

**THE SALVATORIAN FAMILY CHARTER
AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD
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“Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age”.¹

Father Jordan was deeply touched by this commandment of the Savior to his disciples and left it to the Salvatorian Family as a founding heritage. All of his attitudes and actions sprang from his great apostolic heart.

Father Jordan loved to speak about the spirit of the Society and his words truly flowed from his apostolic life. “Called by God, you followed this invitation, this summons, in order to dedicate your whole life to God and to the Salvation of souls in the spirit of our Society and for the attainment of its purposes. Through the holy vows you have consecrated yourselves to God and have taken upon yourselves the obligation of living and laboring in this spirit and for this end”.²

“...proclaim the word of God, be urgent in season, out of season, rebuke with all patience and teaching. Go, and with perseverance speak all the words of eternal life to the people.”³

Father Jordan says again and again, that we need *to follow the example of Jesus and of the Apostles*. We understand that the members of the Salvatorian Family fulfill their mission in the Church and in the world – that is, the proclamation of the Kingdom of God—by following the example of Jesus Christ and the Apostles. We know that Jesus instructed the people, cured the sick, comforted the afflicted, was compassionate with the marginalized, and forgave sinners. The Apostles, in turn, used the same methodology as their Master.

The Charter of the Salvatorian Family makes clear that all the members of the Salvatorian Family who “following in the footsteps of the Savior like the apostles, ... are called to live and announce God’s unconditional love, continuing Jesus’ life-giving work of bringing salvation to all creation and liberation from all that is a threat to fullness of life”.⁴ And we are reminded that “Our personal and communal experience of salvation is the dynamic and animating energy for our mission”.⁵

Thus, we understand that salvation, the Kingdom of God, can't happen without human collaboration. The Kingdom of God is a dynamic project of hope within history.

The action of God in the world is an action accomplished through us. Human persons are not mere spectators in the Kingdom but its active agents. God does not want his kingdom without the collaboration of Human beings.

¹ Mt 28, 19-20

² Exhortations and Admonitions: Chapter 28, no. 1 p. 130. Father Winfred Herbst translation

³ Rule of 1884

⁴ Charter of the Salvatorian Family , n° 5

⁵ Charter of the Salvatorian Family , n° 6

Announcing the Kingdom and Its Features

The Kingdom of God is a historical concrete reality, in which human action and the salvific action of God are intertwined. The Kingdom of God is a dynamic project of hope and of salvation within history.

The Kingdom, as a process, is inserted into the social, political, economic and religious structures of this world. However, it transcends all of them. It is a universal dimension that is present from now on, and that will be fully manifested at the end of the ages when everything will be consummated and a new Earth and a new Heaven will be established. There, the just will live in God, with God and at the side of God.

The Kingdom of God is essentially linked to the man, Jesus of Nazareth. “*Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized...*”.⁶ Jesus proclaims and spreads the Good News of the Kingdom not only through words, but, above all through his actions. He involves the human being totally, in a way that in Jesus we can see a deep unity between his spoken words and his actions. His words are as much actions as are his actions. And, his actions speak as clearly as his words. In fact “*...he did and taught until the day he was taken up to the Father...*”;⁷ “*...He went about doing good and healing...*”⁸

From the beginning Jesus revealed his identity, his authority and his mission to us by his action, as well as by his words. By receiving baptism which is meant for sinners in the process of conversion, Jesus acted in solidarity with them. Thus, he manifested his firm decision to no longer be separated from sinners so that they might have life and have it more abundantly.⁹ His baptism is a kind of baptism of humankind, which implies a commitment to the mission and an anticipation of his redeeming passion.

Luke presents the program of Jesus, which was announced by the Prophet Isaiah in light of the Kingdom of God. This is the program that the followers of Jesus need to keep before their eyes.

“At that time, Jesus returned to Galilee, in the power of the Spirit, and news of him spread throughout the whole region. He taught in their synagogues and was praised by all. He came to Nazareth, where he had grown up, and went according to his custom, into the synagogue on the Sabbath day. He stood up to read and was handed a scroll of the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and found the passage where it was written: ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.’ Rolling up the scroll, he handed it back to the attendant and sat down, and the eyes of all in the synagogue looked intently at him. He said to them: Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing”.¹⁰

“*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me*”. Jesus feels himself anointed by the Spirit of God, impregnated by his strength. For this reason his followers will call him “Christ”, the “anointed”.

