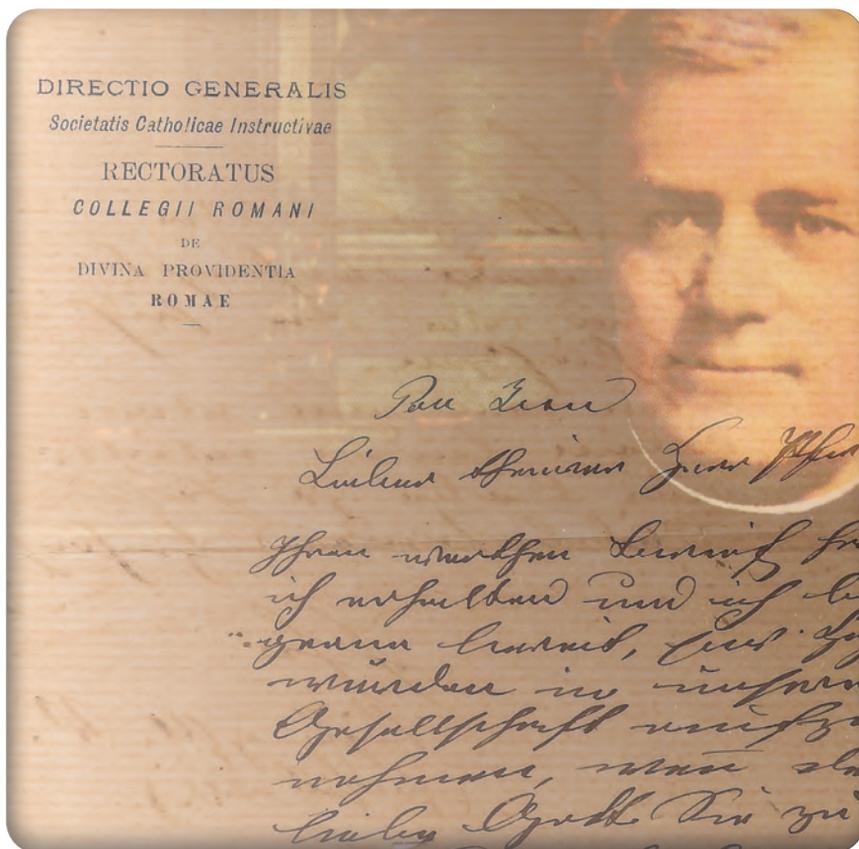


BELOVED SONS

RECOMMENDATIONS OF BLESSED FRANCIS JORDAN

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Superior General



SOCIETY OF THE DIVINE SAVIOUR - SDS
Pastoral Letter to the Salvatorians

8 December 2022



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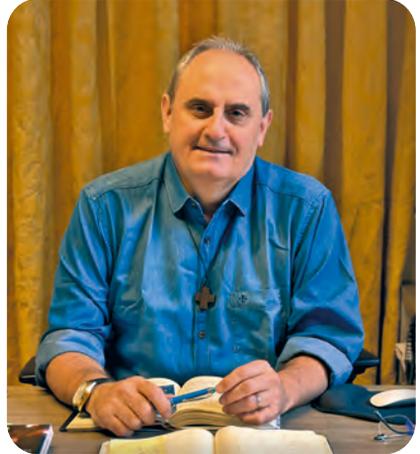
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BELOVED SONS

Recommendations of Blessed Francis Jordan

1. Dear confreres,

As in years past, I extend to all of you my warmest greetings along with my renewed closeness and prayer. I would like to begin this letter by telling you about a dream I had after returning from a visit to the Salvatorians in Asia. Exhausted from the long intercontinental journey, I dreamt that late at night, someone had opened and closed the door of my room. In my dream, I jumped up



Fr. Milton Zonta SDS
SUPERIOR GENERAL

to check the noise, as I often forget to lock my door. However, everything was in its place. There was nothing abnormal.

2. Returning to my room, I stopped for a moment at the window facing the beautiful and fully lit “Via della Conciliazione”. The road was completely empty, except for a few seagulls that were looking from one side to the other for scraps of food. However, the light coming through the window made me notice that there was something strange on my office desk. I saw a yellowed envelope of old paper. I took it in my hands and at the same time switched on the light. How great was my surprise and uncontainable emotion when I saw that on the back of the envelope was written: “**P. Franciscus Maria a Cruce Jordan**, Superior General of the Society of the Divine Saviour”.

