

Fr. Michael Overmann SDS (Ed.)

# Dialoguing with Father Jordan

**Father Francis  
Mary of the Cross  
Jordan -**

How the  
Founder's Spirit  
has shaped  
the following  
Leaders of the  
Salvatorian  
Family



Fr. Michael Overmann SDS  
(Editor)

# DIALOGUING WITH FR. JORDAN

How the Founder's spirit  
has shaped the following leaders  
of the *Salvatorian Family*!

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Munich / Rome, September 8, 2017,  
the 99th anniversary of his death



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## INTRODUCTION

Dear Reader!

Born 1848 - died 1918: these two dates mark the lifetime of Father Francis Mary of the Cross (John Baptist) Jordan. During his life, he founded the *Society of the Divine Savior* and the Congregation of the *Sisters of the Divine Savior* and at least took into consideration the apostolic dedication of lay people, known today as the *International Community of the Divine Savior*.

It is with due modesty, but with joy that we can say that on the 100th anniversary of his death, September 8, 2018, the Founder will be remembered around the world; indeed we can even go so far as to say that by virtue of his saintly way of life he will be asked to be an active intercessor before God for each and every one of us. For we are sure that God called on him to devote himself utterly to the honor of God and the salvation of mankind, even after death - through us - to this day.

To give this commemoration a greater depth of meaning, I have asked the successors at the head of the three Salvatorian branches to choose one or two key words that have defined/define their terms of office and should furthermore be reflected on in regards to the Founder's spiritual legacy. Because of their age, not all could participate, but I am ex-



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General Archivist  
of the  
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since 2010

tremely grateful to those brothers and sisters of the *SDS Family* who assumed leadership responsibility and have now become actively involved.

The contributions, some short, some a bit longer, are testimonies of faith and life that combine elements of the biographical, historical and spiritual with one another; they are inspiring, enlightening and encouraging, indeed, they are even challenging and point to the future. They demonstrate that the Founder's spirit continues to be relevant and influential. To all those who have taken the trouble to write, I therefore say once again: THANK YOU!

I wish all readers, members of the *SDS Family* and all our families, friends, staff as well as our benefactors, pleasant reading. May our Founder, Father Francis Mary of the Cross Jordan, become better known and more familiar to you, may his spirit continue to inspire us in acquainting ourselves with Him who wants our life: God and Him whom He sent, Jesus Christ, Savior of the World.

Munich/Rome, September 8, 2017

Fr. Michael Overmann SDS

## **CHRONOLOGY OF LEADERSHIP (Salvatorian Brothers and Fathers)**

	Birth	Profession	Ordination	Term of Office	Death
<b>01</b>	<b>Fr. Francis Mary of the Cross JORDAN</b>				
	<b>1848</b>	<b>1883</b>	<b>1878</b>	<b>1881-1918</b>	<b>1918</b>
	<i>Fr. Bonaventura Lüthen</i>				
	1846	1881	1872	<b>1881-1908</b>	1911
	<i>Fr. Albert M. Hauser</i>				
	1871	1890	1893	<b>1908-1915</b>	1933
	<i>Fr. Pancratius Pfeiffer</i>				
	1872	1890	1896	<b>1915-1918</b>	1945
<b>02</b>	<b>Fr. Pancratius PFEIFFER</b>				
	<b>1872</b>	<b>1890</b>	<b>1896</b>	<b>1915-1945</b>	<b>1945</b>
	<i>Fr. Hilarius Gog</i>				
	1871	1891	1895	<b>1918-1921</b>	1933
	<i>Fr. Ogerius Bartsch</i>				
	1878	1896	1900	<b>1921-1927</b>	1937
	<i>Fr. Dorotheus Brugger</i>				
	1877	1893	1900	<b>1927-1933</b>	1955
	<i>Fr. Facundus Peterek</i>				
	1880	1896	1902	<b>1933-1947</b>	1948
<b>03</b>	<b>Fr. Franz EMMENEGGER</b>				
	<b>1898</b>	<b>1919</b>	<b>1922</b>	<b>1947-1953</b>	<b>1975</b>
	<i>Fr. Athanasius Krächan</i>				
	1884	1904	1909	<b>1947-1953</b>	1962
<b>04</b>	<b>Fr. Bonaventura SCHWEIZER</b>				
	<b>1893</b>	<b>1912</b>	<b>1921</b>	<b>1953-1965</b>	<b>1968</b>
	<i>Fr. Leone Ruess</i>				
	1908	1929	1934	<b>1953-1959</b>	2002
	<i>Fr. Waldemar Herborn</i>				
	1905	1926	1931	<b>1959-1965</b>	1982



<b>05</b>	<b>Fr. Maurinus RAST</b>	<b>1906</b>	<b>1926</b>	<b>1931</b>	<b>1965-1969</b>	<b>1969</b>
	<i>Fr. Robert Wagner</i>	<i>1918</i>	<i>1942</i>	<i>1946</i>	<b>1965-1969</b>	<i>2010</i>
<b>06</b>	<b>Fr. Earl Donald SKWOR</b>	<b>1928</b>	<b>1948</b>	<b>1953</b>	<b>1969-1975</b>	<b>2002</b>
	<i>Fr. Richard Zehrer</i>	<i>1929</i>	<i>1950</i>	<i>1955</i>	<b>1969-1975</b>	
<b>07</b>	<b>Fr. Gerard ROGOWSKI</b>	<b>1931</b>	<b>1950</b>	<b>1957</b>	<b>1975-1987</b>	
	<i>Fr. Robert Jedinger</i>	<i>1928</i>	<i>1947</i>	<i>1952</i>	<b>1975-1981</b>	<i>1992</i>
	<i>Fr. Richard Zehrer</i>	<i>1929</i>	<i>1950</i>	<i>1955</i>	<b>1981-1987</b>	
<b>08</b>	<b>Fr. Malachy MCBRIDE</b>	<b>1927</b>	<b>1949</b>	<b>1953</b>	<b>1987-1993</b>	
	<i>Fr. Luiz Dalmolin Spolti</i>	<i>1939</i>	<i>1959</i>	<i>1966</i>	<b>1987-1993</b>	
<b>09</b>	<b>Fr. Karl HOFFMANN</b>	<b>1940</b>	<b>1964</b>	<b>1971</b>	<b>1993-1999</b>	
	<i>Fr. Andrzej Urbanski</i>	<i>1947</i>	<i>1964</i>	<i>1972</i>	<b>1993-1999</b>	
<b>10</b>	<b>Fr. Andrzej URBANSKI</b>	<b>1947</b>	<b>1964</b>	<b>1972</b>	<b>1999-2013</b>	
	<i>Fr. Piet Cuijpers</i>	<i>1959</i>	<i>1979</i>	<i>1988</i>	<b>1999-2013</b>	
<b>11</b>	<b>Fr. Milton ZONTA</b>	<b>1960</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1987</b>	<b>2013 ...</b>	
	<i>Fr. Raúl Gómez</i>	<i>1953</i>	<i>1982</i>	<i>1987</i>	<b>2013 ...</b>	

## CHRONOLOGY OF LEADERSHIP (*Salvatorian Sisters*)

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	Birth	Profession	Term of Office	Death
<b>01 M. Mary of the Apostles WÜLLENWEBER</b>	<b>1833</b>	<b>1882</b>	<b>1888-1907</b>	<b>1907</b>
<i>S. Elisabeth Albertzki</i>	1862	1891	<b>1888-1905</b>	1919
<i>S. Engelberta Weinmann</i>	1859	1893	<b>1905-1907</b>	1929
<b>02 M. Ambrosia VETTER</b>	<b>1866</b>	<b>1896</b>	<b>1908-1921</b>	<b>1925</b>
<i>S. Engelberta Weinmann</i>	1859	1893	<b>1908-1921</b>	1929
<b>03 M. Liboria HANSKNECHT</b>	<b>1869</b>	<b>1895</b>	<b>1921-1947</b>	<b>1947</b>
<i>S. Ambrosia Vetter</i>	1866	1896	<b>1921-1925</b>	1925
<i>S. Stanislaus Raczkowska</i>	1857	1891	<b>1925-1927</b>	1944
<i>S. Germana Steidel</i>	1870	1896	<b>1927-1947</b>	1961
<b>04 M. Olympia HEUEL</b>	<b>1898</b>	<b>1921</b>	<b>1947-1965</b>	<b>1994</b>
<i>S. Dolorosa Schmidt</i>	1891	1917	<b>1947-1959</b>	1971
<i>S. Demetria Lang</i>	1908	1926	<b>1959-1965</b>	1991
<b>05 M. Demetria LANG</b>	<b>1908</b>	<b>1926</b>	<b>1965-1977</b>	<b>1991</b>
<i>S. Aquin Gilles</i>	1923	1940	<b>1965-1977</b>	2011

<b>06</b>	<b>S. Irmtraud FORSTER</b>	<b>1933</b>	<b>1957</b>	<b>1977-1989</b>	
	<i>S. Bernarde Lauscher</i>				
		1927	1953	<b>1977-1983</b>	2015
	<i>S. Alzira Poli</i>				
		1937	1956	<b>1983-1989</b>	2016
<b>07</b>	<b>S. Jean SCHAFFER</b>				
		<b>1942</b>	<b>1963</b>	<b>1989-2002</b>	
	<i>S. Dolores Ryan</i>				
		1933	1955	<b>1989-1995</b>	
	<i>S. Terezinha Fontana de Araújo</i>				
		1946	1966	<b>1995-2002</b>	
<b>08</b>	<b>S. Therezinha Joana RASERA</b>				
		<b>1945</b>	<b>1964</b>	<b>2002-2013</b>	
	<i>S. Edith Bramberger</i>				
		1953	1975	<b>2002-2013</b>	
<b>09</b>	<b>S. Edith BRAMBERGER</b>				
		<b>1953</b>	<b>1975</b>	<b>2013 ...</b>	
	<i>S. Maria Yaneth Moreno R.</i>				
		1964	1985	<b>2013 ...</b>	

### CHRONOLOGY OF LEADERSHIP (Lay-Salvatorians)

	Birth	Commitment	Term of Office	Death
<b>01</b>	<b>Mr. Ermes LUPARIA</b>			
		<b>1950</b>	<b>2003-2006</b>	
<b>02</b>	<b>Mrs. Judy DAVIS</b>			
		<b>1955</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>2006 ...</b>







transitus (transition)



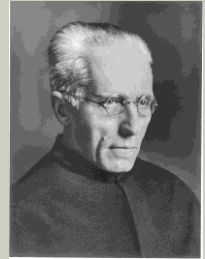
## **P. FRANCIS MARY OF THE CROSS JORDAN**

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Obituary on the Founder and  
first Superior General of the Salvatorians <sup>1</sup>

“As we already reported in the last issue of ‘Missionary’, in the midst of the horrors of the World War, our dear Lord decided to put our Society through a new difficult ordeal: at 8 p.m. on September 8, He took our spiritual father and Founder for all eternity. The spiritual cooperatives he founded: The *Society of the Divine Savior*, and the *Sisters of the Divine Savior* have together 57 branches extending over Europe, Asia and America, and in none of them could their Founder lay his weary head to rest. He died in Tifers hospital in Switzerland, far from his flock. Eight of his spiritual children carried him to the grave, two followed the coffin; not one of the Sisters could attend because of the closed border.

The deceased was, with special permission, buried first in the Tifers parish church until times were such as to allow his transfer to the crypt of the Motherhouse. Nineteen priests from Tifers and the wider surrounding area took part in the funeral. The Most Reverend Diocesan Bishop Placidus Colliard <sup>2</sup> wanted to consecrate the body himself, and to do this came in person, accompanied by his Most Reverend Vicar General. The offering that took place during the requiem held by his Most



**Fr. Pancratius  
PFEIFFER  
SDS**

Superior General  
of the  
Salvatorians

1915-1945

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<sup>1</sup> NN. [Probably PFEIFFER, Pancratius]: Obituary in: ‘Missionary’, No. 38. (1918), November 1918, pp. 173-176.

<sup>2</sup> Bishop of Lausanne and Geneva 1915-1920



Reverend Father Zurlinden from Tafers, was attended on the one hand by the authorities, but on the other, by the poor, invalid occupants of the hospital who could walk only with great difficulty with the aid of sticks and, in their midst, poor orphans who had first prayed at the deceased's tomb and could now put a small donation in the collection plate. And while all this was taking place down in the church, the lamenting and imploring lines of the *Dies Irae* rang out from the chancel:

*What shall I, frail man, be pleading?  
Who for me be interceding,  
When the just are mercy needing  
Low I kneel, with heart's submission  
See, like ashes, my contrition:  
Help me in my last condition.*

Solemnly and in contemplation, the faithful dispersed after the holy rites; they had the feeling of having attended a very special ceremony.

What had actually taken place? Who was the deceased who had been lowered into the coldness of the grave?

Father Francis Mary of the Cross Jordan - the name of the deceased - was the son of simple country folk. He grew up in Gurtweil, a small village near Waldshut in Baden. Born on June 16, 1848, he attended primary (grade) school in his home town. After this, he took to pen and brush to earn a living as a decorative painter. When he was already of conscription age (call-up to the draft), he felt a calling to priesthood. After he first served as a soldier for two years in Constance in Baden, he began to study. Two high-ranking clergymen looked after him and gave him private tuition. The novice in his twenties studied with such diligence and success that after two years at the Constance high (grammar) school he passed the entrance exam for the 6th class. Generous people supported him financially. He completed high school in 1874 and for the graduation exam was able to submit essays in 12 different languages. This demonstrated diligence, talent and will power. He then attended Freiburg University in Breisgau and on July 21, 1878 in St. Peter near Freiburg was ordained to priesthood.

Because of the conflict between the civil and ecclesiastical authorities (*Kulturkampf*) at the time, he could not celebrate his first sacrifice of the Mass in his home town, but had to do this in neighboring Döttingen in Switzerland.<sup>3</sup> The then priest of Döttingen, Fr. J. Pfyffer, reported: *'You got the feeling that this newly ordained priest would become a significant personality.'*

The new priest got permission from his Most Reverend Bishop <sup>4</sup> to go to Rome to continue his studies, namely languages. From Rome he went to Egypt and then to the Holy Land. Here, on the one hand he applied himself to the Arabic languages and, on the other, to fervent prayer, for he felt that he should, to a greater than usual extent of work for our dear God. Gradually, the idea of establishing a religious community started to form in his mind.

With his mind made up, he returned to Europe. As he was of a very fearful disposition, he asked various highly regarded spiritual dignitaries for advice, including the learned German Cardinal [Josef] Hergenröther.<sup>5</sup> The opinions were favorable and he put his plan into action. First, in a private audience, which he was granted, he requested of his Holiness Pope Leo XIII an apostolic blessing for his venture. The great pontiff granted his wish by adding: *'If it is God's will that the venture should come about, then you will succeed in carrying it out.'*

Fr. Jordan now went to his German home town to look for helpers. The dear Lord, as we can say, ordained it that he met a holy priest who because of the '*Kulturkampf*' had come from his home, Paderborn in Westphalia, to Bavaria and worked there as a heaven-sent editor for the periodical '*Ambrosius*'. It was Bernhard Lüthen, later Fr. Bonaventura Lüthen, who after careful consideration went along with him the whole way. Neither Fr. Jordan, who from the start had no financial

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<sup>3</sup> The original sentence begins: "Because of the culture struggle ..." – Here we tried to improve the translation. PMO

<sup>4</sup> Lothar von Kübel (1823-1881), ordained a priest in 1847, appointed suffragan bishop in Freiburg and titular bishop of Leuce in 1867, consecrated on March 22, 1868, appointed apostolic administrator on January 5, 1869, was then diocese administrator. > WIKIPEDIA as of May 1, 2016.

<sup>5</sup> Josef Hergenröther (1824-1890), ordained a priest 1848, was later professor of ecclesiastical history and law, was elevated to cardinal by Leo XIII and appointed cardinal prefect of the Vatican Secret Archives in 1879. > WIKIPEDIA as of May 2, 2016.

means, nor his first spiritual son, who long since had 'gone forth and given his possessions to the poor' had any monetary resources. A third priest joined them, but he later left them.

All three traveled to Rome, and on December 8, 1881 in the death chamber of the holy Birgitta of Sweden Fr. Jordan laid the foundation of his work. There, he read the holy Mass and, as a sign that they voluntarily acknowledged him as Founder and their Superior, his two comrades received Holy Communion from his hand. In the same house they rented the necessary living quarters.

We read in the Acts of the Apostles that Gamaliel who followed the apostles for advice spoke: *'Men of Israel, consider carefully what you intend to do to these men. Some time ago Theudas appeared, claiming to be somebody, and about four hundred men rallied to him. He was killed, all his followers were dispersed, and it all came to nothing. After him, Judas the Galilean appeared in the days of the census and led a band of people in revolt. He too was killed, and all his followers were scattered. Therefore, in the present case I advise you: Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God. And they agreed with him.'*<sup>6</sup> This happened at the foundation of the holy church. – Subsequently, more than one person who had joined the young Society remembered these words and, in view of the difficulties, was about to lose his courage; but some also used them against those that wanted to stifle the young Society or split from their Founder, and these were not few in number.

Fr. Jordan began the formation of his Society, humanly speaking, with nothing. In the eyes of the world he must have been a madman who builds his house on sand; but we believe that we may say that in the eyes of God he was the wise man who built his house on rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against

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<sup>6</sup> Acts 5:35-39

that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.<sup>7</sup>

On what did Fr. Jordan build his Society? Not on wealth and possessions; he could literally say with the apostle: Gold and silver I have none. To quote from another apostle, his work was also not based on, *'eloquence or human wisdom'*; he did indeed have wide ranging language skills, but he was no orator; he found it difficult to present his thoughts and plans clearly or to defend himself against attacks, so that later in the ordeals he had to endure his pain repeatedly voicing the words: *'The Dear Lord just meant it to be that I can't express my thoughts with human eloquence; He will know what it's good for and why He ordained it so, may his will be done.'* And whoever heard the sorely tested man speak in this way was overcome with deep sympathy and felt moved to help him.

Fr. Jordan built his work on God's providence; it was not *'to rest on human wisdom, but on God's power.'*<sup>8</sup> In 1881 he founded the *Society of the Divine Savior*, which should help to spread the Kingdom of God everywhere in the world, and in 1888 the *Congregation of the Sisters of the Divine Savior*, whose members should devote themselves to the teaching of female youth and the work of Christian charity. These works of his arose from his profound living faith. He embraced God and God alone. *'It was for your sake'*, he said to Him, *'that I started the work, in the conviction that you demanded it of me. Take care of it, for it is your work.'* He stuck to these words in the 34 years (1881-1915) in which he led his spiritual children as Superior General; and no difficulties could discourage him and no test of God hinder him; indeed, the more God tested him, the more closely did he attach himself to God, the more devotedly did he pray: *'Lord, thy will be done!'*

Over the years, both communities spread, as mentioned, to Europe, Asia and America. The *Society of the Divine Savior* finally received approbation in 1911 from the Holy See and the *Society of the Sisters of the Divine Savior* received papal approbation in the same year. On

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<sup>7</sup> Mt 7:24-27

<sup>8</sup> 1Cor 2:5

these occasions, the Vatican expressed laudatory recognition of both Societies. For the Revered Founder, it signified a certain earthly reward. After all, he wanted only to serve the holy church, and a word of recognition from the highest church authority must, humanly speaking, have given him more joy than anything else. He was extremely grateful for every blessing, however small. Right up to the last days of his sickness, his thanks said: *'May the Dear Lord bless you!'*, and when he no longer had the strength to say these words, he made a sign with his hand and glanced at his benefactor, doctor, orderly or whomever, which took the place of every word of thanks.

During all the years that he spent in the Society's Motherhouse in Rome, he went to St Peter's every day to pray before the Supreme Pontiff and at the tomb of the Prince of the Apostles. Every afternoon, between about 4 and 5 o'clock, he could be seen there, immersed in prayer, without realizing what was going on around him. He was a man of prayer in the truest sense of the word. Whatever concern weighed on his mind, and there were so many of them, he told God and the heavenly patron saints of our Society. And he left the same legacy to his spiritual children by writing the exhortation in their rules: *'Let them have utmost trust and confidence in God and in our patron saints, because our help comes from above.'* His thinking, speeches and actions, his whole life was a confirmation of this exhortation. If poverty weighed on his mind, he would say, *'The dear Lord is rich; if we do our duty, He will not forsake us.'* If the helpers he needed to carry out his ventures failed, despaired or withdrew, then he was confident that God would provide replacements and admonished the timid to trust in God, who knew when to send help; and just as Moses helped the struggling children of Israel, so he supported his children grappling with countless difficulties by means of his powerful and trusting prayer. It was his principle that prayer was omnipotent.

The Great War broke out. A large number of his spiritual sons had to take up arms. He stayed in Rome with his assistants until Italy entered the war. In May 1915, he saw himself compelled to leave the Rome he had grown so fond of; he moved to Fribourg in Switzerland, where the Society had a theological college and from where one could communi-

cate by mail with all the various colleges. Soon bad news arrived from here and there, reporting that young hopeful Society members had lost their lives for the fatherland. As meekly as he took all this and as much as he prayed after each death report: 'May God's will be done!' – his already very weakened health caused him extreme suffering. Dealing with business affairs became increasingly difficult for him, and when in autumn 1915 the General Chapter was held in Fribourg, at which every six years the Society's most senior heads were elected, he felt that he should not stand for re-election as General Superior. In view of his poor health, the most reverend capitulars went along with this and elected a successor, who fortified by his blessing, relieved his weary shoulders of the burden of leading the Society. His spiritual sons had obtained the privilege from the Holy See that he could keep the title 'Superior General' until his death, so that during his lifetime his successors should use only the title 'Vicar General'.

Two more years passed which he spent in the Fribourg College. Numerous letters from his spiritual children from all colleges as well as from the front reached him, promising to fulfill their duty conscientiously and true to his teachings to stand by their posts, be they in the trenches, behind the front, in military field hospitals or anywhere else in God's vast vineyards. These letters gave him great consolation and he prayed fervently for his children exposed to so much danger. And so things went until about Easter of that year. At that time, the symptoms of a serious abdominal condition made themselves felt, and soon he was totally bedridden. A lay brother served him with great devotion. Amid his suffering he prayed day and night: '*Lord, your will be done!*' The ferocious war finally deprived him of the last available orderly, who, on August 19, had to leave for Germany as a military orderly. The doctor now insisted that he be transferred to a hospital where there would be adequate resources. We were forced to bring our suffering Father to the hospital in Tafers, a small village near Fribourg. He was admitted there at 7.30 a.m. on August 26. The venerable 'Daughters of the Holy Vincent de Paul', who ran the hospital, received the dear patient most lovingly and gave him touching care. But all means failed. At 8 p.m. on September 8, the Feast of the Nativity of Mary, our dear ven-

erable Father, well prepared by a saintly life and receiving the last rites, fortified by the special blessing of the Holy Father, passed away into eternity. He who had founded two Societies, of which one still devotes itself particularly to caring for the sick, should not end his life in one of his many houses nor should he be cared for during his last illness by his own spiritual children. He should, according to God's decree, end his life, which was full of sacrifice, far from them.

As his successor in office sat at the bedside of his seriously ill spiritual Father and in view of the circumstances could not refrain from the words: *'that it had to be this way!'*, the sick priest looked at him almost reprovingly by summoning his last reserves of strength and saying: *'Remember this: 'God's ways are not our ways, and his thoughts are not our thoughts.'* - and far from complaining about God's inscrutable counsel, he added shortly after: *'But how good is God, who so lovingly cares for us! Let us put our trust firmly in him!'*

Thus died our spiritual Father and that was the last message that he gave us. In his teachings and model of virtues, there is a great legacy that will prove to be a blessing not only for us but also his future spiritual children. When we consider that 14 days before his death he was so utterly against our plans to leave the college and end his life in a strange home, then today, now that we have the whole course of events before our eyes, we join the psalmists in saying: *'This is the Lord's doing: and it is wonderful in our eyes.'*<sup>9</sup> Even outsiders said: It had to be this way; such a life could not have ended in a more moving way."



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<sup>9</sup> Ps 117:23

**DIALOGUING**

**WITH THE**

**FOUNDER**







Fr. Francis Mary of the Cross Jordan SDS



## “DEAR REVEREND FATHER”<sup>10</sup>

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*When Fr. Jordan died in 1918, he was buried on September 11 in the parish church of Tafers (Switzerland) with a special permission, but already at that time a later transfer was intended. This transfer was realized in the terms of office of Fr. Bonaventura Schweizer and M. Olympia Heuel. Both were present when the remains were exhumed on September 12, 1956 in Tafers and later transferred to the Motherhouse in Rome. So, on September 15, 1956 a thanksgiving service took place and the remains were laid into the new grave in the new and so called ‘Chapel of the Founder’.<sup>11</sup> – On December 8, 1956 the Salvatorians celebrated the 75th anniversary of their foundation.*

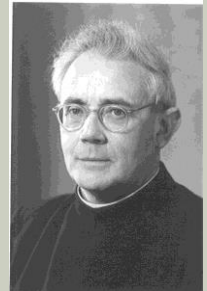
### “Dear Reverend Father!

During your fruitful life you wrote many circular and private letters to your spiritual sons. Although these letters were brief, their content was most significant, and coming from your paternal heart went straight to the hearts of your devoted and loyal spiritual sons. These writings have been gathered and submitted to

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<sup>10</sup> SCHWEIZER, Bonaventura: A letter to Rev. Father Francis M. of the Cross Jordan. On the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the foundation of the Salvatorians 1956. In: ANNALES SDS, VI/08. Rome, 1956-12-08, pp. 337-344. – This contribution was made to the Confreres and spiritual sons of Fr. Jordan at that time; but even if the Lay Salvatorians and Sisters are not meant and mentioned, his offer of thoughts hopefully will be inspiring and interesting for all members of the *Salvatorian Family*.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 347-361.



**Fr. Bonaventura  
SCHWEIZER  
SDS**

General Superior  
of the  
Salvatorians

1953-1965

Holy Church for judgment. Already we know the result. Nothing opposed to Faith and Morals has been found in them, moreover, the ecclesiastical examiners explicitly stressed that they were most edifying. We guard these letters carefully, as precious gems, especially your *Spiritual Diary*. Your book of resolutions which we were able to salvage from your small legacy is one of the most precious gifts you left us. Indeed, your splendid example is worth more to us than all your verbal and written bequests. Nevertheless, in this Jubilee Year of your Society, I want to thank you sincerely, for every character, even, that you wrote. I also thank you in the name of your spiritual sons who are scattered over the whole world. They are reading your *Exhortations* and trying to imitate your example.

Today, as I write this letter, you are celebrating your Name Day in heaven. How beautifully have your spiritual sons endeavored year after year to celebrate your Name Day worthily. Now in the Jubilee Year of your Society, I would like to place your example once more before the eyes and minds of my confreres and assure you and them of all that you have been and all that you have meant to us. Your name is a program of life for your spiritual sons.

### **Father John Baptist Francis Mary of the Cross Jordan**

**F A T H E R** – Pater, Father, Reverend Father – Thus you were addressed during life by your spiritual sons and daughters, and that you have been in the truest sense of the word. Many priests and laymen have verified this, stating that they could think of you only with reverence. They look upon you as a saint. However, the final word concerning your heroic virtues, the sanctity of your life, and the favors and miracles obtained through your intercession is reserved for Holy Mother Church's decision in the process of beatification and canonization which has already been introduced.

All of us who are fortunate enough to have been acquainted with you personally can prove that you have been a real Father to us. Among all the names this one shines as a sparkling star. The word *father* bespeaks everything good, beautiful and sublime that one can think of, being

surpassed by none save that of *mother*. Even God did not receive a more significant name from man than *father*. This name contains all the love, beauty and understanding found in heaven and on earth. You have been to us a real *father*.

To many thousands you have given the religious life; you have preserved this new life for them; you have protected and fostered it. How much care you have exerted for the well-being of your spiritual children! The sick members were your favorites. Daily you inquired about them and made sure they received the proper care. The lay brothers, too, had a special place in your heart. Your last greeting on the night before you went home to God was for them. Your dying lips still whispered '*Saluti, tanti, tanti, tanti. tanti! Sincere greetings many, many, many ...*'

You always had an encouraging and consoling word for the little people, the poor, the helpless, the fearful, and the outcast. Whether it was a poor girl who sold flowers on a street corner in Brussels, or a poor beggar in St. Peter's square asking for alms, you – the poorest – sympathized with them and always gave them a mite. For the smallest act of charity you always expressed a hearty '*May God reward you!*' There was something kind and fatherly even in your look; your handshake was so warm that all felt your deep, great love. You permitted yourself nothing at all, but for others you had everything. You founded two religious orders and accepted many establishments. Your memory was extraordinary; you possessed a sharp mind; you were a prudent adviser, a learned and pious priest, and you knew an astounding number of foreign languages. Your faith was adamant, your confidence in God unshakable, your entire life admirable. Though all this is great, the greatest possession which you gave us was your fatherly love. In your person was reflected the kindness and affability of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

You possessed the nature of a **J O H N**, being gifted with a strong character, 'ein Hotzenwälder' who could have a very stubborn head when there was question of a holy principle. You were a hardened, mortified,

uncompromisingly strong man; one who could say NO when all others said YES; a choleric personality who would sooner break and go to pieces than to bend; a man who said to himself and to others 'non licet – it is not permitted'; you were fearless, intrepid, courageous, tenacious, persevering, serious; one who persevered in even an apparently lost cause. You were a man of strong will power who did not shrink from difficulties. You were stable and enduring like the mountains of your homeland, and your heart was burning with zeal as was that of the Precursor, a 'lucerna ardens et lucens – a burning and shining lamp' burning with love of God and souls. Yes, your unshakable faith, the precious inheritance of your youth, convinced you of the worth of immortal souls.

What you entered into your book of resolutions was always before your eyes: *'Oh, you souls, purchased at a dear price, if I could save you, gladly would I sacrifice my life for you.'* Zeal for souls was your great passion. In order to inflame everyone with this zeal you left nothing undone to arouse enthusiasm and love for the apostolate. All legitimate means were employed. Even before one stepped into your room one was attracted by the maps on the wall and the statistics they displayed concerning the missions. This was a clever device to enthuse the visitor for the apostolate. On your desk stood a globe which you studied again and again and that always reminded you of the Savior's words. *'The harvest is great ... go you also into My vineyard.'* And again, *'The love of God urges us ...'* In order that this holy fire would never diminish, you nourished it daily with fervent prayer. *'Prayer is the greatest power in the world'*, you wrote on the wall of your cell. *'Give me men of prayer, and I will conquer the whole world.'* To see you pray was, indeed, edifying. At Holy Mass you trembled and shivered; entire nights you spent before the Blessed Sacrament wrestling with God for the salvation of souls. Your John-like animation revealed itself in the words you once wrote to a benefactor: *'Help me, most beloved, to save immortal souls redeemed by the precious Blood of Jesus Christ. Assist me in spreading the honor and glory of the Triune God over the entire world. Help me to extol Mary, our Mother, everywhere. Help me to dispel the darkness of paganism through the light of our holy Faith!*

*Help me to enkindle charity in the hearts of all men for the alleviation of misery and want! Help me to rescue youth from the jaws of the hellish lion. Help me to rejoice with the angels, to humble the devils, to comfort Holy Mother Church and its supreme Shepherd. Help me to gather, educate and send forth new apostles. Your assistance, dearly beloved, consists of prayer and alms. O, do not refuse me this help!*

*'As long as there is still one soul on earth who does not know God, nor love Him above all things, you may not rest for one moment. ... No sacrifice, no cross, no suffering, no abandonment, no affliction, no assault, oh nothing must be too difficult for you; no betrayal, no infidelity, no coldness, no ridicule lessen your fervor ... Woe to me if I do not make you, Lord, known to mankind.'*

*'Omnia Salvatori – all for the Savior and immortal souls!'* was your motto. You prepared the way for so many God-seeking, falling, despairing persons and wanted to continue this charitable work even after your death through your religious foundations. You are a real J o h n B a p t i s t.

**FRANCIS** – Yes, that is what you have been. The spirit of St. Francis of Assisi animated you during your whole lifetime. You have always been simple and candid, unassuming and modest, full of cordiality, sympathy and mercy, especially to the poor. In your youth, you experienced poverty to a very high degree; you have suffered much therefrom without complaint. The little house of Nazareth in Gurtweil was appreciated more by you than the Palazzo Moroni in Borgo Vecchio. In the latter you would have liked to remove pictures and paintings if they had not been works of art which had to be preserved for posterity. Your cell was very poorly furnished. It served as reception room, study and bedroom, which was never heated. In this bare place you would not tolerate an armchair. A piece of board that lay on the stone floor served as prie-dieu. Nothing superfluous could be found there. Sometimes, even as Superior General, you made trips begging for alms. It would even have been more to your liking to live on alms if Holy Mother Church would have permitted it. You never carried pocket money,



but secured every coin from the procurator or the brother in the office; this was true even of the few pennies which you daily gave to the poor on the way to St. Peter's.

