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Father Francis Jordan

*Apostle of the Divine Savior
and Founder of the Salvatorians*

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Introduction

In every age, God raises up founders of religious movements that continue the salvific work of Jesus. Augustine, Benedict, Francis, Dominic, Teresa of Avila, and Ignatius of Loyola are but a few of the leaders and founders of communities and movements that have preserved the Church during times of challenge and upheaval. These individuals often faced great trials and misunderstandings in their ministries. Yet each of them was able to persevere, guided by the Holy Spirit and by a tremendous love of God. Such is the case of Father Francis Jordan, the Founder of the Salvatorians.

The purpose of this short work is to tell the story of the life and ministry of Father Jordan. Jordan was born in the tumultuous nineteenth century, when the Church of Europe was swept by secularist and anticlerical movements and revolutions. His response was to found a movement of his own, whose goal was to strive “that all may know the One True God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent” (John 17: 3). This movement, which began as the Apostolic Teaching Society and evolved ultimately into the Salvatorians, would be comprised of priests, brothers, sisters, and laity who worked together to make the love of the Divine Savior known through all ways and means that the love of Christ inspires. Today the Salvatorians continue to minister throughout the world, ever faithful to the charism of Jordan. It is our hope that all who read this work may be inspired by his vision and share his zeal of making Christ known to all.

In preparing this text, the author has relied on several sources. The first is Father Jordan’s own Spiritual Diary. The Talks of Father Francis Mary of the Cross

Jordan, translated by Father Daniel Pekarske, SDS, proved most helpful. Two major biographies have been published on Jordan: *The Life of Father Francis Jordan* (1930), by Father Pancratius Pfeiffer, SDS (second Superior General of the Society of the Divine Savior), and the shorter *Because He Hoped in Me* (1981), by Father Leonard Gerke, SDS. Other materials include the Letter Dialogue between Father Jordan and Mother Mary of the Apostles, prepared by Sister Miriam Cerletty, SDS, as well as various articles and publications by the Salvatorian International History Commission and the Joint History and Charism Committee of the United States Province. The author is grateful to all who assisted in the preparation of this short life of Father Jordan.

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Beginnings

Jordan's early years were marked by many challenges. He was born in Gurtweil, Baden, Germany (not far from the Swiss border), on June 16, 1848, and was christened John Baptist Jordan. His parents, Lorenz and Notburga, were faithful Catholics who instilled in him faith from the earliest age. Lorenz worked as a hired laborer at a nearby inn, but after a serious accident that cost him the use of his leg, he worked as the town crier of Gurtweil. His mother was forced to do the bulk of the work at the house, as well as hiring herself out to other families to help support her husband and three sons. Despite the poverty of the family, Jordan was able to attend elementary school in Gurtweil from 1855 to 1862. Given the family's simple circumstances, the expectation was that Jordan would then take an apprenticeship and spend his life as an artisan. Following the death of his father in 1863, he did just that, taking an apprenticeship in Waldshut as a painter, gilder, and decorator from 1864 to 1866. Upon the completion of his training he worked as a journeyman in 1867.

A story from Jordan's early years will illustrate his piety. On April 7, 1861, Jordan made his First Communion. According to witnesses, after receiving Communion, Jordan looked around, then up to the ceiling, and appeared very distracted. Afterwards, he explained that a white dove had fluttered around his head and then disappeared. While some questioned this story, from this point on, Jordan's behavior changed. He became a very devout young man, spending much time in private prayer. His piety continued to grow as he matured into young adulthood.

During his time as a journeyman, Jordan joined the Kolping Society, an association of Catholic artisans. He traveled extensively during his months as a journeyman,

gaining a sense of both the goodness of people and the many different challenges and evils of the age. He recognized that there were many forces that drew young persons away from God and His Church. Through prayer and reflection he gradually became aware of his vocation: that God was calling him to be a priest.

This was no easy call for a man of Jordan's position. His father was now deceased and his family had no resources with which to assist him in his call. Furthermore, he had no secondary studies and was rather old to be pursuing ordination (he was already twenty-one). Finally, he knew that his family relied on him for support. But he had experienced God's call, and so he pursued it doggedly over the next several years.

