

MINUTES OF THE INTRODUCTORY SESSION OF THE VII INTERNATIONAL DEHONIAN THEOLOGICAL SEMINAR

Date: July 30, 2026

Place: Auditorium of the Faculdade Dehoniana / Convento Sagrado Coração de Jesus (Conventinho), Taubaté – SP

1. Liturgical opening and technical orientations

At 5:00 p.m. on the 30th day of July in the year two thousand twenty-six, in the city of Taubaté, State of São Paulo, the Introductory Session of the VII International Dehonian Theological Seminar began. The proceedings were formally opened with Evening Prayer, delivered in English and presided over by Fr. Wyllians Prado Rapozo, General Councilor, whose accompanying text had been previously made available in the participants' liturgical booklet.

After the moment of prayer, Fr. Wyllians took the floor to provide technical clarifications regarding the operation of the *Wordly* simultaneous translation system. He informed those present that access to the platform is obtained through a previously sent hyperlink or via QR code, requiring an active internet connection and manual selection of the desired reception language. He further noted that interventions throughout the seminar may be made in five official languages: English (ENG), French (FRA), Portuguese (POR), Italian (ITA), and Spanish (ESP), and that the system's intelligence is fully configured to translate them. For technical organization and record-keeping purposes, every member of the assembly was instructed, before making any intervention, to state his or her name and the language in which he or she would speak.

2. Opening addresses and official greetings

Next, Fr. Charles Aimé Koudjou, General Councilor responsible for the International Dehonian Theological Commission (CTID), assumed the conduct of the proceedings, greeting all those present and officially declaring the session of the Theological Seminar open. In his remarks, he emphasized that the realization of this event is the fruit of a long and careful process of preparation, originating from a direct request of the General Government of the Congregation. He then gave the floor to the Superior General, Fr. Carlos Luis Suárez Codorniú, for his inaugural address.

The Superior General, Fr. Carlos, delivered his greeting, expressing special gratitude to the preparatory committee under the coordination of Fr. Charles. Evoking the well-known expression of the Founder, Father Dehon, in his writings, "*je voudrais écrire*" ("I would like to write"), the Superior General stressed the theological and historical importance of focusing on the central theme of the seminar, devoted to reflection on Dehon from his own writings. He concluded by expressing his wishes for a fruitful and excellent gathering, oriented toward a deeper understanding of the Founder's project.

3. Presentation of members, Commissions, and logistical information

Resuming the floor, Fr. Charles proceeded to the nominative and institutional presentation of the seminar participants, namely:

- Members of the General Government of the Congregation;
- Members of the scientific committee;
- Secretaries and those responsible for communications;
- Members of the continental theological commissions present: Europe (CTDEU), Latin America (CTDAL), Asia (CTDAS), and North America (CDTAN), with a formal explanation for the absence of the representatives of the African commission (CTDAF);
- Other special guests, including professors from Hales Corners and from the Faculdade Dehoniana, Brazilian formators from the three provinces, and other invited participants.

Immediately thereafter, Fr. Emerson Marcelo Ruiz, member of the scientific committee and coordinator of the logistics committee, was invited to present the structural and organizational

guidelines. Fr. Emerson set out the practical details of the seminar's logistics, highlighting the joint effort and close collaboration of the three Brazilian provinces both in the preparatory phase and in hosting the event. He explained that the schedule of activities would be concentrated primarily on the premises of the Conventinho and the Faculdade Dehoniana. He also detailed the three official channels of communication for urgent notices and informational updates:

1. Printed materials made available in the participants' rooms;
2. The official electronic portal of the seminar;
3. The instant messaging group on the *WhatsApp* platform.

Finally, he announced the two external outings planned in the program: on Saturday, participation in Mass followed by a fraternal dinner in some of the local parishes of the Diocese of Taubaté; and on Sunday, a scheduled visit to the National Basilica Shrine of Our Lady of Aparecida.

4. Welcome from the Hosting Province

Continuing, Fr. Charles invited Fr. Eli Lobato dos Santos, Provincial Superior of the Brazil São Paulo Province (BSP), the congregational circumscription hosting this Seminar, to deliver his message of welcome. Fr. Eli cordially greeted the Superior General and the General Councilors, expressing the gratitude of the BSP Province for the trust placed in it to host so significant a congregational event. He extended his thanks to the members of the theological commissions present and expressed gratitude to the religious of the Conventinho community and of the Faculdade Dehoniana for their care in the welcome. He specifically highlighted the dedication of Fathers Emerson Ruiz and Marcelo Batalioto in preparing the organizational details.