Your garments had all the earmarks of the wear-and-tear principle. However, they were clean and mended. Yet, on your trip to America you were clad so poorly that you had to borrow some clothes before visiting the Most Reverend Bishop of New York. As for suitcase, you used always the same outmoded one. You never used a breviary with gold edge. In your last illness you even refused an alarm clock which they wanted to buy for you. Your watch chain consisted of a shoestring. Every available space on pieces of paper and old envelopes, etc. was used. You used an old broken knife for sharpening your pencil. Yes, you loved poverty as a mother, and used her as a foundation upon which to build your religious edifices.

Your life of poverty has been a shining example for your spiritual sons and daughters and also edification to a money-mad world. Your life was a demonstration for the wealthy of the sound principle that can save the world and make it really happy. You were convinced of the words you spoke to your spiritual sons: *'If we want to follow the Divine Savior, if we want to become saints, if we want to convert the world, then we must become poor.'* Oh, modern Francis, how much there is yet to say to our wealthy, yet impoverished, world!

**M A R Y** – This name also reveals the life of your soul. From your earliest youth you have been imbued with a great and fervent love for Mary. Your initial sermon as deacon was about the Mother of God. Daily as a student you prayed the Litany of Loreto; you took part in the Marian Congress in Fribourg, Switzerland; you placed your establishments entirely under the protection of the Mother of God and named them after her; and whenever possible you founded the establishment on a feast day of Mary. It was touching to see you pray before the picture of the 'Sorrowful Mother' in the Motherhouse at Rome. The rosary was almost constantly in your hands in order to use every free moment for saying *Aves*. In all your greatest anxieties and cares you took refuge

in Mary. Your faith and confidence was so childlike that you frequently conversed with Mary and gave her your requests written on little slips of paper. We have often seen these little slips which you placed between the fingers of our Blessed Lady's statue. *'Mater tuus sum, salva me – Mother, I am yours; save me!'* and *"Pay our debts!"* These and similar petitions were written upon these favor-seeking slips of paper. How friendly and reverentially you greeted the Madonna in the Motherhouse even from afar. Practically in every letter you urged and encouraged your spiritual sons and daughters to confidence in Mary, and you yourself did not want to be exceeded in this devotion. At each visit to the Blessed Sacrament you also greeted the Mother of the Savior. The feasts of Our Lady were really happy and joyful occasions for you. You said repeatedly, *'As long as the Queen of Heaven and earth is not yet honored everywhere, you may not rest for one moment.'* And you actually did not rest a moment to make known the praise and power of the Mother of God and to repeat constantly and everywhere: *'It has never been heard that she has refused anyone.'* Should we be surprised then, that your Heavenly Mother conducted you to your heavenly home on her birthday? You have a great deal to say to our generation which lives in the Marian era.

**OF THE CROSS** – But how could you add this phrase to your name? Was your life characterized by the cross? And did you love the cross to such an extent that you chose the same for your name?

Yes, the cross was your portion and your constant companion. Since the mysterious occurrence at your First Holy Communion the cross accompanied you like a shadow; it belonged to you and became your friend. You loved the cross. It was also your favorite theme in conferences and addresses. Sometimes it nearly weighed you down. Then you went in spirit with your Exemplar, the Divine Cross-bearer, to Calvary.

You introduced the meditation on the agony of our Lord on Thursday evenings in your Society and this holy practice was widely adopted later. In your great cares and sufferings you instinctively took up your cross and kissed it frequently. One of the lay brothers surprised you

once as you were kneeling before the large crucifix which hung on the wall. You were rapt in fervent and heart-rending prayer to the Crucified One. Discouraged and fainthearted members received kind encouragement with the words: *'Take your cross firmly into your hands.'* Even in the moment of death you could assure your followers, *'The Apostolate of suffering is of great significance!'*

Crosses, sufferings and difficulties have never proved to be an impediment or served as a brake, but on the contrary, they served as stimulus and impetus for great deeds. You realized the truth of the words of St. Francis de Sales: *'From all eternity God's wisdom has selected that cross which He gives you as His precious gift. Before He sent you this cross He penetrated it, studied it with His divine mind, tried it with His judicious judgment, warmed it with His loving mercy, and weighed it with His two hands to ascertain that it was not a millimeter too big or a milligram too heavy. And He blessed it with His all-holy Name, anointed it with His grace, flooded it with His consolation, and then looking once more upon you and your courage, He finally sent it from Heaven as a special greeting to you, as an alms of the all-merciful love of your God.'* Thus you bore the name 'of the Cross' as a title of nobility and honor.

**JORDAN** – That was the name of your ancestors, your family name. Does it date back to the important times of the Crusades? We do not know exactly. However, this name reminded you again and again of the river Jordan in the Holy Land. How full of meaning was this Jordan for the chosen people! How many have refreshed themselves of its waters! What a blessing for the Holy Land! So you, Father Jordan, also have been for innumerable persons a comfort, salvation and blessings. You have always given to others and sacrificed yourself for them. You have assisted many, both personally and through your spiritual sons and daughters. Thousands owe their priestly and religious lives to you and also their salvation for time and for eternity. You went through the land doing good. It is impossible to enumerate all the good deeds you did during your life. You and your accomplishments can never be forgotten. Your foundations already comprise thousands of men and

women who in their dedication to God wrote upon their banner: to succor, to save, to sanctify!

Already during life you were favored with blessings and endowed with supernatural gifts. The appearance of the white dove at your First Holy Communion was, doubtless, a heavenly, mysterious sign of grace. You possessed the gift of prayer to a high degree. Those who saw you were deeply impressed at your constant living in God's presence, at your intimate union with God, so that they gladly recommended themselves to your prayers as they would to a saint's. Wonderful things have been reported about you. For example: after a fervent prayer before the tabernacle you received help in a great financial need. The large sum which you needed was brought to your home immediately upon completion of your prayer and by that strange monk who disappeared before his name could be given.

One day you went unexpectedly to the Sisters in Tivoli to assist Sister Clara in her last hour. She had frequently expressed the wish that she be permitted to make her perpetual vows into your hands before her death. This she did and then died immediately. Who called you and how did you know that the Sister was to die so soon after your arrival?

While you lived, you helped many sick people; even cured them instantaneously. All were aware that there was a special power in your priestly blessing, and since your entrance into eternity reports of new favors obtained in Europe and especially in the New World are constantly coming in. You have been a helper and intercessor for many and in varied necessities. Father Jordan, your unceasing beneficent mission and powerful intercession draws down endless graces and benefits upon poor humanity!

Such was your life and personality. As such have you been seen by all who knew you. All were agreed: you were a man of God, a holy priest and Founder. May this picture of you never fade from the eyes of your spiritual sons. In this seventy-fifth year from the foundation of our Society, we look up to you with gratitude. Your holy bequest to us, the *Society of the Divine Savior*, will always be dear to us. We will love her

as our *mother*. We will prove our gratitude by our total dedication to your foundation.

As you have brought honor to your name, so will we bear our name with honor. That is my wish and prayer, dear Ven. Father; spoken, too, in the name of the entire Society entrusted to me [as General Superior]. Bless them all whom you have given to me, so that they may become like unto you.

And this is the most solemn pledge which I make in the name of your spiritual sons on the Jubilee Day of the Society.

**SALVATORIANI**  
**Salvatori et Societati**  
**semper et ubique!"** <sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Translation: SALVATORIANI – for the Savior and for the Society – always and everywhere!







LIFE guided by God / original: von Gott geführt LEBEN





## HEART AND STRENGTH OF OUR MISSION

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### Our Society - how it presented itself at the XI General Chapter ...

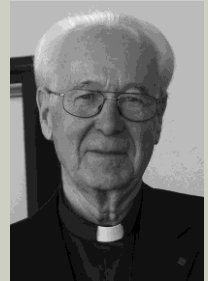
On 28 October 1965, the II Vatican Council passed the Decree on the Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life *Perfectae Caritatis*. This decree required of all religious communities a renewal *“through the constant return to the sources of Christian life and to the original spirit of the individual institutes but at the same time to their adaptation to the changed conditions of our time.”*<sup>13</sup>

In taking on this task, the Generalate at the time convened the so-called ‘Renewal Chapter’ for the summer of 1969 and invited all members to participate and cooperate in the work. The commitment of all members, particularly the younger ones, was overwhelming. All were convinced of the necessity for a renewal and adaptation. The Generalate then appointed a preparation commission consisting of members from all provinces to compile the submitted proposals into one common draft of the constitutions. The idea was thus to reformulate or revise the constitutions in accordance with the Council’s decree.

But even the processing of these proposals in the international commission showed that in many areas the perceptions of the “Renewal of Religious Life” diverged widely. There were

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<sup>13</sup> VATICAN II: Decree on the Adaption and renewal of religious Life PERFECTAE CARITATIS proclaimed by His Holiness Pope Paul VI on October 28, 1965, No. 2.



**Fr. Richard  
ZEHNER  
SDS**

Vicar General  
of the  
Salvatorians

1969-1975  
and  
1981-1987

tough negotiations, in which - broadly speaking - two parties confronted each other: on the one side, the European group, largely regarded as conservative, whose core was seen to be in the German provinces, and the American group, considered progressive, which regarded itself as represented by the US provincial.

Against this background, the XI General Chapter met in *Mondo Migliore*, the centre of P. Riccardo Lombardi SJ, in Rocca di Papa (Italy).

### **The XI General Chapter**

This General Chapter was marked by tough debates and some close, crucial voting. It was evident that the American side regarded and pigeon-holed the European confreres just as they had experienced them in the Founder's time. They judged that the Europeans labored under the old inherited structures that had changed only very little and believed that they did not see what had changed – particularly in Germany – because of the Nazi era and World War II in the practice of the faith and naturally also in the everyday life of the holy workers. The American side thought that the Europeans did not notice for example how much the training would have to change after the post-war years not only for young men, but also men who had been on the front for years, when they came to the novitiate. But on the other hand, the European confreres could hardly imagine how our American confreres had suffered under the old structures and thus how they felt obliged to now renew these by force and to adapt them to the times.

In all of this, a big role was played by the financial situation of the North American province, which was practically bankrupt and which it could not or did not want to accept for itself. And once again it was primarily the German provinces that 'stood up to' the US province by openly declaring that financial assistance from the German provinces was impossible. This stance was justified on the one hand by the fact that because of the necessary building measures for German establishments after the war and the damage suffered, there was hardly any cash available and on the other hand by the fact that an assumption of these dollar debts at the then exchange rate (1 US\$ = 4 DM) would

have precipitated the German provinces directly into bankruptcy. Furthermore, the Generalate itself and also other European Provinces had via that Generalate taken on loans from America and had to repay them as quickly as possible. Against this background, the XI General Chapter had to decide also whether the Generalate, if necessary and helpful, could sell the Motherhouse in Rome. The Society was facing the possibility of a schism.

### **The Election of the Generalate**

It is probably fair to say that even the election of the Superior General, Fr. Earl Donald Skwor, a member of the US province, was the result of a fiercely contested vote. Looking at the camps described and much concerned at being able to preserve the unity of the Society, Fr. Skwor looked for a confrere from the European provinces to put forward as a candidate for the election as his deputy (Vicar General) who enjoyed the trust of these provinces. As Superior and Rector of the Scholasticate in Passau, where confreres from five or six provinces were studying, I was well known and to some extent recognized by the Provincials. So Fr. Skwor proposed me, as a member of the South German province, for election as Vicar General. The General Chapter accepted this proposal and elected me; it was thus a political choice whose primary objective was the unity of the Society. Yes, the unity of the Society was thus indeed ensured. The election of the other members of the Generalate then went smoothly.

### **Duties and Efforts of the new Generalate**

- The unity of the Society

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The new Generalate was thus facing huge tasks. Just as the General Chapter had tried to revise and/or reformulate the constitutions in the spirit of the Council, now the Generalate had the job of bringing these constitutions into the Society 'ad experimentum' - as a basis for the Renewal as well as for the unity of the Society.

On top of this came the recollection of the spirit of the Founder, Father Francis Mary of the Cross Jordan. This was our reversion to grass roots.

We became aware once again of his great concern for unity, which was again highly relevant. In this task, we could and had to invoke the Founder; and accordingly I would like to quote the Founder:

*“Always hold on to this universality. Keep focused on the omnibus et ubique! Thus, the Society is not destined for Italy or Germany. It is for all countries ... We shut out no nation. And it is also the spirit of the Society that people of all nations are admitted.”*<sup>14</sup>

- The Motherhouse in Rome

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The possible sale of the Motherhouse was an issue and task to be dealt with. Initially, I too was of Fr. General’s opinion that the sale of the Motherhouse was necessary and helpful for the repayment of the Generalate’s debts. In many joint deliberations and consultations with experts, however, we both realized that the sale of the Motherhouse would not bring any significant financial help. Even though, out of consideration for his American confreres, Fr. General could not openly voice this finding, he was fully behind this decision. In the meantime, however, we had learnt what the Motherhouse in Rome meant to our Founder. For him, the Motherhouse was *“cor et robur”*, heart and strength of the Society, and the proximity to the Holy See was a calling and sign of his loyalty to the church. The Motherhouse was the Founder’s heartfelt concern; I quote Fr. Jordan again:

*“The second defense, the spirit through which our Society should particularly work, is looking toward the center. Here is the main point ..., the robur societatis ..., the heart of the Society, in Rome”.*<sup>15</sup>

The years 1969 to 1975, the time between the XI and XII General Chapter, was a period of great upheaval and a new beginning in the Church and in our Society. The incumbent Generalate certainly did not live up

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<sup>14</sup> JORDAN: Chapter talk of 1899-02-17. In: DSS XXIII, p. 278.

<sup>15</sup> JORDAN: Chapter talk of 1898-12-02. In: DSS XXIII, p. 248.

to all tasks, expectations and difficulties. But we can say that through the efforts of all members of the Generalate mutual understanding on the whole did evolve. I should also not forget that by virtue of the efforts and great commitment of the then Treasurer General, Fr. Wilibald Ulrich, the Generalate was again free of debt in 1975.

Despite remaining tensions, it was a great success in those years that in the Founder's spirit the unity of the Society had been preserved and consolidated, that in his spirit the Motherhouse had been maintained as "*cor et robur*" and that the Founder himself came more alive again in the minds of all Members. – Fr. General and I often fought for our positions, but we still remained friends. May that too be seen as a sign of the consolidated unity!

Fr. General Earl Donald Skwor had studied in Rome from 1948 to 1953. He suffered greatly under the then strict, often outdated, forms and this burdened him for a long time to come. But I am convinced that he then nevertheless reconciled himself with Rome. In any case, that's how I interpret his wish that after his death his ashes should be laid to rest in the grave of the Salvatorians in the Campo Verano in Rome - this too a sign of reconciliation.





rûh - the power of the HOLY SPIRIT / original: Heilige GeistesKraft





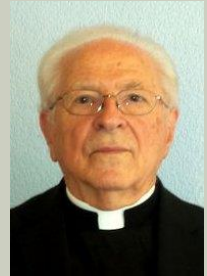
## UNITY IN DIVERSITY

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### Introduction

One of the most important issues that concerned our Reverend Father, Fr. Francis of the Cross Jordan, in relation to the *Society of the Divine Savior* founded by him was **unity**: Unity as a goal inherent in its founding, unity with him as Founder, unity with and amongst superiors, unity amongst confreres: unity at all costs! - thus proclaimed the Founder in his address on October 4, 1896, his nameday, among other things: *“Unity! Unity! ... stand solidly together and prefer to be silent and humble than to disrupt unity.”*<sup>16</sup> –

The period of office of my predecessor as General Superior of the Society from 1969-1975 and the start of my tenure, which ran from 1975-1987, were marked by the heated discussions and developments after the II Vatican Council which the universal church and thus our international religious order experienced. Both in the universal church and in our Salvatorian community worldwide there developed a lively awareness of special ethnic and cultural qualities, which led to difficult tensions. So in the opening address of the XII General Chapter in 1975 Fr. General Earl Skwor urged the preservation of unity and mutual understanding.



**Fr. Gerard  
ROGOWSKI  
SDS**

General Superior  
of the  
Salvatorians

1975-1987

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<sup>16</sup> JORDAN: Chapter talk of 1896-10-04. In: DSS XXIII, p. 75.

## Words from the Founder

In this situation that was threatening the unity of our religious order, I felt an important need, then in my inauguration speech on being elected General Superior, to appeal in particular for unity. Inspired by the words of the apostle Paul in the first epistle to the Corinthians about one body and many parts, I said to the congregated capitulars:

*“Dear confreres, in the reading that we have just heard in various languages, Paul puts Christ before our eyes – a body with many parts. - This portrayal fits our current situation very well, for two reasons: first, as a matter of fact, and second, as a task and obligation. (1) As a **fact**: Despite all our disparities and disagreements that have manifested themselves during the Chapter and will continue to manifest themselves, we still form a unified entity. Christ’s love unifies us – “Congregavit nos in unum Christi amor” – the concrete human example which Father Jordan gave us by founding the ‘Society of the Divine Savior’. (2) As a **task and obligation**: The current Chapter has once again brought to our attention our differing views and opinions; but at the same time it has also showed us that it is possible to find unity in this diversity. – But are we able to achieve this unity? Yes! But only if we seek it in Christ, the Divine Savior; that means: in our love for Him, in our love for one another and in the love in truth that He revealed by his birth and again and again brings to mind in His church, both in the institutional as well as the charismatic church, of which we ourselves are a part as Father Jordan’s religious order. Inspired by this spirit, we will surely find a new form of our Society – perhaps born in pain. A form for today and tomorrow, in which Father Jordan recognizes his own Society again. He should not only recognize it again, but also accept it anew as the only authentic vision of his Society in new, changing times. He will at the same time also accept all efforts of each individual member and each ethnic and cultural group to find the Salvatorian identity, which despite diversity, exists in unity.”<sup>17</sup>*

The fact that pleases me is that the call to unity in diversity that on the occasion of all subsequent General Chapters, General Synods and other

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<sup>17</sup> Informations SDS, V/03 (1975)

international meetings was repeated time and again did, in a long, but successful process, bear fruit that could gradually be harvested and will continue to be harvested, as one can hear from reports present at these gatherings that took place in a pleasing, exemplary spirit of unity and solidarity.

### **Our Christian understanding of Unity**

We all know that unity is not always easy. And in the midst of all unity we may therefore not forget diversity. Pope Francis had this in mind when during a meeting with 'charismatics' he said: *"Unity in diversity: Uniformity is not catholic, it is not Christian. Catholic unity is different but it is one. That is curious, is it not? The cause of diversity is also the cause of unity: the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit does both: he creates unity in diversity. Unity does not imply uniformity; it does not necessarily mean doing everything together or thinking in the same way. Nor does it mean giving up one's own identity. On the contrary: it involves the joyful recognition and acceptance of the various gifts which the Holy Spirit gives to each one and the placing of these gifts at the service of all members of the Church."*<sup>18</sup>

So let us ask ourselves: how can we Salvatorians today further Father Jordan's call to unity in his spirit? Tradition does not mean immobility, but rather taking the lead by a living organism that changes without losing its identity. Our unity and commonality therefore exist in maintaining **Salvatorianity!** We Salvatorians, in the second century of our existence, i.e., after being founded in 1881 by the then diocesan priest Johann-Baptist Jordan, come from all continents of the Earth, from many countries and cultures, we speak many languages; yet: our unity is not threatened by this diversity and variety, but enriched by it.

In common prayer, in the celebration of the Eucharist, in the common constitutions and in joint discussions, each one of us finds the spiritual resources that are necessary for an apostolic community. In service for the Divine Savior and the Church founded by him we are, moreover,

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<sup>18</sup> FRANCIS: Vatican Radio - Print Service, 2014-10-31.

united with the Pope.<sup>19</sup> As men of the Church we cannot do otherwise than think with the Church, led by the Spirit of our resurrected Lord.

Just as our Reverend Father, Fr. Francis Jordan, calling on us *“rather to tolerate, than to have unity destroyed”*, so too does Pope Francis in his Apostolic Letter *Evangelii gaudium*. He speaks of the willingness *“to face conflict, resolve it and make it the starting point of a new process ...”*, for *“unity prevails over conflict.”*<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Cf., Constitutions SDS, 802.

<sup>20</sup> FRANCIS: EVANGELII GAUDIUM – On the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today’s World. Rome, 2013, Nr. 227 / Section heading.

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## RENEWAL OF THE CONSTITUTIONS

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by Fr. Gerard Rogowski SDS

### Introduction

Our Reverend Founder Father Francis Jordan exhorts us Salvatorians: “Therefore, you should always meditate on the holy rule, study the constitutions, and as far as human weakness allows, train yourself to observe them promptly, even strictly. It is the guide, the polestar, the mother near whom you should nestle, who guards you, awaits you and teaches you how you should conduct your life.”<sup>21</sup> (Earlier, the “Holy Rule” was the general name for the constitutions.)

### What are the Constitutions?

At the recommendation of the “Decree on the Contemporary Renewal of the Life of the Order”, *Perfectae Caritatis*, and other documents of the II Vatican Council and numerous post-conciliar documents, the rules of the Order today consist of the **Constitutions**, the **General Directory** and the **Provincial Statutes**:

- (1) As a fundamental bylaw of our entire international Salvatorian community, the *Constitutions* are limited to expressing what makes up the constitutive character of our society: they contain doctrinal and spiritual principles, the necessary legal norms and give structure to the special nature of our consecrated lives.
- (2) Regulations that are subject to change, structures that must be updated but that affect the entire religious community are contained in the *General Directory*.
- (3) Rules and structures that are predicated by locality, culture and regional factors belong in the *Provincial / Local Statutes*.

The rules, i.e., the constitutions, the general directory and the statutes together have the objective of presenting us with a specific, ‘Salvatorian’ form of consecrated life. The central theme is the Imitation of Christ, as our Founder, inspired by the Holy Spirit, experienced it by

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<sup>21</sup> JORDAN: Chapter talk of 1901-06-21. In: DSS XXIII, p. 436.

identifying himself with Jesus Christ, the Divine Savior, who was sent by God, His heavenly father, to redeem mankind.

The constitutions are to be understood as commentaries to the Gospels; the General Directory and the Statutes in turn as concretization of the Constitutions. Our rules want to give us Salvatorians, the spiritual sons of the Founder, an understanding of the figure of Christ, the Divine Savior, who inspired Fr. Jordan to found his religious order: *“The kindness and love of God for humanity have appeared in Jesus Christ. In Him, the one true Savior of the world, all people are called to union with God and one another to form the People of God. Inspired by the Holy Spirit and out of concern for the salvation of all, Father Francis Mary of the Cross Jordan founded the Society of the Divine Savior and gave it the apostolic purpose to announce to all people that Jesus is the Savior.”*<sup>22</sup>

### **The Renewal Process**

The work to adapt the rules to the spirit and corresponding resolutions of the Council began with the X General Chapter in 1965. At this General Chapter, two General Superiors who had participated in the sessions of the II Vatican Council replaced each other: Fr. Bonaventura Schweizer and the new General Superior Fr. Maurinus Rast. Then, the outgoing General Superior called on the General Chapter to deliberate on *“how we can better and further edify society.”* With the help of commissions, by interviewing the provincial and mission superiors and entire fellowship, the Generalate developed a draft constitution, which was revised and approved by the XI General Chapter in 1969. These new Constitutions applied ‘ad experimentum’ and annulled the 1951 Constitutions. Provisionally endorsed by the *Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes (SCRIS for short)* these new Constitutions and the General Directory were translated into several languages and printed.

As a result of further intense activity by the new general leadership under Fr. General Earl Skwor and the newly established *International*

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<sup>22</sup> Constitutions SDS, Art. 101.

*Renewal Commission*, the provincial and missionary statutes and in part the House statutes too were drawn up in the years 1970/71. Under the motto “*Evangelization and Life in the Order*”, the XII General Chapter of 1975 dealt with these issues in particular, but also took necessary measures to continue the revision of the provisionally approved Constitutions. A new *International Commission for Renewal and Review of the Constitutions* was thus established that prepared a timetable and working plan to enable a final draft constitution to be put before the XIII General Chapter to vote on in 1981. The wording of the Constitutions and the General Directory, as it was then endorsed and confirmed by this General Chapter, was presented to the *Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes* on November 9, 1981. Seven months later, in June 1982, the Congregation informed us of results of the discussion of two SCRIS consultors and called on us to study these and give an opinion. In line with the measures taken by the General Chapter, an ‘ad hoc commission’ carefully examined the comments and then proposed changes, which were submitted to the members of the General Synod by means of a survey/questionnaire for approval. The result of this procedure was presented to the *Sacred Congregation* on December 6, 1982. In March 1983, the Congregation (SCRIS) advised us that the wording of the Constitutions had been reviewed by the SCRIS plenary session, which is responsible for the approval, and adjudged as very good, but could be definitively approved only after several further amendments. The General Synod convened to ordinary session in June 1983 dealt with these changes and the amended wording was again submitted to the *Sacred Congregation*. Several months later, this *Sacred Congregation* again requested corrections and clarifications and asked me as General Superior “*with the help of the General Consultors to insert in the text the alterations that had been requested by this Congregation for approval.*”<sup>23</sup>

After this too had been dealt with, the amended wording was submitted to the Congregation in October 1983 for the fourth time, and eventually on December 8, 1983, on the Foundation Day of our Society, was

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<sup>23</sup> SCRIS on September 24, 1983.



finally approved by the Holy See through SCRIS. On January 6, 1984, I published the official circular on *“The Approbation, Promulgation and Presentation of the Constitutions and the General Directory of the Society of the Divine Savior.”* On February 11, 1984, I could present to the members of the Society the first printed text of the renewed Constitutions in English. As the day of officially coming into effect, June 16, 1984, our Founder’s birthday, was chosen.

### **The Constitutions shape our Lives**

The bylaws, particularly the Constitutions, approved by the Holy See are a firm expression of our Founder’s spirit for the Salvatorian community in today’s time. They should show us the way to attaining the *“surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus”*<sup>24</sup>, which made Father Jordan, as the Apostle Paul before him, a preacher of the Gospel. That is **the** key to the correct reading and assimilation of the wording of our Constitutions, namely to know the Divine Savior, which in turn means - as it did for Paul - *“to know nothing except Jesus Christ”*<sup>25</sup>, the Divine Savior.

As an authentic expression of the Gospel and as the word of God, directed particularly to our Salvatorian community, may the Constitutions continue lastingly and irrevocably the dynamic process of renewal and rethinking in every confrere, in the communities and in the whole Society that started with the approbation of the Constitutions.

I would like to close with another quote from our Founder: *“Observe the rule, follow the rule - and you will become happy. You will realize that you accomplish great things thereby – things which are of the greatest importance to the Society. ... And remember how the Society is positioned; it is so appropriate for our time, since it is so innovative in its means: it uses all the means that are allowed. ...”*<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Phil 3:8

<sup>25</sup> 1Cor 2:2

<sup>26</sup> JORDAN: Chapter talk of 1899-12-15. In: DSS XXIII, p. 361.







DIVINE (blue) / original: GÖTTLICHES (blau)



## **EXPERIENCING GOD – TRUSTING IN GOD**

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Experiencing God and trusting in God is a reality that stands in profound relationship with the personal experience of my vocation. Through a neighborly relationship with the Fathers, Brothers and Sisters at the Salvator College in Lochau, I came into contact with Salvatorian spirituality. At 18 years of age I was deeply moved by a thought from a sermon during May Devotions held by a Salvatorian missionary who had returned from China or India – and here began my love story with Jesus. My vocation was for me both a gift and a mystery. In the course of the following four years it slowly matured to become a clear decision and so, in 1955, at the age of 22 years, I entered the Congregation of the *Salvatorian Sisters* in Vienna. Years of learning through responsibilities and studies followed; I was permitted to draw from the fountains of love. These were times of maturing into a worldwide mission, times of spiritual growth.

The election as General Superior on May 21, 1977 in Rome, was a complete surprise for me. It was a profound experience of God, which is quite difficult to put into words. During the moments that followed the result of the vote, I saw in front of me my personal limits, the eventful years of religious life after the Second Vatican Council, the many departures from religious life, the challenges and consequences with which our Congregation was confronted, the great variety of realities in our Units, of which I had become aware only during the



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Sisters

1977-1989

General Chapter, and much more. In view of all these impressions, my mind told me: You cannot accept the election. At this moment of powerlessness and helplessness I was deeply touched within, as I heard a voice that said: ***“Alone you cannot do it, but with me you can!”*** This strengthened my confidence in God so deeply that I was ready to accept the election. This YES was united with a wholehearted self-gift, knowing deep within me: I am not alone, God is with me on the way. In this I found myself confirmed by Father Jordan, when he encouraged his confreres during his Chapter Talk of February 25, 1898: “... *So, let us be men of faith, of trust, if we want to accomplish great things. It is essential to have faith and very great hope ...*”<sup>27</sup>

After the election I placed myself unreservedly into the service of the new chapter in my life. Frequently I wondered myself from where I took the courage to go ahead and not give up in spite of all interior and exterior resistance. This ***entrusting myself to God*** made me surpass boundaries. Time and again it gave me the strength and confidence to work wholeheartedly for the charism of our Founder, Fr. Jordan, and to accept – besides the ordinary tasks and events of every day – also the post-conciliar situation as a special challenge.

Our international Community had decided to contribute courageously to the opening of the Church to the world, as wanted by the Council. Religious were called to be oases in the midst of the world. Therefore all Sisters were invited to contribute to the process of this new awakening in the Church. In this common effort of reflecting, shaping, moving forward in the midst of the manifold expectations of people, we as Generalate wanted to give an answer to their actual needs. We were also concerned, however, to clarify the different arguments regarding renewal in the Units, and our Salvatorian self-understanding, as well as to find our common Salvatorian position at that time. To live authentically requires experiencing the present in order to unite it with what has grown in the past. In the course of this process it became clear to me – and to us – that we had to let go of much that was familiar to us

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<sup>27</sup> JORDAN: Chapter talk of 1898-02-25. In: DSS XXIII, p. 189.

and that we had come to love. Only in this way would it be possible to make ourselves receptive to a new, forward-looking and hopeful orientation, to be able to recognize and realize our charism and our mission within the new possibilities. The challenge of this time was, that, while searching for new ways, we would keep our communication open, so that we would together learn and grow.

The effort to attain this deeper way of living and working together, and of 'being rooted' in God and each in our personal vocation, were the topics that always returned. How can I experience God and trust in God, personally and in community? The challenges of the Ecumenical Council led each Sister and the whole Congregation – including myself – into a process of spiritual maturing. I also realized that I was not always able to correspond to the expectations of communities or individual Sisters, but I learned to live with that.

A certain self-discipline helped me to find times of quiet in the midst of the very challenging everyday life of those years. In this way I was able to share in the spiritual power of faith, which allowed me to sense God, this incomprehensible Mystery, with whom I am on the way even now. It is a grace to receive this gift in the midst of a demanding everyday life, and it also became clear and important for me to always give room to this grace.

Many of these events and experiences have left an indelible mark on me. They have helped me to become calmer, surer of God's assurance: God is with me on the way. I often reached my limits, experienced and suffered them painfully. In the course of the years, however, I learned to accept in a spirit of faith: joy and pain, things enjoyable and painful, to be understood and not to be understood, heights and depths, recognition and rejection, brightness and darkness. But, it was always important for me, to address in all openness and honesty any recognized injustice that caused problems, being well aware that this was not always easy for persons to handle.

If, looking back, I have described here just fragments of my personal experience, I can imagine that Fr. Jordan, as Founder, had in much



greater measure these and similarly painful and for him inexplicable experiences. We, today, owe our existence as Salvatorians to his profound confidence in God and to his 'abandonment to God' in all life situations. When, in 1982, in preparation for my 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of profession, I copied from the Founder's *Spiritual Diary* and from *Exhortations and Admonitions* 365 thoughts which spoke to me and which became my daily companions, I realized how Father Jordan saw himself as an instrument in the salvific plan of God.

In Father Jordan's Chapter Talk of October 8, 1897, I read: "*If you walk in humility, God's blessing will descend on you, and the Society and all her individual members will fulfill the mission entrusted to them according to the measure of their strength and of God's grace.*"<sup>28</sup> For me the years as General Superior were both – *gift* and *task*. My 'being firmly anchored in God' became a blessing for me personally. I can only hope and pray that it became a blessing also for my Sisters and for all those with whom I was in contact. Today I gratefully look back to a fulfilled life as Salvatorian Sister.

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<sup>28</sup> JORDAN: Chapter talk of 1897-10-08. In: DSS XXIII, p. 131.

