



CONGREGATION FOR THE CAUSES OF SAINTS

Rome or Fribourg, Switzerland
Cause for beatification and canonization
of the Servant of God

Francis Mary of the Cross
(in secular life: John Baptist Jordan)

Priest and Founder
of the Society of the Divine Savior
and of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Divine Savior
(1848-1918)

DECREE ON THE HEROICITY OF VIRTUES



The Servant of God, Francis Mary of the Cross Jordan, was born on June 16, 1848, into a poor family in the village of Gurtweil near Waldshut in Baden, Germany. Son of Lorenz and Nothburga, he was the second of three brothers. The next day he was baptized and given the name John Baptist. Around the age of 13 he received his First Holy Communion. From that moment not only the joy at receiving Communion, going to Confession, praying and reading spiritual books, but also a longing for the priesthood grew in him. The loss of his father at the age of 15 reinforced even more his spiritual life. After completing elementary school, John Baptist worked as an unskilled laborer and painter. After pursuing this trade in various places, around the age of 20 he finally decided to follow his calling to the priesthood. He began by taking private lessons and then entered secondary school in the city of Constance. Having completed these studies, he entered upon a three-year program of studies in Theology and Philology in Freiburg in Breisgau. At the same time he undertook the study of various modern languages. At a time when he felt the presence of God in a particular way, he became aware of how greatly the Church in Germany was suffering because of the emerging ideology of the so-called "Kulturkampf." He realized that the peoples of Europe were threatened with the loss of their faith, and he felt compelled to live entirely for God and through God, in order to be an instrument for the salvation of all people.

During the year of preparation for Holy Orders in the seminary of St. Peter in Schwartzwald, he felt a certain inspiration and often asked himself a question: was this call to found a so called apostolic "movement" coming really from God or not? In response, he struggled even harder to know God's will and he strove after holiness with ever greater determination. As in the preceding Freiburg years, now too he lived through periods of inner darkness and aloneness. But he also experienced moments of deep happiness in receiving Holy Communion.

After his priestly ordination on July 21, 1878, he was sent by his bishop to Rome where he studied Syrian, Armenian, Coptic, Arabic, Hebrew and Greek. He also visited the Holy Land and Lebanon,

during which, deeply moved by the words of the Gospel, "This is eternal life, to know You the one true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" (Jn 17:3), he grew increasingly certain that he was being called to found an apostolic movement. After returning to Rome, his plans received the blessing of Pope Leo XIII and he began his enterprise. His desire was to associate with himself in the "Apostolic Teaching Society" (later the "Catholic Teaching Society") diverse groups of Catholic Christians, especially parents, teachers and formators whose task would be to transmit the faith, academics who should defend it, and finally even children. At the same time he wanted to found communities of men and women who would live according to the evangelical counsels and would be prepared to be sent anywhere. He soon changed these communities into religious Societies. He consecrated himself to God in the Basilica of St. Peter in the Vatican on Passion Sunday, 1883, taking the name Francis Mary of the Cross.

In order to found a women's community in Rome he selected as the first superior Petra Streitell, a religious woman filled with Franciscan and Carmelite spirituality, to whom he gave the name Mary Francis of the Cross. After two years it became clear, however, that Fr. Francis' calling and that of the Venerable Servant of God Mary Francis were incompatible. The life styles of the two communities could not be harmonized. So, in the end, ecclesiastical authorities separated the women's community from Fr. Jordan. Yet he was not discouraged, and in 1888 he founded a new Congregation of sisters with Therese von Wuellenweber, venerated today as Blessed Mary of the Apostles.

Fr. Francis Mary managed to gather around himself many spiritual sons and daughters. He wanted his motherhouse in Rome to be a "School for Apostles" who later would form many new apostles. He spared no effort in devoting himself entirely to the mission in Assam, India, and to opening many new houses in Europe and the Americas, making certain to form them in the same spirit that animated him. In 1893, he gave his religious communities the names "Society of the Divine Savior" and "Congregation of the Sisters of the Divine Savior."

In 1915 the First World War forced the generalate to relocate to neutral Switzerland, and in accord with the decision of the third general chapter, Fr. Jordan transferred the administration of the Society to his future successor, Fr. Pancratius Pfeiffer. After a serious illness Fr. Jordan died on September 8, 1918, in a humble hospice for

the aged in Tafers near Freiburg in Switzerland.

From his youth, God had filled this Servant of God with a great desire to be united with Christ in the Eucharist. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and Eucharistic adoration would remain the source of his life-long apostolic zeal. His confreres found him constantly absorbed in prayer. He drew great consolation from his love of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Savior and Queen of the Apostles, whose veneration he wanted to spread. He was a great lover of evangelical poverty and lived in an unshakeable trust in God along with profound humility. He was filled with love of the holy cross. He was always obedient to the faith of the Church and to the commands of Church authorities even in the most difficult times. He showed concern for his spiritual sons and daughters like a true father and was increasingly able to extend forgiveness.

The life of Father Francis Mary inspires apostolic holiness. He is the model of an apostle and a missionary, filled with the desire to lead all to Jesus Christ, the Savior of the World. In his universal vision of the apostolate he wanted not only to promote a renewal of the faith of those who believe, but also at the same time to promote the first and new evangelization. In all areas of life and culture he wanted to proclaim Christ and to give witness “using all ways and means the love of Christ inspires.”

Because of the Servant of God’s reputation for holiness, something which was recognized both during his lifetime and especially in his death, a diocesan Informative Process was held in Rome from December 22, 1942, to June 17, 1949. Thereafter, additional Inquiry Processes were made in the dioceses of Freiburg in Switzerland, Passau, Paderborn, Vienna, St. Sebastian in Rio de Janeiro, Olomouc and Green Bay (1943-1949); the juridical validity of these inquiries was approved by this Dicastery with the decree of November 24, 2006. After the Positio was submitted, the Historical Consultors issued a positive verdict at their session on June 5, 2007. On January 22, 2010, the Congressus Peculiaris of Theological Consultors met and also issued a positive result. The cardinals and bishops at their regular meeting on January 11, 2011, having heard the report from the presenter of the cause, His Excellency Most Rev. Msgr. Lino Fumagalli, bishop of Viterbo, recognized that the Servant of God had lived to a heroic degree the theological virtues and the cardinal virtues, along with the other associated virtues.

After the Cardinal Prefect, whose signature appears below, accurately reported all these things to the Supreme Pontiff Benedict XVI, His Holiness accepted and ratified the decision of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints and declared on this date: *in the case of and for the objective under discussion, that the Servant of God, Francis Mary of the Cross (known in civil society as John Baptist Jordan) priest and Founder of the Society of the Divine Savior as well as the Congregation of the Sisters of the Divine Savior, practiced to a heroic degree the theological virtues, faith, hope, and charity towards both God and neighbor, along with the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, temperance and fortitude and other attendant virtues.*

The Holy Father has ordered this decree to be published and be entered in the files of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints.

Rome, January 14, of the Year of the Lord 2011



Ang. Card. Amato

ANGELUS Card. AMATO, S.D.B.
Praefectus

M. Bartolucci

MARCELLUS BARTOLUCCI
Archiep. tit. el. Mevaniensis
a Secretis