In his reflection, the Provincial recalled that the methodological dynamic of the seminar aims at a strictly updated reading of Father Dehon, urging participants to assess whether the Founder's writings retain validity in the contemporary setting. He evoked number 4 of the Constitutions (Cst 4), calling the assembly to interpret modern dilemmas as explicit refusals of the love of Christ and to seek, in Dehon's documentary sources, effective responses to present-day problems. He concluded by reiterating his words of welcome to all members of the Theological Seminar.

5. Historical genesis and methodological proposal

Fr. Charles again took the floor to situate historically the initiative that led to the VII International Dehonian Theological Seminar on the present date. He recalled that the previous edition of the seminar, held in 2023, had focused on the economic theme, proposing an alternative economy in full harmony with the social appeals of Pope Francis. He noted that the conception and architecture of the present seminar are intrinsically linked to the person of Fr. John van den Hengel, whom he invited to present the genesis and the theoretical-methodological proposal of the seminar.

Fr. John reported that the scientific proposal originated during the CTID meeting in December 2024. On that occasion, the urgent need was recognized to recover and deepen knowledge of Father Dehon, precisely one century after his death, drawing directly on his written legacy. The CTID identified in the digital platform *Dehondocs* a valuable instrumental tool for inventorying and scrutinizing Dehon's testimony. He explained that the seminar, set within the context of the Dehonian Jubilee (2025–2028), proposes to study the Founder's textual production on the basis of five distinct hermeneutical codes, revealing plural modes of understanding his worldview.

The scientific committee endorsed a method of systematic reading structured on the literary theory of Wayne Booth. The objective is to identify, in each literary genre examined, namely autobiographical, social, and spiritual writings, correspondence, and articles, the categories of "implied author" and "fictional reader" (or simulated reader – *mock reader*) that operate in the fabric of the texts. This unified methodology makes it possible to interpret diverse textual genres from common vectors of approach to the Founder's intention. The method aims primarily to equip Dehon scholars with tools of critical hermeneutics that illuminate the dilemmas of the present time, avoiding the mere uncritical reproduction of traditional interpretations of the Founder handed down by previous generations. Fr. John affirmed that treating Dehon as a "textual figure" opens horizons

for theological novelty. The work was distributed to the five continental theological commissions based on this scientific framework, representing a mature moment for the Congregation to establish its own rigorous scientific hermeneutic. He concluded by stressing that the principal purpose is not to validate whether Dehon's historical statements correspond to factual truth, but to diagnose whether his worldview remains operative and functional for Dehonians today, in a process analogous to that undertaken by Dehonian religious and communities in the 1960s and 1970s during the revision of the Rule of Life.

6. Structure of the session itinerary and closing

Taking the floor for the final word, Fr. Charles synthesized the spirit of the gathering: whereas traditional studies were guided by the question "*Who is Father Dehon?*", the present seminar proposes the methodological shift of asking "*Who is this Father Dehon who emerges and manifests himself in his own texts?*". To that end, he informed the assembly that the seminar schedule is rigorously structured in seven working sessions, arranged as follows:

- **1st Session:** Analysis of Dehon in his *Notes Quotidiennes*;
- **2nd Session:** Study focused on the *Social Catechism*;
- **3rd Session:** Investigation based on the work *Crowns of Love*;
- **4th Session:** Analysis of the epistolary genre in his *Correspondence*;
- **5th Session:** Examination of his press production in the articles of the *Chronicles*;
- **6th Session:** Collegial debate for the recognition of convergent points and transversal lines that emerge from the texts (seminar construction);
- **7th Session:** Formal conclusion of the activities and drafting of the final message addressed to the entire Dehonian family.

In closing the introductory session, Fr. Charles expressed sincere thanks to all those following the seminar transmissions through digital platforms and social networks, reiterating that the entire documentary framework and the study materials are fully hosted on the official website of the theological seminar.

Fr. Eduardo Nunes Pugliesi
Fr. Nilson Helmann
Fr. Victor de Oliveira Barbosa