## APOSTOLIC UNIVERSALITY

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by Sr. Irmtraud Forster SDS

Apostolic Universality is part of our Founder's charism at its very depth. Already in 1894 he lists in his *Spiritual Diary* 26 cities, countries, and continents throughout the world, where he wanted to be present in order to form members for the Salvatorian Society.<sup>29</sup> In his great zeal and love, Father Jordan felt obliged to make the good news known to all persons in all countries of the world. His *Spiritual Pact with God*<sup>30</sup> and other notations in his *Spiritual Diary*, as well as his speeches clearly and strongly delineate apostolic universality in an impressive, dynamic manner. On the first pages of the second volume of his diary, he expressed – even in his handwriting – the whole apostolic urging that animated him. “As long as there is one person on earth who does not know God and does not love Him above all things, you dare not allow yourself a moment's rest. ... But everything through Him, with Him, and for Him.” Then he immediately adds, “All peoples, races, nations and tongues glorify the Lord our God.”<sup>31</sup>

When the Apostolic Prefecture of Assam in the northeast of India was entrusted to the young religious congregation, Fr. Jordan sent the first missionaries to Shillong (today the main city of the State of Meghalaya), on January 17, 1890. After the unexpected, early death of two of the first four missionaries, the Founder and Mother Mary of the Apostles sent to India – already in December of the same year 1890 – three priests, a brother, and three of the first seven *Salvatorian Sisters*, just two years after the Congregation's foundation. This decision gives witness to the universal, apostolic spirit of the Founders and the first members of the Salvatorian Congregations. After 25 years of richly blessed work, the First World War put a sudden end to the Salvatorian presence in India, in 1915. However, many other missions were started

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<sup>29</sup> JORDAN, John Baptist (1848-1918): *Spiritual Diary* (hereafter: SD) 1875-1918. New English Language Edition, 2011. Edited by D. Bergner and C. Tresher. Milwaukee, WI, 2007, p. 206 = SD I/206.

<sup>30</sup> SD I/202

<sup>31</sup> SD II/1-2

in the course of the following years in North and South America, in Europe, Asia and Africa.

The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) called on all religious communities to study the charism of their Founders, in order to rediscover the sources of their spirituality and mission, to vivify and to deepen them. Immediately following the Second Vatican Council, the *Salvatorian Sisters* were involved in this process of renewal. In the General Chapters of 1968, 1971, and 1977, the written input from the Units was evaluated, studied in depth and passed on to the Sisters. During the prolonged General Chapter of 1983, the capitulars took up the challenge to vote on the content of the new Constitutions. The core of our charism, the center of our apostolic task and of our identity, as well as our worldwide mission as Salvatorians in the Church, were described in the first chapter and developed in the subsequent parts. On the anniversary of the Foundation, December 8, 1985, this Rule of Life was approved by the ecclesiastical authority and, during the Jubilee Year of the Congregation, 1988, was distributed to the Sisters in the various languages.

According to their education, their gifts and possibilities, the Sisters dedicate themselves to the healthy and the sick, the needy and the destitute, to children and to adults, to solitary persons, to those advanced in age, and to persons who have been pushed to the margins of society. They oppose the many forms of modern slavery worldwide. They often live apostolic universality in difficult, at times dangerous conditions. This apostolic, universal mission, which we have received from our Founders, is a gift to society and to the Church in today's globalized world. In an increasing number of Units, our Lay Salvatorians contribute generously to the accomplishment of the Church's apostolic work.

As we become older, we have the precious gift of the apostolate of prayer and suffering with which we support our sisters and brothers who are in active service. Our Salvatorian spirituality is supported by the idea of *BEING HEALED* and is also envisaged in *BRINGING HEALING* in our interactions with others. If we, as *Salvatorian Family*, are able to mediate salvation, then we are well along in the footsteps of Father

Francis and Mother Mary. In the great variety of our living and working together, both in our communities and apostolic tasks, we want to take hopeful steps.

In view of our missionary vocation, we, the *Salvatorian Sisters*, dared to make a second beginning in India in 1984, 70 years after our first Sisters were obliged to leave the country. The first years involved great personal and community risks in view of the visa problems and their consequences. All the more gratitude do we owe to those who were ready to face the challenges of this time. Until today, God is blessing our Indian Region with religious vocations. Therefore we are now present from the south to the northeast of India with about 60 *Salvatorian Sisters* in twelve communities situated in seven federal states. In addition, it is a joy that the Region as well as the individual Sisters are ready to support communities in other continents.

In a special way, I would also like to thank my Sisters on the Generalate team for their good collaboration. They came from different continents, countries, cultures and languages. For me it was a great joy that during the Chapter of 1977, for the first time a Sister from South America (Brazil) was elected to the Generalate and, in 1983, for the first time, a Sister from Asia (Sri Lanka). We, as a group were enriched by the gifts and variety, as well as confronted by the challenges related to our differences. It was another good experience that we could organize for the first time some international meetings to take place not in Rome, but in other countries and continents. In this way, it was possible that those responsible for the Units could have a personal experience of the way our universal charism is lived in other countries as, for example, during the Congregational Council of 1982 in Brazil, and at the Congregational Council of 1986 in Israel. For those who took part, these were experiences of lived universality.

The two terms of office, from 1977-1989 belonged to an eventful period in the history of the Church and the Congregation. It was the time of my life, which was characterized by a deep experience of exchange, encounter and companionship, by joy and tension, experimentation and growth, but also by conflict and contradiction. I was granted a profound primal sense of trust and, with it, the certainty that God accom-

panies and protects our Congregation in all situations and also in experiences in which we are pushed to our limits. In our life, there are moments that become a treasure only in exchanging and sharing with others. Honesty, openness and trust act as driving forces of good international collaboration. And if, in our hearts, we are apostolic- and universal-minded, we will draw from the fullness of salvation in our active lives as well as in our apostolates of prayer and suffering and, if we do so, we will ever be bearers of hope for others.

Before his death in 1918, our Founder, Fr. Francis Mary of the Cross Jordan, looked into the future full of confidence, leaving us his words, which Fr. Pancratius Pfeiffer, the Vicar General, noted down:

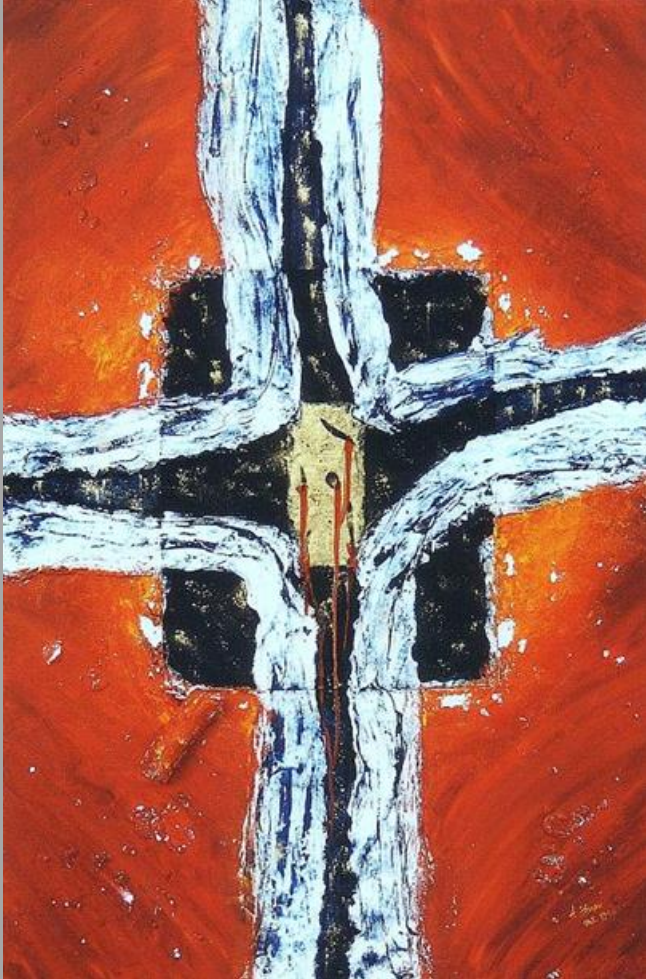
**“The good Lord will make everything turn out right ...  
others will come and be mindful of our suffering  
and continue the work.”<sup>32</sup>**

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<sup>32</sup> PFEIFFER, Pancratius: The Life of Fr. Francis Jordan. Translation: Fr. Winfrid Herbst. St. Nazianz (Wisconsin), 1936, p. 527.







Mortification of the Flesh / original: Kreuzerfahrung





## FRANCIS OF THE CROSS

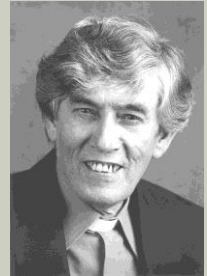
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### Introduction:

My first-ever visit to Rome was in September 1968. I travelled around Rome with the help of a Salvatorian guide book, written originally in German but of which there was an English translation. I got around classical and ecclesiastical Rome on busses and trains. I scrambled over the Palatine Hill and wandered through the Forum. I discovered the Circus Maximus without at first realizing where I was, until recollected schoolboy lessons began to impress on me that this was where the games of Ancient Rome had taken place.

And now I must come without further delay to the subject of this article, the phrase *of the Cross* and especially our Founder's devotion to the *cross*. But I must set my introduction of the subject in context and tell you that what I remember best about that trip to Rome is the time I spent on the roof of the Motherhouse in the September sunshine, looking in one direction towards the Vatican and Monte Mario and in the other direction on a clear day towards snow-capped Soratte.

A lot of my time on the roof of the Motherhouse was spent in the company of Fr. Alfred Schneble who never stood still, but walked up and down conversing in very good, though heavily accented English, while I responded in my best Hiberno-English. I learned a lot from Schneble about Salvatorian history and especially about the Founder but for the purposes



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1987-1993

of this essay, one of the things he said has remained with me forever. He said it was not for nothing that the Founder took the name *of the Cross*.

### **The Meaning of the Cross:**

I will say what I think this title *of the Cross* meant for the Founder and with some assurance I will say what it means for me and I believe the two to be substantially the same. *of the Cross* is the basis for our Christian hope; it is the explanation of our Christian reliance on Divine Providence. Those who follow the *Word of the Cross* today fall into two groups. Some like Edward Schillebeeckx follow the generally theistic line, unable to admit the possibility of suffering within God. I would imagine that the Founder would have belonged to this group. Others, who would have Jürgen Moltmann for their standard-bearer, talk of the Pathos of God. Moltmann would seem to borrow something from the philosophy of Miguel de Unamuno who developed a theology of the infinite sorrow of God.

While I find much of great interest in Moltmann and Unamuno, it is surely safer to develop a simple theistic devotion of the *cross*, much as I believe would be that of Father Jordan. Suffering has an inner unseen meaning of success and ultimate victory which we see in the resurrection. This is a message of life for everyone. God is hidden on the *cross* but is really there in all his glory. Therefore the glory of God is found amid desolation, defeat and failure. There is a union of opposites like death and life, failure and triumph, defeat and victory. Father Jordan would have found salvation in his devotion to the *cross* because it was united with its opposite, the resurrection. For this reason the Founder could see suffering, in whatever form it came – criticism, movements against him, ill health and poverty – as a sacrament in which was the presence and glory of God. He knew that God was present in the cry of Jesus on the *cross*: “*My God, My God, why have you forsaken me.*”<sup>33</sup>

On the *cross* the crucified Christ lets out a Trinitarian cry. The cry is made with the strength and inspiration of the Holy Spirit to the Father

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<sup>33</sup> Mt 27:46

by the crucified Son. This manifestation of the Trinity is another reason for devotion to the *cross*, showing it is central to our Christian faith. We invoke the Trinity “In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” and at the same time we make the sign of the *cross*. As Christians we are totally Trinitarian and totally devoted to the *cross*. The two go together. Father Jordan had a firm grasp of the essentials of the Christian faith. It is no wonder that he styled himself as *of the cross*.

### **The Message of the Cross**

The Letter to the Romans is basic to an understanding of the whole idea of salvation. Once Father Jordan had accepted that the name of the Society would be the *Society of the Divine Saviour*, he must have reflected on Saint Paul’s assertion in Romans 8:32 that God gave up his Son for us with the resurrection in view. The Greek verb used reveals that the Father gives up his Son to death for us at the same time that the Son gives himself up for us. What is a common sacrifice comes about through the Holy Spirit, who joins and unites the Son in his forsakenness with the Father. The Founder as a linguist must have seen in Saint Paul a strengthening of his devotion to the *cross*.

I am writing this in Holy Week. Two complementary sermons, one for Good Friday and the other for Easter Sunday, will proclaim the *Word of the Cross*. Good Friday looks forward in hope to the Resurrection and Easter Sunday only has meaning when it recalls the events of Good Friday. No wonder the Founder had such a reliance on Divine Providence. The message of the *cross* in Holy Week is one of hope.

An Easter sermon can begin with Saint Paul’s “*Death is swallowed up in victory*”<sup>34</sup>, because Easter is a feast of freedom and hope. Every **no** at Easter is absorbed into a profound **yes**. I have said enough to indicate that I believe that Father Jordan’s devotion to the Cross, rightly understood, could be a shining light in a darkening world. There is a feeling abroad that the Christian faith has lost its relevance to that world. Perhaps the Church should look at what it really has to offer. One such offering would be a reinforcement of Saint Paul’s “*We preach Christ*

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<sup>34</sup> 1Cor 15:54

*Crucified*”<sup>35</sup>, undoubtedly a central point in our Christian faith. Father Jordan’s insight into the meaning of Christ Crucified could be an inspiration for Christians struggling to make their faith relevant to that world.

The reform of the liturgy after the II Vatican Council deprived us of the feast of the Stigmata of Saint Francis in the universal calendar. I have not the text any more but the Collect began something like this, “God who gave the stigmata of Saint Francis to a world growing cold (*‘frigescenti mundo’*)”. The world appears to be growing cold again. Perhaps another Francis has been given to our world to help warm it up – this time through his devotion to the phrase *of the cross*.

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<sup>35</sup> 1Cor 1:23

## THE PEOPLE OF GOD

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by Fr. Malachy McBride SDS

### Introduction

When I came out of office as Provincial of the British Province in 1984, I was offered a sabbatical year which I gladly accepted. I spent a year at the Jesuit Heythrop College, University of London, because I knew that the Second Vatican Council would feature largely on the curriculum. I had followed the events of the Council closely during its sessions, and afterwards I continued my interest by reading articles in magazines like *Concilium* and books which projected the message of the Council to the world.

Two years after finishing the course, I found myself, to my great surprise, elected Superior General of the Society at the General Chapter in Steinfeld in Germany. I carried my interest in the Second Vatican Council with me and was especially pleased to have as Vicar General Father Luis Spolti of the Brazilian Province who would inform me of the effect the Council was having on the Church in South America.

It is difficult to assess the effect the Council would have had on Father Francis Jordan. He was a man of his time, influenced in one way or another by the culture and politics of the Germany and Europe of his day, and of course by the Church of the First Vatican Council. However, I think that he, after some hesitation, would have found much in the Second Vatican Council discussions to agree with. There was much there that reflected his own views on the apostolate. He could not have failed to be impressed by the emphasis on the People of God, so prominent in the documents of the Council. After all, Father Jordan's life work and enthusiasm were directed towards the apostolate, the projection of the mission of the Church into all ages and among all people. It is possible that if he were present at the Council, he would, like many others, have begun by being sceptical about what was being discussed, but, because of his love for Our Lord and his Church, he would have come to an appreciation of the thrust of the Council documents.

## The Spirit of Vatican II

What was the purport of the Council documents? Perhaps the first thing to realize about the Council is that it was not called to define any doctrine or settle any dispute about discipline or politics. It was called to be a pastoral council, to draw the People of God more closely to Christ's work in his Church and to attract others to be part of that work. Father Jordan would have been very interested in that. Pope John XXIII is said to have declared the Council to be an *aggiornamento*, an updating of the life and work of the Church.

The Council was convoked because there was a need for the Church to examine its position in the modern world. Pope John described the Council as a *new Pentecost*, a phrase which was to prove to be a prophetic description of what the Council turned out to be. Not everybody agreed with this, and some had no hesitation in declaring the Council to be a disaster. As I am attempting to offer an insight into what inspired my ministry, I must say that I was among those who felt that the Council was an answer to a real need. I was happy to shape my ministry along lines suggested by *Lumen Gentium* and other documents.

*Lumen Gentium* is the central document of the Council. It is entitled *The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*. It is important for the pastoral life of the Church. This emphasis on the apostolate would have especially pleased our Founder. His preferred name for the Society was *The Apostolic Teaching Society*. He may have had some difficulty with some aspects of the Council such as the positive view of the world in *Gaudium et Spes* but he would not have been the only one. I can imagine that St. Augustine would have had a similar problem. The saint who wrote *De Civitate Dei* would have had some difficulty in seeing the positive aspects of this world as depicted in *Gaudium et Spes*. But Father Jordan would easily have been persuaded that *Lumen Gentium* as well as *Dei Verbum* on the Word of God and preaching, as well as other documents, would have been an essential part of his own mission to bring the message of the Gospel to the modern world.

In *Lumen Gentium* the Church is seen under different headings. The Church is an *Institution*, it is a *Mystical Communion*, it is a *Sacrament*, it

is a *herald* and it is a *servant*. Father Jordan would readily have accepted the idea of the Church as an institution. He would have been appalled by any attempt to replace the authority of the Church, which rests in the Pope and the bishops, with the charisms of its members, however wonderful and necessary those charisms may be. To use his own words in the Spiritual Diary, “I accept what Holy Church accepts, and I reject what Holy Church rejects”.<sup>36</sup> It is clear that Father Jordan would have acknowledged that a large body of people, like the Catholic Church, needs structures and leaders. Catholic doctrine and practice as well as common sense dictate this. *Lumen Gentium* states clearly that the government of the Church is by the Pope and by the bishops in communion with him.

However, the way that *Lumen Gentium* sees the Church as an institution is rather different from that which Father Jordan was used to. The Church is no longer described as a ‘perfect society’. The institutional is not to triumph over the organic. Chapter 3 of *Lumen Gentium* emphasises the collegiality of the bishops with the Pope. This should make it clear that together with authority in the Church, there is also the possibility of dialogue and discussion. The bishops are “shepherds of the flock”; their office is described as service (*diakonia*) to the People of God. Priests are to administer the family of God, as a brotherhood. The leaders of the Church are placed within the family of the Church not above it.

The New Testament reveals the Church as a *communion* (*koinonia*) to which all the baptized belong. In *Lumen Gentium* the role of the hierarchy is placed as a service within the communion of the whole Christian body. The pastors of the Church are called to exercise a ministry which will foster fellowship. Bishops and priests are asked to see their ministry as a service which will help to develop a community of faith. The Church is a community of people who are brought into unity from the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>36</sup> SD I/1



### **The Church as *People of God* and as *Body of Christ***

The model of communion is described principally under two headings in *Lumen Gentium*, the People of God and the Body of Christ. The Church as described by Saint Peter is the new People of God who are “*a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people set apart*”.<sup>37</sup> As a practical consideration one must say that the Church as a whole will not act in this way unless the members are well informed and given an opportunity to act as God’s people. The clergy at all levels must help them to accomplish this. Many bishops returned to their countries inspired by what they had heard at the Council and were determined to turn this into reality. To state the obvious, the onus had to rest with the leaders. If these had not accepted their responsibility the ideal contained in the People of God would not be realized.

The Church is also the Body of Christ, a living body, a unity with diversity of members, so the Church is a unity in diversity. Each of its members draws its life from the whole body, at the same time that it makes its contribution to the well-being of the whole. Perhaps some of the Church’s problems in the recent past could have been avoided or better handled if this had been dwelt upon and put into practice. This may imply a tension in the Church but this is not necessarily a bad thing; it could be a sign of life. The recognition of diversity enables the Church to listen to the members and take account of their charisms and abilities, at the same time that the members listen to the voice of authority.

One of the formulas of dismissal at the end of Mass in the present liturgy is “*Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord*”. The Church is a herald and a preacher of the Gospel. It would have been one of the Founder’s dearest wishes that the laity should share in that office. They know and understand the people among whom they live and so they can be most effective heralds of the Gospel.

Both *Gaudium et Spes* and *Lumen Gentium* made the point that the Church is a servant to the People of God. In imitation of Our Lord the Church encompasses all afflicted with human misery, and recognizes in

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<sup>37</sup> 1Pt 2:9

the poor and suffering the state of her poor and suffering Founder. It would seem that our present Holy Father Pope Francis has seen the need to emphasize again this aspect of the Gospel message. It is no accident that Father Jordan also took the name Francis and “*had an unshakable trust in Divine Providence.*”<sup>38</sup> Our Constitution also states: “*We live... in solidarity and responsibility with the poor of the world because each person has a fundamental right to live in human dignity.*”<sup>39</sup>

## **The Challenges of Vatican II**

After the Council the bishops from around the world returned to their dioceses. Generally speaking, they were enthusiastic about what they had heard, and set about explaining to the people the message of the Council. The bishops of England and Wales did this very well and in time issued a joint Pastoral Letter, *The Easter People*, expressing their eagerness to put the message of the Council at the Center of their ministry. The bishops of South America met at Medellin in 1968. They placed the Church in South America in the socio-political context in which it was living, which meant that there had to be some emphasis on the alleviation of poverty. The Conference at Medellin produced major conclusions on justice, peace and poverty.

The message of the Council was received in different ways, given a different interpretation in different continents. However, there was a general acceptance of the central message of the Council, the need to minister once again to the People of God and to recognize their importance within the Church. Karl Rahner thought that this message would only be achieved in the “*little flock*” envisaged by him in *The Shape of the Church to Come*.<sup>40</sup> But little, medium or large, the Church needs to take seriously the message of Vatican II. The message was not new, but there was a new emphasis which will enrich us all. Salvatorians, following the Founder, will find much there to inspire their apostolate.

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<sup>38</sup> Constitution SDS, art. 313.

<sup>39</sup> Constitution SDS, art. 315.

<sup>40</sup> RAHNER, Karl: *The Shape of the Church to Come*. Trans. and introd. by Edward Quinn. New York (The Seabury Press), 1974, 136 pp.





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## SALVATORIAN MISSION

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### **MISSION STATEMENT:**

*“We Salvatorians are called to follow Jesus Christ, the Divine Savior, by living as community within the universal Church for apostolic service.*

*As with our Founder, Father Francis Mary of the Cross Jordan, we proclaim to all people the salvation which has appeared in Jesus Christ, so that by the lives we live and in our apostolic activities, all may come ‘to know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent’ (Jn 17:3), and have life in all its fullness.*

*This mission compels us to share our call to be apostles with people from all walks of life.*

*We are ready to serve all people everywhere, by all ways and means which the love of Christ inspires.*

*We trust in God’s loving providence in discerning and courageously responding to the particular signs of the times in each place and age.*

*Today, these signs urge us to be a prophetic voice for the renewal of Church and world,*

*- by conveying in a contemporary way the values of the Gospel in dialogue with each culture;*

*- by animating lay people to live their baptismal commitment for Christian leadership, ministry, and service;*

*- by joining the poor in challenging contemporary evils which frustrate a fully human life, particularly social injustice, poverty and violence in all their forms.*

*We Salvatorians seek to fulfill our mission by being one with those we serve, manifesting to the world the goodness and kindness of God our Savior.”*

Our mission as Salvatorians is certainly described by the first chapters of our Constitutions. These, however, contain the fundamental principles of our experience without indicating the practical way to experience them. Therefore, the General Chapter of 1987 decid-



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of the  
Salvatorians

1987-1993

ed that the *International Renewal Commission (IRC)* would start a reflection in that sense. Their work resulted in what became known as the ‘basic texts’.<sup>41</sup> The first and most important one is a mission statement, which translates our mission as Salvatorians into a clear language:

*“We Salvatorians are called to follow Jesus Christ, the Divine Savior, by living as community within the universal Church for apostolic service.*

*As with our Founder, **Father Francis Mary of the Cross Jordan**, we proclaim to all people the salvation which has appeared in Jesus Christ, so that by the lives we live and in our apostolic activities, all may come ‘to know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent’ (John 17:3), and have life in all its fullness”.*

### **The Process of Renewal in Five Steps**<sup>42</sup>

This *Salvatorian Mission Statement* is part of a long and arduous renewal effort at the international level. At the time, this process essentially followed the renewal method proposed by the *Movement for a Better World*, hence the strong rejection it found in some Provinces. We were able to take only a few steps with the proposed method, but that work definitely triggered our awareness about the need for greater clarity, and for a more active and operational language regarding our identity and mission: *who we are, what do we want, and how will we achieve our proposal?* This gave rise to the so-called *International Community Renewal Plan (ICRP)*.

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<sup>41</sup> As *basic texts* the following documents were named, the Chapters/Synods of the Salvatorians of the years 1993-1999 adopted.

- General Chapter SDS 1993: *Salvatorian Apostolic Community. Key Elements from our Heritage.* In: ANNALES SDS, XIV/01, 1993, pp. 14-18. ||
- General Synod SDS 1995: *Mission Statement.* In: ANNALES SDS, XIV/07, 1996, p. 460. ||
- General Synod SDS 1997: *... all ways and means.* In: ANNALES SDS, XIV/09, 1999, pp. 580-581. ||
- Generalkapitel SDS 1999: *Our Life in Apostolic Community.* In: ANNALES SDS, XV/01, 1999, pp. 12-13. ||

<sup>42</sup> Cf. XV General Chapter SDS, Ordinance 01. In ANNALES SDS, XIV/01, 1993, pp. 19-23.

- Who are we?
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Using a less complex and more operational scheme, the ICRP at an international level was again discussed and approved by the General Chapter of 1993. That same Chapter, after much debate, approved the first step of the plan: ***Key Elements of Our Heritage***, which had been discussed at length by the Provinces in the years prior to the General Chapter. Then each Province looked into its own reality to discover the most meaningful facts, their causes and consequences.

The second step of the plan emerged from this study, that is, ***The Signs of the Times*** regarding each Province in particular, which therefore needed no discussion or approval at the international level.

- What do we want?
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The relationship between our heritage and the signs of the times resulted in the basic and essential joint declaration about our ***Salvatorian Mission***, the third step of the plan, which was approved by the General Synod in 1995.

- How will we achieve our proposal?
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By bearing in mind what our mission was, it became easy to figure out what we needed to do in order to implement it according to our Salvatorian perspective of religious life. After the study carried out by the provinces, the General Synod of 1997 adopted the resolution called ***Ways and Means in Our Apostolate***, that is, the fourth step of the plan.

With a little additional effort – and always conducted by the methodological guidelines of the IRC – the provinces also concluded the fifth step, completing thus the plan, with the proposal forwarded by the IRC to the General Chapter of 1999 on ***Our Apostolic Community Life***.

In this way, the five basic texts of the renewal process became available for each province. They were drafted and approved as inspirational texts for our religious life journey thanks to a remarkable testimony of worldwide unity of the Salvatorians gathered around the ideal proposed by Father Jordan.



They are an answer to the calls for renewal coming from Vatican II, and to the signs of the times regarding the Church and the world today. Thanks to these texts, the principles and values contained in our Constitutions became more operational and implementable in our daily life journey.

### **Inspiration for the Future**

The ICRP turned out to be a relatively fast process of renewal for the entire Society, engaging not only an international work team but involving all SDS members. It was the greatest international cooperation effort after the renewal of the Constitutions. The basic texts of this renewal process were not meant to simply become additional documents for the Society. As we just said, they were produced and approved as inspirational texts for our journey thanks to an extraordinary testimony of international unity of the Salvatorians gathered around Father Jordan's ideal. We are entitled to dream about the great energy coming from them for the renewal and animation of our Salvatorian religious life! *"Oh Lord, I wish I could always burn ardently for love of You and inflame everyone. May I be a burning fire, Oh God, and a flaming torch!"*<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> SD III/20

## MARY - MATER SALVATORIS

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by Fr. Luiz Dalmolin Spolti SDS

### 1. Important References to Mary in the Founder's Talks and Writings

At the beginning, Father Jordan placed his project, which he called *Apostolic Teaching Society* (ATS), under the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Heaven and of the Apostles.<sup>44</sup>

He also suggested some invocations to the Queen of the Apostles:

- *"Holy Mary, Queen of the Apostles, pray for us!"*
- *"Holy Mary, Queen of Apostles and our Mother, pray for us! Do not abandon us! Intercede for the children and their educators. Intercede for our Society, for our superiors! Intercede for our benefactors, friends and enemies!"*<sup>45</sup>

Later on, when he changed the name of ATS to *Society of the Divine Savior*, Mary was invoked as *Mater Salvatoris* (Mother of the Savior). On the 12<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation (12/8/1893), the Founder addressed these important words to the brothers of the Motherhouse community:

*"In particular we must give the Holy Trinity our deepest thanks, and then that exalted, spotless Virgin who trampled Lucifer's head. She guarded our Society against all attacks, extending her protective mantle and shielding us from all dangers within and without. The Queen of the Apostles proved to be our Mother. She defended our welfare, protected and preserved our work! This is the story of these past twelve years! (...). Today let us offer ourselves in a very special way as children of God's dear Mother! Let us give ourselves completely to her! Let us go to our Mother and plead at her feet, to extend her protective mantle over us from now on. And let us promise that we will never leave her like disloyal children!"*<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> JORDAN: Smyrna-Text. In: DSS XX.II, p. 8. || SHS, Sectio 9.2, p. 11-15.

<sup>45</sup> ATS Statutes. Draft with Auer, 1880. In: DSS II, S. 67-90. || SHS, Sectio 9.2, p. 17-34(33/34).

<sup>46</sup> JORDAN: Chapter talk of 1893-12-08. In: DSS XXIII, p. 14-15.

## 2. Showing his Veneration for and Confidence in the Virgin Mary

Father Jordan had a particular devotion for the *Mother of Sorrows*, and often used the *Stabat Mater*. (The grieving Mother stood weeping beside the cross where her Son was hanging.) The image of the *Mother of Sorrows* before which he prayed was placed in one of the side altars of the community chapel and can be seen today on the right side of the Grand Cross in the back of the present community chapel.

It also became known that there was a small statue of *Our Lady of Lourdes*, in whose hands Father Jordan used to put small notes with special requests for graces he wished to receive through the intercession of Mary. This image can be admired today in the so-called *Christ the King Room*, where some objects belonging to the Founder are preserved.

People who lived in community with him gave unanimous witness to his devotion to Mary through the prayer and meditation of the Rosary. The eminent writer and biographer, Alessandro Pronzato, states that Father Xisto Kraisser emphasized the fact that, in order to animate his spiritual sons to venerate Mary, Father Jordan firmly declared: “*Whoever grows in loving the Mother of God, also grows in every good!*”<sup>47</sup>

In one of the pages of his *Spiritual Diary*, Father Jordan exclaims: “*Oh Mary! Oh Virgin! Oh Mother of God! Oh Queen of Heaven! Oh holy One! Oh Immaculate One! Oh my Mother and Queen! Oh my help! I hardly know how to praise you. I feel more than words can express!*”<sup>48</sup>

Witnesses also claim that Father Jordan, in his daily visits to Saint Peter’s Basilica, used to pray briefly before Saint Peter’s tomb and then head to one of the Basilica’s side altars known as ‘Altar of the Column’ that shelters a 15<sup>th</sup> century icon of the Virgin Mary, where today, following the request of Pope Paul VI, the title of *Mater Ecclesiae* he assigned to Mary is venerated. Father Jordan used to kneel down in this place to express through prayer his particular devotion to the Mother of God and of the Church.

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<sup>47</sup> PRONZATO, Alessandro: Padre Francesco Maria Jordan. Ha preso in consegna il fuoco. Milano (Gribaudi), 2011. ISBN 978-88-6366-053-1. p. 244.

<sup>48</sup> SD I/196

The most significant expression of his devotion to the Mother of God, however, was the fact that Father Jordan added the name of Mary to his own religious name: *Francis Mary of the Cross Jordan*.

### 3. Final Thoughts

Ascribing to Father Jordan a systematic thinking about the presence of Mary in the Church – for example as presented by Chapter 8 of *Lumen Gentium* – would certainly be an anachronism. However, we know that Father Jordan’s love of devotion to the Virgin Mary – and the way he encouraged his spiritual sons to intensively develop it – certainly deserves our admiration, and leads us to go on being devoted to her and extending this special devotion.

The title that Pope Saint John Paul II assigned to the Blessed Virgin in his Encyclical *Redemptoris Mater*<sup>49</sup> – although it is not exactly the same – resembles very much the title of *Mater Salvatoris* that Father Jordan used. The Fathers of the Church – starting with Justin (165 A.D.) and Irenaeus (202 A.D.) – spoke about the parallel between Mary and Eve in their writings, thus integrating Mary in the history of salvation. This comparison between Eve and Mary is a very special feature in the thinking of the Fathers of the Church.

This title of *Mater Salvatoris* was certainly very dear to Father Jordan because it joins the Virgin Mary to her Divine Son, the Savior, in the mystery of salvation that we, Salvatorians, are called to proclaim to everyone. Therefore, it is a way to keep in mind our mission as Salvatorians, and to feel that, if Mary is with us, at our side, we can give full meaning to our apostolic action.