“*He sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor*”. God is concerned with the people’s suffering. This is the big task of Jesus: to bring hope into the hearts of those who suffer so that the

⁶ Mk 1,9

⁷ Acts 1,1

⁸ Acts 10,38

⁹ Jn 10,10 and 17,3

¹⁰Lk 4,14-21

Kingdom of God is truly realized. Jesus realizes that he is sent to four groups of people: to the poor, the captives, the blind and the oppressed.

The first look of Jesus is not directed at the sins of the persons; his concern is with the consequences of sin, the suffering that ruins life. It is not the sin as such that touches his heart, but the pain, the oppression and the humiliation suffered by men and women as a consequence of their sin.

The Spirit of God is in Jesus, who is sent to the poor. His life is oriented to the needy, the oppressed and the humiliated persons. As his followers, we must act with the same orientation. This is the direction the incarnated God in Jesus wants to imprint in the human being in history.

The poor are eager for justice. Consequently, the incarnation of God is for them Good News. God cannot exercise his kingship other than by defending the life of the unjustly treated person. The poor will not be happy unless the Kingdom of God is fully realized. Where God reigns, the powerful will not be able to overpower the weak, nor the strong overtake the defenseless.

Jesus does not stay in Nazareth only, but he goes to the region of the Lake of Galilee and lives in Capernaum, at the home of Simon and Andrew.¹¹ He chooses this place as a strategic one, because it was a place to encounter people from different nations. In this place Jesus was able to develop his missionary activity as an itinerant prophet.

Jesus “walked through all the villages going from place to place proclaiming and announcing the Good News of the Kingdom of God”.¹² From this point on, the “Kingdom of God” was the reason that Jesus spent his time, his energy and entire life. The Kingdom of God is the core point for Jesus’ action, his innermost conviction, the passion that animates his mission activities.

Mark, the Evangelist, synthesizes this original and surprising message, the Good News of God, that Jesus proclaimed throughout all the villages in Galilee: “This is the time of fulfillment. The Kingdom of God is at hand”.¹³ For Jesus the *Kingdom of God* does not begin at the end of this world; it is at hand. The “*Kingdom of God*” is in our midst as a living reality.

The Kingdom of God is not conquered by the strict observance of the Law. The Kingdom breaks in as a response to the gift and grace of God.

*“Let the children come to me, and do not prevent them; for the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to such as these”.*¹⁴

*“Blessed are you who are poor, for the kingdom of God is yours”.*¹⁵

*“I desire mercy, not sacrifice”.*¹⁶

Rather than the strict and outward practice of the Law, God prefers the inner feelings and the attitudes of a sincere and compassionate heart.

¹¹Cf. Mt 4,12-13

¹²Lk 8,1

¹³ Mk 1,15

¹⁴ Mt 19,14

¹⁵ Lk 6,20

¹⁶ Mt 9,13

Jesus was not a simple political Messiah. At the sight of the signs he had done, the people exclaimed: *“This is truly the prophet, the one who is to come into the world! Jesus knew that they were going to come and carry him off to make him king, so he withdrew again to the mountain alone.”*¹⁷ In Jesus’ proclamation of His life’s program, he eliminates the part of Isaiah’s quote that mentions Yahweh’s day of “Vengeance” *seen as a day of terrible judgment.*¹⁸

The Kingdom of God is revealed in the action of Jesus *“for he taught them as one having authority...”*¹⁹ so the people said and regarding this they were right. He spoke of God with authority. Whatever God proposes, in speaking about his kingdom, the concrete historical experiences are revealed. Jesus is truly man and truly God. There, where Jesus acts, God is acting. There, where God acts, the Kingdom of God is happening! Where Jesus acts the Kingdom of God is happening. In the same way, where the true follower of Jesus acts, the Kingdom of God is happening.

