundamental attitudes such as oblation, reparation, availability to God's will, and union with Christ's sacrifice.

Father Dehon often expresses this attitude with the biblical formula "Ecce venio," inspired by the Letter to the Hebrews: "Behold, I come to do your will." This expression sums up the disciple's response to God's love: a trusting and total surrender.

Therefore, the Kingdom of the Heart of Jesus in souls means, first and foremost, a spirituality of communion with Christ, in which the disciple allows himself to be transformed by the love of the Lord and learns to live according to the Gospel.

### *b) The Kingdom of the Heart of Jesus in society*

However, the originality of Father Dehon's thinking appears with particular force when he extends this spiritual vision to the sphere of society.

For him, Christ's love cannot remain limited to the sphere of private life. If Christ is truly Lord, his Gospel must also inspire social relations, economic structures, and the organization of public life.

This conviction led Father Dehon to speak of the "social Kingdom of the Heart of Jesus." At first glance, the expression may seem linked to certain

historical conceptions of the 19th century. However, in Dehon's thinking, it has a profoundly evangelical meaning.

What he wishes to affirm is that the love revealed in the Heart of Christ must become the principle of renewal for society. A society inspired by the Gospel must promote justice, solidarity, and respect for human dignity.

The historical context in which Dehon lived helps us to understand this concern. The second half of the 19th century was marked by profound social changes brought about by industrialization. These changes also brought serious injustices, especially in the world of work.

Father Dehon was particularly sensitive to these situations. As a priest in Saint-Quentin, he had direct contact with the difficulties faced by workers and the poorest families.

This pastoral experience deeply marked his reflection. He realized that evangelization should also include a response to social injustices. "For Dehon, the establishment of the Kingdom of the Heart of Jesus necessarily implies a transformation of social structures in the light of the Gospel."

For this reason, Father Dehon promoted various social and pastoral initiatives aimed at improving the living conditions of workers and promoting the Christian formation of communities.

In this sense, his vision is close to the great insights of the social doctrine of the Church, which would begin to develop systematically with Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum Novarum*.

Dehon understood that the Christian faith has a profoundly social dimension. The love of Christ is not limited to the sphere of individual devotion; it must become a transforming force in history.

### *c) A spirituality to transform the world*

The synthesis between the spiritual and social dimensions is one of the most original aspects of Dehonian spirituality. The Kingdom that Dehon desires is not only interior; it must become visible in people's lives and in the structures of society.

Thus, contemplation of the Heart of Christ necessarily leads to mission. The disciple who experiences the love of Christ feels called to share it with others and to work so that this love may transform the world.

This perspective also helps us understand why Father Dehon chose the invocation "*Adveniat Regnum Tuum*" as the motto of the Congregation.

This prayer precisely expresses the desire that God's love transform humanity. Praying for the coming of the Kingdom means committing oneself to its realization.

Therefore, Dehonian spirituality is not a spirituality of escape from the world, but a spirituality of commitment to history. It invites Christ's disciples to be witnesses of the love of the Heart of Jesus in the midst of human realities.

In this sense, the expression "Kingdom of the Heart of Jesus in souls and in society" remains deeply relevant. It reminds us that the true transformation of society begins with the conversion of the human heart, but does not end there. The love of Christ wants to radiate throughout the world and become the principle of a new civilization founded on justice, solidarity, and fraternity.

Thus, Father Dehon's vision proves to be extraordinarily prophetic. It invites the Church and her disciples to live the faith as a force for spiritual and social renewal, participating in Christ's mission to establish the Kingdom of God in history.

## **2. Witnesses to the primacy of the Kingdom**

"Witnesses to the primacy of the Kingdom" is the subtitle of the section that includes numbers 10 to 15 of our Rule of Life and understands the call to live "in the service of the Kingdom" as an expression of our vocation to follow Christ.

The texts of numbers 9-39 of the Constitutions, which guide the Dehonian Jubilee we are celebrating, make frequent references to the person of Christ. In fact, the section opens and closes under the name of Jesus Christ, as if in a kind of grand inclusion: "In the Church, we were initiated into the Good

News of Jesus Christ" (Cst 9) ... "by the advent of the new humanity in Jesus Christ" (Cst 39). And in the same text of Cst 9-39, the reference to Christ, under various titles, appears almost 40 times, in almost every paragraph. In other words, our religious experience always begins with the encounter with the person of Jesus and with his centrality in our lives: He is the beginning and center of our life (cf. Cst 17); He is the First and the Last, the Living One (cf. Cst 11); His way is our way (cf. Cst 12); He is the only thing necessary (cf. Cst 26).