3. On opening the old-looking envelope, I noticed that it was dated 1913. This reminded me that in that year our Founder was already grey-haired and about to turn 65. At that time the Society consisted of an apostolic body of about 450 members. Moreover, the letter, written in Latin, was dated Passion Sunday, which was in March of that same year. It immediately came to my mind that exactly one month after writing this letter, the Founder received the news of the “official” conclusion of the canonical visitation by the Holy See, which had already lasted more than 19 years. Undoubtedly, after having spent months without writing anything in his Diary, the Founder wrote again precisely these words: “*Trust, trust, trust...Love God. Trust in Him...*” (SD III, 30).
4. The letter, which was addressed to all the Salvatorians, began with these words: “***Beloved sons, health and paternal blessing in the Lord***”. Not knowing Latin very well, I had to read over and over again each of the nine recommendations of the Founder who, in a paternal spirit, addressed his beloved sons. As my level of understanding increased little by little, I soon became aware of the topicality of some of the central themes and the importance of his message, linking Salvatorian identity and spirituality. Fully convinced that the Salvatorian religious that today's times require, springs precisely from these recommendations indicated by Blessed Francis Jordan, I began for the third time to read and meditate on the following contents.

TO MOULD CHRIST IN YOU

I

*“In all things and everywhere,
always keep before your eyes
your holy vocation, which is to mould Christ
in yourselves and in those around you.
In order that you may manifest this,
be very attentive to observe faithfully
the Constitutions...”*

5. Like a father filled with wisdom and experience, the Founder addresses his words to the Salvatorians who are “*everywhere*” and in the most diverse contexts. To each one of them, from the elderly and the sick to those who are just arriving, he turns his paternal gaze, with the ability to read the hearts of all. Wherever we are, “*in all things*” that occupy us, he asks us to be very attentive and vigilant in what is most essential to our “*holy vocation*”. This vocation is not born of ourselves, nor is it the privilege of a few. To be a Salvatorian is a gift, a grace, a primordial choice to follow the teachings of Jesus Christ through an unreserved love, a life given to the service of others. Every Salvatorian is a story of God's love that brings us out of ourselves to make Jesus Christ and his words of Salvation known. Jesus Christ is the door that leads us to know, love and serve the living and true God as a compassionate and merciful Father. This is the apex and the centre of every Salvatorian vocation.

6. The Founder has his gaze directed towards every Salvatorian so that he may manifest by his life the same sentiments of Jesus Christ (cf. Phil 2:5) and thus become a tool of God's salvation for all. In this sense, Blessed Francis Jordan reminds us of the danger of becoming simply “functionaries of God”, forgetting the call to “*mould Christ*” in our lives and in the lives of others. In a cultural environment as pragmatic as that of our times, it is all too easy to reduce our vocation to the mere exercise of a particular function, i.e., instead of being apostles sent on mission, we gradually become “professionals of the sacred”, who do not put their own lives at stake. For this reason, the Founder asks us to allow ourselves to be moulded and transformed by the love of Jesus Christ, embracing our vocation to holiness with dedication and joy. The fact that Blessed Francis Jordan wanted our Society to bear the name “Divine Saviour” should remind us to always keep this point of reference. When we fail to place Jesus Christ at the centre of Salvatorian life, there is a great danger and temptation to place ourselves there, seeking other



compensations and demonstrating worldly and immature attitudes. So let us not forget this centrality of being transformed and clothed by Jesus Christ. It is He who makes us tools of God the Father's salvation for the world.

7. With all the simplicity of truth, the Founder invites us to *“observe the Constitutions faithfully”*. He himself had them engraved on his heart. He hoped unceasingly to foster in the Society not only a literal knowledge of the Constitutions, nor even a mechanical or slavish obedience, but also an internal experiential knowledge as a means to help us find the meaning of our vocation and to deepen our understanding of the spirit of the Society. Here it is worth remembering that the privileged addressee of the Constitutions is not the Salvatorian as an individual, separate from others. The Constitutions refer to our thinking and acting as one apostolic body which is the Society of the Divine Saviour. How much more and how much good we could do if we spent more time in meditation and study of the Constitutions with this basic criterion of unity in mission! The search for unity *“in all things and everywhere”* is what gives meaning and visibility to the apostolic service we perform in Church. If it is absent, we lose everything. We become like solo singers in search of personal success. In this way we will never be confreres who form a choir to evangelise together. In this sense, we are at the right time to actively participate in the process of revision of the first and second chapters of the Constitutions, which is taking place throughout the Society. Let us not allow that this time of returning to the sources of our spirituality, charism and mission passes in vain!