Jesus’ actions characteristically lead to transformation from death to life. We can see four different and specific levels of Jesus’ actions:

1. Jesus cures the sick person.
2. Jesus forgives sins.
3. Jesus welcomes the excluded person.
4. Jesus brings life to the dead.

In the four levels of Jesus’ actions the same characteristics always appear. Situations in which life is lacking are transformed into a more plentiful life. Death situations are transformed into life situations.

In curing the sick, Jesus reintegrates them into the society, enlarging the person’s space in life. In forgiving sinners, Jesus opens a new space for them for life. Jesus opens space for life in the society and before God. In making his option for the poor and the excluded ones, Jesus shows that God did not abandon them, but, on the contrary, they are receiving special attention from God. This means life. Giving life to the dead, Jesus proves before all that He is the Lord of death as well. He is the God of life who came so *“that they might have life and have it more abundantly”*.²⁰

In all four levels of Jesus’ actions, death situations are transformed into life situations. The actions of Jesus reveal what constitutes the Kingdom of God: Constructing the Kingdom means transformation of any and all situations of death into life!

When the Kingdom of God comes to be, situations of oppression will be overcome. When the Kingdom of God comes to be, situations lacking life will be transformed into life in fullness.

Based on the praxis of Jesus, we come to the conclusion that the Kingdom of God manifests itself in any and all actions in which life overcomes death. God wants life for all. Whenever and wherever God exercises his kingship, life is present. The change from the situations of less life to more life is the way that Jesus proposes in order to realize the Kingdom of God.

¹⁷ Jn 6, 14-15

¹⁸ Cf Lk 4, 18-19

¹⁹ Mt 7, 29

²⁰ Jn 10, 10

From the moment that groups or persons try to realize in history the values of the Kingdom of God, they come in conflict with opposing forces and interests, forces contrary to the implementation of these values.

The whole process of building the Kingdom presents itself as huge dialectic dynamism. In it, the dialectic of what we call the process of salvation of the world is made concrete.

VALUES OF THE KINGDOM	VALUES OF THE ANTI-KINGDOM
<i>Justice</i> , as foundation for an egalitarian society	<i>Injustice</i> , to maintain Interests and privileges
<i>Love</i> , as foundation for a harmonious coexistence	<i>Hate and Jealousy</i> , as foundation for a competitive coexistence
<i>Truth</i> , as foundation for a society of trust	<i>Lie</i> , as foundation for a Manipulative society
<i>Fraternity</i> , as foundation for a harmonious society	<i>Selfishness</i> , as foundation for a society of exploitation
<i>Peace</i> , as foundation for a happy society	<i>Conflicts and war</i> , as foundation for an unequal society

The process of constructing the Kingdom of God generally is not a peaceful and harmonious process. The kingdom is growing. The Project of God is moving within history, even when, at certain periods, this project seems to be suffocated. Such an experience is dialectal. Despite progress and setbacks, the Kingdom is growing and the anti-kingdom diminishes, because, certainly, God’s project will be triumphant. This is the certainty of faith that allows all the followers of Jesus to act in hope, knowing that the project will be successful because it’s God’s Project. And, God is faithful.

Jesus Invites Us to Imitate His Actions

The Kingdom of God doesn’t happen only in the actions of Jesus. The kingdom of God happens whenever men and women act as Jesus acted.

The great call from Jesus: “*Come and follow me!*”²¹ is a call to act in the same way Jesus did. Jesus invites his followers to follow his footsteps, in his way. They are supposed to do the same as he did, that is, act according to his way, because through his manner of acting, the Kingdom of God appears as a concrete and visible reality.

²¹ Mk 1,17; 2,14; 10,21

The actions of Jesus, however, were not an abstraction. They were very concrete actions, intertwined with personal, socio-cultural, religious and political situations. They were concrete actions that culminated in generating fullness of life and in overcoming all forms of oppression, in order to open new horizons for life.

The following of Jesus is accompanied by a basic requirement: The historical attitude of Jesus in his mission is an affirmation of the present life. To follow Jesus means announcing the Kingdom of God as a contribution to its realization in history. If the practice of Jesus is evidence of the features of the Kingdom of God and of its extension in history, then the following of Jesus is an indispensable condition to make the Kingdom of God visible and active.