Jordan began by studying privately under Monsignor Werber, pastor of the parish of Waldshut. With him, Jordan began the language studies required for seminarians. Jordan proved to be a masterful linguist and learned countless languages throughout his life. After studying with Werber and his assistant, Jordan then completed his middle school (gymnasium) studies at Constance, graduating in 1874. These years were filled with much financial hardship for Jordan. To help support himself, he tutored other students and was assisted by benefactors. He attended the University of Baden in Freiburg where he completed his studies in theology in 1877. Jordan took his final year of preparation for priesthood at the archepiscopal seminary of Saint Peter outside Freiburg, and was ordained a priest on July 21, 1878. During his time of studies, his piety found expression in his diary:

Know that you are completely consecrated to God; He alone has the right and claim to your faculties. You may only will something if and because God wills it for you. In all you do, do not ask yourself:

“do I want this,” but “does God want this.” Always be joyful, praise God constantly, come what may (*Spiritual Diary*, I, 11).

On the day of his ordination, he wrote, “Lord Jesus Christ, I desire, I purpose, and I intend to receive today the holy order of the priesthood for Your Glory and the salvation of souls. Take and accept me as a perpetual holocaust for You. Amen” (*Spiritual Diary*, I, 141).

During the years of Jordan’s studies, an anti-Catholic movement known as the “Kulturkampf” raged in Germany. The purpose of this movement was to force the Catholic Church into subservience to the government. As a result, seminaries were closed, and all priests and bishops were required to obey the anti-clerical laws. Many refused and were imprisoned or expelled. Jordan himself was ordained behind locked doors and celebrated his First Mass in Döttingen, Switzerland (across the border from Germany) because the law forbade anyone who had not taken an oath to obey the state from functioning as a priest in his homeland. (He later celebrated a private Mass in his home parish.)

The political climate of Germany prevented Jordan’s bishop from assigning him to a parish; consequently, he was sent to Rome to continue language studies in 1878. There he attended the German College of Campo Santo. By this time, he was also beginning to understand that God was calling him to more than the life of a simple priest. God was also asking Jordan to found a movement dedicated to the salvation of souls. This endeavor was to cost Jordan dearly, and yet would be the fulfillment of God’s purpose for his life.

The Inspiration for the Apostolic Teaching Society

The idea of founding a new movement was fraught with difficulties. Jordan was newly-ordained and studying outside of his home diocese, which was itself desperate for priests. Furthermore, this was a time when many other institutes and religious congregations were founded; the necessity of another was questionable. Each of these dilemmas Jordan faced with courage and prayer, seeking always to live in accord with the mind of the Church and her ecclesiastical leaders. He spoke frequently with his classmates at the Campo Santo about his plans. Some were skeptical. One in particular recalled many years later that he had told Jordan quite bluntly that while the idea was sound, he was in no way personally suited to execute it. He said that he was impressed by Jordan's humble response: "Ah, well, but often God selects as instruments for the accomplishment of his designs such men as are in themselves most unsuitable for the purpose" (Pfeiffer, *Life*, 42).

Another event proved to have a major impact on Jordan's vision. In 1880, Jordan, along with approximately twenty other priests, set out on a journey to the Middle East. They traveled first to Egypt and then to Palestine, where Jordan visited all of the places of Christ's life on earth. On March 13, in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, he wrote out what many regard as the first outline of what would become his Society:

Do not give up and never lose heart. Make use of all the lawful means at your disposal...daily invoke the Blessed Virgin, the Patroness of the Society. Begin with the instruction of capable boys who give the sure sign of having a vocation

to the priesthood, and then, as soon as possible, under the protection of the Propaganda Fide and the Holy See (SD I, 152f*).

Jordan continued his studies in the Holy Land, but made a visit to Lebanon as a break. It was there on a mountain, gazing out over the cedars of Lebanon, that Jordan had a profound religious experience. He pondered the words of Christ at the Last Supper: “Now this is eternal life: that they should know Thee, the One True God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou has sent” (John 17: 3). He was deeply moved by this experience. These words became the inspiration for his new society, and its primary mission. Upon his return to Rome in August 1880, Jordan was ready to begin his work.

The Foundation of the Society

As stated in his reflection in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Jordan wished to place his Society under the protection of the Holy See. Consequently, as soon as he reached Rome, he visited various prelates, proposing to them his idea of founding a new institute. One sympathetic prelate, the Barnabite Cardinal Bilio, arranged for a private audience with Pope Leo XIII, who listened to Jordan’s plan with interest and then gave his papal blessing to the project. The reception he received from the Pope encouraged Jordan. He knew that he could now begin in earnest to found his new “Apostolic Teaching Society.”