The Christological character of our religious vocation is very evident in numbers 10-15 of the Rule of Life, on which we focus. In fact, immediately after presenting our experience of faith as an initiation into the Good News of Jesus Christ and as a proclamation of Christ the Lord (cf. Cst 9), the Rule of Life offers us, in numbers 10-12, what Fr. Albert Bourgeois calls the "first Christological hymn," which is structured in three points:

- 1) the mission of Christ, sent by the Father in the fullness of time, which consists in revealing God's love and proclaiming the Kingdom (cf. Cst 10);
- 2) the Paschal mystery of Christ (death, resurrection, and gift of the Spirit) which proclaims the coming of the Kingdom already present (cf. Cst 11);
- 3) Christ's redemption, which is also already present in us and allows us to make his way our own (cf. Cst 12).

Through this Christological hymn, the Rule of Life proposes an understanding of our religious vocation not only as following Christ, but as identifying with Christ, his life in us: "it is Christ who lives in me" (Gal 2:20).

Number 13 confirms this understanding, giving us a definition of the Dehonian religious vocation: "With all our brothers and sisters in the Christian faith, we are called to follow in the footsteps of Christ, to attain holiness (cf. 1 Thess 4:7). *In fact, this is what you have been called to do, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his footsteps* (1 Pet 2:21). Our religious vocation, rooted in Baptism and Confirmation, is a special gift granted for the glory of God and to bear witness to the primacy of the Kingdom" (Cst 13).

As we see in the text, our religious vocation is rooted in Baptism and Confirmation, that is, it is our way of living the grace of Christian life as followers of Christ "with all our brothers and sisters in the Christian faith." It is a vocation lived in the Church and oriented towards holiness (universal

call to holiness). It is a "special gift," not because it is a "vocation of the privileged," but because it is oriented towards the glory of God and the witness of the primacy of the Kingdom.

Number 14 of the Rule of Life shows how our vocation only makes sense as a "joyful and total adherence to the Person of Jesus." This means that our life is a participation in the lifestyle of Christ, virgin, poor, and obedient (cf. PC 1) in function of his redemptive and sanctifying work (cf. Cst 14). Therefore, our profession (of vows, as Christ's way of life) is to "strive for perfect charity," a beautiful but also demanding understanding of our vocation: the holiness of our vocation, which we seek to live in following Christ, means "consecrating ourselves entirely to the love of God and our brothers and sisters."

Finally, we come to number 15, which defines our religious life as "a story," that is, as a movement that begins with the "grace of origins" (the Foundation, the charism given to Father Dehon and the first members) and develops by drawing on what the Church says. In other words, understood as following Christ in the service of the Kingdom, our vocation is called to "constantly" actualize the grace of origins (which must be known and studied – cf. DG 15) in our cultural, social, and ecclesial context as a condition of fidelity, fruitfulness, renewal, and creativity.

But let us return to the title of the first section of the second part of the Rule of Life (Cst 9-39): "With Christ, at the service of the Kingdom." In it we find essentially our identity and mission as Priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, that is, who we are and what we do in the Church and in the world. "Christ" and "Kingdom" constitute the two poles of our religious life and our apostolate. From the title itself we can deduce the specificity of our being (identity) and our action (mission): "With Christ," designating our identity as "life of union with Christ" (union with his reparatory oblation – cf. Cst 6); "at the service of the Kingdom," indicating our apostolic mission (we are an apostolic institute – cf. Cst 8) in the Church and in the world.

Therefore, it is important to consider the centrality of the Kingdom in the proclamation of Christ and in our mission, according to the Rule of Life: in fact, we are called as a community to be "witnesses to the primacy of the Kingdom" (subtitle of block Cst 10-15), that is, to make our life in the service of the "Kingdom of the Heart of Jesus in souls and societies" a "prophetic witness" (cf. Cst 39).

The Kingdom of God is a theological category that is very present in the text of the Rule of Life. First of all, it must be considered that the Kingdom refers to the person of Jesus: Jesus announced the Kingdom (cf. Cst 10) and prayed for the coming of the Kingdom (cf. Cst 11); following in the footsteps of Christ, in our religious vocation, we are called to witness to the primacy of the Kingdom (cf. Cst 13) and to witness that the fullness of the Kingdom is in the mystery of the Cross and Resurrection of Christ (cf. Cst 29).

As we can read in Fr. Alfredo Carminati's commentary on the Constitutions: "The Kingdom of God is the new world that was born in the Person of Jesus and in the service He rendered to the multitudes; it is the new world that is forming in the Mystical Body; it is the new world that is already sprouting in the uncertain efforts of men... It is first of all in the New Man, in the Person of Jesus, present among us, that the Kingdom of God is already at work, so to speak, the primacy of the Kingdom means, first of all, affirming the primacy of the Person of Jesus" (CARMINATI, *Dehoniani '80*, n. 10).