WITH PATIENCE AND WISDOM

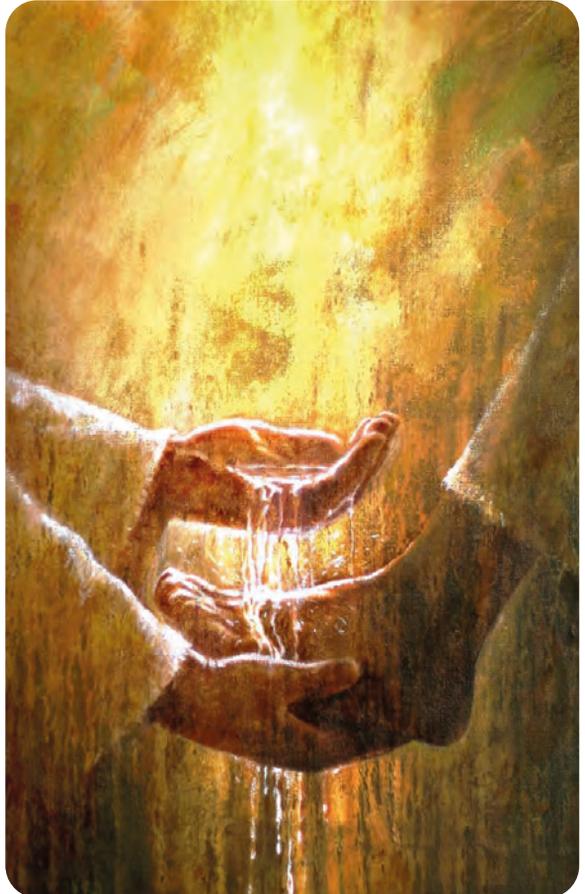
II

“You, superiors who are in charge of your brothers, be vigilant (...) be constant whether it is opportune or inopportune, denounce, question, correct with all patience and wisdom... however, you children, obey your superiors (as fathers in Christ) and submit to them, for they care for you...”

8. At this point the Founder points out the inseparable binomial of the exercise of authority and obedience to authority as one of his concerns in the Society. He looks first of all at Salvatorians who exercise the service of superior of a community or a Unit. More than commanding, they must exercise their office with an attitude of fraternal docility. *“You (...) are in charge of your brothers”*, says the Founder, recalling that we are first and foremost a community of brothers. Therefore, the office of superior cannot be synonymous with possession, domination, or success. It is not the role of the superior to impose his positions, but to be vigilant *“whether it is opportune or inopportune”* so that his confreres remain obedient to the apostolic purpose of the Society. In other words, any and every form of authority in the Society, to be truly evangelical, needs to be synonymous with service and humility.

It is a paternal authority which requires a constant attitude of “*denouncing, questioning, correcting with all patience and wisdom*”, in order to discern well and to guide the community fraternally according to the Society's purpose.

9. The second binomial points out our position of obedience to our superiors. Here again it is striking that the Founder does not speak of the conduct of subjects who obey their superiors, but of “*sons*” who know how to respect and love their superiors “*as fathers in Christ*”. How can we not think of the Founder's own conduct, who was tenaciously obedient to the Church to the end? It would be an astronomical error to think that we know everything and not to deepen the meaning of the evangelical counsel of obedience, in the perspective indicated by Blessed Francis Jordan. I dare say that the Founder invites us never to lose sight of the ultimate expression of the obedience of Christ



who placed his will in the will of the Father. This presupposes on our part to obey the superior of the community, in the manner of Christ and for the love of Christ. In short: for Salvatorians, the obedience-authority relationship will always have as its foundation the total and decisive obedience of Christ on the cross, the ultimate expression of his identification with the will of the Father and the total gift of self to others.