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<sup>49</sup> JOHN PAUL II.: Encyclical REDEMPTORIS MATER. On the Blessed Virgin Mary in the life of the Pilgrim Church. Rome, 1987-03-25.





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## **“IN THE SHADOW OF THE CROSS”**

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### **Fr. Francis Mary of the Cross Jordan SDS:**

*“The works of God prosper only in the shadow of the cross.”<sup>50</sup>*

*“John Mary Francis of the Cross, therefore:*

*The cross is your life,*

*The cross is your salvation*

*The cross is your crown*

*The cross is your glory*

*The cross is your hope*

*The cross is your shield*

*The cross is your protection*

*The cross is your portion*

*The cross is your joy.*

*For it belongs to me to glory in nothing but the cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ!”<sup>51</sup>*

### **M. Mary of the Apostles Wüllenweber SDS:**

*“All crosses are healing and salutary!”<sup>52</sup>*

*“May God continue to be gracious to us, and may the cross by which he brought us to Rome, always remain a sign of salvation for us.”<sup>53</sup>*



**Sr. Jean  
SCHAFFER  
SDS**

General Superior  
of the  
Salvatorian  
Sisters

1989-2002

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<sup>50</sup> SD I/163 and in a similar way II/73

<sup>51</sup> SD I/179

<sup>52</sup> WÜLLENWEBER, Mary of the Apostles: Diary – Book II, p. 53/1891.

In: SHS (English), Nr. 10, Sectio 2.13 Doc, p. 93.

<sup>53</sup> Diary – Book II, p. 101/1894. In SHS 2.13 Doc, p. 122.



## Introduction

For Christians the cross is a reminder that human life is inevitably fraught with struggle and suffering. More importantly however, it is also a reminder of God's imminent abiding love poured out in the Paschal mystery of Jesus, who saved us while we were still sinners so that we could come into the embrace of a loving God, who wishes that no one be lost.

For Salvatorians the cross is a way of discipleship, as we follow Jesus, the Divine Savior. The cross is also a testimony to the charismatic graces of our Founder, Fr. Francis Mary of the Cross Jordan, which we have inherited by our vocation. The above quotes paint a vivid picture of how integral the mystery of the cross was for Fr. Jordan and how it can inspire our daily life and mission in any era of history.

## Cross-Dialogue

The Congregation's XVIII General Chapter, during which I was elected, was held in Rome in October, 1989. Unbeknownst to us this year would mark the start of many historical changes, first being the fall of the Berlin Wall on Nov. 9, 1989 after 40 years of division between Eastern and Western Europe. By 1992 all countries of the Eastern Communist Bloc, except Russia, were open. This directly affected our sisters in Hungary, Poland, and Germany. It also inspired a call among our European sisters to reach out to the peoples of Albania, Romania and Bratislava.

During the reports from the Provinces and Regions at the 1989 Chapter it became clear that our sisters did not share a common belief about social justice and the preferential option for the poor. Human suffering and our role in bringing healing and salvation to those suffering became a somewhat divisive discussion, with parallel monologues about *who are the poor*. It became clear to me that there was need for *cross-dialogue* on these topics – no doubt painful, but hopefully fruitful.

Being the first non-European General Superior and coming from the so-called 'most powerful first world country' I knew I would have to

embrace the *cross* of misunderstanding and mistrust until I could build common ground and a common vocabulary wherein to reveal the values we held in common. Having also worn lay dress for 22 years, as had other members elected to the Generalate that year, the Congregation was beginning to open an unspoken but obvious way toward greater diversity. That transition too was painful.

In prayer I felt the way forward required us to become closer together as *sisters* and *friends* despite our vastly different experiences and realities. I hoped to create a less hierarchical style of leadership, drawing somewhat unconsciously from American values rather than from any virtuous motives. We wanted to make *cross-dialogue* a way of life for our leadership, as well as a means to strengthen relationships as Sisters across the Congregation. Computers and faxes were first being introduced into the Generalate and Secretariate offices. We did not share a common vocabulary for discussing issues of international import because we had not yet had the privilege of more international contact.

### **Planned and Unplanned Changes**

Between 1989 and the end of my second term in 2002, many other changes also took place – some very unplanned and others purposefully guided by the Generalate. Whether planned or unplanned, change is often difficult to embrace. Yet life and growth require continual change. I began to understand and experience the basis for Fr. Jordan’s love of the cross as a tangible symbol of life’s inevitable sufferings and God’s response of constant supportive love. The cross reminds us of our central belief in the death and resurrection of Jesus. We too experience many dyings and risings throughout life. Some of the **unplanned** but necessary changes we experienced included:

- **Reconstruction of Buildings on Motherhouse Ground**

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The European Union imposed regulations for electricity and plumbing and other such standards for each member country of the European Union. This required a reconstruction of buildings on the Motherhouse grounds, including our guest house and main Generalate buildings. This

opened the opportunity to also remodel and provide our sisters more flexibility in community life. In the process we discovered the roof of the main building had termite-eaten timbers holding up the tile roof over five stories of living space – a disaster ready to happen. It required months of destruction and reconstruction with subsequent shifting and reshifting of living spaces and office spaces – dust, noise and lots of flexibility. The outcome was safe, new working spaces and community living spaces along with a remodeled guest house and modern conference center for international and local meetings.

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● Leadership of the Tanzanian Region

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The Tanzania Region was near to celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. We were blessed with many native sisters but the European sisters who had founded and served there many years were aging. While visiting the Region it was clear that the Tanzanian sisters did not readily speak for themselves in deference to their elders. We decided in order to promote leadership, one of our Chapter mandates, we would gradually transfer the Europeans back to their home units, where they would still be able to offer service and readjust to their homeland again. Many of the European missionaries admitted that they could see themselves ‘going home’ but would never have asked to do so in order not to hurt the Tanzanians. The three year transition went well culminating in the native sisters assuming leadership in Tanzania. It was a challenging time, with inevitable sufferings and misunderstandings, but new life for all resulted – another sign of the cross leading to resurrection.

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● Leadership of the School in Nazareth

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Similarly it was obvious that our large and thriving school in Nazareth, Israel needed strong leadership in order to continue to serve the Christian Arab population successfully, as well as promote dialogue and unity with a smaller population of Muslim students and families. Our sisters were no longer able to handle the complexities of the school in the modern Israeli environment. We were fortunate to find among the faculty a team of native Arab Christian teachers, who shared the values of the *Salvatorian Sisters* and valued the school. Upon appointing four teachers to leadership positions, other

missionary groups in Israel warned that it *'would never work.'* They predicted inevitable infighting and corruption among faculty and families were dangers too great to risk. We took up the *'cross'* of public disapproval and proceeded. The outcome was exactly the opposite of predictions – the faculty rallied around their new leaders and the leaders inspired families, students and the society to realize the gift of the school to the community and to their children's future. It continues to be a jewel in the city of Jesus' birth.

The Generalate also had intentional plans to bring about greater collaboration within the Congregation and the *Salvatorian Family*, another Chapter mandate. Two examples of these planned efforts required struggling to overcome attitudes and historical events that continued to fester:

- Healing the Wound of Misunderstanding

In July 1999 at the Chapter of the *Society of the Divine Savior* I was invited to speak on behalf of the Congregation. In part of that presentation I shared, *"In a spirit of reconciliation, we as a Generalate are trying our best to correct some of the mistakes of the past. We have printed new prayer cards and posters of Fr. Jordan and Mother Mary. On these Mother Mary is identified as 'the first General Superior' and Fr. Jordan as 'the Founder'. We have reminded our Sisters to do the same in their various publications. ... Another action we will undertake in the coming months is to substitute the inscription on Mother Mary's tomb in her chapel in the Motherhouse to read, 'Co-fundatrix Sororum Divini Salvatoris'.*

*These are some concrete steps we are taking to show our desire to heal the hurts and misunderstandings of the past. However, we cannot change what occurred in the past. We can only decide how we want to speak and reflect about these events today and in the future. All of us long for the day when Fr. Jordan will be recognized by the universal Church as the holy man we know. All sisters are working diligently to awaken in others a love for Fr. Jordan and a trust in his intercessory power."*

● A Greater Collaboration within the *Salvatorian Family*

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In 1989 there were few Lay Salvatorians. Those in the U.S. considered themselves members of the *Society of the Divine Savior*. The former Generalates had recently mandated that all Provinces of the Society and Congregation should strive to draw laity in as co-members of a *Salvatorian Family*, but that no Province should have two separate unrelated groups – one belonging to the Society and another belonging to the Congregation. This process of *separation* in order to become autonomous and equal was a very painful process for some Lay Salvatorians in the U.S., who felt the Sisters were ostracizing them. It required *cross-dialogue* and trust building.

Ten years later, by the time of that same 1999 Chapter of the Society, the Lay Salvatorians were forming in various parts of the world. It seemed a moment to further and even stronger collaboration. I introduced to the Chapter delegates a proposal to change our respective Constitutions so as to allow each branch of the *Salvatorian Family* to introduce into their Rule an opening statement on what we share in common. I said, *"We believe this would move us toward re-establishing the original vision of Fr. Jordan, namely to have priests, religious and laity living from one shared spirit. ... The long-term hope of this proposal is that at some future time, when each branch of the Salvatorian Family has its own Rule, the first section in each would be identical. It would describe who we are as Salvatorians, what is our Salvatorian spirituality and what is our common Salvatorian mission. The remainder of each Rule would then specify how we organize and govern our lifestyles and incorporate new members - as priests and brothers in the Society, - as sisters in the Congregation, and - as lay Salvatorians in the Association. ..."*

*We are open to whatever change you might make to our proposal. We understand that your Chapter's response would be incorporated into the ongoing processes of our Congregation, either at our Congregational Council or next General Chapter.*

*Regarding your proposal to have General Chapters in the same calendar year beginning in 2006, we feel very positive about this idea. Also*

*joint membership on some commissions would be a wonderful opportunity for constructive collaboration.”*

As we know today the Society’s Chapter modified the proposal to promulgate a common Charter for all three branches of the *Salvatorian Family*, which the Congregation’s Chapter also accepted. That resultant Salvatorian Charter is now a common document of inspiration and witness to Fr. Jordan’s vision shared within a thriving *Salvatorian Family*. Since that time we Salvatorians plan more effectively together because we hold decision-making meetings simultaneously and share membership on significant committees. We have also healed wounds from our historical mistakes and reverence the correct roles of our Founder, Fr. Jordan, and his early collaborators – Blessed Mary of the Apostles and Fr. Bonaventura Luethen. *Cross-dialogue* became a healing balm for all of us and has led to new life and growth in the *Salvatorian Family* around the world.

### **The Experience of Suffering and Blessing**

The symbol of the cross evokes insights into the difficulties that life offers us – the unexpected events, the limitations of our members and resources, the fears and lack of ability to change, etc. The cross also evokes a deepening realization of God’s profound and inexplicable love for us even within our limitations. Jesus models a faith in God’s Providence that allowed Him to live authentically despite a growing realization of rejection by those in authority.

In dialoguing with our sisters around the world I realized that many found it hard to view the cross as a Salvatorian foundational value because they did not want to focus only on suffering. I used that opportunity to prepare an ongoing presentation on other *attitudes* we can take relative to the ‘cross in our life’: **walking toward the cross** (symbol of the vow of chastity); **carrying the cross** (symbol of the vow of poverty); **standing under the cross** (symbol of the vow of

obedience); and ***embracing the cross*** (symbol of reconciliation and building community).<sup>54</sup>

Shadows imply the presence of the sun. For us the shadow of the cross implies our firm faith in the presence of the Son and Savior, Jesus. Today there is a large cloud looming on the horizon, which threatens to overshadow all of created life. It is the threat of global climate change. Pope Francis, in his encyclical 'Laudato Si', has called on all people to take up the necessary mission of working together to heal our earth in order to save suffering humanity. He points clearly to the relationship of the suffering Body of Christ and the suffering earth.

This contemporary mission to unite peoples in the work of healing the earth and living in balance with nature may be the greatest and most difficult evangelization we have ever undertaken. It will require new levels of global solidarity. Those of us in the north must sacrifice and cut back dramatically in order that our brothers and sisters in the south are given their share of resources to develop and begin to thrive as equal human beings. This *cross* will be hard to carry. If Fr. Jordan were alive today I am sure he would be appealing to all to listen to Pope Francis and join him in suffering so that *all may have life*.

Finally again Fr. Jordan: *"Through suffering, through patient suffering, you will call down blessings from above! ... You know the dear Savior redeemed the world through his passion! Do we want to choose a different way? It is a well-known principle: an apostolic religious always succeeds in proportion to his sufferings!"*<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> For further insights into these attitudes, this article can be found in 'Salvatorian Key Elements', Part 3, 2007, pp. 70-85.

<sup>55</sup> JORDAN: Chapter talk of 1898-10-04. In: DSS XXIII, pp. 234-235.

## “PREACH THE GOSPEL TO ALL CREATURES”<sup>56</sup>

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by Sr. Jean Schafer SDS

### **Fr. Francis Mary of the Cross Jordan SDS:**

*“Go and teach all nations.”<sup>57</sup>*

*“Scan the globe, its various peoples, nations and languages, and see how much there is to do for the honor of God and the salvation of others.”<sup>58</sup>*

*“Fly like an eagle around the globe and proclaim the word of God.”<sup>59</sup>*

*“Praedicate verbum Dei omnibus creaturis” [Preach the word of God to all creatures.] This is the Intention of the Society.”<sup>60</sup>*

### **Introduction**

Father Jordan’s vision for the foundational *Apostolic Teaching Society* was a group of persons from various lifestyles working zealously to bring the saving message of Jesus everywhere by every means. The gift of the Spirit given to Fr. Jordan was that of the charismatic genius of uniting all forms of ‘teaching’ with universality in regard to who are the ‘teachers.’ He wished to include all peoples, all places, all means – so that Jesus would be known by all and all would have **true life**.

### **Global Mission**

As our Congregation moved into its new century of existence in the 1990s, it became clear that our Sisters needed growth in their awareness of our own global reality – the ways in which we *Salvatorian Sisters* were expressing diversity, universality and unity. The Generalate took inspiration from St. John Paul II’s encyclical ‘*Redemptoris Missio*’

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<sup>56</sup> JORDAN on 1901-11-20. In: SD II/32

<sup>57</sup> JORDAN in January 1879. In: SD I/153

<sup>58</sup> SD I/63

<sup>59</sup> SD I/182

<sup>60</sup> JORDAN: Chapter talk of 1899-02-17. In: DSS XXIII, p. 278.



on missionary life: the importance of witness, of announcing Jesus as Savior, of forming community among the people, of assisting with people's development and denouncing their exploitation, of respecting the enculturation process, and of serving with sisterly love. "*Missionary activity is nothing other and nothing less than the manifestation or epiphany of God's plan and its fulfillment in the world and in history; in this history God, by means of missions, clearly accomplishes the history of salvation.*"<sup>61</sup>

In 1992-93 the Generalate planned a common ongoing formation study for the entire Congregation, using Jesuit Marcelo Azevedo's book '*Vocation for Mission.*' The book, published in 1988, provided the sisters the ability to read the same material in Portuguese, Italian, French, Spanish, English, German and Polish. It treated the apostolic vocation, the mission to evangelize, how the vows and community life influence our mission, and a call for the prophetic renewal of consecrated life for the sake of evangelizing a changing world.

This study enabled us to respond from our various cultural vantage points, seeking what we actually did share in common as *Salvatorian Sisters*. I trusted the elements of our charism would emerge in new expressions and new insights. We gained a common understanding of terms such as '*prophetic*' and '*preferential option for the poor.*' These terms no longer threatened us, but impelled us to find ways to become authentically prophetic in order to be in solidarity especially with impoverished women and children. We became more tolerant of the diversity of dress allowed by our Rule of Life, as well as diversity in community prayer and community living arrangements. We began to see ourselves as '*women*' religious, rather than as '*neutered nuns*'. This enabled us to embrace our '*sisterhood*' with other women religious and women in general so as to take up more intentionally the work of '*teaching all nations*' about the plight of women and girls and advocating on their behalf.

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<sup>61</sup> VATICAN II: Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church AD GENTES, No. 9; cf. Chapter II, 10-18. Quoted by John Paul II in his encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*. On the permanent validity of the Church's missionary mandate. Rome, 1990-12-07, No. 41.

The Generalate planned ongoing formation meetings in Rome for sisters from all the Units, choosing those who may have never had prior international exposure. Through these meetings we would be *'teaching'* one another, as well as learning in common for the sake of improving our missionary effectiveness in *'teaching'* others. Our sisters grew in confidence that the same values informed our apostolic responses to people's needs, despite the differences in how we went about that mission.

We also conducted continental meetings so that Asians, Africans, Europeans, and Americans could meet within their continental groups to know one another better and discover their common and unique identities, struggles and successes. We held international meetings for formators and vocation promoters, for unit treasurers, for retired sisters, and for those involved with the promotion of Lay Salvatorians. Outcomes from these meetings were shared with the Congregation by way of writings from the Generalate.

Through each of these encounters diversity became an ever-greater richness, while our unity was deepened through a greater understanding of our charism and the spirituality of our Founder, Fr. Jordan. We began to open our eyes to the diverse forms of poverty and injustice within our own cultures due to what our governments did or did not do on the national and international scene. Sisters wanted to reach out and do more to help across Units in whatever ways they could – prayer, service, resources, etc. Gradually new missions opened in Ecuador, Venezuela, Albania, Romania, Syria, Pakistan, Jordan, Malaysia, Mozambique, and Kenya.

While renovating our Motherhouse chapel we installed windows that depicted the mission of our Sisters in each of the four continents of Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas. We commissioned a Romanian icon painter to paint in the sanctuary the vine and branches in a way that brought out the unity in Jesus that defines Salvatorians, as well as our place among the great apostles – Peter, Paul and Magdalene – and the saints that represent holy men and women throughout history – Francis of Assisi and Catherine of Siena, patrons of Italy.

Today Salvatorian communities continue to combine diverse nations, ethnic groups, cultures, languages and ways of thinking to work together in common *'to be in solidarity with the suffering world, so that all may experience the fullness of life'*.<sup>62</sup>

### **Cosmic Mission**

However, a new insight into the genius of Fr. Jordan is emerging. His urgent plea to, *"preach the Gospel to all creatures!"* is a prophetic call today. Not only are we to *'preach to all nations.'* We are to preach the Gospel of life *'to all creatures!'* There is a growing awareness that we are integrally bound up with all created things and cannot exist without them. Due to the rapid industrialization and now the over-industrialization of much of the planet, our earth is suffering. Pope Francis exhorts us: *"Human beings, endowed with intelligence and love, and drawn by the fullness of Christ, are called to lead all creatures back to their Creator."*<sup>63</sup> Does this exhortation not reflect the words of Fr. Jordan: *"Preach the Gospel to all creatures!"*<sup>64</sup>

The salvation of the nations is now bound up with salvation of the earth and its tightly knit system of interacting forces, of which we are only one part. Climate change can no longer be ignored, despite those who deny its effects. The great prophetic challenge today is to denounce socio-economic greed and inspire all nations to come together and work together to reestablish balance and harmony on the earth we share. Salvation has become a cosmic mission. Jesus is the Cosmic Christ and we, His Body, are called to *'teach all.'* Jordan speaks: *"The die is cast – united solely with God, accomplish (it) through Christ Jesus crucified. All peoples, races, nations, and so on, all."*<sup>65</sup>

*"The created things of this world are not free of ownership: 'For they are yours, O Lord, who love the living.'* (Wis. 11:26) *This is the basis of our conviction that, as part of the universe, called into being by one*

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<sup>62</sup> Enactments of the XX General Chapter in 2012.

<sup>63</sup> FRANCIS: Encyclical Letter *LAUDATO SI'*. On Care for our Common Home. Rome, 2015-05-24, No. 83.

<sup>64</sup> SD II/32

<sup>65</sup> SD II/114

*Father, all of us are linked by unseen bonds and together form a kind of universal family, a sublime communion which fills us with a sacred, affectionate and humble respect. Here I would reiterate that, 'God has joined us so closely to the world around us that we can feel the desertification of the soil almost as a physical ailment, and the extinction of a species as a painful disfigurement.'"*<sup>66</sup>

*"Moreover, when our hearts are authentically open to universal communion, this sense of fraternity excludes nothing and no one."<sup>67</sup> – "God gave the earth to the whole human race for the sustenance of all its members, without excluding or favoring anyone."<sup>68</sup>*

Our mission as Salvatorian disciples of Jesus is not yet finished. Fr. Jordan exhorts us, *"Oh, holy apostles flying through the world evangelizing all."*<sup>69</sup>

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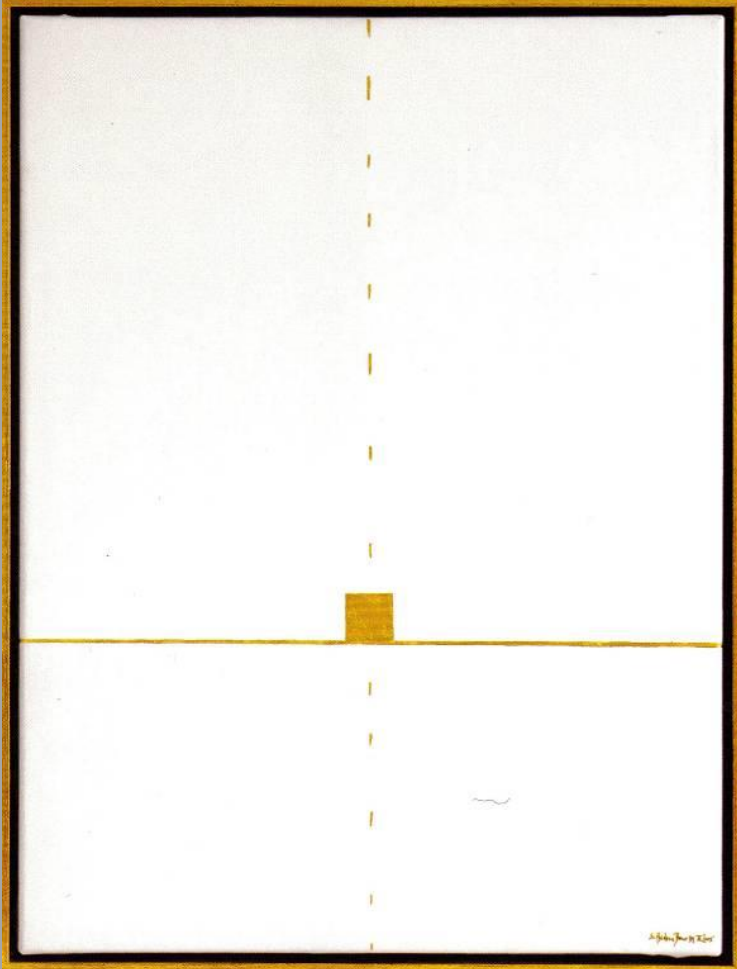
<sup>66</sup> FRANCIS: Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'*, no. 89.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 92.

<sup>68</sup> JOHN PAUL II: Encyclical Letter *Centesimus Annus*. On the Hundreth Anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*. Rome, 1991-05-01, No. 31.

<sup>69</sup> SD I/138





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**MAN IS OUR CARE**  
**– THE LORD IS OUR SALVATION**

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How Catholic Days make a lasting impression...

***Fr. Francis Mary of the Cross Jordan SDS:***

*“... cast all your cares upon the Lord; He will help you; He will save you!”<sup>70</sup>*

**The History of the Catholic Days<sup>71</sup>**

‘Catholic Days’ have been held in Germany since 1848. In the year of the German revolution and the ensuing political changes, people were concerned with fighting for/defending their civil rights such as freedom of assembly and association, freedom of the press and of religion and especially freedom of conscience. Catholics too demanded their civil rights and fought for the rights of the church in society and the state. In this period of upheaval, active Catholic clubs-and-societies movements developed, and from October 3 through 6, 1848 the first “General Assembly of Catholic Associations” took place in Mainz to pool and coordinate Catholic forces and to be able to represent Catholic interests more strongly; this went down in history as the ‘1st German Catholic Day’.

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<sup>70</sup> JORDAN: Chapter Talks 1898-02-18. In: DSS XXIII, p. 186. Quoted here according to MENKE: Exhortations and Admonitions. Translated by Fr. Winfried Herbst. St. Nazianz (Wisconsin / US), 1939, p. 9.

<sup>71</sup> ‘Katholikentage’ (= Catholic Days) are a gatherings organized by the Roman Catholic laity for several days in Germany. Although major church officials have become involved, it is neither an official ecumenical event nor mandated or organized by the clergy. PMO



**Fr. Karl  
HOFFMANN  
SDS**

Superior General  
of the  
Salvatorians

1993-1999



Except for the years of the Franco-German War, 1870-1871, World War I, 1914-1920, the Nazi-period and World War II, Catholic Days have been organized in various German towns – since 1948, generally biennially, alternating with the evangelical church congresses. In 2016 the 100th Catholic Day was held in Leipzig.

### Experiencing the Catholic Days

It was during that era that John Baptist Jordan, born in the revolution year 1848, grew up. He listened and observed what the dispute between church and state, generally described as the *Kulturkampf*<sup>72</sup>, meant for society and the people. As a decorator's assistant and member of the Kolping-Verein (association) he took part in club life and certainly in the societal discussions of his contemporaries too. For the Catholic theologian, initially during his studies and then after his ordination, three Catholic Days were formative<sup>73</sup>: 1875 in Freiburg, 1876 in Munich and 1880 in Constance. The participation of highly varied groups, the combining of forces and the experience of the lay movement influenced his thinking and the actions he took, culminating in the establishment of the *Apostolic Teaching Society* with its three stages. At the time, Jordan's ideas still went too far for the church, and today we know that it is quite possible for the three branches of the *Salvatorian Family* to get along with one another.

Just as Fr. Francis of the Cross was allowed to, so too could I experience a Catholic Day. From August 13-17, 1958 the 78th Catholic Day took place in Berlin. Aged 18 and as an altar boy in the parish of *Salvator*, I was able to not only serve at Mass, but also attend several events.

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<sup>72</sup> "The German term ... *Kulturkampf* ... refers to power struggles between emerging constitutional and democratic nation states and the Roman Catholic Church over the place and role of religion in modern policy, usually in connection with secularization campaigns." > WIKIPEDIA as of October 31, 2016.

<sup>73</sup> Cfr. MAYER, Günther:

(a) Jordan in seiner Zeit. Die Katholikentage von 1875-1880. In: FORUM SDS. Mitteilungen des süddeutschen Provinzialates. Ed.: Provinzialat der Süddeutschen Provinz. Red.: P. Anton Kiebele. Vol. V (1970), No. 5, pp. 369ff.

(b) Jordan und die Katholikentage. In: Kiebele, Anton at all (Ed.): Die Salvatorianer in Geschichte und Gegenwart 1881-1981. Im Auftrag des Generalates der Salvatorianer, Rom, 1981, pp. 21-33.

This Catholic Day had been given the slogan: *“Man is our care - the Lord is our salvation”*; at the time, this appealed to me very much and has captivated me ever since. I have kept the program booklet for this event to this very day. The cover page shows two hands moving towards each other. From one side, the upper hand appears in the picture, it is pierced – it is the hand of Jesus; from the other side, the lower hand enters the picture, it belongs to a person – it could be my hand. The experience and the slogan of the Catholic Day have remained important to me all my life.

### **The After-Effects of a Catholic Day**

After my time at school I completed a bank apprenticeship and at the time I could well imagine continuing to be active in this area. But as I had also played a part in the youth activities of our church community of Salvator, I was encouraged by my confreres to become a Salvatorian instead. And it was definitely the experiences of congregational life and the youth activities that ultimately got me to join. There followed the usual training, and I got to know Fr. Jordan better and more intimately. Several commonalities manifested themselves:

- He was a so-called ‘late starter’ – I too;
- He had participated in Catholic Days – I too
- And in a chapter address, he had phrased the sentence: *“Cast all your worries on the Lord, and he will help you and rescue you!”* – this message by the Founder was so very similar to the Catholic Day’s slogan.<sup>74</sup>

When I was ordained a priest on January 6, 1971 in our then parish in Hildesheim, I chose this as my slogan for the first Mass I celebrated: *“Man is our care - the Lord is our Salvation”*.

Initially chaplain in our church community of St. Gottfried in Münster, I could attend pastoral further education that was geared to support and counseling for marriage and family. Accordingly, the team of Salvatorians/ministers developed the idea of establishing *family circles* in the parish, small lay groups, as Fr. Jordan had envisioned them, that

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<sup>74</sup> JORDAN, *ibid.*

helped and supported one another and together integrated themselves into congregational life. In my mind, however, the realization took shape of how important spiritual support and counseling are for each individual and care for him/her especially in difficult times.

### **The Catholic Day Slogan became my Motto**

I would like to have remained active in parish counseling work, but at the beginning of 1981 was elected for the first time to an internal leadership function, namely house superior of the Steinfeld monastery. Then, over 40 confreres awaited me there, and in addition to everyday monastery life the chapter preparations had to be dealt with, for the Salvatorian's XIII General Chapter was about to be held in Steinfeld. Looking back, the event went well, for the XIV General Chapter was to be held there again in 1987.

Well, after that, in 1986, the confreres elected me Provincial Superior of the North German Province and in 1993 General Superior of the Salvatorians. At the General Chapter, directly after my election, I asked for a bit of time to consider my decision in prayer. With a **yes**, I decided outwardly to move from Cologne to Rome and inwardly to take a chance as the Reverend Father's 8th successor. As varied as the duties in a leadership function may be, visits and one-on-one talks, expressed more generally, contact with the individual confreres, were always important to me. I wanted to hear and understand and embrace what was important to them. And I was glad to ask confreres to take an evening walk with me; undisturbed, one could then have a casual chat or a serious talk.

My period of office lasted until 1999 and besides my special experiences the Pope's visit was surely the highlight. On March 19, 1999, Pope John Paul II visited the Motherhouse, prayed at the Founder's grave, spoke to us in the house chapel and spent several hours with us over lunch. After my replacement and spells in Israel and Switzerland, I now live in Berlin again and am the archdiocese's representative for spiritual support and confessions at St. Hedwig's Cathedral. But if I look back at the years in Rome and reflect on my responsibility there, I find myself

immediately back at the Catholic Days, as Fr. Jordan and I could experience them. We were both full of worry for our fellow human beings and we were/are both sure that in His concern for others only the Savior himself encourages us and helps to shoulder our own worries - and yet there remains a small difference: whereas I focused more on the individual, Fr. Francis of the Cross, in contrast, by virtue of his universal thinking, kept an eye on **all**.

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## “WHOLLY CONTEMPLATIVE AND ACTIVE!”

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by Fr. Karl Hoffmann SDS

### Fr. Francis Mary of the Cross Jordan:

“Our Society is wholly contemplative and active.”<sup>75</sup>

### The Founder’s Concerns

It was with great enthusiasm that Fr. Francis of the Cross Jordan founded the *Apostolic Teaching Society* in 1881, which was later to be called the *Society of the Divine Savior*. Some 20 years later, this enthusiasm gave way to disillusionment, because in his opinion he could not achieve everything that he had once intended. In his biographical study, Fr. Timotheus Edwein describes the Founder’s feelings, particularly after the 1st General Chapter of 1902 in Rome; only the main issues can be summarized here. *“After a promising expansion the Society began to stagnate. Vocations decreased considerably. The members established themselves in pastoral work. Many set their hearts more on this work than on spending themselves to build and extend “apostolic nurseries”. After ordination quite a few, thinking that for good pastoral work religious life was not necessary, turned their backs on the Society. ... Jordan saw the fat years turn lean. Looking here and there it must have seemed to him that the burning fire of “first love” had had been reduced to a smoldering ember. ... Increasingly, Jordan asked himself whether the Society, which in the meantime had received the full right to exist in the church, still corresponded fully to its original name Apostolic Teaching Society”, namely to go and belong there where souls needed salvation. Fr. Francis was torn apart by the desire “to lead everyone to Christ” and the apparent failure of not having lived up to one’s own demands and assumed responsibility.”*<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> JORDAN: Chapter Talks 1899-06-23: DSS XXIII, p. 330. Quoted here according to Menke, Exhortations and Admonitions, p. 179.

<sup>76</sup> Cfr.: EDWEIN, Timotheus: Fr. Francis M. of the Cross Jordan. The Founder and the Confirmation of his Work: Crisis and Maturation 1907-1909. In: DSS XVII.I (English Edition), 2008, p. 89.

He “*entreated the Lord ‘urgently, vehemently and passionately’ (1904-11-17) to help him regain somehow what he had missed, or what was still missing: ‘O Lord, rise up, help me! A new army for the glory of God and the salvation of souls! Oh, time is short; come quickly and instruct me’ (1904-06-19).”* <sup>77</sup> In his conflict, he thought of the ‘new army’ as a contemplative, Marian-characterized creation that was to balance and/or complement the Salvatorian cause. So, inwardly, Fr. Francis was clear on being outwardly in search of the right answer to the developments described: an apostle can proclaim and act with credibility only from prayer and the community.