For us, the category "Kingdom" is even more important if we think about the legacy we received from our Founder, who wanted to take as the motto of the Congregation the expression *Adveniat Regnum tuum!* As we have seen, Father Dehon worked for the establishment of the Kingdom of the Heart of Jesus in souls and societies, especially with his social apostolate. However, it is not in Dehon's social action as such that we see the whole, nor perhaps the essence of his mission, nor even the specific and original intention of the foundation of the Congregation. On the contrary, the social apostolate certainly appears not as a sufficient element, but as an integral part of his vocation and his intention of "union with the reparatory oblation of Christ." In the same way, our "service to the Kingdom" must be considered an integral part of our "prophetic charism" (cf. Cst 27).

### **3. The mission in Ecuador as a historical sign of the Kingdom**

As we have seen, number 15 of the Rule of Life invites us to understand our religious life as a story that begins with the grace of our origins and develops by drawing on the guidance of the Church. Therefore, it is important for us to understand our "service to the Kingdom" today in the light of the Founder and , following the current guidelines of the Church. In this endeavor, we want to return to the history of the first mission of the Congregation desired

by Father Dehon in Ecuador as an expression of his commitment to the establishment of the Kingdom of the Heart of Christ.

Léon Dehon's understanding of the mission of his Congregation in Ecuador, which began in 1888, must be interpreted in the broader context of his spirituality and the apostolic project of the Congregation of the Priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. For the founder, the missionary presence of the Congregation was not just one pastoral activity among others, but a historic sign of the expansion of the Kingdom of the Heart of Christ in the world and in society.

The Congregation founded by Dehon in 1878 was deeply marked by the spirituality of the Sacred Heart. The fundamental goal of Dehon's work was to collaborate in the advent of the "Kingdom of the Heart of Jesus in souls and societies," an expression he often used to summarize his spiritual and apostolic vision. This perspective united contemplation and action: reparation to the Heart of Christ had to be translated into missionary, social, and pastoral commitment.

On February 19, 1888, Father Dehon wrote in his *Diary*: "Today I sent my request to Rome to obtain a distant mission. This date will undoubtedly be the beginning of something great" (NQT 4/100). Dehon sought a mission *ad gentes* as a guarantee of survival for the Institute he founded.

During the same period, Father Dehon began a correspondence with Father Julio Matovelle, a young Ecuadorian priest who had founded a congregation—the Oblates of Divine Love—and who proposed a merger with the institute founded by Dehon. For our Founder, it was a favorable opportunity for a presence outside Europe. However, he had some reservations about the merger of the two institutes, even though both had as their special purpose the social reign of the Heart of Jesus.

The determining factor for Father Dehon to send the first missionaries to Ecuador was the proposal to collaborate with the Oblates of Divine Love in the construction of the Basilica of the Sacred Heart in Quito. Ecuador had in fact been consecrated to the Heart of Jesus on March 25, 1874, by then-President Gabriel Garcia Moreno, and the Archbishop of Quito had a great desire to erect a national votive temple to the Sacred Heart.

On August 20, 1888, Dehon wrote in his last letter to Fr. Matovelle about the proposed merger these words: "I thank God for this dignity of senator, which will allow you to work for the social kingdom of the Sacred Heart.

Do not hesitate to accept the charge of the votive basilica of the Sacred Heart in Quito, which is so well suited to our purpose. [...] Finally, I consider our union complete. We consider you brothers and want to work with you for the kingdom of the Heart of Jesus, especially in the sacred tribe and in civil society” (1LD 50107).

On November 10, 1888, at the port of Saint-Nazaire, Dehon sent the first two missionaries, Fr. Gabriel Grison and Fr. Irénée Blanc, to the “Republic of the Sacred Heart” (cf. NQT 4/302-303). Thus began the first mission of the Congregation, which aimed to establish the Kingdom of the Heart of Jesus in souls and societies. From the beginning, the mission in service of the Kingdom was Father Dehon’s intention for us, Priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Although the project of merging with the Oblates of Divine Love did not materialize for various reasons, the sending of Dehonian religious to Ecuador was the first mission of the Congregation. For Dehon, this experience represented the first concrete realization of the missionary desire of the Congregation and a sign that the nascent work was beginning to go beyond European borders.

