



Fr. Jordan's History

Take this time to learn a bit more about the founder of the Salvatorians, Fr. Francis Jordan. Let's look first at his life and then see what lessons we can draw from it on our own way to heaven.

John Baptist Jordan was certainly not born for greatness. In fact, his family was downright poor. His father was a stable-hand and his mother was a hotel maid. Born in 1848, he grew up in the Black Forest area of Germany during a very chaotic time, when the secular government was claiming its superiority over religion in all its forms. Although he had wanted to be a priest from a very early age, the untimely death of his father threw the family into even greater poverty, and there was no way he could afford an education. Instead he trained as a decorator's apprentice to support himself and his family back home.

But Fr. Jordan's dream of priesthood would not die. And at a rather late age, he convinced the local parish priest to tutor him in his school entrance exams. Despite all odds, he was accepted to school, and with some scholarships and the assistance of his godmother, he finally was ordained in 1878, at the age of 30.

Barred from serving the church in Germany for political reasons, he went for language studies in Rome. And over the next few years he grew increasingly convinced that he was being called to found a new religious movement. He dreamed of enlisting men and women from all walks of life to build up the kingdom of God using all the ways and means the love of God inspired. These "new apostles" would look beyond the boundaries of nations, race and sex. They would work at home and abroad and not rest until all the world had come "to know and love the one true God and Jesus Christ whom He had sent." He founded this movement (later called the Salvatorians) on December 8, 1881.

Then the real trials began. Almost immediately he faced opposition from the Church over the name of his new institute, and over its "Noah's ark" of passengers. No sooner was one misunderstanding cleared up with one group than another arose. For the remainder of his life, until he died in exile from Rome in 1918, he faced misunderstanding and opposition from both within and outside his new order.

But as gold is tested in fire, so his virtue was tested and proved in the flames of this opposition. Here was a man of unwavering trust in Divine Providence, of unceasing prayer, of unswerving loyalty to the Church and of unflinching charity to all, most especially to those who least appreciated him. These are the heroic virtues he practiced and modeled for Salvatorians, his spiritual children. And these are the virtues we hope to model for those we continue to serve.