In this certitude, the Founder defended the life of the Order against all apparent secularization tendencies. He warned the confreres against the ‘spirit of the world’: “*The spirit of the world is one of the biggest dangers threatening a religious. It has already snatched many members from religious life, and has made many religious fall. ... This is applicable to you. In fact, first and foremost it is applicable to those bound in holy profession. ... In mundo estis, sed non de mundo, therefore, in opposition to the world. ... Furthermore, this is particularly true in the priesthood, when due to circumstances many assist in the world by helping out in the ministry. If they come in contact with the world for a very long time, the spirit of the world easily seeps, drop by drop, little by little, into their habits and opinions. And how difficult it is to get it out of him again.*” <sup>78</sup>

### **The Founder’s Advice**

Fr. Jordan thus pointed out the possible dangers that apostolic communities and people had to and must face. As changes crept up insidiously, he urged vigilance. General recognition and esteem, e.g. that can be experienced more easily in counseling activities or teaching and flatter everyone, are tempting for priests. Action and contemplation are then all too easily set against each other in an ‘either-or’, and often

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<sup>77</sup> EDWEIN in: DSS XVII.1, *ibid.*, p. 90.

<sup>78</sup> JORDAN: Chapter Talks 1901-03-22. In: DSS XXIII, pp. 410-411.

too late does it become apparent how imprudent activism first superimposes itself on, and then destroys, the union with Christ.

For this reason, the Venerable Father could not accept this ‘either-or’ for spiritual life; important for him was: an apostle lives by ‘both-and’; at first, he is close to Christ in prayer, liturgy and meditation, and from this fuels his mission and message. Accordingly, in his 1899 chapter address he unmistakably made clear to his confreres: *“Our society is totally contemplative and active”* and illustrated this with the example of ignition and shining: *“Contemplation is used to ignite you with the Holy Spirit. I would like to say, contemplation is like pouring oil into a lamp so that it burns and shines. Without it the lamp will go out, and the light, the ardere will cease. ... The second point is lucere, the radiance that gives light. ‘Luceat lux vestra coram hominibus – Let your light shine before all.’ Yes, you are called to shine, to show the world the light and to shine yourselves.”*<sup>79</sup> Ignition thus leads to shining, and as the oil is consumed by the shining, it must constantly be refilled. In other words: in an apostle, closeness to Christ, i.e. the contemplative, flows into the apostolic mission and effect, and because in his dedication to mankind the apostle shines, he needs the constant return to his source of energy.

The Founder’s explanations, conveyed verbally at the time, are now available on paper. We find ‘ignition’ and ‘shining’ not only in his addresses, but also in our new constitutions:

(1) ‘Ignition’: *“Moved by the words of the Gospel: ‘Eternal life is this: to know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent,’ our Founder gave us the command and mission ...”*

(2) ‘Shining’: *“...not to rest content until all people know, love, and serve Jesus as their Savior.”*<sup>80</sup>

### **The Founder’s Relevance for Today**

Even today we still observe: in whichever country we live and act, as an apostle it is not easy to relax. The world is full of problems and has

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<sup>79</sup> JORDAN: Chapter Talks 1899-06-23. In: DSS XXIII, pp. 330-331.

<sup>80</sup> Constitution SDS, Art. 103.

become restless. Yet in view of the secularization and technical overpowering, the contemplative has precisely for this reason become all the more necessary.

In my room there hangs an icon of Christ that was given to me as a gift in Romania. The Savior of the world holds an open Bible in His hand, in which can be read: *“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”*<sup>81</sup> These words of Christ are an invitation, not an obligation. They invite you to stop what you are doing, be still and pause in silence, pray, meditate or simply just reflect. And after Christ has reassured and invigorated me afresh, I can carry on working again.

Gladly and often do I also recall my stay in Rome from 1993-1999; one of my rooms was directly next to the Founder’s chapel. I often went next door to pray myself and ask Fr. Jordan for his support. - During this time, Pope John Paul II visited our Motherhouse on March 19, 1999, surely a highlight in the history of our Order and my life in the Order. He too prayed at the tomb of our Reverend Father and took plenty of time for the prayer. He addressed words of encouragement to the community of the Motherhouse: *“May you continue to bear eloquent and faithful witness to the charism of Father Francis Mary of the Cross; may you be filled with intense love for Christ and his Church and with great devotion for our Blessed Mother; may your lives of selfless service – especially among young people and in the missions – inspire others to embrace the faith ever more fully, so that they may ‘hear the word of God and keep it’”*<sup>82</sup>

It is now up to each member of the *Salvatorian Family* to recognize for him-/herself from which source of strength he/she fuels his/her spiritual life and apostolic work. Fr. Francis Mary of the Cross Jordan, then, and John Paul II, later, both realized for themselves and conveyed to us that in spiritual life action and contemplation are mutually dependent and complement and do not oppose or even contradict each other.

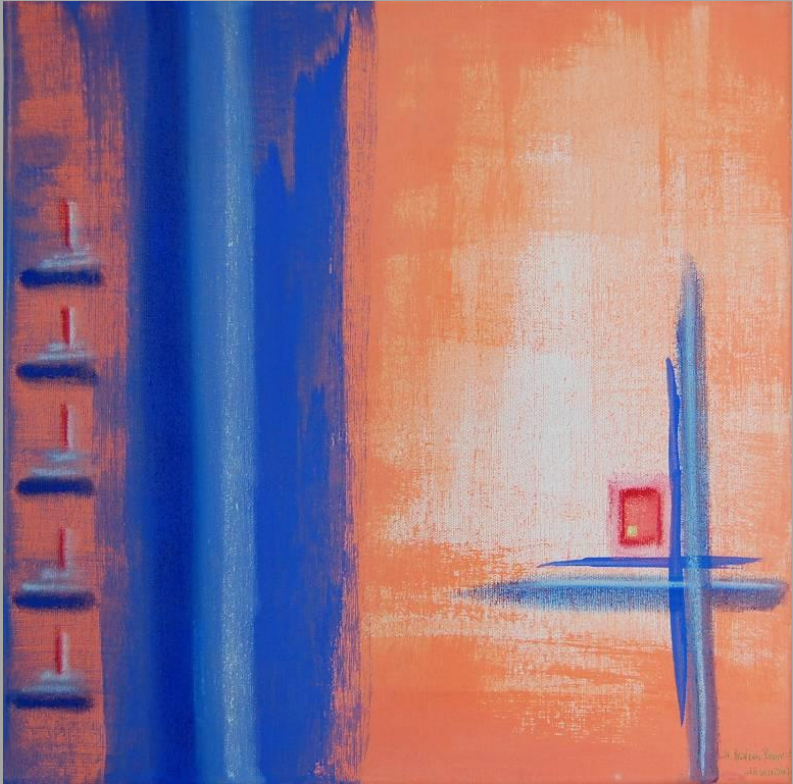
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<sup>81</sup> Mt 11:28

<sup>82</sup> John Paul II: Address of the Holy Father to the Community of the Motherhouse, Rome, March 19, 1999. In: ANNALES SDS. Vol. XIV, No. 9, P. 552-553. / Bible Quote: Lk 11:28.







rich in contrast / original: KontrastReich



## IMPELLED BY THE SOLIDARITY OF OUR SAVING GOD

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***In 1878 John Baptist Jordan wrote in his  
Spiritual Diary:***

*“I suspect that we can have no devout lives in  
the world without some active tending of the  
poor ... - the sick ...”<sup>83</sup>*

*and*

*“[Establish] a society to help the sick and the  
poor, the lapsed, etc., of a particular parish or  
of the whole world!”<sup>84</sup>*

A few years ago, during a General Chapter of the Congregation in Rome when the units were sharing, a Sister who came from one of the units still in need of financial assistance from the Congregation asked the question: *“Why are there differences within the same religious family? Why do we have to be uncomfortable and feel like beggars stretching out our hands to ask for help from the Congregation when we don’t have sufficient resources?”*

At this General Chapter, the writer and theologian, Fr. John Baptist Libanio, SJ, was present as our facilitator. He listened attentively to the anguished question of the Sister and then gave all of us a challenging reflection about the significance of a culture of solidarity in contrast to distinct and isolated acts of solidarity. He

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<sup>83</sup> SD I/105

<sup>84</sup> SD I/140



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Vicereess General  
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1995-2002

spoke of acts of solidarity such as responding to a specific catastrophe or crisis. In that type of a situation, humanitarian aid is given during a critical period and then often ceases when the situation is no longer in the news. On the other hand, when one adopts a permanent posture of solidarity, in other words, a culture of solidarity, the spirit of sharing, service and protection becomes a permanent characteristic of the person. Indirectly, Fr. Libanio was motivating us to review our actions and our way of being in solidarity within the Congregation.

From that time on, solidarity has taken on a different meaning for me. Certainly that was also the case for the Congregation because in that General Chapter we stated that solidarity among us would now be one of our priorities. Following this, when I was in contact with some of the provinces, I began to witness increased reflection and awareness raising on this topic which is so necessary today. We began to see how deeply our modern day western culture is permeated by a selfish individualism in which every group and every person pursues what is best for themselves alone regardless of what is happening to those around them.

Some units at that time became more open to generously share both their human and their financial resources for the good of our common Salvatorian mission in the world.

This reflection challenged us to look at each other as sisters of the same family. It challenged us to question the individualism that often characterizes us who are so influenced by western culture to be worried about our own interests within our own respective realities. In this context, Father Jordan reminds us: *“You know an organism is arranged in such a way that each limb supports the other. You know how in a machine one part affects the other, and how in a building one stone carries the weight of the other, each in its place. And if any part were missing in the machine, the organism, the human being or the building, the whole structure would suffer.”*<sup>85</sup> Father Jordan compares solidarity to *“a building: one stone supports the other, as in an organism one limb affects the other. Thus, it is necessary for both the individual and the*

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<sup>85</sup> JORDAN: Chapter talk of 1897-11-26. In: DSS XXIII, p. 148.

*whole community that everyone, from the prefect to the highest superior, in every case protects and supports ...*" what is required by love.<sup>86</sup> The question which presents itself to us from Fr. Jordan is: How can we be an Apostolic Body, in communion through the same charism and mission without living in solidarity, without taking up a culture of solidarity that impregnates our way of being, living, thinking and understanding with the reality of everyone in the group? We are called and challenged to embrace true solidarity for the sake of greater equality and respect among us as persons both within the *Salvatorian Family* and the society at large.

Living the solidarity of Fr. Jordan is far reaching and has biblical roots because it directs our whole being and all of our actions toward the communion and solidarity of the Divine Savior. Enlightened by the Word of Jesus who is in solidarity with the people, Jordan made the words of the Lord his own: "*Are they sheep without a shepherd?*" – "*As Jesus went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd and he began to teach them many things.*"<sup>87</sup> The dimension of universality expresses the Founder's feelings about solidarity. He wants to include all ethnic groups, from all places and from whatever social conditions. The vision of Fr. Jordan is very broad and in solidarity with all peoples. He wants to include and involve all the living forces of the Church in his work so that the proclamation of the Word could reach all places, through all ways and means. "*As long as there is one person on earth who does not know God and does not love Him above all things, you dare not allow yourself a moment's rest.*"<sup>88</sup>

Contemplating the historical process through which all humankind including the *Salvatorian Family* must pass, we verify that these challenges repeat themselves. The cry for more life in its fullness continues to echo in our times. If Fr. Jordan were alive today, he would challenge us and even impel us toward a greater solidarity with the suffering world. He would urge us to break open the boundaries that imprison us

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid., p. 149.

<sup>87</sup> Mark 6: 34

<sup>88</sup> SD II/1

within our own self-interests, our own necessities and our own individualistic cultures. He would challenge us as a group to take up a culture of solidarity instead of practicing isolated acts of solidarity. He would challenge us to be uncomfortable with the little effort we place in service of the promotion of life and our mission to make the one true God known and loved by all people.

Salvatorian solidarity, following the example of the Founder, is that of the shepherd who cares for his/her flock with loving attention. *“Like a shepherd, he feeds his flock; he will gather the lambs in his arms and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep.”*<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Isa 40:11

## WITH PASSION AND ZEAL

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by Sr. Terezinha Fontana de Araújo SDS

### **Fr. Francis Mary of the Cross Jordan:**

*“Therefore, zeal for souls! ... We should become ‘salt of the earth and light for the world’. We should excel in holiness and learning. So never neglect these two means. ... You must also be ‘fire’. So if you desire to be lux mundi, and sal terrae always desire to find ways to increase your zeal for souls. ... Therefore, apostolic zeal, holiness and learning!”<sup>90</sup>*

### **Accepting our Heritage**

In my personal experience of the Congregation at the Generalate level, I noticed that our initial formation often continued to be marked by characteristics of the years before Vatican II. In general at that time, there was little access to Salvatorian literature due to the fact that the original documents were in German and very few had been translated into other languages. Awareness of the Founder was limited. Almost the only source available to us on the ideal of Father Jordan came through the reading of *Exhortations and Admonitions*. Then in the 1970s and 80s, work began on the translation of the foundational documents of Salvatorian literature. This promoted an understanding of the Salvatorian charism, mission and identity. For many this became a process of *recognition* and *re-learning*.

From that time on, through research, study, retreats and renewal meetings, we began to recapture our identity. The result was a greater understanding of the spiritual inheritance given to us by Father Jordan whose apostolic missionary zeal impacts us and whose very words challenge us. *“Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!”*<sup>91</sup> This historical process itself became a witness which evoked in us a new grasp and deepening of the Salvatorian charism and mission. Through it we came

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<sup>90</sup> JORDAN: Chapter talk of 1898-04-29. In: DSS XXIII, pp. 213-215.

<sup>91</sup> 1Cor 9:16. Quoted in: SD I/212



to a new understanding of the spirit which impelled Father Jordan. It became clear; his ardent apostolic zeal is his proposal for us today and it is urgently needed in our times. *“Therefore, zeal for souls! We should become ‘salt of the earth’ (sal terrae) and light for the world (lux mundi).”* Looking to the words of Jesus, Fr. Jordan tells his companions and us today: Why salt of the earth and light for the world? – *“What good is salt of the earth if it loses its flavor, how can you restore it? Such insipid salt is good for nothing except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.”* ... *“So if you desire to be light for the world (lux mundi), and salt of the earth [sal terrae] always desire to find ways to increase your zeal for souls. And you will surely see that if you are not the one [lux mundi], the other [sal terrae] will be of no use. ... Therefore, again and again I recommend zeal for souls!”*<sup>92</sup>

### **The Founder’s Zeal**

During my twelve years on the Generalate, I was always struck by the missionary dimension, that is, the apostolic zeal, and faithfulness to the inheritance left to us by Fr. Jordan, that was present in the lives of our Sisters and Salvatorians around the world. I am thinking of provinces that dedicated themselves to an intensive work of returning to our Salvatorian sources. Today, they continue to drink deeply from the Salvatorian wellspring through writings, courses, retreats, the organization of commissions, and interprovincial projects for study, publications, music, theater, and common apostolic projects – all oriented by the guiding compass of Jordan’s dream *“that all may know, love and serve the Savior.”*<sup>93</sup> Father Jordan’s notes, written in his *Spiritual Diary*, always were and continue to be light for the apostolic being and action of so many missionaries. *“Be a true apostle of Jesus Christ. Do not rest until you have carried the word of God to all corners of the earth. Be a true herald of the Most High!”*<sup>94</sup> So often the Founder expressed himself passionately when speaking of apostolic zeal. *“Shout like a mighty trumpet throughout the earth so that every creature may hear! Fly like*

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<sup>92</sup> JORDAN: Chapter talk of 1898-04-29. In: DSS XXIII, p. 214.

<sup>93</sup> Cf. SD II/52 and II/70

<sup>94</sup> SD I/182

*an eagle...*"<sup>95</sup> Fr. Jordan's apostolic urgency is expressed in vigorous words. He is in a hurry, he is thirsty and calls himself forth from the silence of his apostolic prayer: *"Pray, suffer, endure, sustain, work, fight even unto blood. Cry to God, run, fly, spend yourself totally for Christ, for the salvation of souls ..."*<sup>96</sup> And, then with the same insistence that apostolic zeal is necessary because the world needs salvation now, he writes: *"Fly like an eagle, and like an angel call with a great voice all the living to the holy war to fight for the Supreme Commander with the troops in sublime array drawn up in battle."*<sup>97</sup> Fr. Jordan uses St. John Chrysostom's homily to express his passion and apostolic zeal: *"One individual inflamed with zeal for the faith is enough to lead a whole nation back aright."*<sup>98</sup>

### **The Missionaries' Zeal**

Through these years, I was always struck by the witness of dedicated, zealous Salvatorian missionaries whose dynamism surpassed geographical limits, as well as physical limitations imposed by poor health or age. Despite these limitations, they fearlessly confronted every obstacle and difficulty with zeal. I personally came to know Salvatorian Missionary Sisters giving themselves without reserve in missionary areas which lacked everything. Material and human resources were scarce, communication was difficult as was transportation, and medical assistance. There they were, serving the people with great dedication and zeal. They were missionaries during a time before the internet, when communication with the outside was rare and then only by post. These zealous missionaries remained in place, faithfully persevering, living among the needy people, giving themselves entirely, even to the point of giving their own health so that people could have more life and our Divine Savior could be better known and loved by all. I personally saw them as enterprising, active, creative, loving and persevering. This is indeed the fruit of those who cultivate a passionate apostolic zeal with-

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<sup>95</sup> SD I/190

<sup>96</sup> SD II/17

<sup>97</sup> SD I/190

<sup>98</sup> SD I/200

in their own hearts through a deep intimacy with the Lord. Prayer sustained their mission. The witness of these people marked me deeply. I could read in their lives the words of our Founder: *“Let your zeal be resourceful, active, persevering, patient; it must unite gentleness and strength.”*<sup>99</sup>

### ***The Zeal as a Challenge***

These attitudes and examples continue to challenge all Salvatorians about the life and practice of our apostolic zeal, yesterday, today and always. The words of Fr. Jordan: *“Pray, suffer, endure, sustain, work, fight even unto blood. Cry to God, run, fly, spend yourself totally for Christ, for the salvation of souls ...”*<sup>100</sup> certainly provoke, challenge and impel us today toward an apostolic missionary zeal which will touch all people so that they may know, love and serve the one true God. This was the goal so ardently desired by our Founder.

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<sup>99</sup> SD III/23

<sup>100</sup> SD II/17







New Creation / original: NeuSchöpfung

## **“ALL WAYS AND MEANS”:**

*Apostolic Criteria of the Salvatorians*

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*“1. To create methods to raise religious consciousness among people through Christian formation and spiritual development;*

*2. to collaborate with the entire Salvatorian Family, share responsibility in partnership with laity, co-operate in ecumenical endeavours, and join forces with those involved in similar apostolates and in promoting the defense of life and human rights;*

*3. to prepare lay people and Christian communities to engage in leadership in the work of evangelization;*

*4. to relate with those we serve through mutual experiences of life and faith, community and prayer;*

*5. to serve the needs of the poor and marginalized in a manner which empowers them to transform their situation;*

*6. to promote a missionary spirit and to support missionary activity through personnel and/or finances;*

*7. to educate ourselves and others to respect creation and so to use natural resources justly and responsibly.”<sup>101</sup>*

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<sup>101</sup> ANNALES SDS, XIV/09, pp. 580-581.

## INTERNATIONAL GROWTH

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**Fr. Francis Mary of the Cross Jordan:**

*“So then, go to preach Christ crucified! But to do it effectively and successfully you must remain in the deepest union with Christ crucified.”<sup>102</sup>*

My Spiritual Father and Beloved Founder!

On the occasion of the centenary of your death I wish to share with you my inner reflections and to dialogue with you on the great gift of expansion and universality, which our Lord bestowed upon you and through you upon our *Salvatorian Family*.

As a young boy I was searching for a religious congregation to join which would have missions especially in Africa. My grandmother guided me to Trzebinia for the Fatima celebrations. You were there a few times and you started there the first Salvatorian house on Polish soil. I met my first Salvatorians there and through them I met you spiritually. I joined your Society after hearing that your religious Society had missions in Africa and lives out a spirit of universality. Thus, I discovered that my religious vocation was to be a Salvatorian missionary. I joined the novitiate of your Society as a young boy of 16 years of age. Our Savior led me through various events eventually to the missionary life. I experienced two difficult



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<sup>102</sup> JORDAN: Chapter talk of 1891-12-25. In: DSS XXIII, p. 7.



years of forced military service with much indoctrination in atheism and communism but your intercession for me before our Lord helped me to be faithful to our religious Society. I eventually went to Africa 42 years ago full of enthusiasm for the missions and for your Society.

Learning from you about universality and the spirit of expansion I tried to contribute to the growth of the Salvatorians through the formation of African candidates and later through our efforts to return to your very first mission in India. God's Providence led me after 19 years to ministry on the Generalate in Rome where I remained for another 19 years.

Now again I am in the African missions but I am already aged with many grey hairs and I feel quite worn out. Helping pastorally my Tanzanian confreres I have time to sit on the terrace of our house here in Mandera with its beautiful view of the endless African bush and to reflect on the past, the present situation and the future. Throughout my life your talks to the first missionaries you sent to Assam were and still are most inspiring and animating for me. You said to them: *"So then, go to preach Christ crucified! But to do it effectively and successfully you must remain in the deepest union with Christ crucified."*

I was blessed to be in your first mission more than 25 times and to witness the biggest and the most moving event in my life, which was the transfer of the earthly remains of the first two missionaries<sup>103</sup> from the cemetery to a special mausoleum in the nearby Cathedral Church of Shillong, India. At that time, I was blessed to see the tremendous growth of your re-established first mission of the Society and thus the development and expansion of our entire religious Society. The word expansion can sometimes have a negative meaning, so in searching for the correct name for this vital aspect of our life now and in the future we could call it 'Concern for our International Growth'.

Many things changed since you left us to go to our heavenly Father. A number of formerly strong Christian countries have now become missionary territories and many former mission counties have now become great evangelizing nations. Some units continue to grow and

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<sup>103</sup> Fr. Otto Hopfenmüller († 1890-08-21) and Br. Marianus Schumm († 1890-08-30)

some experience diminishment. Many foundations, which you started, have already died out but others are still thriving. Many of your successors tried and others are still trying to bring our presence to many new countries. The times we live in are in many respects similar to the times in which you lived and discovered God's call for founding our Society with its universal purpose.

How is our missionary spirit and our concern for the growth of the Salvatorians lived out now in our consumerist world which does not wish to hear the message of the crucified Christ? Each unit and every Salvatorian has to answer this question in an honest discernment of heart. I can only answer for myself.

My beloved Spiritual Father, there was a time in which I could help you to fulfil your charism of universality on the international level when I was working on the Generalate. How did I fulfil my mission in respect to expansion or international growth? In many cases I followed your example by starting new foundations without detailed planning and the necessary finances but only with trust in God's providence. Surely Jordan University College in Morogoro (Tanzania) is one of them. I have also experienced a taste of the destructive criticism, disloyalty, disappointments and difficulties you had also experienced. I feel sorry for my mistakes and for missing some opportunities to do more for our growth than I did.

History will try to tell this story but it depends on who is the historian. It is much better that I leave this to God himself and to his judgment and your judgment. I cannot do much now for expansion (international growth) while living in the distant and forgotten small mission of Mandera. As long as my health permits I can only share my experiences and still keep alive in my heart enthusiasm for the future growth of the Society as well as giving witness to fidelity to my missionary vocation.

Every evening I see millions of stars in the African sky and I see the Southern Cross. It reminds me of the cross of our Savior and your words already mentioned: *"So then, go to preach Christ crucified! But to do this effectively and successfully you must remain in the deepest union with Christ crucified."* As long as the spirit of international growth

is alive in every Salvatorian and at every level of leadership we will grow and continue our Salvatorian mission in this world.

## “BECOME HOLY!”

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by Fr. Andrzej Urbanski SDS

### **Fr. Francis Mary of the Cross Jordan:**

*“Become holy! Tell yourself over and over, ‘I must become holy! If I do not strive for holiness I am in danger of falling to the ground. It is my duty to strive unceasingly for holiness.’ What use are other ideas and undertakings if we do not strive for holiness?”*<sup>104</sup>

### My Spiritual Father and Beloved Founder!

The history of your beatification process is long, complicated and full of ups and downs. We, your spiritual sons and daughters, have to blame ourselves for failing to complete it. My Father, during my ministry as part of the Generalate we managed to take the important step of announcing officially the decision of the Church to recognise the heroicity of your virtues so that you are now officially regarded as a holy person.<sup>105</sup> However, we did not manage to finish successfully the final step of gaining the approval of a miraculous healing through your intercession because the Papal Congregation judged that the healing we presented was partly not miraculous. I always regret this failure in the last months of my ministry in Rome but a consolation for me is that this failure has given us precious experience, which we did not previously have, on how to proceed in the last step.

Why is it important for us, Lay and Religious Salvatorians, to pray for your beatification and to struggle to complete this process in spite of all difficulties and delays? You do not need your beatification because we believe that you already enjoy the presence of the Father in Heaven BUT it is we who need your beatification.

I live in an African culture where ancestors are especially honored and the children are happy when their father is honored and has a good

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<sup>104</sup> JORDAN: Chapter talk of 1894-04-20. In: DSS XXIII, p. 22.

<sup>105</sup> This document was promulgated by Benedict XVI in Rome on 2011-01-14.

name. There are many cultures like this in our world. There is no happiness in a family when the children do not honor the parents or where the parents do not enjoy a good name. You did so much for us and we owe you our efforts to obtain your beatification. Every General Chapter, which I attended, had your beatification on its 'List of Priorities'.

But there is yet another reason for your beatification. We celebrate many anniversaries in which we remember you in a special way, together with Blessed Mary of the Apostles and some of your spiritual sons whom we honor very much. These celebrations bring us great help for our renewal, our struggles to return to your founding spirit and to your charism and to help us to become your faithful disciples. These celebrations are times of grace for us. From the experience of many Religious Orders a beatification is a very special occasion which brings about a new start and a refreshed apostolic zeal, as well as an increased apostolic spirituality and the promotion of vocations. It will be the same for us and it will gather us in joy from various cultures and parts of the world to celebrate your sanctity and it will encourage us to follow your steps to obtain our own apostolic sanctity. I believe that this special time of grace is close but it will happen only when all the members of the entire *Salvatorian Family* desire it and struggle for it.

We already have an experience of how to make this final step before the beatification but the involvement of all of us will become a reality only when our superiors at every level make it a priority and animate us and encourage us in these efforts. Of course the nomination of the postulator and his assistant(s) is essential but it is not enough to leave them alone in efforts for the beatification. A few practical steps are necessary to involve all our collaborators. Living in the African bush again I noticed that the highest concern of our members is the pastoral care of the faithful and the social projects which are so much a part of our daily ministry and so there is a natural tendency to put our Salvatorian topics and concerns in second place. Therefore it is so important that our superiors animate us and remind us on every occasion of the ultimate goal of our life which is our apostolic sanctity leading us to a deep union with our Savior.

Reverend Father, one day a high official of the Papal Congregation questioned the continuation of your beatification process saying that your beatification would be inopportune coming at a time when there is bad publicity about some Salvatorians. Surely you would not be happy with your beatification if we, your spiritual sons and daughters, do not live out your spirit and instead bring you shame through our way of life; if we decrease our struggles for apostolic sanctity; if we diminish living out your apostolic spirit or if we give up our efforts for international growth (expansion). If Salvatorians would disappear from the face of the earth who would then venerate you and invoke your intercession? For whom would your beatification be needed? Your beatification would be just simply the adding of your name to a long list of saints and blessed who are forgotten and nobody needs them, and nobody lives their spirit. We each have to answer this question honestly, as do each of our units and communities. I ask for your intercession for us that we will be enabled to give a life-giving answer to this question and that we can increase our efforts in struggling for the apostolic sanctity which you have lived out and of which you have given us a good example.

Therefore it is important for us to remember your words *“Become holy. Tell yourself over and over again, ‘I must become holy! If I do not strive for holiness I am in danger of falling to the ground. It is my duty to strive unceasingly for holiness.’ What use are other ideas and undertakings if we do not strive for holiness?”*

## **“OUR LIFE IN APOSTOLIC COMMUNITY”:**

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*“1. We cultivate ways of praying together centered in Christ which are conducive to our apostolic identity and are rooted in shared reflection on our experience of God in Word, Eucharist, community and apostolate. (Constitutions SDS 401-403, 501-504)*

*2. We emphasize in initial and continuing formation that our life and service within community have an apostolic value in themselves, that the individual is called to be committed to the community’s needs and apostolates, and that each individual’s apostolic activity needs to express our charism. (Constitutions SDS 311,326)*

*3. We assess our community gatherings by their capacity to enrich and strengthen our bonds as a community of life and faith, that is, by their quality and regularity and not only by their quantity or long tradition. (Constitutions SDS 406)*

*4. We provide occasions when we express to one another our need for forgiveness and reconciliation so that we more fully respect and accept each one’s individuality. (Constitutions SDS 309, 326, 404-405, 509)*

*5. We use any appropriate means which can help us more effectively communicate and dialogue, share personal experience and concerns, and give and receive support. (Constitutions SDS 403, 405)*

*6. We open our life in community to fuller integration with the Salvatorian Family and to deeper relationships with men and women of similar apostolic and spiritual aspirations, while respecting differences of lifestyle. (Constitutions SDS 107-108)*

*7. We evaluate the simplicity of our lifestyle and integrate our communities within the reality of the people whom we serve, conscious of our obligation to be in solidarity with the poor. (Constitutions SDS 315, 403)*

*8. We form our leaders to view their role as one of service and shared responsibility; to engage us in dialogue, communal discernment, and apostolic planning; and to implement the initiatives in this resolution. (Constitutions SDS 324-326, 405-406, 701-704)*

*In our efforts to renew our life in community, we gain inspiration from the Apostles at Pentecost:*

*'They devoted themselves with one accord to prayer,  
together with some women, and Mary  
the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.  
When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled,  
they were all in one place together.  
And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit  
and began to speak in different tongues,  
as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim.'  
(Acts 1:14; 2:1.4)"<sup>106</sup>*

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<sup>106</sup> ANNALES SDS, XV/01, pp. 12-13.







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## **UNITY AND PLURALITY: SOCIETAS CATHOLICA**

### **Fr. Francis of the Cross Jordan:**

*“A Catholic Society of clerics and workers in the Lord’s vineyard from among all nations.”<sup>107</sup>*

*Whereas 17 provinces might die individually,  
one Society will survive!*

### **Death and New Birth**

The Founder was apparently not happy when he was led to convene the first General Chapter in 1902. If I remember well, this was in part because he would have to be elected Superior General, whereas from the very origin of the Society he occupied this position by reason of being the Founder. For him, his position did not originate in election or in being the Superior General. His position in the Society was based on his founding vocation and not on his own energy, his personal talents, his aptness, his individual views or an election because of these qualities. Like Fr. Jordan, we too believe that the Holy Spirit conferred a gift to the universal Church in pouring out the Salvatorian charism into a human being, perhaps even not the most suited one, who picked up the call and turned the foundation of the Society into his personal vocation and mission.

From reading our history, I also seem to remember that the Founder was not so happy

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<sup>107</sup> SD I/124



**Fr. Piet  
CUIJPERS  
SDS**

Vicar General  
and  
Mission Secretary  
of the  
Salvatorians

1999-2013

when the second General Chapter in 1908 proceeded in organizing the Society into provinces. While undoubtedly the need of the hour was for the delegation of many a detail to the local level, I ask myself whether Fr. Jordan was hitting upon a real concern in his insisting the Society should be one, one community and one force, and not be 'divided' into units.

In the course of our history, the period after the Second Vatican Council was again a pivotal moment. With the renewal of our Constitution and its definition of 'subsidiarity', the balance in leadership shifted from the general to the "local" level of the individual provinces. Structural changes implemented the shift - like e.g. more Provincials being elected by the members rather than being appointed by the Superior General with his Council; also a reclassification of administrative units was performed. At that time, we only had rather small groups of European missionaries in Congo and Tanzania, and one small mission in Asia, namely Taiwan. All the established provinces in Europe, South and North America were still thriving. Right after the move to a quite radical decentralization, the vocation crisis in the Western Church hit with its full impact; beginning in the 1980's the Society lived through a process of diminishment and closing of single houses in many units. During the 1990's that process showed more and more to lead not only to the eventual closing of individual units, but also to a loss of perspective of the whole and one Society. Fewer members were able to directly communicate with their confreres in other languages and cultures, notwithstanding the omnipresence of modern means of communication. In every international meeting, we needed more translators in order to be able to understand each other. At the same time, we saw the emergence of new and young communities and units of the Society in countries previously unheard of in our history.