The mission in Ecuador must be understood within Dehon's historical theology. The founder saw the concrete events of history as places where God brings about the realization of his Kingdom. Thus, the establishment of religious communities, evangelization, and pastoral service were historical signs of the presence of the Heart of Christ, which continues to act in society. The mission was not only the geographical expansion of the Church, but a visible expression of the spiritual and social transformation inspired by the love of Christ.

The choice to start a mission outside Europe also corresponded to Dehon's universal understanding of the Church. He believed that the spirituality of the Heart of Jesus had universal value and should be shared with all peoples. The sending of missionaries to Latin America thus manifested the Catholic vocation of the Congregation and the openness of the Dehonian charism to the diversity of cultures and historical contexts.

In addition, the mission in Ecuador expressed another central aspect of Dehon's spirituality: reparation. For him, reparation was not only an individual spiritual act, but a concrete commitment to the renewal of humanity. Thus, the missionary presence of the Congregation should

contribute to transforming social structures in the light of the Gospel, making the Kingdom of the Heart of Jesus visible in the lives of peoples.

However, the missionary experience in Ecuador was marked by great difficulties. The political context of the country, the tensions between the Church and anticlerical groups, and the internal limitations of the young Congregation made missionary work very complex. After a few years of presence, the religious were eventually forced to abandon the mission. Despite this, Dehon did not interpret the episode as a definitive failure. On the contrary, he considered it part of the historical path through which God was leading the Congregation.

In fact, the Ecuadorian experience had an important symbolic value for the further development of the Congregation. It confirmed the missionary character of Dehon's work and paved the way for other missions entrusted to the Congregation in the following years, such as those that would later be opened on different continents. The mission in Ecuador thus became a kind of initial stage in the Dehonian missionary expansion.

Thus, Dehon's understanding of the Congregation's mission in Ecuador can be summarized in three fundamental dimensions. First, it represents the universalization of the Dehonian charism, which seeks to bring the love of the Heart of Christ to all peoples. Second, it constitutes a historical sign of the realization of the Kingdom of God in society, through a model of society that places the kingship of Christ and the principles of the Gospel at its center. Third, it expresses the spirituality of reparation and oblation that characterizes the Dehonian charism, as we will see in the last point of our reflection.

#### **4. *Adveniat Regnum Tuum*: oblation and reparation**

In this last point, based on what we have seen so far, we want to understand more deeply the meaning of the motto of the Congregation of the Priests of the Sacred Heart: *Adveniat Regnum Tuum* – Thy Kingdom come.

For Father Leo Dehon, this invocation from the Our Father was not just a devotional prayer. It expressed a true spiritual and apostolic program. The whole of Christian life, and in a particular way the Dehonian vocation,

should be oriented toward this goal: to collaborate with Christ in the realization of the Kingdom of God.

In the Founder's thinking, this collaboration takes on two fundamental spiritual attitudes that structure the charism of the Congregation: oblation and reparation.

These two dimensions constitute the core of Dehonian spirituality. They express the disciple's response to the love revealed in the Heart of Christ and indicate the concrete way of participating in the mission of the Kingdom.

#### *a) Oblation: participating in Christ's self-giving*

The first dimension is oblation, that is, the total surrender of one's life to God in union with Christ's offering to the Father.

Father Dehon often contemplated the mystery of Christ's oblation, especially at the moment of the Incarnation and the surrender on the cross. He was inspired by the words of the Letter to the Hebrews: "*Behold, I come to do your will*" (Heb 10:7). This expression became a kind of spiritual synthesis of his life, often evoked in the formula *Ecce venio*.

For him, Christian life consists precisely in entering into this movement of love with which Christ gives himself to the Father for the salvation of the world. Thus, oblation constitutes the core of Dehonian spirituality: it is the disciple's participation in Christ's surrender to the Father; it is the response of love to the redeeming love manifested in the Heart of Jesus.

This attitude of surrender is not limited to the interior dimension of the spiritual life. It also has an apostolic character. Offering one's life to God means placing oneself entirely at the disposal of Christ's mission.

Thus, oblation becomes availability for the service of the Gospel, for the mission of the Church, and for the promotion of the Kingdom of God in the world. In this sense, the motto *Adveniat Regnum Tuum* precisely expresses the horizon of Dehonian oblation. The religious offers his own life so that the Kingdom of God may be realized in history.

#### *b) Reparation: responding to the wounded love of Christ*

The second fundamental dimension of Dehonian spirituality is reparation. This notion arose in the context of the spirituality of the Heart of Jesus and the contemplation of Christ's love rejected or ignored by humanity. In contemplating the pierced Heart of Christ, the faithful discover God's infinite love and, at the same time, the pain caused by sin and human indifference.

Father Dehon deeply experienced this dimension of the Christian mystery. For him, reparation was not just a feeling of piety, but a spiritual attitude that involves the whole of life.

