

*Incontro Vescovi Dehoniani*  
*Roma, 10-15 Gennaio 2013*



*Meeting of Dehonian Bishops*  
*Rome, January 10-15, 2013*

## **Some Experiences and Observations on the Connection between Consecrated Life and Episcopal Service**

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It is interesting to observe that in the Eastern Rite and in the Orthodox Church, the priests are usually married but not the bishops, who are supposed to be celibate. According to custom, the bishops are usually elected from the monks in the monasteries. It is even so that if the elected one is single, but not a monk, he is usually consecrated a monk before he is consecrated a bishop. Thus, all the bishops in the Eastern Rite are monks. They continue to wear the habit of a monk, especially the veil. We can see that the monastic life and the life and service of a bishop are clearly linked to each other. The influence of the consecrated life of a monk on the life of a bishop is without any interruption or break. A bishop being a monk is not something additional but rather a condition in the Eastern Church. Of course, the new bishop – in the Eastern Rite - is no longer under the jurisdiction of a monastery. He is an independent leader of the diocese, but in principal he continues to follow the evangelical counsels in his life.

After I was elected but not yet consecrated a bishop, I read ‘The Directory of the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops.’ From chapter to chapter it was said that this or that was very important. I realized when reading that the bishop is responsible for everything in his diocese, but along with this responsibility, he has to give himself totally to his task. He is not a real shepherd of the diocese if he is not willing to abandon himself entirely to serve God and his flock. I felt that this has always been the Sacred Heart spirituality, also my spirituality, only now it is more total than before, in other words, more serious than before. I have to commit myself more intensively. The sign of this commitment is the bishop’s ring. I am married to my diocese. Although the bishop is responsible for everything it has helped me a lot being a Dehonian. I have learned that the bishop who does confraternal counseling, sharing and delegating is not just a leader but also a brother.

As Dehonians, we have our wonderful spirituality of the Heart of Jesus. *Sint Unum* means in Finland especially that as a bishop I have to preserve the unity of the diocese, a very important task to promote, but I have also to promote the unity of all Christians. We pray always that our own hearts would become like His. If we have dedicated ourselves to His Heart, we should continue to grow in our love for our neighbor. It is good for the members of the diocese and for all others to notice that their bishop has a heart, that he is a bishop, whom they, so to speak, can touch.

I think a Dehonian bishop has also to continue his Dehonian devotion. The bishop is the first person of prayer in the diocese and an example for all. By becoming a bishop, one can realize

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even more deeply his vocation as a religious, as a Dehonian, or at least that is my experience. Of course there is the exception of not being able to live always in a community.

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