### **A Society with Two Speeds**

As General Mission Secretary and Generalate liaison for German speaking units, I became acutely aware of these problems and started reflecting on the underlying currents. With one leg of my work I was in-

volved with large groups of young members and students, setting up new apostolates, constructing new formation houses, receiving first and final vows of young Salvatorians, setting up our Salvatorian presence with new communities in new countries. But with the other leg of my work I had to deal with aging units, the closing of houses and all the financial and human problems connected with this, especially the loss of perspective and hope for the future of the Society and its presence in a given country.

The situation in the Society during the last two decades interestingly had some implications for the Generalate and its position. The new and young units clearly required more direct guidance from the Generalate than foreseen in our present rules and in the habits of administration on the international level during the past 40 years. Likewise, the shrinking older units requested, sometimes quite explicitly, more guidance and support from the Generalate than was the case during the previous 40 years. I am convinced that these developments in the Society on the international level are leading us to a different role and scope of activity for the Generalate. We notice that sometimes it is difficult for new Generalate members to capture and understand what is going on, especially if they do or do not know the realities in other areas of the Society. We also notice the difficulties for units that have been accustomed to doing things their way, the way they have been done for years. We need the acceptance of dying away with its accompanying pain. But we also need the acceptance of birth pains and childhood diseases.

We are dealing with the weaknesses of our formation programs, especially the Salvatorian content in those programs. We notice problems with finances and administration. On the one hand, they shrink as some units shrink. On the other hand, we see the growing need for finances, funding and fundraising, as some of the units are growing and expanding.

## **A Provincialized Society vs. ONE Society**

Who will deal with such currents, if not the Generalate? Of course, we are not going to return to a situation in which every single detail is decided by the Superior General. Likewise, we should not remain wedded to a situation in which the balance tilts toward the other extreme. Could it be true, what is whispered among generalates in Rome, that congregations that did not so radically decentralize have better withstood the destructive currents of individualism, the vocation crisis, the consumerist Western mentality and the trends toward secularization? Is there truth in the remark of a Provincial Superior during one of our international meetings, who mentioned that we are not only dealing with the individualism of members, but also with the individualism of units? Could it be that the Founder was touching upon a deep spiritual truth when he insisted the Society is and has to be *o n e* and undivided?

## **Spiritual Unity**

Seeing our recent history I am more and more convinced that the way in which we organize our visible structures has an influence on the invisible life of the Society. Put in other words: if we fragmentize authority, leadership, personnel, finances, we might as a consequence be in danger in the long run of fragmentizing our charism, unity, spiritual closeness to one another, and our heritage from Fr. Jordan. There was a time we lived and acted as one Society, visibly experienced in the leadership of the Founder, and then came a time when we lived and acted as a Society in about seventeen different provinces, spread around the globe, each with its different characteristics, with its own formation content and structures, with its own financial resources rarely shared with other units, with its own personnel politics, with its own home grown problems, with its own way of presenting itself to the surrounding world and Church.

Perhaps the truth for the future is to be found somewhere in the middle. In order to foster our spiritual unity, we might need more tangible unity on the visible level. We need more flexible and open Salvatorians,

knowledgeable of the realities in other parts of the Society, able to speak at least one other language beside their own mother tongue, able to live together in one community with confreres from other cultures. We need a Generalate that has more say on our common mission and on formation, on the good and best use of human resources, on the flow of our finances, on overall planning of our apostolic efforts and presence on each continent. At the same time, we need to respect the local realities as far as needed. In short, we need to apply a fuller understanding of the concept of 'subsidiarity', which means that policies should be pursued at the level or mix most effective for the common good. According to the principle of subsidiarity, decisions should be made at the lowest level possible and the highest level necessary. I believe the gist of things is in the words ***mix*** and ***and***, as well as in the balance of decision-making power. In the end, all of this must serve the unity and oneness of the *Society of the Divine Savior* for the better performance of its apostolic task in the future: that all may know the Savior!



**Fr. Francis Mary of the Cross Jordan:**

*“As long as there is one person on earth who does not know God and does not love Him above all things, you dare not allow yourself a moment's rest.”*<sup>108</sup>

When after the XVI General Chapter in 1999 I was appointed by the Superior General the General Mission Secretary of the Society, I was quite unprepared for this task. Although I had been serving as provincial secretary for several terms of office, I had never been outside Europe, and so had no personal or hands-on experience concerning missionary work. Moreover, I quite quickly ended up becoming part of developments I was unfamiliar with at that time. Getting a feel for those developments and dynamics of the young units and missions in our Society was the first task ahead, which was accomplished through a first round of extensive visits to all our communities at that moment in Africa and Asia.

The tasks that arose from those visits and the ongoing developments took lots of time and energy. Many new communities and houses were established throughout India and in the Philippines. A fresh start was made in remodeling the initial formation structures in both places. Moreover, the Generalate got involved in the establishment of many new formation houses, new missions, new and young foundations across the globe. This development had already been going on since around 1987, when the Colombian Province initiated a new foundation in neighboring Ecuador. Since the last new foundation in Australia in 1961, no less than 26 years had elapsed – one generation. In the next 26 years, up through 2012, the Society spread to no less than 18 new countries and missions on every continent. This meant a doubling of its geographic extension and it should be considered nothing less than a

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<sup>108</sup> SD II/1

*revolution*. The reasons for the years of inactivity, not to say paralysis, in the preceding generation remain to be studied.

## **Solidarity**

During two terms of office, all the members of those Generalates can testify to the great solidarity that became obvious throughout the Society. Many units were no longer in a position to initiate a new foundation; in some units, the majority of members were of retirement age. But when called upon, everybody throughout the Society contributed to the growth and expansion of our charism. It is as if the realization had dawned that, though it is all good and fine to be concerned with the internal renewal of the Society, the revision of its rules and the rediscovery of its founding charism, this would be of no avail if there were no Salvatorians left to live this charism and to be involved in the mission of salvation within the universal Church. The solidarity displayed proved not only to be financial.

It must be underlined that the reality of the 30 years before the year 2000 was that the patrimony of the Society was under the power of the Provincial Superiors and their Councils. The Generalate itself had no income other than the percentage of the annual unit contributions. The mission procuras, founded to help finance our mission efforts as well as pastoral and social projects in developing and poor countries, were and are under the authority of the Provincial Superiors. But seeing the big developments in the area of expansion and understanding the need to accelerate and create new ways, the Society in successive General Chapters and Synods supported the proposals of the Generalate. New income was created in order to help finance our expansion and formation needs. Units as well as individual members greatly contributed, e.g. to the international formation fund. Several units donated large portions of the proceeds from the sale of property to the Generalate for mission purposes, enabling the construction of more than 10 formation houses throughout Africa, Asia and Latin America.

But there was also personnel support. Several units answered the call for the 'grandfather project' in the Philippines. Several confreres, who

were already over seventy years of age, engaged in helping guide the big groups of young candidates and scholastics with their wisdom, experience and lived Salvatorian religious life. It represents one way of passing on our charism to the next generation and it is a way to prevent older and shrinking units to sink away into resignation or even pessimism about the Society's future.

Our Founder always called upon the sound and healthy spirit of religious life and the core values and attitudes of our Salvatorian charism. I was blessed to be able to see this happen in so many places, although we know much still needs to be accomplished. And finally, there was always great moral support for what the Generalate, together with units and missionaries, was trying to do. This last element I consider to be of the utmost importance, because it shows that we see ourselves as one community. The international Society is one community, present in so many different nations, cultures, languages and circumstances, but showing a fundamental undercurrent of unity.

### **Ongoing Need for Missionary Drive**

Looking at the wave of first foundations by Fr. Jordan together with the past 25 years of new expansion of the Society, I am convinced this dynamic of spreading our charism into new areas needs to continue. The first drive is and must be found in our personal spiritual life. The first concern of any Salvatorian should be to proclaim the Savior. Each one of us should be convinced that we cannot rest, we cannot shy away from this task, daunting though it may be, because so much still needs to be done in the apostolic field of proclaiming salvation.

In an ongoing effort, we need to continuously grow in our dedication to the Society, to its apostolates, to all our confreres in our own local communities as well as in units far away. At least in principle, we must be flexible in answering the call of the need of the hour, must be ready to be open for new tasks, even engaging in a new culture and working and living in another language other than one's mother tongue. We must remain apostolic, just as Fr. Jordan wanted his foundation to be an *Apostolic Teaching Society*. Therefore, we cannot be anything else

but missionary in our personal and communal spirituality. We must work in any given apostolate, in whichever area of the Church or the world, with a missionary spirit, enabling people to get to know the one true God, and He whom God has sent, Jesus Christ, as the Savior of all.

### **Reference to our First Mission**

To me, the enormous apostolic zeal and dedication to the Society of the first missionaries in Assam is the shining and first witness of the actual putting into practice of our charism. Many members of the first generation and our first missionaries, Fr. Otto Hopfenmüller in the first place, seem to have captured the spirit of the Founder, as expressed in the quote at the beginning of this article. If any Salvatorian is imbued with the holy and zealous unrest of Fr. Jordan for the spreading of the knowledge of God's saving goodness and kindness in the Savior, he or she cannot but burn one's energy and life for the apostolate. Then that Salvatorian will be apostolic, missionary, open and flexible, working by all ways and means, engaging into new initiatives, in new foundations and missions, in solidarity with all his brothers and sisters in the Society, the Congregation and the International Community of the Divine Savior, so that all may know, love and serve Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world.





Light of VOID / original: Licht des Nichts



## **DYNAMIC FAITHFULNESS TO THE CHARISM**

### **1. The Current Context of our Life**

How could we describe the time we are living? It is the time in which everything that was done before reaches fulfilment, and everything lying in front of us is promising. By faith, we know that this is also the time of the Savior, who became man in order to be with us.

As part of today's society, we, the *Salvatorian Family*, face progress and regression, abundance and scarcity. We are surrounded by wealth and by people who suffer from hunger. We are trying to extend life and to destroy it in many ways. We move forward in the areas of freedom and human dignity, and many people are victims of the modern slavery caused by unjust systems, such as the traffic of human beings.

We are in a time of great hope and great despair. We speak of love and practice indifference. We say we are administrators of our planet, and yet behave as owners in a world threatened by global climate change because we keep ignoring the laws of nature.

We know many wonderful families, and yet the values of long-term commitment and loyalty in basic human relationships are under question. We are in an era of continuous human mobility, which brings about a mixture of cultures and religions, but then again they are afraid of one another, and mutual understanding is actually very superficial.



**Sr. Therezinha  
Joana  
RASERA  
SDS**

General Superior  
of the  
Salvatorian  
Sisters

2002-2013



The awareness of this complex, unjust and difficult reality makes us realize that many people are crying out to God, who is always on the side of the oppressed, of the people who feel lost or discarded, who are treated with neglect and contempt.

Regarding this modern-day slavery and the problem of climate change, *“all of our cultural traditions affirm the inherent dignity of every individual linked to the common good of all humanity. They affirm the beauty, wonder, and inherent goodness of the natural world, and appreciate that it is a precious gift entrusted to our common care, making it our moral duty to respect rather than ravage the garden that is our ‘common home.’”*<sup>109</sup>

God heeded the cry of his people and touched our hearts to elicit our solidarity and make us bear their pain. We know that solidarity stems from inner listening, and that its purpose is to discover ourselves in God, living in his presence as part of his project, because the last phase of solidarity is prayer, which rather than a specific act is actually our normal way of living. The *Salvatorian Family* members want to heed the cry of God at this time in history.

## **2. Jordan’s Charismatic Experience**

Jordan was born in 1848 during the German industrial revolution. In the context of the mass of workers – men, women and children – exploited by the bourgeoisie of the time in their thirst for production, Jordan’s experience was twofold: on the one hand, the human reality of poverty and his family’s struggle for survival; on the other, the experience of feeling called by God to serve within that very situation. This dual experience – of God and reality – made him understand the need and the opportunity to carry out a special mission in the Church and, inspired by a concrete text of the Gospel, he sensed the charisma that he then left as a legacy to the *Salvatorian Family*.

In order to understand our charisma, we must go back to Father Jordan’s founding mystical experience: *“Eternal life is to know you, the*

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<sup>109</sup> Modern Slavery and Climate Change: The Commitment of the Cities. Joint declaration signed by 70 mayors of the world and Pope Francis on July 22, 2015, in the Vatican.

*only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.”*<sup>110</sup> This knowledge – which involves immersing ourselves in the experience of God’s action in us, in the salvation He performs in our lives – is deeply transformative. When we live this experience, our actions convey the charism. Each Salvatorian who experiences salvation in her or his own personal life, will elicit in others the thirst to know the true God and Jesus Christ his Son. Therefore, we face the challenge of rediscovering the light, the true splendor of the charism’s original experience.

### **3. Jesus Encounters the Samaritan Woman**

In his encounter with the Samaritan woman, Jesus the Savior helps us rediscover the splendor of our charism’s original experience.<sup>111</sup> Spring water is a symbol of the life that God gives us. Jesus overcomes the prejudices of race and social discrimination by speaking to a Samaritan woman. Like any person, she is thirsty for life. We all want to quench our thirst, but find only stagnant waters. Jesus, on the contrary, brings us living water, and makes it spring up in each of us.

For us, Salvatorians, the Samaritan woman symbolizes the experience of intimacy with Jesus the Savior. He reveals himself, makes himself known. We need to live an intimacy of love with him as the center and reason of our life in order to know the only true God. The experience of our Salvatorian charism calls us to discover this thirst for God in our hearts and in the hearts of those we encounter in our mission. We know this was the deep yearning that Jordan sensed: the thirst for eternity, for the knowledge of God.

Those who experience Jesus, like the Samaritan woman, set off to proclaim him and bring about the participation of others. What are the Salvatorian paths to reach the *knowledge of God*, which we could share with those who are looking for sources of spirituality today? The will of the Father is to gather humankind as a whole around Jesus, and it is up to us to carry on with the mission he started.

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<sup>110</sup> Jn 17: 3

<sup>111</sup> Jn 4:5-26

The Samaritans came out to meet Jesus and asked him to stay with them.<sup>112</sup> In the same way, we must be agents and promoters of dialogue. We need to learn a lot about the spiritual path of other religions, to be brave in the ecumenical, interreligious and intercultural dialogue, because salvation is God's gift to all people who open up their hearts and welcome it. *"Now we believe no longer because of what you told us; we have heard him ourselves and we know that he is indeed the Savior of the world."*<sup>113</sup>

In this scene, Jesus reveals his identity in a progressive way: he is initially only a thirsty Jew; then he is a prophet; he then proclaims his identity as Messiah, and shortly after the Samaritans recognize him as the *"Savior of the world."*

#### **4. The Challenge of Rethinking the Salvatorian Charism**

A charism is alive as far as – being faithful to its roots and also to newness – it can regenerate itself and open up to a *dynamic vision of history*. This vision puts cultures in touch, so that they can recognize, respect and enrich each other, without any intention to dominate. Such cultural dynamism becomes a mediation for mutual growth, in the acceptance of humanization as an evolutionary process, which includes the search for truth. In this way, our spiritual life is enriched by the good we discover in others, and also offers to them whatever could make them move forward in their humanization process, guided by the belief that everyone can achieve greater justice, deeper love, and a higher truth.

Making an act of faith in God who is present in all cultures means recognizing that his salvation comes to people through many paths. This makes us rethink the concept of salvation through Jesus Christ. He became present in the world to ratify, on God's behalf, that the processes grounded in justice are the path that pleases God, and the mediation that really humanizes us. The incarnate Jesus is not the beginning of

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<sup>112</sup> Jn 4:40

<sup>113</sup> Jn 4:42

history, love, justice and ethics, but he is the key to understanding history in all its manifestations of love, truth and justice.

For this reason, we can say that interculturality simply means following the dynamic vision of history that leads cultures to interact, to recognize and enrich each other, with no intention whatsoever to conquer or dominate. As we said before, it is a matter of making this cultural dynamism become a mediation for mutual growth, in the understanding that humanization is an evolutionary process. Interculturality is an appeal that summons us, and it involves the challenge of respecting, accepting and recognizing the values and dignity of each culture, so that the precious historical process we construct with the concrete stories of people does not get lost.

In order to be builders and witnesses of our charism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we urgently need to follow the path of intercultural dialogue. It is not easy to move from our *I* to a culturally different *You*, and even less so, to the *Us* of interculturality. Our list of friends and relationships is already full. However, we face the challenge of expanding the tent of our relationships in order to welcome the people from the peripheries – who perhaps will bring changes to our way of life – even if that makes us feel insecure. This will allow us to shorten the distance between what we are and what we say we are: *“All peoples, races, nations and tongues glorify the Lord our God.”*<sup>114</sup>

Our Salvatorian life will be relevant today if it embraces the cultures of the people and groups we meet every day in our mission. The paths of prophecy imply the construction of bridges and the opening of new roads in different directions in order to create a civilization based on dialogue and inclusion.

In the life of our communities today, intercultural dialogue represents the passing of the Spirit, who turns interculturality into the Salvatorian way of being, a lifestyle and a place allowing people to encounter the Savior. But we cannot welcome interculturality without a personal, institutional, and missionary conversion. The adventure of having cultures relate to each other in this way requires both an inward and an

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<sup>114</sup> SD II/02

outward journey. As a result, we face the collapse of our securities and certainties, of what is known and familiar. It is a matter of cultivating a Salvatorian spirituality imbued with prophetic courage and wisdom, with the conviction that the best of Salvatorian life is yet to come. Attention to diversity shall bring about a new spirituality and an authentic communion. Interculturality in our communities today makes the Gospel more alive and Salvatorian life more credible.

## **5. Significant Experiences:**

### **a) Weaving a Salvatorian life towards the future.**

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We, the Sisters of the General Coordination – in the five-year term of 2002-2006, and then reelected for the following six-year term of 2007-2012, after getting to know the reality of the Congregation in its different Units, and with the intention of responding to the current emergencies, concerned about the crisis of our world and, consequently, of the Church and consecrated life – developed and implemented a process called '*Weaving a Salvatorian life towards the future*'. It seemed to us that we needed to rethink our life in the midst of this crisis in order to be more prophetic in our world, and to read again our charism so that we could give real answers in the present moment of history. This process was developed in stages and undertaken by all the Sisters and young women in formation within the Congregation.

To our surprise, we realized that a process without hierarchies emerged, in which everything worked like in a circle, with each member participating in the weaving only when she saw in her mind and heart what was the concrete movement she had to do to weave in her thread. That implied respecting people's timing, accepting to wait, greeting the originality of each Sister, of every culture, and all situations in the Congregation, and also admitting that some members or groups would not be able to join the process.

During this process, we experienced that when we questioned ourselves about our identity and mission, a sort of vacuum emerged, and we felt the need for a new inner elaboration of our Salvatorian way of

being, and a new expression for it. The questioning became existential, rather than sociological or religious.

During the Congregational Council of 2010 – which was attended by all the Unit leaders – each Unit shared its experience and the first steps it had taken locally. This served as a screening process before moving to the next phase. In the General Chapter of 2012 – inspired by the motto of ‘Salvatorian Women, Mystics and Prophets in our Suffering World’ – as sisters we shared the experiences we had lived in our Units. After this communication process, we committed to living in solidarity with our suffering world so that all people may have life in fullness.

Both the future of our charism and our capacity to live in solidarity with our suffering world depend on our conviction, audacity and prophetic commitment, as Jesus the Savior teaches us in the Gospel. For this reason, it seemed urgent to undertake some specific action lines:

- deepen and redefine our Salvatorian apostolic identity;
- offer a holistic and contextualized formation in all stages of life;
- collaborate with others in the culture of solidarity;
- create congregational structures that are significant regarding our mission;
- and carry on with the financial sustainability plan within the culture of solidarity.

We are convinced that prayer, community reflection and missionary action at all levels lead to a personal transformation that allows us to continue carrying on Father Jordan’s vision in a faithful way.

#### b) Sharing with the *Salvatorian Family*.

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Another important experience was the communion between the three General Teams of the *Salvatorian Family*. In the study, prayer and conviviality meetings there was always a welcoming atmosphere, a feeling of joy when meeting each other, a brothers-and-sisters relationship, sharing, mutual support, the deepening of our Salvatorian identity, the interest for the Founder’s beatification, and for the Salvatorian mission worldwide.

I thank God, our Venerable Founder, Father Francis Jordan, and Blessed Mary of the Apostles for the experience in the General Team, for the relationship with each Sister and young woman in formation, and for the interaction with the *Salvatorian Family*. The difficult task of knowing, listening, dialoguing, learning, loving, facing personal challenges, and questioning our Sisters in different cultures as they lived the Salvatorian charism in their following of Christ (who entrusted us the mission of proclaiming Him by all the means and forms that God's love may inspire in us, leading us in whatever place we carry out this mission in the world) made me live my own discipleship experience more deeply, passionately, full-heartedly, and with deep gratitude to God and to the *Salvatorian Family*.

For this reason, my experience in leading the Congregation was closely linked to the concrete experience of the difficult changes we presently live in the globalized world, which is intensely connected by communication networks, but does not yet live the hospitality and intercultural attitude the signs of the times are requiring. In this sense, the Salvatorian charism – which precisely bears witness to salvation as a gift from God through Jesus for all nations – seems very relevant to me, although it urgently needs reinterpretation and renewal on the part of all the *Salvatorian Family* members, especially through our witness when it comes to living out our vocation and mission.<sup>115</sup>

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go into Galilee / original: geht nach Galiläa



## ABOUT THE LAITY

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### Father Jordan and the Laity

The Founder was many years ahead of his time, especially regarding the role of the laity in the apostolic action of the Church. For this very reason, neither Church leaders nor common people were able to understand him. Therefore, his concept of 'adherence to the charism' must be explained. Being 'charitably lay' and 'operatively lay' are not the same thing. Nowadays we still focus more on the first attitude than on the second.

The Founder's idea was much closer to the ecclesial overturning brought about by the II Vatican Council. The lay person is not a mere supplier of goods or an economic supporter but a bearer of the Salvation message to the world. This clarifies even better the identity of the Salvatorian lay person. He or she must not be only an associate. Such role places the laity in a subordinate position that is not suited to their vocation, which stems from baptismal priesthood; it relegates them to a sort of *servitude* that is not consistent with the *diakonia* of someone who is concerned about the Salvation of a *brother* or a *sister*, as Father Jordan prophesied: If the Kingdom of God is now at hand, how can it be possible that only some people are able to bring the last chance of salvation to every part of the world?

One can objectively draw many conclusions from the aforementioned statement, including



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the following: Apostolic forces brought into play will never be enough, so hierarchizing would amount to dividing. A united front is the only solution: unity in diversity.

### **A Message that is simple and understandable to all**

The amazing clarity of Father Jordan's message is another point worth mentioning. Lay Salvatorians proved to have quickly and deeply understood what it meant to be Salvatorians in their vocation to marriage, workplaces, and within the parish Christian communities.

It soon became very clear that Father Jordan did nothing but bring the Gospel as the only content – not unlike other Christians, but standing apart because of his zeal, enthusiasm and concern for people's salvation. The uniqueness of his charism had to do with the *how* rather than the *what*.

Coming across the apostolate's universality, being always in mission 24/7, amounts to giving an immediate sense to the personal experience of being Christian. The fact of understanding the new meaning of being missionaries – in contrast with what we believe is an outdated position that still predominates in people's collective imagery – has given a strong impetus to the growth of committed laity.

### **Laity and the Saints**

The relationship between saints and the people of God has always had a privileged place in Catholic devotion. A saint's popularity is often passed down orally, and usually needs to resonate for some decades before the Church officially declares his or her holiness so that lay people can acknowledge it.

Lay people, unlike the religious, need signs in order to assert someone's holiness. Otherwise, the holy person is meaningless for them. 'Miracles' are the key sign. Lay people need to see miracles, or at least they need to know miracles have taken place, no matter when, as long as they have actually happened.

On the other hand, asking whether this canonical criterion in order to officially declare someone's holiness is still valid is a legitimate question.

This position of the faithful – believing that a person's sanctity does not depend on an official canonization but on his or her holy life – is certainly the most adult and mature attitude, besides being distinctly Christ-centered, such as the life of a saint.

Perhaps the saints of today are holy not only because of the special gifts the Lord has entrusted to them, but mainly because of their daily life, as well as the divine inspirations translated into concrete actions.

### **Is it Necessary to Canonize Father Jordan?**

The Founders of religious orders, congregations and institutes have a special place among the saints. These institutions pass down the concrete signs of their holiness. Those who adhere to their charisms through religious vocation sometimes express their veneration by organizing complementary Third Orders and lay associations.

Devotion to these saints, which consolidates mainly through the institutions they found, is already a tangible and accredited sign of their holiness. For many of them, the work they accomplish is the only sign of the Lord's predilection.

This is also Father Jordan's case. The fact that the Founder has not been canonized yet was never a problem for the Italian lay Salvatorians, which is truly remarkable and amazing, although we are not many.

However, it is not easy to say why he should be canonized. To give a comprehensive explanation, we should first pinpoint the invalid reasons that could move us to seek this official recognition.

Father Jordan's canonization will become necessary when it will be supported by the entire Society's impulse towards holiness. What sense would it make to canonize him if we, his spiritual sons and daughters, are not holy?

It will be us who will make Father Jordan a saint even before his miracles do! This will happen if we are able to sanctify his project through

an increasingly closer adherence to the charism, without delay or compromise. That will be the real miracle!

Actually, ecclesial renewal that comes through the implementation of Vatican II strongly pushes us towards a *congregational kenosis*. With the birth of the Lay Salvatorians, and with the completion of Father Jordan's work, the Society must die to itself in order to be reborn to evangelical poverty, obedience to the Church, and an apostolic zeal that is ready for everything, including death.

This is what lay people have realized. That is why they are so enthusiastic, and feel the life of the Church, touching it with their own hands, as leading characters of this story.

So is it necessary to canonize Father Jordan? Yes, but because he is actually already a saint, not in order to embellish and bring prestige to his Congregation, nor as a condition for our own holiness<sup>116</sup>.

### **Jordan anticipates Vatican II and prophesies its Future**

The birth of the lay movement in the Church indicates the relevance of the Salvatorian charism as a seed of the Second Vatican Council, a fact that is now before everyone's eyes. He wanted an active, adult and mature kind of laity within the Church.

*"From disciples to apostles"* is what we say to our laity. *"From spectators to active participants"*, says Vatican II.<sup>117</sup> Both statements are true and relevant today, and they permeate modern pastoral theology.

But Father Jordan invites us to take the last step leading to fulfillment. Could Jesus save his people without the cross? Absolutely not! He could have only performed an act of 'divine power' that would have not required any human participation, and would have never been a source of conversion. Father Jordan realized that *redemption* and *sal-*

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<sup>116</sup> Cf. JORDAN, Francis: "Become holy! Tell yourself over and over, 'I must become holy! If I do not strive for holiness I am in danger of falling to the ground. It is my duty to strive increasingly for holiness.' What use are other ideas and undertakings if we do not strive for holiness?" In: Chapter talk of 1894-04-20. In: DSS XXIII, p. 22.

<sup>117</sup> For example: VATICANUM II. – Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy SACROSANCTUM CONCILIIUM promulgated by His Holiness Pope Paul VI on December 4, 1963, No. 48.

vation were possible for Christ, as they are for us, because they came through the cross. This is the final step: *from apostles to martyrs*.

Every page of the *Spiritual Diary* radiates Father Jordan's love of the cross. Today more than ever, we cannot be instruments of salvation if we are not willing to lose everything. This is what we, Lay Salvatorians, have realized, and this is what warms up our hearts. There are many fears, but the awareness that by relaxing our Christianity in an armchair we redeem no one is stronger than ever.

*"From apostles to martyrs"*: How many objections can arise regarding this extreme statement? Unimaginable, I know it well! It is a crazy step, even more so if we also invite others to take it.

And yet, when Lay Salvatorians face this prospect, they develop more stamina instead of feeling intimidated. Obviously, it will not be easy to particularize this final step in everyone's life but people's readiness to plunge into the *pedagogy of the cross* is evident every day.

## **Conclusion**

How can we update nowadays this rather futuristic proposal of our Founder's charism in the life of priests, religious brothers and sisters, and lay people? Albeit being so deep, it is also easy!

Senior members, shake the dust from your religious habits, collect your belongings as if the Rule was entrusted to you today, and set off for the mission with renewed energy! Like old soldiers that were relegated to the military reserve for too long, dust off your uniforms and cheerfully return to the ranks! Armed with the gospel and the rosary, bearing a renewed apostolic zeal at the risk of being considered insane, leave everything behind so as to proclaim your love for Jesus to the world, and your passion for the people you must save!

Young members, break free from the world's self-indulgence and the conditioning of its secularist and nihilistic messages, and you too come to active duty with joy, trusting your superiors, ready to express all



your intelligence, risking through obedience to face the “*folly of the cross!*”<sup>118</sup>

This is actually what the younger generations want, something which is worth giving up everything! Unlock all doors, open the hospitals, go out to the streets shouting that Jesus is the Savior, fight against social injustices that make the weak perish, and bind up the wounds of the marginalized as you dirty your own clothes!

In this *kenotic* movement, renewal is not just a mere intellectual exercise but becomes day-to-day life. Our option for the poor will not be just a statement of principle, but concrete poverty lived with them and for them.

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<sup>118</sup> Cf. 1Cor 1:18-31

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## FATHER JORDAN'S MARIAN DEVOTION

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by Mr. Marcus Ermes Luparia ICDS

### Introduction

Father Jordan deeply loved Mary. This is a great truth that always accompanied him, and he gave witness to it in every moment of his life.

He used to put every concern, project and situation immediately into the Blessed Virgin's hands so that she would take it as her own. This indicates how great his trust was in the Mother of God.

The members of the *Salvatorian Family* should welcome this inheritance and make it their own. Believing in Christ without being grateful to the woman who bore him in her womb, looked after him as a child, and accompanied him to the cross would be an incomplete faith.

But let us hear his own words:

*"Soon we begin the month of May. Therefore, I would like to remind you again of our duty to venerate God's Mother in a special way."*<sup>119</sup>

He adds:

*"The month of May approaches. The whole Catholic world directs its thoughts toward this wonderful month. The zealous Catholic hastens to honor and venerate God's dear mother."*<sup>120</sup>

### Venerating Mary: A Commitment for Every Christian

Nowadays, many Christians believe that venerating Our Lady is an old-fashioned devotion for elderly or uneducated people, which we should overcome as soon as possible. By contrast, Fr. Jordan advises us to strengthen the devotion to Our Lady, both through private and community prayer.

However, according to the Founder, prayer without conversion is like an empty vessel. If it is not accompanied by an examination of life, it is like barren soil.

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<sup>119</sup> JORDAN: Chapter talk of 1899-04-28. In: DSS XXIII, p. 304.

<sup>120</sup> JORDAN: Chapter talk of 1901-04-26. In: DSS XXIII, p. 422.

*“Everyone should also see what faults he still has and completely lay the ax to the root in order to eradicate any existing faults!”*<sup>121</sup>

Regarding Marian virtues, I would like to strongly recall the one that was dearest to him, in which Mary excels, that is, purity of heart.

*“Especially in this holy month dedicated to the Blessed Mother, everyone should strive for purity of heart!”*<sup>122</sup>

We also seek all the other Marian virtues that should characterize the personality of any Christian. The veneration of Our Lady is a privileged shortcut towards the way of perfection.

### **The Rosary, a Special Prayer**

Father Jordan wondered what was the best way to disseminate a special devotion to the Mother of God inside and outside the Congregation. His answer was sharp and unambiguous, and was even included in the Society’s Rule:

*“Today let me stress this to you ...: It is ... praying the rosary.”*<sup>123</sup>

He even assesses the spiritual maturity of his sons and daughters by looking at their practice of the rosary. According to Fr. Jordan, only those who are truly spiritually mature can enjoy the intimate relationship with the Virgin Mary that the rosary establishes. All the elements of prayer meet in the rosary, that is, praise, petition and thanksgiving.

*“Oh, say it regularly then. I attach so much importance to this. And I would like to add that by this [praying the rosary or not] one can tell whether you are on the way up or down.”*<sup>124</sup>

### **Mary in the *Spiritual Diary***

To the texts from Chapter Talks of the Founder we have already quoted, we must add the innumerable invocations from the *Spiritual Diary*.

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<sup>121</sup> JORDAN: Chapter talk of 1899-04-28. In: DSS XXIII, p. 304.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> JORDAN: Chapter talk of 1899-02-10. In: DSS XXIII, p. 275. || See also: Constitutions SDS, Art. 506.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

The Founder's invocations often reveal the painful psychological and spiritual moments he was living, making them alive and present for us. On the other hand, it had to be so, given his longing for the salvation of people. He deeply believed in the biblical promise of the 'woman who will crush the head of the snake'.<sup>125</sup> According to him, saving people meant fighting against Satan and his seductions, taking away from his grasp every human being in danger.