To make reparation means to respond to Christ's love with love, seeking to console his Heart and collaborate with him in the work of reconciling humanity. "Reparation is not just an act of devotion; it is an attitude of life that unites the disciple to Christ's redemptive mission."

However, the originality of Dehonian spirituality appears when this idea of reparation is also understood in its social dimension.

### *c) The social dimension of reparation*

Reparation in Father Dehon also has a social value. He lived in an era marked by the labor question, tensions between Church and State, and growing secularization. In this context, he was not content with an intimate spirituality, but saw reparation as a historical and social task as well.

It is true, as Fr. Stefan Tertünte states in an article published in the *Dehoniana* magazine, that "Father Dehon himself did not define his immense social commitment with the category of reparation [...] but he also saw it explicitly as an outcome of his fundamental spiritual experience: that agape recognized and lived by looking to the open side" (DEH2022-05/8).

The understanding of a social dimension of reparation, therefore, is necessarily linked to the spiritual perspective: for Dehon, all social commitment is based on the desire to respond to God's love. In fact, in a speech to the Sisters of Reparatory Adoration in 1887, Dehon states: "Our Lord asked above all for reparation for the lack of love, reparation to the Eucharist, reparation for the chosen people. He also asked for social reparation and the social kingdom of the Sacred Heart" (RET 9170007).

The idea of social reparation is very well expressed by the expression so dear to Dehon: "the Kingdom of the Heart of Jesus in souls and in societies." As we know, this ideal, which guided him throughout his life, led him to found social works in Saint-Quentin (patronages, vocational schools, workers' circles), to write studies on social doctrine, and to promote the social cult of the Sacred Heart. Social reparation, therefore, is nothing more than a commitment to the triumph of self-sacrificing love in the fabric of public life.

As Fr. Giuseppe Manzoni states in his study published in *Studia Dehoniana* 40: "In this struggle for the universal triumph of self-sacrificing love, social reparation is achieved and the reign of the Heart of Jesus is affirmed in souls and societies. This ideal, which sustained Father Dehon throughout his life, is the profound reason for his intense social apostolate, the goal that guided him in founding the congregation and kept him committed even in the last years of his life to the construction in Rome of the votive temple of Christ the King [...] Reparation for Father Dehon is closely linked to the triumph of the reign of love of the Heart of Jesus" (StD 40, p. 116).

This is a commitment that has not only ethical motivations but also theological roots: sin damages not only the personal relationship with God but also social bonds. From this perspective, social reparation becomes the concrete form of reparative love that reconciles, rebuilds, and restores the bonds wounded by sin, also at the community and historical levels. Not punitive justice, but a "justice of mercy" that makes reconciliation possible, as Marcello Neri's study affirms.

Thus, for Dehon, the social apostolate is a concrete realization of his spirituality of love and reparation; not only a personal choice, but also an authentic choice for his religious, to realize the spirituality and mission of the institute.

#### *d) Reparation and the Kingdom of God*

It is precisely here that the deep connection between reparation and the Kingdom of God is manifested. If the Kingdom of God is the reign of Christ's love in history, then every action that promotes justice, reconciliation, and human dignity contributes to its realization.

Reparation means collaborating with Christ in restoring relationships wounded by sin. Understood in this way, reparation becomes a deeply missionary and social spirituality.

Dehonian reparation is participation in the work of reconciliation accomplished by Christ; it is expressed both in prayer and in commitment to the transformation of the world.

This perspective allows us to better understand the scope of the motto *Adveniat Regnum Tuum*. To ask for the coming of the Kingdom means to commit oneself to its concrete realization in history.

## **Conclusion**

Reflection on the motto *Adveniat Regnum Tuum* allows us to understand the depth of Father Dehon's spirituality and the mission of the Congregation he founded. The Kingdom of God, the center of Christ's preaching, also becomes the permanent horizon of Dehonian life.

To be witnesses of the primacy of the Kingdom means to place Christ at the center of one's life, to contemplate his love in his pierced Heart, and to commit oneself to the transformation of the world according to the Gospel.

The history of the Congregation, from its first apostolic initiatives to its missionary experiences, manifests a constant desire to collaborate with God's work in history.

Today, as yesterday, the prayer "Thy Kingdom come" continues to resound as a call to conversion and mission.

Following the example of Father Dehon, the Dehonians are invited to live as promoters of the Kingdom of the Heart of Jesus, as prophets of the love of the Heart of Jesus, and as servants of reconciliation in the Church and in the world.

This is what allows us to continue to pray, with hope and commitment: *Adveniat Regnum Tuum*.