The first task was to procure housing. He rented a few rooms in the Monastery of Saint Bridget in Rome and took in two students who were preparing for priesthood (neither went on to become members of the Society). He then began to publish articles in the Italian

press calling for support, and in 1881 wrote a circular letter to the bishops of Italy describing to them his idea for the Apostolic Teaching Society. That same year, he journeyed to Germany to find collaborators and to establish a German center where the Society could be promoted in the German press. He was especially interested in the Cassianeum, an established educational and printing center run by Ludwig Auer in Donauwörth, Bavaria. Jordan's hope was that the Cassianeum could be joined with the Society as its German headquarters. While the connection with Auer was short-lived and stormy, this endeavor did lead Jordan to his first recruit for the Society, his "eldest son," Father Bernard (later Bonaventure) Lüthen.

Lüthen, a young priest himself, was from Paderborn, Westphalia, in Northern Germany. He had worked at the Cassianeum for several years, printing a magazine for priests entitled *Ambrosius* and writing for and editing other publications. Though initially hesitant, Lüthen gradually felt called to join Jordan's movement. This new disciple proved to be Jordan's right-hand man, carrying on a heavy correspondence with future members of the Society, helping with formation, and advising and counseling Jordan, who was sometimes impetuous and prone to anxiety and scrupulosity. For the rest of his life, Lüthen faithfully assisted Jordan in his work, and the most devastating loss to Jordan throughout his ministry was the death of Lüthen in 1911.

Quickly Jordan and Lüthen began their new partnership. The first endeavor was to begin the publication of a Catholic periodical entitled *Der Missionär*. Jordan left Lüthen in Germany and returned to Rome. Lüthen, who found housing with the Benedictines, produced the first copy of *Der Missionär* in August 1881. In this first edition, Lüthen offered the readership an outline of what the Apostolic Teaching Society would be:

The Apostolic Teaching Society has taken upon itself a great scope of activity. First of all, it wants to help make a great many Catholics thoroughly Catholic again, in order that they may not merely bear this beautiful name exteriorly, but that also their hearts may be filled with the true spirit of the Catholic Faith...Every lawful means is agreeable to us: science, art, instructions, missions, periodicals, and societies...Priests and the laity, parents and teachers, craftsmen and workers, master and servants---we summon them all to gather round our banner! (Pfeiffer, *Life*, 65).

Lüthen, continuing to outline Jordan's vision, wrote that the Society would help ordinary Catholics to better defend their faith during a time when the Church was under such grievous attack. Finally, the Society would train missionaries and send them throughout the world to convert "pagans" to the Catholic faith. *Der Missionär* would prove to be a valuable resource for the Society, serving as an organ for Jordan's ideas.

The year 1881 closed with the first step of the fulfillment of Jordan's goal: the official founding of the Apostolic Teaching Society. On December 8, Jordan, joined by Lüthen and a third priest, Frederick von Leonhardi, took private vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience as members of the new Society. Leonhardi, a Prussian convert with a strong and determined personality, made his vows for life, whereas Lüthen took his for a period of three years. Ultimately, von Leonhardi left the Society, the first of many defections that deeply hurt Jordan.

The structure of the Apostolic Teaching Society in its initial form was as follows. There were three degrees, based upon intensity of involvement in the apostolate. The first degree consisted of priests and laity who would "leave all things behind" in order to dedicate their lives

exclusively to the service of the Society. (Jordan, Lüthen, and von Leonhardi were its first members.) The second degree was composed of scholars who would promote the aims of the Society without relinquishing their academic positions. Finally, the third degree was open to all persons who wished to live by the Society's ideals within their own state in life. Members could be married or single, professionals or non-professionals. The main requirements were that they subscribe to the Society's publication and live exemplary Christian lives, helping others to know the love of the Savior.

In time, others began to join the Apostolic Teaching Society. Most notable was Baroness Therese von Wüllenweber, a laywoman in Germany. Von Wüllenweber had tried her vocation in several different religious communities, but had never made final vows. Returning to her home in Myllendonk, she founded a charitable institute, the Saint Barbara Institute in Neuwerk, and privately lived a quasi-religious life. Upon reading the description of the Society in *Der Missionär* in 1882, von Wüllenweber discussed the meeting with her parish priest, Father von Essen, and immediately wrote to Lüthen, offering herself and her institute for the new apostolate. Lüthen accepted her into the third degree and von Essen into the first. A few months later she made private vows into the hands of Fr. von Leonhardi and became a member of the first degree. The following year, she professed her final vows directly into the hands of Father Jordan. Ultimately, von Wüllenweber co-founded with Jordan the Sisters of the Catholic Teaching Society, but not without many obstacles along the way.