10. As already noted above, the Founder's words are a renewed invitation to rework old concepts and possibly old practices of power and obedience. Often more is achieved by love than by imposition, for as the proverb says, quoted by the Founder himself, "*with a drop of honey you can catch more flies than with a barrel of vinegar*" (SD I, 88). What often happens is that in the face of conflict we tend to revert to the security of blind obedience which places all responsibility on the shoulders of the superior. Others, however, tend to do the opposite, which is also wrong: what they do is to explain their right to freedom in which each one is the bearer of his subjective truth. In both cases we must keep our guard up, both against a legalism that stifles personality and against a liberalism that degrades personality. Whoever does either way is simply wrong, because both are extremes. In any case, we must not dwell on the conflictual in any way. For unity is always superior to conflict, and it is part of the mission of the superior of the community to give rise to unity.

THAT YOU MAY LOVE ONE ANOTHER

III

“Observe the Lord's commandment with the greatest diligence: love one another.

By observing this, all will know that you are disciples of the Divine Saviour.

Thus, you will be imitators of the holy apostles, who were of one heart and soul.

Where there is love, there is God; where there is God, there is peace.

The love of Christ gathers us together in unity...”

11. In this paragraph, the Founder quotes a passage which he often likes to recall: *“that they may love one another”*. This prayer of Jesus for unity is the same recommendation that is present in the Spiritual Testament we received from Blessed Francis Jordan. Moreover, this is not a secondary argument. For it is not the Founder, but the Word of God that invites us to live in unity so that the world may believe. This commandment, to live united with Christ in mission, has always been for the Founder a relevant content which he firmly wanted to be observed *“with the greatest diligence”*. The fact that there are conflicts and arguments among us is not so much a problem. On the contrary, it is a sign that we are alive and that the Spirit is still at work among us. What concerned the Founder was individualism,

the attitudes of isolating ourselves in our own certainties and/or taking refuge in our own spaces, which little by little break the bonds of fraternal life. Thus, according to the Founder, the life of communion and mission as such are inseparable.

12. On the other hand, our Salvatorian fraternal union evangelises for its own sake. Ultimately, it will not be the too many words or even the grandeur of works that will make it visible that we are “*disciples of the Divine Saviour*”. The spirit of fraternal communion is the best identity card to present ourselves in the face of a fragmented and pluralistic world, where differences tend to be posed as opposites and to become a source of conflict. The Founder's call to conversion is to ensure that the variety of nations, races and generations



becomes a source of harmony and collaboration. However, it should be noted that this indication of the Founder to learn to live together is not synonymous with homogeneity of doing, sensing, and saying all in the same way. What Blessed Francis Jordan asks of us is a permanent process of conversion towards a style of living, praying, and doing things together, which helps us to discover anew that we are confreres. There is no more effective way to evangelise than our witness of living together, enriched by diversity and intercultural relationships.

13. We Salvatorians are much more than a multinational welfare community or a non-governmental organisation (NGO). The Founder reminds us again that love and the following of Jesus Christ is the founding theological dimension by which we are together and available to be sent on mission. Our communion of love with the Living and True God is expressed in our relationship of fraternity, closeness, and care for others. The very words of the Founder make us understand that he was not the protagonist, nor are we the protagonists. Rather, let us say with him: *“the love of Christ brings us together in unity”* for the mission. In this way Jesus Christ, the living image of God the Father, is the one who unites us and sends us out into the whole world, just like the community of the apostles after Pentecost. The Founder exhorts us to keep our eyes always on the *“imitation of the holy apostles”* who were *“of one heart and one soul”* oriented towards God. That is, the joy of sharing one's gifts, resources and dreams through a community that helps to move forward.

ENCOMPASSING ALL WITH THE SAME LOVE

IV

*“The Society,
because it is meant for all peoples,
remains connected to all peoples.
Therefore, embrace all with the same love,
making no distinction
of race or nation...”*

14. What would our Founder think knowing that, in these first decades of the 21st century, we are still talking about wars, about the construction of new walls and barriers in defence of particularisms? How much good it does us to be reminded that the mission of the Salvatorians *“is destined and connected to all peoples”*. This is a call not to be carried away by the logic of building walls between countries, groups and people, or even a way of thinking that the Society could fulfil its purpose closed in on itself. In this globalised world in which we live, today much more than ever before, we need to listen again to this call of Blessed Francis Jordan to build bridges between people of the most diverse nationalities and to go out to meet with everyone. This aim of universality has always been part of the Founder's apostolic vision for the Society. In this context, how can we fail to remember with gratitude the missionaries (past and present)

who, beyond the frontiers of their cultural contexts, have always been witnesses to this apostolicity of the Society in the farthest corners of the earth?