The Kingdom of God is the horizon that demands of us a new way of being and of acting. The Kingdom of God is a free gift; it is the transfiguration of one's own world. In this new creation God recreates and gives life to everything that is under the power of death

The Gospels tell us that Jesus calls the disciples: "*follow me and I will make you fishers of men*". The response from the disciples was immediate: "*and leaving their nets aside, they followed him*". To leave their nets and their father meant leaving everything, breaking with their former life. It meant breaking with all the social guarantees including tradition, and the world's security. Following Jesus implies the demand for self-renunciation, as well, which means taking the focus off of ourselves in order to focus on Jesus.

The Kingdom of God in Mary: Mary is challenged by the angel to respond freely, thus assuming the consequences of being chosen by God. She is not preserved from the mystery of the dark night, of possibly being abandoned by Joseph, or of the risk of the Mosaic Law that blamed and chastised a pregnancy out of marriage. Silently, she believes and makes herself a servant of the Lord, unconditionally.

A grace-filled woman, Mary's only desire was to be faithful to God. Free of all forms of pride and self-sufficiency, she opens her heart to receive the grace of God that makes her a temple of the Holy Spirit. In saying "yes", Mary links heaven to earth. The incarnation of the Son of God is a New Creation, linking the Creator and the creature. In this interweaving is the expression of tenderness, love and mercy.

Mary lives her offer to God radically in her total poverty and availability to the plan of Divine Love. She goes out to meet Elizabeth and communicates the gift she has received and offers to help Elizabeth. Mary feels welcomed, supported and encouraged by her cousin Elizabeth: "*Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled*".²² Mary's response was the song of recognition of the wonders God works in the person. She entrusts and gives herself wholly and freely to God. Every praise and prayer of gratitude springs forth from the inner depths of the human being, through the action of the Holy Spirit.

"With Mary, his mother, we bear to others the Savior we have come to know ourselves. The Holy Spirit guides and enlightens us along the way,"²³ for the service of the Kingdom of God.

The Church is the seed of the Kingdom of God in history. God sows the seed of the Kingdom in the heart of every person (which can bear fruit or not). Even as Jesus has been raised to heaven, he continues to live and act among us, on earth, in his Church.

²² Lk 1,45

²³ Charter of the Salvatorian Family, n°10

As members of the Salvatorian Family, “we nurture our love for the Church and work within it with a prophetic awareness as witnesses of the Gospel. Convinced as Father Jordan and Blessed Mary of the Apostles were of the vocation of all the baptized to be a living force in the Church and for a just world”,²⁴ we are united as sisters and brothers, joyfully living the Kingdom of God.

Thus, “we open ourselves to the questions and challenges of our historical epoch, allowing the signs of the time to reveal to us the ways and means to respond”.²⁵

“We involve others in our mission and seek to collaborate with those involved in promoting truth, justice and the defense of life, making a preferential option for the poor and for those whose humanity and dignity are not recognized”.²⁶

CONCLUSION

God acts in the world through us. We cannot just be spectators of the Kingdom; we need to be its active agents. God wants to fulfill his Kingdom through human collaboration.

We, human beings, are confronted with the need to make decisions and to assume attitudes resulting in concrete relationships that guide our way of acting in the world, as we see in Jesus’ example.

Our common mission, as members of the Salvatorian Family, is to build the Kingdom of God in the Church and in the world, faithful to the global project of God who wants abundant life for all. Our goal and ideal is to live like Jesus Christ and the Apostles as we help to build the Kingdom of God.

Reflection Questions

1. Re-read the Salvatorian Family Charter in light of this article.
 - Note words or phrases that speak to you and ask: “What is this saying to me and how will I respond?”
 - What could be some implications for the Salvatorian Family in your area of the world, and/or globally?
2. In light of this article, if you were to revise the Salvatorian Family Charter, what would you add or change?
3. Where do I see the signs of the Kingdom of God in my personal life and in the community?
4. As Salvatorian Family, where are we promoting life?

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²⁴ Charter of the Salvatorian Family, n°7

²⁵ Charter of the Salvatorian Family, n° 8a

²⁶ Charter of the Salvatorian Family, n° 8b