As the Society developed, Jordan experienced much hardship and many attacks. The Cardinal Vicar of Rome, the Church authority immediately responsible for the undertaking, received reports of this new organization. Jordan was summoned to the Vicariate and told

that he could no longer use the word “apostolic” in the title of the Society. Critics charged that Jordan was assuming for himself and his members the apostolic teaching function of the Church, a term at that time reserved for the pope and the bishops as the successors of the apostles. The Society was then reviewed by the Congregation for Religious, which appointed a consultant to investigate. In his report, the consultant harshly criticized the Society, referring to it as a “Noah’s Ark” that attempted to include all people in an organization that had no clear purpose (Pfeiffer, *Life*, 147). Jordan cooperated with the process and made the recommended changes. The name of the Society was changed to the “Catholic Teaching Society” to avoid further controversy. Officials allowed the organization to continue, and more students joined. That same year, the members of the Society living in Rome moved to the Palazzo Moroni in the Borgo Vecchio, in close proximity to Saint Peter’s Square. This house remains today the global headquarters of the Society.

The Society Becomes a Religious Institute

While originally Jordan did not plan to found a religious congregation, in time, that is exactly what it became. The charge of “Noah’s Ark” revealed that the Society in its original form, without clearer norms, would not receive official approval by Church officials, regardless of Pope Leo XIII’s initial blessing.

Rather quickly Jordan came to see that the best way forward for his apostolic society lay in adopting a more typical religious lifestyle—including regular community life, public vows, and an official habit. Reflecting on this change three years later, Jordan saw this as “a prompting of the Holy Spirit.”

At the same time, he was working to establish a Roman branch of sisters with the help of Amalia Streitell, a former Franciscan sister and Carmelite novice. Streitell's view of religious life was heavily influenced by both her Franciscan and Carmelite experiences. She believed that heavy penance, hours of prayer, and strict fasting were the only ways to ensure the success of Jordan's community. Jordan, on the other hand, felt that such heavy penances would prevent the Sisters from fulfilling their apostolic work and could jeopardize their health. While Jordan frequently disagreed with Mother Streitell's severity, he, a diocesan priest, learned much about the particular character of religious life from her.

On March 11, 1883, Jordan took vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and began to wear the habit of the Catholic Teaching Society, which consisted of a cassock and black rope cincture with four knots. (The knots represented the three vows taken by the members: poverty, chastity, obedience, and their commitment to the apostolate.) Lüthen made his profession shortly thereafter. They also took religious names. From this point on, Jordan's name was "Francis Mary of the Cross." Lüthen received the name "Bonaventure."

The consequences of this change in the character and identity of the Catholic Teaching Society cannot be overemphasized. Previously, many students had joined Jordan at his residence in the hope of becoming priests; this did not imply, however, a commitment to remain with Jordan for life. Now that the Society had become a religious congregation, only those students willing to become Religious under vows were allowed to remain. Furthermore, the structure of the Society was dramatically altered: the priests and brothers would be members of the men's branch, whereas the sisters would constitute a separate women's congregation. In addition, concentration on the work of establishing two traditional

religious congregations eclipsed for a long time Jordan's earlier interest in lay involvement. Finally, religious life implied a much stronger commitment to communal religious observances, and, in time, Jordan would impose the common recitation of the Divine Office on all houses of the Society. (At this time, private recitation had been the norm.)

Meanwhile, von Wüllenweber remained in Neuwerk with her own small community. They did not receive the habit, and, in time, it became clear that Rome, and not Neuwerk, would be the headquarters of the Sister's branch of the Catholic Teaching Society. Attempts to mix the two houses in Neuwerk and Rome in order to form a common identity failed, for Streitel's view of poverty, penance and the role of the apostolate were simply inconsistent with the Neuwerk community. Furthermore, despite their mutual respect for one another, the divide between Jordan's concept of religious life and Streitel's continued to widen. In 1885, a new problem developed regarding Streitel's Franciscan vows, which remained in effect. Hence, she had to quietly step down as superior of the Roman Sisters. This caused much consternation among them. Misunderstandings abounded. Many blamed Jordan and begged him to reinstate Streitel, something he was powerless to do. Finally, Monsignor Jacquemin, confessor to the Sisters in Rome, asked the Cardinal Vicar of Rome on behalf of Mother Streitel to intervene. In October 1885, the Rome Sisters were removed from Jordan's direction and placed directly under Jacquemin. They were given a new name, the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother, and Jordan was informed that he was to have no further contact with them.