*"Imitating the holy Virgin Mary, I must test well the spirit that lures me towards anything potentially harmful, fearing it could be the spirit of Satan disguised as an angel of light to deceive, lest so zealous for my neighbor's welfare I lose sight of my own."*<sup>126</sup>

The following are some of the invocations from the *Spiritual Diary*:

*"Oh powerful Virgin, raise up new apostles. Immaculate Virgin of Loreto, Mother, arise! You are my hope. Gather them together and send them into the whole world!"*

*"Oh Mother of God, you are my Mother! Help, defend, protect me! Oh my Mother!"*

*"Oh Mother, Queen of Heaven! Oh help me, help me, help me! See, I am here, I place all my requests at your feet."*

*"Oh Mary, Mother of God, my Mother, - my protectress - my hope! Oh Mother, I am yours!"*<sup>127</sup>

### **Devotion to Mary: A Story of Boundless Love**

Before concluding this collection of thoughts, let us look into the depth of our hearts to see how these resonate with us. We reflected on the Marian prayers of Fr. Jordan and were conscious of what he enjoyed or worried about in his life. In the face of this, the hope that something will enlighten the obscure angles of our lives has always been with us.

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<sup>125</sup> Cf. Gen 3:15

<sup>126</sup> SD I/31

<sup>127</sup> SD II/98 || II/119 || III/18 || II/110

The Savior is the light of the world <sup>128</sup> and Mary will intercede that this light will illuminate our path – that is for sure.

But we also know that our relationship with Mary is either a story of boundless love or it does not exist. Our connection with the Blessed Virgin is and must be without half-measures, such as any mature human relationship: we either love fully and definitely our beloved ones, or we simply do not love them.

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<sup>128</sup> Jn 8:12







universality / original: Universalität





## LIVING UNIVERSALITY

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### Fr. Francis of the Cross Jordan:

*“Prayer is where you should get fire and increase it on the earth, where you should fortify yourself, where you should rest when you are apostolically involved in the activities of the world.”* <sup>129</sup>

### Introduction

Quite often in my prayer I have conversations with Fr. Jordan. In my mind’s eye, I meet with him, we sit in the chapel of the Motherhouse and I ask him to enlighten me; to show me the way to lead as part of the elected team of the General Board for the *International Community of the Divine Savior*.

To begin this conversation I read a little something from the Chapter Talks, the *Spiritual Diary* or one of the many rich resources that we have inherited by being a part of the *Salvatorian Family*, to encourage my understanding of living universality as a Lay Salvatorian. I cherish these moments and find they ground me when in the midst of my day to day encounters with people.

### Animations of my Prayer:

- ◆ Animation by Jesus

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My favorite scriptures also make it into my daily prayer; the Word encourages me and

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<sup>129</sup> JORDAN: Chapter talk of 1900-01-05. In: DSS XXIII, p. 366.



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President of the  
International  
Community of the  
Divine Savior

2006 ...

keeps me focused on what is truly important. In John's Gospel, Chapter 17, Jesus prays for those who will believe in him through the words of the Apostles. I give thanks each day that I am one of those believers and that God has allowed us (Lay Salvatorians) to follow in the footsteps of the Apostles by being a follower of Fr. Jordan.

◆ Animation by the Founder

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*"Become imitators of the Holy Apostles ... Make yourselves worthy of your vocation! Prove yourselves worthy!"* <sup>130</sup> And he says, *"We should make the Savior of the world known to all people, to reveal Our Lord to everyone everywhere. We should unite with the Salvator Mundi (the Savior of the World) and spread Him and His honor everywhere."* <sup>131</sup>

◆ Animation by the Pope

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The Holy Father, Pope Francis, who like the Salvatorians has a heart of justice, has encouraged us, *"to pass on to our young people the values that can help them build a world that is more just, united, and fraternal."* <sup>132</sup>

All of these quotes have a common message; they guide us in living universality as Lay Salvatorians in 2016. I think of the Lay Salvatorians around the world and recognize each of us has a unique mission within the Salvatorians. It is not our mission, it is God's mission and it was given as charism through Fr. Jordan to the world. We have been called as Salvatorians and on judgment day each of us will be accountable to God for those talents.

### **Gifts of Grace with Universal Impact:**

As Lay Salvatorians some of us can sing, some can dance, some can preach, some can teach, some can listen well, some can minister through parish work, some can minister through patient care, some can travel and help the poor and build universal ties, some can tighten nuts and bolts, some can lead in administration and organization, some

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<sup>130</sup> JORDAN: Chapter Talk of 1897-10-01. In: DSS XXIII, p. 125.

<sup>131</sup> JORDAN: Chapter Talk of 1900-01-05. In: DSS XXIII, p. 365.

<sup>132</sup> FRANZISKUS: Homily on 2013-07-24 in Brasil. In: [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va) > Francis > Homilies > 2013

can provide much needed financial support for the handiwork of others. We have many, many talents and each is important in God's plan to complete the mission. First and foremost, our lives are the example that will attract others and our willingness to share the salvation we know through Jesus Christ is indeed an important role we play in God's plan. We do this everywhere, everyday within our private homes, within our workplaces, and to those we encounter on the streets of Europe, of the Americas, in many places in Africa, in part of Asia and in Australia. We assist where we are needed; we serve God's people we encounter. We are united in prayer around the world as well.

### **Encouragement of the Founder:**

As I sit in that chapel with Fr. Jordan in my mind's eye he reminds me not to be afraid, not to worry over things that I cannot control but, he encourages me to push forward, to persevere and most of all to trust in Divine Providence. God is indeed in control, he is greater than any evil we have to endure, greater than any challenge we will encounter. He encourages me to stay the course and to be concerned about the little things that seem trivial because those are things that really count in the end; reaching out in love to be a witness to the love and mercy of our Divine Savior.

We always end our conversation in the same way; I can feel the hands of our Founder upon my head in blessing whispering the words he used to describe a true Salvatorian; *"There is and can be no other true sign of a Salvatorian, of followers of our dear Savior than love, and observing the commands of the Savior: 'This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.'* *There are and will be no greater works and no greater or more celebrated name but the love of Christ toward all. Those who do this merit the name **Salvatorian.**"*<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> JORDAN: Chapter Talk of 1903-02-14. In: DSS XXIII, p. 473.





encounter / original: Begegnung



## THAT ALL MAY KNOW YOU (John 17:3)

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### **Father Francis Mary of the Cross Jordan**

*“Oh most loving Father, see,  
they sit in the shadow of death,  
ignorant of You.  
Lord, save them,  
since for You all things are possible.”<sup>134</sup>*

*“As long as there is one person on earth  
who does not know God  
and does not love Him above all things,  
you dare not allow yourself  
a moment’s rest.”<sup>135</sup>*

*“Oh Lord, how I wish  
I were intimately united with You  
and could lead all to You!”<sup>136</sup>*

### **Introduction**

Praying and pondering the words of John, *“Eternal life is this: to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent,”<sup>137</sup>* is for me at the heart of our Salvatorian Charism. The following short formula has gradually emerged, *to know God and Jesus is LIFE!*

These words, in the course of a long spiritual search and path of liberation, became blissful certainty. The personal experience of being in

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<sup>134</sup> SD I/12

<sup>135</sup> SD II/1

<sup>136</sup> SD II/75

<sup>137</sup> Jn 17:3



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since 2013



a vital relationship with God and Jesus – this, for me, is the source from which springs the desire to make this ‘source of life’ accessible to other people as well.

### **‘To Know God’ – is HAPPINESS**

Father Francis Mary of the Cross Jordan was very sensitive to the longings of people for God. Whenever he wanted to show how to provide answers for these longings in his lyrics, his language would then reveal the great passion that he had for his mission in the world. He uses words such as ‘flaming torch, burning fire, ardent zeal’, but he also uses ‘be on fire, pray, suffer, endure, sustain, work, cry to God, run, fly, spend yourself totally for Christ ...’

In three cited sections of his *Spiritual Diary*, aspects of his vision and passion for the salvation of humanity are visible. In these citations, the path – always to be in close communion with God – leads from *awareness* (SD I / 12) to *commitment* (SD II / 1) to a *mystically prophetic approach* (SD II / 75), which, in turn, makes it clear that the mission, to lead all to God, grows out of an intimate relationship with Him.

Father Jordan’s vision emerged from his own experience, namely, to ‘know’ God and Jesus (to be specific, *to know* in the biblical understanding of a very intimate relationship!), which changes lives and gives life in fullness. Already the young Jordan writes: “...you, my one and all...”<sup>138</sup> or: “Talk to God constantly...”<sup>139</sup> And out of this deep friendship with God grows his great desire that ALL people also reach this eternal, abundant life, as he writes in the Rule from 1882: “Therefore, by exercising this ecclesiastical teaching function in word and writing, it (the Apostolic Teaching Society) intends to achieve the end that all people might know more and more the one true God and Him whom He sent, Jesus Christ ...”<sup>140</sup> Father Jordan was very well aware that there is much to do to achieve this mission. So he needed a very bold vision.

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<sup>138</sup> SD I/8, loc.cit. p. 16.

<sup>139</sup> SD I/25, loc.cit. p. 33.

<sup>140</sup> Constitution and General Directory of the Society of the Divine Saviour, p. 1.

A witness from a secular, un-churched context can possibly show what was happening in our Founder. I am impressed by the French social worker Madeleine Delbrêl (1904 -1964), who converted from atheism to Catholicism and who founded a community that preaches the gospel in the midst of un-churched people on the margins of society. For Madeleine Delbrêl, it was her deepest motivation and most burning desire to communicate to others by deeds and words, especially to people who had lost faith in God or had never even come into contact with Him, something of the immense happiness that she herself had experienced, which is to know God. Atheism was for her, from her own personal experience, such ‘misery of mind and spirit’ that she could not remain in this situation and was always looking anew for ways to proclaim the living God to others.<sup>141</sup>

### **‘To Know God’ – is LIFE**

The Rule of Life of the *Salvatorian Sisters* begins with a declaration of the love of God for humanity: “*God so loved the world that He gave His only Son as Savior.*”<sup>142</sup> In John’s Gospel we continue to read: “... so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish but may have eternal life.”<sup>143</sup> And, according to John 17:3, ‘eternal life’ is to know God and Jesus. Thus, in these words, God tells us what His deep desire for every person in the world is: that we have LIFE, and He is willing to do everything so that we live in fullness and not just survive. The Evangelist John then points to the close connection that exists between *faith* in the Savior and *life*.

When the gospel speaks about LIFE, the gospel meaning is the “deep secret of life” that makes me a living person. Each one of us knows whether he or she is really alive or not. If life within me is blocked and disturbed, this blockage or disturbance often has its roots in the fear of not being valuable and not loved because of ME. Therefore, I feel threatened and react destructively toward myself and others. This fear,

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<sup>141</sup> DELBRÊL, Madeleine: Gott einen Ort sichern. Kevelaer, 2010, p. 17.

<sup>142</sup> Rule of Life of the Sisters of the Divine Savior, Chapter 1, Article 2.

<sup>143</sup> Jn 3:16

this condemnation, I think, is the root sin that is in me and lives in me. And into this human reality God sends His Son to get me out of the trap, to free me from the chains that do not allow me to live. To believe in Jesus the Savior means to believe not only in God, but also to believe in the human person who I am in the eyes of God the Creator. Jesus Himself felt during his baptism that He is the 'Beloved Son' in the eyes of the Father.

Have you ever wondered why you are becoming more alive every time you are touched by love? It is because love that is given confirms your identity and your dignity. People feel alive when they realize, "I am someone who is valuable as myself; I have value in myself." Only then can they begin to live their own authentic lives; only then can they be a source of life for others. Here we touch the deepest reason why anyone who knows Jesus and believes in Him shall not perish but have life. To pause before the exalted Christ on the cross and to dialogue with the Crucified can deepen this experience. It is the question of the Crucified One whom I accept within my heart and to whom I can only answer in my heart: "Do you know who you are to me ...?"

And when I feel in my depths that I am really lovable until death, then the wall of self-condemnation, which has thus far surrounded my heart, falls down and breaks into pieces and 'Jesus will embrace me from the cross.'<sup>144</sup>

### **'To Know God' – moves us to love**

The overwhelming words of the immense love of God for us humans at the beginning of our Rule of Life immediately connects us to the prophetic approach: "*Moved by the deepest need of people to find life and to know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He sent, Francis of the Cross and Mary of the Apostles founded our Congregation.*"<sup>145</sup> This mystical-prophetic aspect of the Salvatorian charism is fundamental to our apostolic mission today, namely, to answer the human desire for life and meaning.

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<sup>144</sup> AZZOPARDI SJ, Cecil: Homily in the Chiesa del Gesù. Rome, 2012.

<sup>145</sup> Rule of Life of the Sisters of the Divine Savior, Chapter 1, Article 2.

The mystical-prophetic lifestyle helps us to grow in our ability to relate and to love. It enables us to risk exposing ourselves to the world and to commit ourselves as Salvatorians *there*, wherever we are sent to people, with their specific needs and afflictions. This world, beloved and created by God, is also the world deformed and perverted by scandalous inequality, where millions of people are exposed to hunger and deadly violence and, therefore, hundreds of thousands are on the run.

### **‘To Know God’ – Makes us Ready to Help**

The prophet Jeremiah conveyed the words of Yahweh: *“He used to examine the cases of the poor and the needy, then all went well. Is this not what it means to know me?”*<sup>146</sup> When we recognize Jesus in the poor - those whom we meet in person or those far away about whom we are interested in a responsible manner - these poor will contribute in their way that *“all get to know HIM.”* Sister Martha Zechmeister, CJ, a theologian teaching in El Salvador, is convinced that no one can “know God” who is not receptive to His presence in the defenseless and the losers, and that the awareness of that presence inevitably leads to dedicated action. The mission of religious life is a movement away from the center to the margins, to those who live on the edge. The marginality, this very own place for religious life, is, to Jon Sobrino, SJ, *“desert, periphery and frontier.”*<sup>147</sup> The ‘natural’ environment of religious life is therefore:

- where nobody likes to go,
- where impotence, not power, is concentrated,
- where one enters a higher risk at the risk of one’s own life,
- *“where prophetic action is needed to tear the church away from the stupor that threatens to petrify the whole or to energetically denounce sin.”*<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Jer 22:16

<sup>147</sup> SOBRINO, Jon in ZECHMEISTER, Martha: Simply human – like Jesus: Considerations about the nature of Religious Life. Speech in Innsbruck, April 2016.

<sup>148</sup> Ibidem

## **‘To Know God’ – Makes us Prophetic**

To live as closely as possible with the people in the midst of this world is an important characteristic of our Salvatorian charism. We are sent to be prophets and to make known God’s desire for *salvation* and *life* for all people through solidarity and active commitment to justice and prayer. Would not Pedro Arrupe, former Superior General of the Jesuits, also indicate to us that the plight of the world is deeply lacerating our *Salvatorian* sensitivity so that it stirs the innermost fibers of our apostolic soul in its zeal and makes it tremble? Solidarity with the poor has been part of our mission since its foundation by Father Jordan.<sup>149</sup> The mission and purpose of our Congregation is therefore an evangelization, a proclamation of faith. We know that faith pushes love into motion and, in turn, faith is moved by love. Love brings about justice and goes even beyond it.

During my visits to our sisters in Africa, Asia, America and Europe, I was able to meet many people whose life reality speaks out of their misery and search for life and salvation:

- Sister Lawrence, one of our Congolese *Salvatorian Sisters* who collaborates in a large orphanage of the Salesians in Goma, North Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo, told of the children entrusted to them. The majority have lost their parents because of armed conflicts and violence. Many were street children or babies who could not be cared for by their child mothers and who, with their mothers, were victims of rape. Others have been recruited by rebels and child soldiers but managed to escape and reach the Sisters in their search for protection. In the center, where every day approximately 3,000 children and adolescents get at least some little food or medical care, 400 of these children have found a permanent home. The 98 infants aged 3 weeks to 3 years who are entrusted to the sisters subconsciously hope for life and a dignified future.

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<sup>149</sup> SD I/105 + 140

- A day with the Filipino sisters in the slums of the mega-city Manila gives an insight into the situation of thousands of women, men and countless children who move to the city in search of decent living conditions and casual labor to nourish their families. Ten-year-old Anne talks about her experiences of helping a classmate abused by her father to get a right to dignity in her family. She acts in her function as an advocate committed to help other children in the context of *Salvatorian Pastoral Care for Children (SPCC)*, a program for setting up child-friendly parishes. Countless women and children have been made aware of their human rights through a network of trained volunteer helpers. In this way, the self-esteem of the victims is strengthened and, in many cases, the victims are protected from further abuse.

### **‘To Know God’ – Makes us Salvatorian**

The fire that burned in Father Jordan to found the Salvatorian communities was kindled especially during the years in which he was among the people. A photo showing Father Jordan with the globe clearly indicates his attention and passion. As he viewed the world, he wanted to reach ALL, as he wrote in his *Spiritual Diary*: “He (God) wishes all to be saved and to come to the knowledge of truth.”<sup>150</sup>

When we, inspired by him, look now at our planet and at what moves people, we encounter a world in transition. According to socio-ecological research, we are in a transition to the so-called “planetary phase”<sup>151</sup> with all of its hopes and uncertainties. But how are we dealing with these uncertainties and the many open questions for the future?

I rely entirely on the Founder because he was an expert in searching with great confidence for the will of God in an attitude of spiritual discernment. In listening to the signs of the time, he developed ways with a vision about how people can gain life in abundance. Motivated by his passionate love for God and committed to the salvation of

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<sup>150</sup> 1Tim 2:4 in: SD I/176

<sup>151</sup> [http://www.greattransition.org/documents/Great\\_Transition.pdf](http://www.greattransition.org/documents/Great_Transition.pdf)

humanity, he went beyond the known and familiar to start something completely new.

Perhaps Father Francis of the Cross would encourage us today like this: “Do not be afraid when, in listening to the needs of today's world, you are feeling urged to do something new! Do not be afraid to take up as your cross the difficulties, sufferings and obstacles! In all these fears, you may completely confide yourself to God.”

In his day and in the language of his time, he simply expressed it somewhat differently: *“Do not despair, the Lord will help you to realize your goal. Place everything in His hands, trust firmly in Him, and hope and await all from Him!”*<sup>152</sup>

This encouragement of Father Jordan will help us to find new Salvatorian answers about how we can quench the thirst of people for salvation, healing and true life - today and in the future.

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<sup>152</sup> SD I/211









Poverty / original: Armut



## SPIRITUAL LIFE AT THE FIRST PLACE

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### Returning to Francis Jordan:

*“Carry on your spiritual dialogue with your beloved Savior. Sit at His feet, humble and docile, and attend to His words”* <sup>153</sup>

### The Experience of Fr. Jordan

Sometimes I have wondered: what was the oil that fed Francis Jordan’s burning lamp? The answer that spontaneously comes to my mind is that this oil was his deep relationship with Jesus Christ. This was certainly the secret of his existence and apostolic work: a total and boundless love for the Divine Savior. For me, this is the most precious pearl from the spiritual heritage our Founder has left us, that is, a life of deep intimacy with the Savior, an immersion in the experience of God’s excelling love in our life.

From this perspective, we can easily understand his great concern to educate the Salvatorians in the ‘knowledge of God’s love’. It was essential for him to help his spiritual sons learn how to encounter Jesus Christ – which is the ‘founding experience’ that gives meaning to everything else – because, as we know, the substrate of a deep spiritual life has always been, and will always be, the heart of our Salvatorian mission and spirituality.

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<sup>153</sup> SD I/65



**Fr. Milton  
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Superior General  
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since  
2013

Therefore, returning to Francis Jordan today means that the experience of encountering (of getting to know) Jesus Christ and his Salvation message becomes the ground on which we build our personal lives and community relations. For me, the Founder's insistence on the foremost importance of being '*men of prayer*'<sup>154</sup>, of rooting our lives in Jesus Christ, remains decisive and essential for each Salvatorian at all times. For this reason, it is important to understand that the moments we dedicate to pray and meditate on the Word of God are not wasted time, nor stolen from our apostolic mission, but that they rather assure the quality of our Salvatorian apostolate. We can have doctoral degrees, use fine liturgical vestments, live in comfortable and renovated houses, multiply our apostolic activities, but if we do not nourish a spiritual life that is completely centered in Jesus Christ, we will never produce the fruits we desire.

### **Live Spiritually**

When I say that returning to Francis Jordan is crucial today, I mean that we need to nurture in us the same deep spirituality that guided our Spiritual Father's life. Although his occupations were absorbing, he felt the strong need to set aside time for prayer and silence. In our concrete reality: what else can we do to encounter more deeply the One who calls us by name and invites us to be his disciples? Without a deep spiritual life, we will be guided only by a tireless activism, and will certainly lose the enthusiasm for our Salvatorian vocation bit by bit, together with the capacity to enthuse other people. In my opinion, there are two elements that need to be analyzed, evaluated and revitalized in our Society without delay, in order to better incarnate the motivations that hold together our vocation to Salvatorian apostolic religious life.

#### **(1) The Significance of Prayer and Silence**

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First of all, we must learn again to be silent. This could seem redundant to some of you but not to me. Canonical prayers prevail in our houses,

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<sup>154</sup> JORDAN: Chapter talk of 1895-11-29. In: DSS XXIII, pp. 47-48.

sometimes in a somewhat superficial way, while we relegate personal prayer to a secondary place. A Salvatorian, or another apostolic religious, cannot be happy with a mere recitation of the Psalms. Other regular moments of solitude and silence are indispensable as a basis for our spiritual life. A religious without personal prayer, who has no dialogue with Christ, is like a skeleton without flesh.<sup>155</sup> Therefore, it is a matter of establishing a fixed time of solid and progressive interior prayer that lets the Gospel replace our worldly criteria, changing our self-referential attitudes and transforming us into people who are deeply united to Jesus Christ and dedicated to others.

## (2) The Significance of Ongoing Formation

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Secondly, we must learn again the exercise of spiritual discernment in our daily lives. This practice is also called *ordinary ongoing formation*. It means that our spiritual life does not amount to the times of the day when we meet at the community chapel, although this is an essential space in our life. Spiritual life is made of our day-to-day small efforts, interpersonal relationships, the planning of our work and free time, the moments of prayer, and our attention to the signs of God's Spirit that become evident everywhere. Our personal and vocational growth strengthens through our attention to simple things, until we achieve the goal of being configured with Christ. I think that this practice of learning to discern in everyday life and to be formed by it, as we are enlightened by the Word of God, could make a huge difference for many of us, Salvatorians. It would strengthen our following of Jesus, making us understand that He is always at our side and walking along with us.

### **Focus on Christ**

Finally, I firmly believe that these attitudes, if we live them intensely, can bear fruit and positively shape our vocation to know, love and serve the Savior. In other words, they set in motion a spiritual life that is rooted in Francis Jordan's same personal path, which consists in

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<sup>155</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II.: *Vita Consecrata*. Rom, 1996-03-25, No. 74 and 94.

knowing Jesus Christ more intimately, loving Him more deeply, and following Him more closely. The more our Founder deepened his identification with Christ, the greater was his enthusiasm to evangelize and ‘save everyone’. In a similar way, Jesus should have the first place in our lives and in our hearts. I do not mean a quantitative change, but rather an inner work each of us has to undertake in order to focus his life on the true center, that is, on the person of Jesus Christ. “*He is the center and source of strength for our life.*”<sup>156</sup> It is a fundamental option that guides our decisions, transforms our hearts, and gives depth to our lives. I can say without a doubt that this was one of the key issues our Founder insisted on, for he realized it was the sense of our apostolate, and of all things in our life.

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<sup>156</sup> Constitutions SDS, Art. 501.

## POOR AMONG THE POOR

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by Fr. Milton Zonta SDS

### Returning to Francis Jordan:

*“All peoples, all nations, all races, all tribes, everyone. You are a debtor to all! Do not rest until everyone knows, loves and serves Jesus the Savior!”*<sup>157</sup>

*“Therefore, poverty, and again poverty. And if you don’t want to believe me, just look at the Divine Master you desire to follow. Pauper natus [est], pauper vixit, pauper mortuus est! [He was born poor, lived poor, and died poor.] – If we want to follow the Divine Savior (and this is what we are called to do), if we want to become saints, if we want to convert the world, then let us become poor.”*<sup>158</sup>

### To the Ends of the Earth

During the time in which Father Francis Jordan founded the *Society of the Divine Savior*, many other religious congregations were born with the purpose of reaching the peripheries where the Church was not present yet. There were many difficult situations in that period – under the geographic and human perspectives – that nobody wanted to tackle for a thousand alleged reasons. I think it is very important to interpret our Salvatorian history according to this ‘missionary spirit of the time’, in order to avoid the danger of a navel-gazing attitude at the expense of our missionary vitality.

The same Spirit that drove our Founder inspires us today, and consequently our apostolates need to be part of the great evangelization movement of the Church in favor of human life and of those who are poor, ignorant, dispossessed, and abandoned, and we must be ready to reach out to the peripheries where nobody wants to go probably out of fear.

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<sup>157</sup> SD II/70

<sup>158</sup> JORDAN: Chapter talk of 1899-07-07. In: DSS XXIII, p. 339.



## **The 1890 Sending as a Paradigm of our Mission**

We all know the moving story of the Founder sending the first Salvatorian missionaries to the distant lands of Asia. The place they went to was considered a missionary frontier that the Catholic Church had not reached yet. They evangelized the poor people of the Khasi-Jaintia Hills, and were evangelized by them. This first missionary appointment to Northeast India is a paradigm for the Salvatorian mission. All the other foundations in the Society evoke the sending of Father Otto Hopfenmüller and his companions, who were Good News for the people in need of love, justice, and true life in the vast region of Assam.<sup>159</sup>

## **The Core of the Salvatorian Mission**

Today, more than ever, I see the face of the poor and the suffering who crave the message of God's love as a sign of the times that brings out the core of our Salvatorian mission. Jesus the Savior challenges us and questions our commitment to the least, the hungry, the unemployed, the sick, and those who are in prison.<sup>160</sup> I believe our Society needs to rediscover this sense of missionary commitment to and compassion for the weak and vulnerable. It is urgent to review our mission, especially in the many places where one can perceive an atmosphere of self-sufficiency and individualism – due to material securities and possessions – which banishes away any concrete gesture of sensitivity and solidarity towards those who suffer the most. As we know, the wealth and luxury of a preacher discredit the word and message he proclaims. Therefore, it is not enough to promote some sporadic charitable activity: we must embrace a lifestyle that permanently engages us all, making visible our mission of true apostles in every frontier of the Church.

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<sup>159</sup> These confreres were (in alphabetical order):

Bächle, Br. Joseph (Birth: 04.06.1863 / Profession: 10.04.1887 / Egress: 09.09.1899)

Hopfenmüller, Fr. Otto (Birth: 29.05.1844 / Ordination: 06.10.1866 / Profession: 20.05.1888 / Death: 21.08.1890)

Münzloher, Fr.. Angelus (Birth 03.05.1866 / Profession: 14.10.1886 / Ord.: 21.12.1889 / Death: 16.08.1957)

Schumm, Br. Marianus (Birth: 26.01.1854 / Profession: 15.01.1890 / Death: 30.08.1890)

<sup>160</sup> Cf. Mt 25:40

## Two Main Ideas of our Salvatorian Mission:

Trying not to speak abstractly about this topic, I think there are two concrete principles acting as a *conditio sine qua non*<sup>161</sup> for our Society regarding the visibility of our Salvatorian apostolic mission.

### (1) Contemplation of the poor Christ

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First, we need to develop a spirituality focusing on the contemplation of Christ who became poor to save the entire humankind, a spiritual life that makes us dive into the mystery of *divine kenosis* (self-emptying). It is an internal decision that liberates us from any self-attachment, and allows us to be recognized as people who are fully consecrated to God. Explaining the sense of our consecration does not simply mean quoting texts about austerity. It also entails making visible and understandable the fact that we detach ourselves from everything in order to follow Christ without reserve or baggage.<sup>162</sup> It is clear that we do not achieve a simple and selfless lifestyle automatically, or merely by observing a number of rules about poverty. Our Founder has shown us that the mission requires a life of continuous prayer in order to contemplate the humility of Christ's mission from the stable of Bethlehem to the total surrender of the Cross. Kenotic spirituality gradually transforms our criteria, our attitudes, and our deepest feelings, leading us to a full identification with Christ, and making us able to touch Him when we touch the poor. Such a lifestyle makes our vocation authentic and our mission credible.

### (2) Service among the poor people

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On the other hand, I think we need real contact with poor people. In some places, this literally means going out to meet those who are suffering the most, and getting to know the place where they live. In my opinion, a life at the service of the least is a demand that needs full attention on the part of the Salvatorians today. This requirement must be assumed not only at the personal and community levels, but also by the Society as such. Being close to the most vulnerable people is the

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<sup>161</sup> Translation: A condition which cannot be excluded!

<sup>162</sup> Cf. Mt 10:10

right place for the *Society of the Divine Savior* to be. May no one evade this, may no one step aside! Globalized indifference is a problem that challenges the Salvatorians worldwide, and asks us to heed the cry of the poor by living in evangelical poverty and making proper use of our material resources. Being in touch with situations of poverty is the best way to develop a new mindset that can free us from cultural individualism, fragmented community life, scarce apostolic efficacy and, consequently, from the limited ability to attract new vocations. I feel really glad whenever I see that the apostolates, buildings, and financial resources of our Society are at the full service of those who suffer the most in the world!

### **Meeting the Challenge at Three Levels**

Finally, in every country there are *frontier* contexts and situations needing evangelization, about which we must discern. Although not all Salvatorians are called to live in the same way, I have the conviction that we must keep insisting that our Society must tackle the challenge at three levels:

- all Salvatorians should work for the most vulnerable, helping those who suffer the most through concrete solidarity activities;
- many Salvatorians should keep a continuous pastoral contact with the poor in the slums, nursing homes and orphanages; and, finally,
- some Salvatorians, given their particular charisms and aptitudes regarding solidarity, should live as the poor and with the poor, particularly in 'frontier' situations.

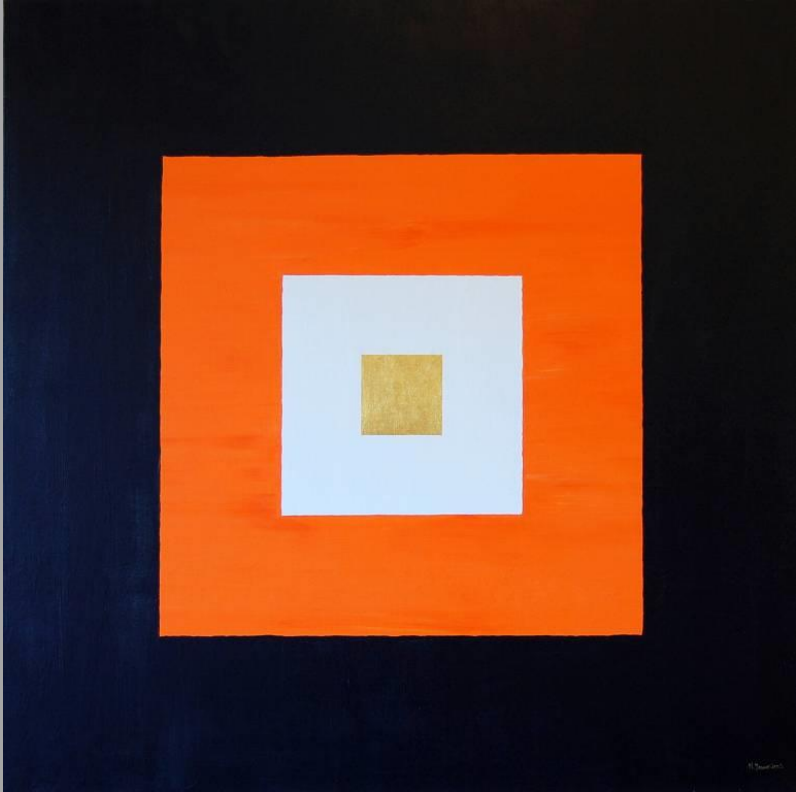
I believe that, in one way or another, our actions and thoughts should manifest the same apostolic boldness of our Founder, who sent the first Salvatorians to live in solidarity with the most forgotten and weak, to defend them from exclusion, and to promote justice among them. Such was also the life and mission of the Savior of the World.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Cf. Lk 4:18







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## SALVATION

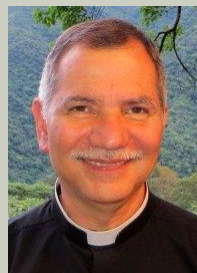
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### Introduction

I am taken by Father Jordan's admonition that we are to be *'instruments of salvation'*.<sup>164</sup> Throughout our venerable Founder's life he was extremely concerned about the salvation of souls, primarily the souls of others but also those of his followers as well as his own. Though he writes very little about this latter point, I believe it is because he had a deep experience of salvation that was the motivation behind all he did. Thus, Jordan had this burning within to dedicate himself totally to the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

We are told that one of his first experiences of salvation was at his First Holy Communion. Even so, this terminology is not used in describing that experience. Yet, I am convinced that the desire to deepen that experience and to share it with others became a burning desire during his preparation for priesthood and became even more ardent after his experience on Mount Lebanon. It is what motivated him to establish what today are three branches of the *Salvatorian Family*. As a result we see how often the word 'salvation' appears throughout his *Spiritual Diary* and in his other writings, particularly in his Chapter Talks to the community of the Motherhouse.