Though bitterly disappointed, Jordan continued to pursue the work to which God had called him. The Catholic Teaching Society remained firmly under his direction. Furthermore, the community in Neuwerk

under the direction of Therese von Wüllenweber was not affected by the split between Jordan and Streitel. While at the present time, it was not opportune for them to join Jordan in Rome, he and Lüthen encouraged them to remain patient and to take consolation in their vows, which remained in effect. In 1888, at the invitation of Jordan, von Wüllenweber and Ursula Rabis, accompanied by four candidates, came to Tivoli (near Rome) and to form the nucleus of the Sisters of the Catholic Teaching Society. This community would flourish and ultimately establish its own motherhouse in Rome, in very close proximity to the men's headquarters. Although the Sisters comprised a separate religious congregation, Jordan always encouraged and supported Mother Mary of the Apostles (as Therese was known in religion) as superior and collaborator. The following quote from September 1889 shows the great affection Jordan felt for Mother Mary:

For the holy feast of your nameday I send you my most heartfelt good wishes for happiness and every blessing. May the dear God grant you abundant graces. May he still let you experience countless joys, after the many crosses which you already have had to bear (Cerletty, *Letter Dialogue*, 58).

The First Mission of the Society

The years 1889-90 witnessed a significant event in the history of Jordan's Society. He had always hoped that his movement would be international and mission-oriented. This hope was fulfilled when the Society was given a new mission in Assam, India. After this territory had been separated from the Bengal diocese, and with

none of the more established orders willing to accept it, Jordan was requested by the Propaganda Fide, the congregation responsible for mission territories, to consider assuming the work for his Society. The Cardinal Vicar of Rome wrote a recommendation supporting the venture, and so, despite the small size of the Society (six priests, three deacons, four subdeacons, seventeen brothers, and one hundred and twenty-four students), they were entrusted with the India mission. Jordan initially sent two priests and two brothers to Assam: Fathers Otto and Angelus, and Brothers Marianus and Joseph. His address to them at the time of their departure demonstrates the significance this moment had for Jordan:

Through our confreres, the first ones that our Society is sending out, peace, the happy tidings of the Gospel, are to be brought to the people. This joy must by far outweigh our sorrow. Go forth, then, into the hard battle that awaits you...The works of God flourish only in the shadow of the Cross...gaze upon the Cross again, and you will take on new life, and exult anew (Pfeiffer, *Life*, 273; DSS XXII, 17/01/1890).

The missionaries departed on January 17, 1890. By the end of the year, both Father Otto and Brother Marianus would be dead from disease and hard work, but the foundation was laid, and more men and women were sent. The Assam mission flourished. With the outbreak of the First World War, however, the Society members were expelled due to their German and Austro-Hungarian nationality, and replaced by Italian Salesians. Yet the missionary work of the Society had begun, and, during the next few years, the Society would spread to several other countries and continents.

Growth of the Society

This growth was quite rapid. In 1890, a minor seminary was opened in Tivoli, Italy, which would prepare students for novitiate and provide a place for members to go for refreshment during the sweltering summer months. Foundations in Austria soon followed, with the community taking two parishes in Vienna and opening a house of studies in Lochau. In the 1890s, Jordan sent missionaries to the United States of America, with the first group of priests and brothers going to Washington State, and a second to Saint Nazianz, Wisconsin, in 1896. During the same years, a group was sent to Ecuador, but due to a revolution, they soon relocated to Colombia. A house of studies opened in Fribourg, Switzerland, and a second house in Sicily in 1894. A short while later, the community accepted an institute for troubled boys in Drogens, Switzerland, and opened another foundation in Moravia. This rapid expansion of the Society throughout the 1890s shows Jordan's strong faith in Divine Providence.

This faith was needed. While the community continued to expand, the challenges were many. Jordan, remembering his own difficult days as a poor student struggling to support himself, accepted many students for seminary studies who could not afford to pay. Their liberal arts studies were often shortened, without reducing their requirements in philosophy or theology, in order to provide much needed priests for the growing apostolate. Furthermore, he opened houses and established new foundations with few priests and little money. This was not blindness on the part of Jordan; he knew that Providence would provide the means for the realization of the Society's mission. While some charged that his spending was imprudent, the expansion proved to be fruitful and the Society flourished with voca-

tions. Perhaps Jordan's vision can be summed up in a talk he gave to members in 1899: "One main condition for a beneficial and fruitful apostolate is zeal for souls. Therefore, have zeal for souls! If you want to work effectively, you must have great zeal for souls!" (DSS XXII, 27/01/1899).

The criticism of Jordan's rapid expansion and acceptance of poor students ultimately led to the appointment of an Apostolic Visitor, whose role it was to supervise the development of the Society. While the Visitor himself, the Roman Carmelite and former provincial, Father Antonio of Jesus, was a good man who would prove very helpful to the Society over the years, the visitation itself was viewed at the time as a devaluation of Jordan's leadership ability. Time would prove that Jordan was indeed a good and holy founder, but his acceptance of the appointment of the Visitor was a sign of his utter obedience and respect for the Holy See.

The Society of the Divine Savior

At the same time that the Society was growing, it was also given a new name. In 1892, Jordan had again sought official approbation from the Holy See. (While Leo XIII and various prelates had given Jordan their blessing when he began his project, as yet his congregation was of diocesan right.) Such papal approbation would formally establish the Society as a permanent, international community directly under the Holy See. When Jordan submitted his request in 1892, complete with glowing recommendations and proof of sustainability, the Society was still officially called the Catholic Teaching Society. After two years of deliberation, the Church decided to postpone papal approbation; the community was still too new, and the constitutions required additional revisions. Jordan

accepted this disappointment with humility and courage. He also accepted, quite joyfully, a new name for his community. The consultor who examined the application felt that to call the Society a “teaching” community implied that its sole focus was running educational institutions. He suggested a title that would indicate the broader ministry of the congregation: the Society of the Divine Savior. From 1894, this would be the official name of the community of priests and brothers that Jordan founded. The sisters’ branch was renamed the Congregation of the Sisters of the Divine Savior. Final approbation eventually came from the Holy See: in 1905, the community received the *Decretum Laudis* (“Decree of Praise”) from the Pope; in 1911, the final approbation of the Society as a Religious Institute of Pontifical Right was given. That same year, the Sisters received the *Decretum Laudis* for their community as well.

Jordan and the Observance of Religious Life

Jordan’s faith was not only evident in his vision of expansion, however. He also zealously promoted the ideals of the religious life to the members of the community. He insisted on the importance of regular religious observance, and, following the advice of the Visitor, he allowed little local variation. The habit was to be worn at all missions. (This would prove challenging to many members, especially since the habit at the time included, in addition to cassock and cincture, a heavy mantle and an awkward Roman-style broad black hat.) Furthermore, from 1890 on, Jordan insisted that all houses of the Society recite the Divine Office in common. This practice of reciting the Office in choir, while appropriate for larger monastic communities, proved difficult in

the smaller houses. Many preferred the Jesuit model, which did not bind members to a common recitation. Eventually a balance was struck, with dispensations given when necessary.

At the heart of Jordan's vision for the religious life was the sanctity of its members. Jordan's confreres remembered him to be a man of great prayer and unshakable confidence in God. This faith, this sanctity, was a quality that he constantly stressed to the membership, as this talk given in 1894 demonstrates:

How little attention we pay to this truth: we must be holy. In his great mercy the Divine Savior has called us to be conformed to his image; he called us to be like him as much as possible: to be holy. He has called us so that already, here [on earth], through holiness, our work everywhere may be accompanied by blessings, happiness and salvation (DSS XXII, 20/04/1894).

If at times Jordan stressed observance of the rule more than some community members would have preferred, his point was always to ensure that the Society functioned as one body, dedicated to the work of Christ. Jordan felt that when members began to go their own way, absenting themselves from community observances and the direction of the superiors, the result would be chaos. He firmly believed that only union with Christ and with each other would bring about the success of the apostolate.

The Shadow of the Cross

When Jordan made his public vows in 1883, in addition to taking the name "Francis Mary," he added the words

“of the Cross.” This was a prophetic action, for throughout his religious life, he experienced much suffering and hardship. Already, the years between 1883 and 1900 had brought difficulties: some members defected, others criticized his leadership. The first group of Sisters was removed from his jurisdiction. While the early foundations were successful and many more were added during his remaining years, these also took their toll (e.g. the death of Father Otto and Brother Marianus shortly after the founding of the mission in Assam). Attacks from within and without had led to the appointment of an Apostolic Visitor. Finally, Jordan’s own health began to weaken. While visiting Wisconsin in 1896 at the beginning of the Saint Nazianz foundation, sunstroke left Jordan deaf in his right ear. Upon his return to Rome, he wrote in his diary: “Do begin finally to take it seriously, for the time of evening is approaching” (Pfeiffer, *Life*, 374; SD II, 10).