Clearly, Jordan's experience of salvation led him to enter into a *pact* in 1878 with the Lord



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GÓMEZ  
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Vicar General and  
General Secretary  
of the Salvatorians  
since  
2013 ...

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<sup>164</sup> Cf. JORDAN: Chapter talk of 1898-04-08. In: DSS XXIII, p. 206.



to which he held all his life, submitting “... to His reign the whole world, i.e., all persons who now or later live, so they may know, love, and serve Him, and find salvation for themselves.”<sup>165</sup> Consequently, this raises for me questions about what the Founder understood by the word salvation and where he thought it was found. This has implications for us today as a *Salvatorian Family* because we carry within our name the concept of salvation that only the Divine Savior can give. It is central to our identity. Thus, if we can understand what ‘salvation’ means for today and where it is found, I believe we can be effective agents or “*instruments of salvation*” as Fr. Jordan says.

### **Jordan’s Notion of Salvation**

The Founder never explicitly defines in his writings what he means by salvation. Yet in the context of his writings there are several ideas that come forth. For example,

- in his sending of the first missionaries to Assam on 17 January 1890 we find: “*To the degree the apostolic man suffers, to that degree he achieves the salvation of souls! God’s work flourishes only in the shadow of the cross.*”<sup>166</sup> In other words, salvation is something attainable and it is linked to suffering for others.
- And in his second sending of missionaries to Assam he says: “*Again the solemn moment has arrived when we see some leaving our midst who have decided to take the glad message of salvation to those who still wander in the shadow of unbelief and error.*”<sup>167</sup> Here salvation means being taken out of unbelief and error and the proclamation of Christ’s message. In other words, it is the result of evangelization.
- And in the passage that has caught my attention Jordan declares: “*The memory of the suffering and death of our Divine Savior Jesus Christ is and should be for us a powerful incentive to live up to our holy vocations, particularly to live as observant religious, and to strive to become useful instruments for the salvation of souls. When we see how*

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<sup>165</sup> SD I/202

<sup>166</sup> JORDAN: Chapter talk of 1890-01-17. In: DSS XXIII, p. 4.

<sup>167</sup> JORDAN: Chapter talk of 1890-12-12. In: DSS XXIII, p. 5.

*God's Son died for us, if we see the worth of a soul, if we see what God's Son does for human souls, ah, how motivated we must feel to work for immortal souls!"* <sup>168</sup> In this we see that salvation means participating in Christ's Paschal Mystery and sharing in eternal life.

In other places we see him linking salvation to conversion, to embracing suffering, to holiness, to participation in the Kingdom of God starting here on earth, to unity in community, and to eternal bliss, among other things. In all cases, salvation is for all people, in all places, in all times and in all circumstances. Certainly these are not novel concepts nor are they out of date. But how can we understand this today and where do we see salvation working?

### **How to Understand Salvation Today?**

A way to approach this is to consider the etymology of the word salvation. It comes from *salus* (Latin, health; German *heil*), which is based on the Hebrew word *יְשַׁח* (*yeshah*). It literally means, "being taken out of a tight place," that is "deliverance". Certainly today we find great concern for good health or healing from all types of maladies and clearly Jesus presents himself as the one who heals, the one who restores us to wellbeing. But today there is also a great longing for happiness. People, however, seem to be looking for it in all the wrong places such as in the exercise of power and self-actualization, in drugs, promiscuousness, the provisional, consumerism, and materialism, among other things. Furthermore, so many people live in dire circumstances and are in need of help to get out of them. Salvatorians at times give evidence of these things too. Perhaps what we all should be seeking instead is serenity, the inner peace that helps us see that the healing and happiness only the Divine Savior can give us is available to us here and now but that it also takes time to be evident. When we allow ourselves to trust his saving presence with us, we gain serenity.

What this means is that salvation is found by seeing it as a process and the result of a relationship with the Divine Savior and one another. It means recognizing we are incomplete without the other and need one

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<sup>168</sup> JORDAN: Chapter talk of 1898-04-08. In: DSS XXIII, p. 206.

another. Therefore it requires patience, perseverance and commitment. Jordan wanted us to be *instruments of salvation*. In considering his words to us, this is a two-sided coin

- that involves seeking our own salvation by loving God, embracing the cross in our suffering, by living according to the Rules of the *Salvatorian Family*, and sustained prayer both personal and communal.
- The other side involves working for the salvation of others through evangelization, building community together, and helping people find deliverance from the tight places of their lives. And for what purpose? For *eternal bliss* (true happiness) or *eternal life* (the fullness of life) as Jordan would say.<sup>169</sup> Yet salvation does not only take place after death but begins here. It takes place in our worship and in our service to others. It takes place in our gatherings and in our community.

### **What this Requires of us Today ...**

If we are to be agents of salvation we need to first spend time reflecting on our own experiences of salvation. Perhaps most of us will never have the overwhelming experiences of our venerable Founder, but all of us have had some experience that has impelled us, that has motivated us to commit ourselves as Salvatorians. It is important to keep these experiences alive in our memories. Often we cannot identify these experiences as salvific as such while they are taking place, but they appear as such when we reflect on them in our prayer in the light of the Gospel and the liturgy. Consequently I am convinced that we are called to be experts in soteriology, able to reflect on and speak about how God's salvation is at work in the world today.

Moreover, if we are to be effective *instruments of salvation* we need to see that salvation is not primarily individual but is to be shared in community. Jesus gathers around himself a group of followers who share their lives with him and one another and whom he sends out to heal others. Though this can take place in many forms, salvation is primarily about *we and Jesus* not *me and Jesus*. That is because Jesus

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<sup>169</sup> Cf. Jn 10:10

takes unity to be a key element of salvation. This requires fulfilling our obligations both to our apostolates and to community. And it is true, community is both the source of the greatest sense of belonging as well as of suffering. Jordan wrote in his *Spiritual Diary*: “My greatest penance is the common life.” Yet as Jordan also says “*per crucem ad lucem* [through the cross to the light].”<sup>170</sup>

The primary place where we can then experience this salvation is through the liturgy. For we firmly believe that Jesus the Savior is truly present in word and sacrament and that in this encounter, he who shares in our humanity makes us partakers of his divinity. Here we find we are not alone and that our own need for healing and deliverance is being met. Here we hear the Father calling us his beloved sons and daughters. Here is found the consolation and inspiration of the Holy Spirit that can help us embrace the cross and motivate us to share salvation with others.

And this means service. Salvation is found in Christian service. For what we celebrate in the liturgy must be seen in our lives. We are to be like Peter’s mother-in-law who after experiencing healing gets up to serve.<sup>171</sup>

- Thus, if we have been healed by the Divine Savior, we are to disclose it and share that healing with those in need.
- If in the Eucharist we have been fed by the Body and Blood of Christ, we are to go out and feed the hungry and give drink to the thirsty.
- If we have given one another a sign of peace we are to go out and work for justice and peace in the world.
- Where we have heard words of love, consolation, peace and life, we are to go out and speak words of dignity and worth through our actions to those who are oppressed and discouraged.
- And where we have felt ourselves lifted up and given the wellbeing that comes from grace, we are to accompany those who are also in

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<sup>170</sup> JORDAN quotes John Berchmans on 1903-09-13. In: SD II/60 || Cf. JORDAN: Chapter talk of 1901-10-11. In: DSS XXIII, pp. 456-457.

<sup>171</sup> Mk 1:30-31

need of being lifted up and taken out of the tight places of their lives so that they too will see they are God's beloved sons and daughters.

Through our service may they find in us agents of the healing and serenity, of the goodness and kindness they need to live fully as our Divine Savior wants for the entire world! This is what motivated our venerable Founder. It is what motivates me to submit myself to become more and more an *instrument of salvation*. I pray that it be what motivates us all as Salvatorians.

## FAITHFUL TO THE CHURCH

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by Fr. Raúl Gómez SDS

### Introduction

In our Venerable Founder's *Spiritual Testament*, he admonishes the members of the Society to "*Remain sincere and loyal sons of our mother, the holy Roman Church. Teach what she teaches; believe what she believes; condemn what she condemns.*"<sup>172</sup> The first outlines of his *Spiritual Testament* were written sometime between 1885 and 1897. However, his desire to be personally faithful to the Church was expressed already as he started to write his *Spiritual Diary* in 1875. – And in 1901 he inserts onto the first page, prior to the first entry of the Diary, "*I accept what holy Church accepts and I reject what holy Church rejects*" and signs it. – Even though by 1897 the Sisters had been formed into a separate congregation and the lay branch had not yet come to fruition, Fr. Jordan clearly desired that all Salvatorians be faithful to the Church.

Thus we find that in his address to the first missionaries to North America, Fr. Jordan tells them to "*Remain loyal, true children so that you may be a joy to the church ...*"<sup>173</sup> And in a talk to the Motherhouse community he admonishes "*Everyone should search his soul and apply this to himself! Don't copy the example of other religious. That can be totally misleading because they can be completely lax or even fail to share the church's point of view. Let us follow the holy rule, church law, and the vows!*"<sup>174</sup> And in his address to the Sisters on the occasion of a vows ceremony he speaks about how the Church has permitted the rite in which they have engaged.<sup>175</sup> Furthermore, during another profession ceremony he hopes for the Sisters "*May each one of you become an Apostolin' Christi, 'an apostle of Christ,' a true Salvatorian,*"<sup>176</sup> thereby indicating their role in the Church.

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<sup>172</sup> JORDAN, Francis: *Spiritual Testament*. In: Bergner/Tresher (Ed.), p. 346.

<sup>173</sup> JORDAN: Chapter talk of 1892-06-27. In: DSS XXIII, p. 10.

<sup>174</sup> JORDAN: Chapter talk of 1896-09-25. In: DSS XXIII, p. 71.

<sup>175</sup> Cf. JORDAN on 1896-06-01. In: DSS XXIII, pp. 57-58.

<sup>176</sup> JORDAN: Chapter talk of 1903-04-25. In: DSS XXIII, p. 474.

## Attitudes that Impact on Salvatorians

In our day there is much cynicism in many parts of the world about the Church. Much of this has arisen with the upsurge in secularism in Western society as well as the tremendous sex abuse scandals rocking the Church. And so many people question the moral authority of the Church. They even question its motives when they see priests, religious and lay faithful engaging in activities that call into question their own commitment to the Church. Unfortunately some of this cynicism creeps into the way some Salvatorians talk about the Church as if they were outside of it.

Surely at times it is easy for us religious to see ourselves as if we were distinct from the Church. There is a tendency sometimes in our way of talking to speak about the Church as if it were primarily the hierarchy or diocesan clergy who make up the Church. And indeed, the power to determine Church doctrine and law is mostly concentrated in these realms. Religious on the other hand tend to see ourselves as walking with the people, serving the poor and needy through our apostolates that are mostly geared to some type of work for justice and peace. Thus we take 'clericalism' as an attitude to be avoided (although the fact that one esteems one's vocational distinctiveness or wears certain garb does not warrant an accusation of it). In addition, women religious often especially feel the great pain of being excluded from the decision-making and power-wielding arenas of the Church. I would venture to say that in my opinion lay people are even more so.

Yet we know that we all are the Church. We believe we are full members of the *Body of Christ*, which is the Church, as a result of our baptism and enhanced through our religious vows or commitment as a Salvatorian. Even so it is easier to be faithful to the Church when we agree with the stances or orientation of a certain pope or bishop. And in the same measure, it is much more difficult to be faithful when we disagree or find certain stances as contrary to our vision of what Church should be. When we fully commit ourselves to certain theological perspectives, get attached to our apostolates or engage in ways of organizing our lives that make us feel fulfilled and then find that those perspectives, apostolates or structures are called into question by

Church authorities, our tendency is to reject those authorities and their guidance.

Certainly Fr. Jordan experienced great sorrow at the hands of the hierarchy. In a chapter talk to the Motherhouse community he speaks about ‘the four cups of suffering’ that we as apostles must be prepared to drink: *“The last, if God should pass it to you, is when even those appointed by God to support and guard you, even the church authorities, lay obstacles in your path. This is the fourth and most bitter!”*<sup>177</sup> Nonetheless, we know that even to his last days he saw himself as a faithful and loyal son of the Church accepting decisions that were difficult and went contrary to his vision. For him it was part of embracing the cross in which salvation is found.

### **Implications for Salvatorians Today**

So then what are we to do when we feel misunderstood or questioned by the Church? Like Fr. Jordan we are to be firm in our faith and recognize our purpose. He tells us: *“It is especially important for us as apostolic workers to be completely firm in our faith, to hold firmly to the holy church, to everything Christ and the church teach, and to reject everything contrary to this. ... Remain men of the holy church!”*<sup>178</sup> For we believe that the Holy Spirit is at work in the Church and that we as individuals or as a religious community only have part of the truth. Obedience and love require that we take seriously what the Church teaches and respect it. We also know that over time things change as they become clearer or the promptings of the Holy Spirit guide us to the fullness of life God desires to share with all of us. This requires great faith and humility as well as great courage and wisdom.

Then what do we do when we feel the Spirit guiding us in other directions? Like those saints who had taken positions contrary to Church stances in their eras, when we do so it must truly be as a result of a well-formed conscience formed by deep prayer and reflection on Scripture, doctrine and dialogue with others. Thus it must be rooted in

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<sup>177</sup> JORDAN: Chapter talk of 1899-05-05. In: DSS XXIII, p. 307.

<sup>178</sup> JORDAN: Chapter talk of 1898-02-18. In: DSS XXIII, p. 185.



prayer and liturgy, interchange and contemplation. As Fr. Jordan declares: *“Pray that our Society never embraces erroneous doctrines ... that our actions and our effectiveness flow from faith!”*<sup>179</sup> We also must avoid things that would cause scandal. We who are priests and religious especially must recognize that we are public persons and that our actions and words have great impact even if we are not aware of it. Thus the Founder admonishes us to *“see the scandals in the church in our time, in our community, look, look at others, are they not almost all priests and religious who have given such great scandal.”*<sup>180</sup>

In terms of what the Holy Spirit is doing with us it is important for us to see that we as a *Salvatorian Family* are offering a wider vision of Church. That is, it envisions another way of collaborating between men and women religious, lay and ordained. The vision I see us offering is found in the *Eucharistic Prayer for Various Occasions and Needs*: *“Through your Son you gather men and women, whom you made for the glory of your name, into one family, redeemed by the Blood of his Cross and signed with the seal of the Holy Spirit.”*<sup>181</sup> We need to value and foster this vision.

The *Salvatorian Family* Charter in particular embraces this vision. We declare by it *“The Salvatorian Family is an expression of the charism, the gift of the Spirit given to Father Jordan for the Church. ... We are united by our commitment to the mission as envisioned by our Founder, forming one family of zealous apostles who announce to all the salvation that has appeared in Jesus Christ. ... We live our call in equality and complementarity in ways appropriate to our diverse states in life, gifts, and cultures.”*<sup>182</sup> Furthermore, *“As a Salvatorian Family, we seek to provide a visible witness of men and women from diverse cultures and backgrounds working side-by-side in mission. We nurture trust and respect for the differences among us, learn from one another, and value the contribution that each is able to make for our life and mission”*<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> JORDAN: Chapter talk of 1898-02-18. In: DSS XXIII, p. 186.

<sup>180</sup> JORDAN: Chapter talk of 1898-04-15. In: DSS XXIII, p. 211.

<sup>181</sup> Eucharistic Prayer V, Preface

<sup>182</sup> Charter of the *Salvatorian Family*. Chapter I, Parts 2-4. Cf.: [www.sds.org](http://www.sds.org)

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, Chapter IV, Part 14.

The Charter envisions how men and women, ordained and non-ordained, lay and religious as part of and faithful to the Church can collaborate and form community committed to lifting up and improving the lives of those to whom we minister in all the areas and circumstances in which they are. I find likewise a great validation of our approach also in the same Eucharistic Prayer already cited: *“Grant that all the faithful of the Church [i.e., both men and women], looking into the signs of the times by the light of faith, may constantly devote themselves to the service of the Gospel. Keep us attentive to the needs of all that, sharing their grief and pain, their joy and hope, we may faithfully bring them the good news of salvation and go forward with them along the way of your Kingdom.”*<sup>184</sup>

Though there are other and larger religious congregations that have *three branches* I am convinced that our approach is distinctive and worth developing. In doing so we increase our faithfulness to the Church because we will be faithful to ourselves and to the charism of our Venerable Founder. *“After all, God has called you to enter the church in these pressed times like a new army, to work with all your strength for the holy Catholic Church and to fight. You will accomplish this if you cling firmly to Christ.”*<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> Eucharistic Prayer V, III

<sup>185</sup> JORDAN: Chapter talk of 1901-10-04. In: DSS XXIII, p. 453.





others will come / original: andere werden kommen



## THE EXPERIENCE OF POVERTY AND OUR MISSION IN THE SHADOW OF THE CROSS

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### Introduction:

Father Jordan preached to his brothers in the General Chapter of 1902 with great conviction that “*the works of God prosper only in the shadow of the cross.*”<sup>186</sup> Are we (religious men and women) also convinced of this as he? Do we really believe that the symbol of the cross can be the wood that nourishes our bonfire in order to enlighten again our ardor? Are poverty and the cross related to Salvatorian life and spirituality in order to live passionately the mission?

I do not have the intention to propose any fundamental theology of the cross nor of the vow of poverty, I only want to share my dialogues with the *Spiritual Diary* of Fr. Jordan, with his life of poverty, his wanderings starting from his love and spirituality of the cross and how they help me to find today a new ardor in following Jesus and the mission entrusted to me. This has been my main purpose in writing this text with the intention not to fall into the temptation once again of celebrating the memory of Jordan when the centennial of his death is being remembered, without approaching and deepening his life. Does Jordan really live among us (religious men and women), as Jesus did in the memory of his first communities?

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<sup>186</sup> SD I/163



**Sr. Maria  
Yaneth  
MORENO  
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Vicress General  
of the  
Salvatorian  
Sisters  
since 2013

## The Cross and its Significance:

I found myself in front of a cross and I remembered that Fr. Jordan with the symbol of the cross sent the first missionaries. Fr. David Restrepo<sup>187</sup> in one of his writings on Jordan and the cross, did a historical reference to the fact that in the first communities the cross was not a symbol of Christianity, rather it was the Risen Jesus because the cross was the symbol of ignominy. Little by little the cross recovered its value, the mysterious value of the cross that Saint Paul recalls as *“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”*<sup>188</sup>

The first communities in their reflection understood the value of the cross as the necessary condition on the path of discipleship and the motivation of the words of Jesus to them *“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.”*<sup>189</sup> Cross and poverty are two important characteristics of a follower of Jesus. To those who asked him where he lived, he answered: *“Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head”*<sup>190</sup> and later on, when he sent them in pairs to the mission, he gave them precise instructions on how to go on a mission - demands of poverty and liberty.<sup>191</sup> It is Jesus who inaugurates a new way of discipleship starting from the cross and poverty, starting from divesting oneself of power in order to live in the freedom of the Beatitudes.

I do not need to say much that is fundamental concerning poverty, the value of the Reign of Jesus, starting from a life option, which frees us from hedonistic and egoistic possession in order to become free for the Reign of God. As the suffering inherent to human life, it may convert to a very useful tool in the process toward a strong and deep spirituality, in order to give greater meaning to the *kenosis* so much needed today in Christian and Salvatorian religious life.

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<sup>187</sup> RESTREPO, David: La Cruz para Jordán. Colombia, Cuaresma 2011.

<sup>188</sup> 1Cor 1:18

<sup>189</sup> Mt 16:24 and Lk 9:23

<sup>190</sup> Mt 8:20 and Lk 9:58

<sup>191</sup> Mt 10 and Lk 9

The cross of Jesus the Savior symbolizes the fact that the judgment was overcome and forgiven by love, his condemnation was condoned, that Jesus gave death to death! The cross is the ultimate symbol of love, of reconciliation, of forgiveness. Whoever does not love and does not forgive is not a follower of Jesus. But whoever is not able to love up to the point to give life as Jesus did is also not a disciple of Jesus.

Many texts of the New Testament that refer to the cross, as a re-reading from the first communities do, point to the fact of the crucifixion of Jesus, and when we bring the cross or expose it in a place, it makes us aware of the price by which we were saved, but also of the need to give life, as Jordan says, “to surrender yourself entirely”.<sup>192</sup>

When I re-read Jordan's life and experienced myself some situations of his life, a series of elements appeared with greater awareness, which helped me to acknowledge why Jordan chooses the name of *Francis Mary of the Cross*. It was not only the influence of the Franciscan spirituality in his life or maybe the influence of Amalia Streitel. I believe that Jordan's life was also a school of spirituality of the cross: this way with Jordan is only a provocation so that each person may fulfill it, with the creativity starting from his/her own reflection.

### ***IN THE SHADOW OF THE CROSS or:***

#### ***– starting from his childhood and family's reality...***

Jordan drank from the source of neediness and suffering, so that he profoundly understood starting from faith, how poverty is an “everlasting legacy” and that everyday suffering and the cross are possibilities for “*Whomever wishes to find grace.*”<sup>193</sup> Poverty and the cross are formational and educational tools, they discipline the will and strengthen Jordan's faith. He was born and grew up in the little village of Gurtweil, as the son of a family without sufficient economic resources, so he had to abandon school and work in order to help his family. This is also the situation in which many families live nowadays, where the father is absent or has been killed or has left the family and

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<sup>192</sup> SD I/ 92

<sup>193</sup> SD I/ 34 - Father Jordan took this sentence from the Blessed Angela Foligno.



has not come back anymore, and the mother whom we call today the head of the family is responsible for the needs of the children.

Jordan's childhood, full of unattended needs, is also an opportunity to remember our own origin and to re-read starting from the place of the poor, the call for us to take on again the values of the Reign, facing the prophecy and the mysticism that we need to be witnesses in this time of boasting and social inequalities.

***IN THE SHADOW OF THE CROSS or:***

***– dreams and wishes are not accomplished at once ...***

In this society where we want everything *now* and which creates an outrageous desire to keep it, starting from some ideas of *easy acquiring, practicality and modernity*, Jordan is an example for us of great patience in order to wait for God's time in his history.

His family did not have the necessary means to send him to the seminary, when Jordan discovered his vocation. And in the same way many young people of our countries have to wait for, to work and to study, Jordan started his studies, which allowed him to achieve his dream.

When he finished school, Jordan was apprenticed as a painter and decorator and during many years he travelled to the newly industrialized cities, living and working with the German working class exercising his new occupation and becoming aware of its urgent needs.<sup>194</sup>

He concluded his studies at an advanced age and this, really, is not easy. Being among other people who are younger, with all the jokes are made, complex exclusions and distinctions that may arise. These things that may sound simple, but, seen starting from faith, were accompanying and forming Jordan for his future mission, in order to take on greater challenges, risks and sufferings.

When he completed his high school studies, Jordan could enter the theology program in Freiburg and after the diocesan seminary of Saint Peter's in Breisgau, he was ordained priest on July 21, 1878 at the age of thirty. He could not celebrate his first Mass in his parish in Germany,

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<sup>194</sup> MEISTERJAHN, Bernward: A la sombra de la Cruz. Traducción: Jan Leenders. Caracas (VE), 2000.

due to the restrictions of the *Kulturkampf*; he had to cross the Swiss border as many migrants do today for various reasons, which also caused him not to have been assigned a parish anywhere in Germany.

***IN THE SHADOW OF THE CROSS or:***

***– how to respond to the moment of crises in the world ...***

In Germany, especially in the second half of the 19th Century, there were great political and social changes. The *Kulturkampf* made the task of the Church difficult at that moment; this means it was not easy to evangelize in a secularized world where the Church was becoming aware of not only losing power, but also the possibility of meeting the needs of the poor who were emerging as a socially marginalized working class.

Thanks to his language skills Jordan obtained a scholarship to study Oriental languages in Rome and could travel to the East to reinforce his learning *in situ* and it was there in Lebanon, where he experienced the crucial call of God in his life, soon after he experienced as a cross, which made him write in many forms and ways that the cross is inherent to the life of the believer, the follower of Jesus and whoever wants to accomplish great works. "*Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.*" <sup>195</sup>

This inspiration of Lebanon, led him to reinforce his idea of how to face the action of the *Kulturkampf*. In fact, some historians agree in saying that at the beginning Father Jordan did not want to found a Congregation or an Institute of Religious Life, he wanted to have at his side people who would help him to influence the way that secularism appropriates the minds and hearts of people, displacing Jesus and how the *Kulturkampf* was promoting this. He needed partners passionate in his ideals and in his task and therefore he thought of priests, of men and women with a certain kind of education. His visionary and missionary spirit, that gave women the same status as men and included families, young people and children in this work, had to face the ecclesiastical

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<sup>195</sup> Jn 17:3

structures. Are our apostolic works responding to the signs of the times, as Jordan wanted it to?

**IN THE SHADOW OF THE CROSS or:**

**– an inexperienced Founder meets the ecclesiastical structures ...**

Jordan succeeded even though, by his own inexperience in religious life, his plans did not have the result he had originally conceived. Some members of the Vatican considered that the young Jordan did not have enough experience in ecclesiastical affairs. Because of the cross of a damaging psychological influence that leads to project an image rather than what we really are, some doubted his ability to be a good manager or leader. Despite his persistent enthusiasm, many considered him not practical enough and criticized him for the fact that he often resorted to other persons to have his ideas ratified.

Jordan himself did not overestimate his own abilities and gifts. He was too modest for that, although there is no doubt he strongly believed in his divine vocation. Jordan had to bear the cross of the intervention and the control of the Church; the Church authorities appointed a advisor whose advice Jordan had to follow for twenty years.<sup>196</sup> He was in Rome, under the control of the Vatican. "*A prophet is not welcome ...*"<sup>197</sup> But for Jordan it was really important to be right in the heart of the Church, even if this caused him to be under constant investigation, exposed to difficulties, opposition and accusations.

The rules written by Jordan after much prayer, adopted by the First Grade were not well viewed. They were based on biblical texts that inspired people who adhered to his work. But the Church asked for more norms and regulations of a legal constitution, in order to give canonical structure to new religious congregations.

One of Jordan's intentions was that men and women would be part of the same Society working as equals in the apostolate. This was not

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<sup>196</sup> The apostolic visitation of the Salvatorians lasted from 1894-1913. The Apostolic Visitor was Fr. Antonio Intreccialagli OCD. See: MEIJL, Peter van: Die apostolische Visitation im Institut P. Jordans. Rom, 1993. In: DSS XX.I+II

<sup>197</sup> Cf. Mt 13:57 / Mk 6:4 / Lk 4:24

acceptable for that time. Men and women should belong to distinct, self-sufficient and independent organizations. Each religious community should have a clear purpose that identified it. This was radically different from the ideas of Jordan, who considered that the new Society should not concentrate on a specific apostolate, he thought about the apostolate of the press, youth education, missionary work, etc. The principal characteristics of Jordan's foundation should have a universal character.

Jordan had advanced ideas comparable to that time; due to this the ecclesiastical authorities frequently intervened, so that he would adjust to the traditional monastic life. What initially was conceived as a universal movement was re-shaped and it became a religious congregation like any other one. The cross of Jordan's submission to the church was really creative. In November 1882 the name of the *Apostolic Teaching Society* was changed to *Catholic Teaching Society*. For the authorities, both names were too close to the mission of the Church itself, so that in 1893 they suggested a new name: *Society of the Divine Savior*, in Latin *Societas Divini Salvatoris* = SDS. The change had a positive result, because of the fact that the new Society does not derive its title from the activities it performed, but from its higher ideal: Christ himself, the Savior of the world.

### ***IN THE SHADOW OF THE CROSS or:***

#### ***– The cross of the neediness when his work starts ...***

Because of the lack of financial resources, necessary to implement his various plans, Jordan experienced what it means to depend solely on the generosity of others, he experienced the worries of having debts without money with which to respond (others would say lack of foresight, lack of organizing a good budget, etc.) and what an inexhaustible fire of confidence in God and His Divine Providence he left to us as a legacy. This reminds us many times of loving poverty as a crucial element of spirituality and an attitude of the follower of the Savior. He prayed worriedly while remaining confident and in the last moments when he had to pay debts, the money appeared.

I have seen this same process in poor families that always say "God will provide", or in order to obtain the necessary resources they pray to Saint Joseph and resort to other pious practices which I imagine Jordan learned from his poor mother.

In our realities, we do not start any work without having the secured resources for the sustainability of the work and all basic needs 'settled' and even more. The adventure and the courage of the first missionaries seem to be lost and exhausted by the rigidity of the 'plans' that sometimes squelch the creativity of the Spirit. Flexibility and willingness to implement new projects were always important characteristics of the *Catholic Teaching Society* and continue to be a challenge and risk for us today.

***IN THE SHADOW OF THE CROSS or:***

***– the failed attempts with the foundation of the Sisters ...***

Seeing that Fr. Jordan failed in the foundation of a congregation of sisters in cooperation with Sister Amalia Streitell, in 1883 the church intervened. Mother Streitell had introduced a too strict, cloistered regimen, contrary to his original intentions. The situation was out of the control of Jordan because the church authorities intervened to separate him from the order. They appointed a new director and the order continues to this day. Today the order is known as the *Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother*, the *Adolorata Sisters*.

In 1882 the meeting with Teresa von Wüllenweber (later Mother Mary of the Apostles) generated a hope which soon was culminated in December 1888, after many obstacles. Mother Mary and Father Jordan understood very well the situation in Germany, the issue of secularization and they shared ideas on how to intervene. In 1886 the *Catholic Teaching Society* received canonical approval and was formally constituted. We can imagine their joy. In 1890, despite the fact of having very few members, the Founder sent his first missionaries to Assam, most of whom died and still in 1892 he started new foundations in the United States and in Austria.

**IN THE SHADOW OF THE CROSS or:**

– *the experience of loneliness, sickness and pain ...*

I also want to speak about the cross of sickness and suffering Jordan accepted in his last days. In 1915, World War I also forced him to move the Generalate to Fribourg in Switzerland and this caused for him a life of loneliness, without news of any kind.

I agree with Father Jordan that *"the work of God bears fruit only in the shadow of the cross."* For a person who faced many difficulties in striving for his mission and who showed such a special perseverance, it was imperative that faith and trust in God were fundamental aspects in his spiritual life, so that the cross and the sufferings could be felt as fundamental tools in order to build up God's plans.

**IN THE SHADOW OF THE CROSS or:**

– *"Others will come, remember our suffering and continue our work."* <sup>198</sup>

The suffering, the cross, the pain, the neediness are taken by Fr. Jordan as indispensable values for the response to be given to the Lord. *"Working apostolically, to suffer apostolically, to pray apostolically"* <sup>199</sup> these were not catchy phrases for Jordan, they were the actual fruit of his journey, his life, his giving of himself. In the light of the cross he discovered and accepted trials, tribulations, fears, disappointments and illnesses. To bear something and to suffer for the love of Christ, to work for His glory and the salvation of souls, may sound like a pious spirituality, but today we have to call it mysticism and prophecy.

To go back to work tirelessly is to see that not everything is easy, that religious life cannot be living in ease, nor adjusting to tendencies and comforts of modern life. We have chosen the *poor means* of evangelization and however this does not mean an absence of methods, of technologies and of other resources. To work among the poor is not equal to 'just anything will do'! It is rather a turn to simplicity and a

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<sup>198</sup> PFEIFFER, Pancratius: *The Life of Fr. Francis Jordan*. Translation: Fr. Winfrid Herbst. St. Nazianz (Wisconsin), 1936, p. 527.

<sup>199</sup> Cf. JORDAN: Letter to the Community in Neuwerk, 1884-11-13. In: DSS X, p. 133, No. 184.

modest job, without sparing ourselves, to be able to take risks, not to have everything guaranteed to exercise our ministry, divested of all power and ambition ...

How many missions have been left, have been ended, because we have concentrated on the cities and for thousands of reasons, sometimes valid, we refuse to abandon our own fears and security in order to go on the adventure of love towards Jesus who promised us that we will have not only his help and his presence, but that we will 'receive 100 times more'? How many reasons have been introduced into our everyday rationalizations so as not to do this and leave it to others? How easily we justify what we are and have, thereby being far from the Kingdom that Jesus preached and from the witness we have to give.

Today the cross on which Jesus gave his life calls us, cries to us, shouts to us! The memory and the experience of Jordan who wanted to adopt a name that would remind him and make him aware, calls us also and moves us to create new paths towards *kenosis*, towards a generous dedication with joy – isn't this the characteristic of the first love?

**If we have come why not ... –  
and if not, why did we come?**









like a grain of wheat / original: wie ein Weizenkorn



## CLOSING REMAKRS

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(1) ©image + photography: Sr. Heidrun Bauer SDS

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