The suffering of Jordan increased in 1906, when personal attacks against him and his Society appeared in German newspapers. The charges were grossly exaggerated and cut Jordan to the core. According to the anonymous author (a disgruntled former member of the Society), Jordan was an inept autocrat whose main goal was to remain in control of the Society at all costs. Furthermore, he constantly introduced legalistic practices into community life that hampered the apostolate and led to division. The author charged that the only reason why the Assam mission had been accepted was as a “milk cow” to gain resources for other works of the Society. Finally, he maintained that the students of Jordan’s Society were poorly trained and ordained without appropriate academic preparation. The articles, though widely circulated in Germany, produced no lasting effect, other than to foster an even greater loyalty of Jordan’s spiritual sons and daughters for their founder. Jordan

received many letters of support from within and without the Society. Despite this support, the pain he felt, as well as his strong faith, is evident in his entries into his diary: “Oh, Lord, see my sufferings; help me, take pity on me. Thy will be done” (Gerke, *Because He Hoped*, 202). Lüthen, Jordan’s unwavering assistant, responded to the attacks with letters to the various houses assuring them that all was well. The response at the Second General Chapter of the Society in 1908 was to unanimously re-elect Jordan as Superior General of the Society. Some changes were forthcoming, however: all of his consultants, including Lüthen, were replaced, and the capitulars decided to divide the Society into provinces a bit earlier than the Founder had anticipated. Despite this, the Chapter proved to be the vindication of Jordan, and he continued to lead the Society until 1915.

Deaths of Mother Mary and Father Bonaventure

If the press attacks caused Jordan considerable pain, the deaths of Mother Mary of the Apostles and Father Bonaventure Lüthen devastated Jordan. Mother Mary had been sick for a considerable period of time. The Sisters re-elected her as Superior at their Chapter in 1905, despite her frail condition and pressure from Church authorities to choose a new leader. In 1907, her health failed, and she died on Christmas Day 1907. Jordan felt keenly the death of Mother Mary, who had remained faithful to him throughout her religious life, especially during the early years when the Roman community of Sisters had broken away from Jordan’s movement. She was buried according to her own request at Campo Santo (her remains were later transferred to the Sisters’ Motherhouse chapel in Rome).

If the death of Mother Mary was painful for Jordan, the death of Lüthen was excruciating. Throughout their thirty years together, Lüthen had been a good balance for Jordan. Whereas Jordan was energetic, anxious (even scrupulous), and sometimes indecisive, Lüthen was calm and reassuring. Lüthen assisted Jordan with his heavy correspondence, often serving as his spokesperson to various members. Even after he ceased to be an official member of the Generalate, he continued to work with Jordan, calming his many fears and scruples. His death on December 10, 1911, was not unexpected (his health was rapidly deteriorating), but it was still a tremendous blow for Jordan. On the evening of his death, Lüthen had appeared briefly at recreation but then retired to his bed, where he had already spent the day resting. Shortly after going to his own room, Jordan was summoned to Lüthen's bedside. According to observers, Jordan knelt by Lüthen's side and, determining that he was dead, murmured "The Lord gives and the Lord takes away...Blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1: 21). Jordan accepted the death of his friend, companion, and supporter with grace, but he was never able to attain the same peace of mind that he had known in the company of Lüthen.

The Death of the Founder

The final years of Jordan's life were lived directly in the shadow of the Cross. The outbreak of World War I led to the transfer of the Generalate to Fribourg in neutral Switzerland. Jordan, too, left Rome and went into exile, never to return. He watched helplessly as many of his students and clerics were drafted into the armies of their respective homelands. At the Third General Chapter in 1915 (delayed a year due to the war's outbreak), Jordan,

aware of his own physical weakness and the need for a strong leader during such turbulent times, stepped down as superior of the Society, though he retained the title of Founder and General. From that point until his death three years later, he lived a humble religious life, assiduously striving never to interfere with the new Generalate's affairs.

During this period, the Generalate itself operated out of a house in Maggenberg, Switzerland, while Jordan remained at the house in Fribourg. His health began to seriously decline in 1917; at times, he was on complete bed-rest. Due to his poor health and shattered nerves, he was no longer able to pray the Divine Office. Mass became increasingly difficult for him to celebrate. Finally, when it was apparent that he required professional care, he went to live at a hospital near Tifers run by the Daughters of Charity. When Jordan arrived there, he saw the poor elderly gathered in front of the house and said, "Now I am among the poor" (Pfeiffer, "The Last Days of Father Jordan," *Salvatorian Chronicle*, 1918, 8). According to Father Pancratius Pfeiffer, who succeeded Jordan as head of the Society, the Sisters caring for Jordan regarded it as a great privilege. The Sister-superior said to him, "The individual sisters like to take care of Father General. Each one is happy if she can do something for him. They take the various tasks away from each other" (Pfeiffer, "Last Days," 10). Pfeiffer also reported on Jordan's faith during this ordeal:

Our Venerable Father was gazing steadily into my eyes. As he noticed how his condition was affecting me, he said: "The dear God will make everything turn out right. Others will come, they will remember our suffering and continue our work" (Pfeiffer, "Last Days, 11).

Sister Huberta Dehottay, superior of the hospital of Tafers, testified that his courage in the face of suffering edified them all:

That evening [September 6] one of the Sisters said to him: “When you get to Heaven, pray for us, too, so that we can remain faithful to our vows.” He added to that: “And that you carry out the will of God and remain united with Jesus.” If anyone handed him the crucifix, he would press it tightly to his heart, saying repeatedly, “My Jesus, mercy” (Pfeiffer, “Last Days,” 21).

Father Jordan died on September 8, 1918, attended by the Sisters of the hospital, a male nurse, the parish priest of Tafers, and Pfeiffer himself. For several days afterwards, the Sisters kept vigil beside his body while villagers and friends paid their respects. Due to the difficulties caused by the war, Jordan was buried in the church at Tafers (his remains were later transferred to the Motherhouse in Rome). In his homily, the parish priest said: “Because of the sad conditions of the times, the venerable deceased had to conclude his holy life—far away from the Motherhouse, like an exile—surrounded by only a small number of his large family. The parish of Tafers feels honored to have been able to offer him asylum during the last days of his life” (Pfeiffer, “Last Days,” 20).

Conclusion

Nearly one hundred and twenty years have passed since Father Jordan founded the Society of the Divine Savior and the Sisters of the Divine Savior, and his work continues to flourish around the world. Jordan’s vision

of a movement of priests, Religious, and laity working together “so that all may know the One True God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent” remains the guiding force of the Salvatorian community. In the years since the Second Vatican Council, the community has expanded to include Lay Salvatorians, who promise to follow the Salvatorian charism according to their state in life. The Salvatorians now exist on every continent and have begun to increase rapidly in Africa and Asia. As the movement grows, so does the good work of the community, which includes schools, hospitals, missions, parishes, printing presses, chaplaincies, and many others. In short, in the charism of Jordan, the Salvatorians use “all ways and means that the love of Christ inspires” to spread the love of the Divine Savior to all people.



Words of Father Jordan

(Taken from his *Spiritual Diary*)

“O most beloved Jesus, Spouse of my soul, grant that I may always love You above all things” (I, 144).

“Do not omit any good work compatible with your state. Fear useless anxieties as a great enemy which hinders you from all good!” (I, 191).

“Believe, trust, hope, love, work — you must lead all to Christ: you are debtor to all, to whatever nation they belong” (I, 192).

“The greatest possible glory of God. The greatest possible self-sanctification and salvation/ the greatest possible salvation, that is, the salvation of as many as possible. To achieve this, fight even to the shedding of blood, to death, to the most difficult martyrdom, always — always — everywhere” (II, 16).

“Cover mistakes over with the mantle of love” (II, 23).

“Reflect often on the significant sentence: Do not trust in yourself, but place your complete trust in God, and you will be able to do everything!” (II, 75).

“Just as charity alone makes apostles, it alone also makes saints” (III, 23).

“Pray — Pray without ceasing; for if you pray, you will surely be saved... St. Alphonse Liguori” (III, 34).

“Always do everything out of love for God” (IV, 18).

“Persevere in suffering and in the Cross. Oh, persevere firmly and heroically. Courage, my child, look upon Me on the Cross!... Embrace the Cross and kiss it. Easter morning is coming soon!” (I, 175).

Prayer for the Beatification of Father Francis Jordan

Most Loving God,
You called forth Father Francis Mary of the Cross Jordan
To found a religious family of priests, brothers,
sisters, and laity.
Look with mercy upon the community he founded.
Help us to remain ever-faithful to his vision.
Through the intercession of Father Francis Jordan,
Give peace of mind to those who suffer anxiety,
Healing to the sick,
Light to those in darkness,
And the grace of conversion to all.
And, if it be Your holy will,
Raise him to the dignity of the altar,
So that all may know You, the One True God,
And Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.
Amen.

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