15. Thus, the spirit of universality, more than a topic for discussion, is the very manner of the mission of Salvatorians of all times, moved by this purpose of “*embracing all with the same love*”. This makes us aware, now more than ever before, that being part of the apostolic work of Blessed Francis Jordan implies a way of proceeding that is anchored in a sense of inclusion and joining forces in mission. According to the Founder, Salvatorians should go to the geographical and spiritual places where others do not reach or find it very difficult to reach. In this sense, all forms of resistance and fear of crossing borders must be combated. There is nothing more contrary to the spirit of the Founder than to close in on oneself, on certain styles, places and means which become an immovable system of evangelising forever. These particularisms kill the charism and obscure the Founder's vision of universality.



16. Therefore, the dimension of universality is a precious treasure of our way of contributing to the apostolic mission of the Church. We can even say that we have been graced by this gift of the Spirit as the Society's dynamic growth adds more and more young people from different languages and cultures. Who knows what the Founder would say to us, knowing that the dynamism of universality continues to impel his beloved children to go the distance - in every sense - *“without distinction of race or nation”*? In today's times, when every land is mission land, the Founder's

missionary zeal to *“proclaim the Gospel to all creation”* (Mk 16:15), does not allow us to be indifferent to the fate of people who survive in contexts of exclusion and far from God.

Therefore, everyone who joins the Society needs to take to heart this primary focus of salvation for all humanity, because this is our task in the world: to go on mission to make known Jesus Christ, the face of the Living and True God, who *“desires salvation for all”* (1 Tim 2,4), without any distinction.



FOSTER A SPIRIT OF PRAYER

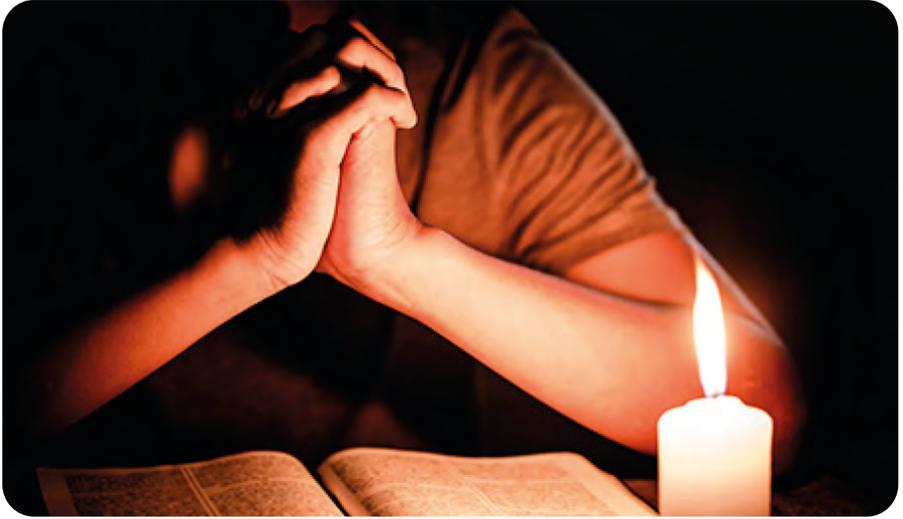
v

“Encourage continually the spirit of prayer (...) Contemplate daily whether Jesus is the treasure that is in your heart so that you may be enlightened and enkindled by the fire of his love (...) Be friends of our Saviour in the holy tabernacle (...) Do spiritual reading as great food for the soul (...) The examination of conscience helps to restore courage and to encourage still greater growth. May your most pleasing aspiration be that all generations bless our Blessed Mother and Queen (...) by daily worshipping her through the holy rosary”

17. The personal relationship with the Lord gives life to the Salvatorian. Based on his own example of unceasing prayer, the Founder makes this recommendation to each of us: *“continually foster the spirit of prayer”*. However, it is important to remember that, to pray continually is not in contrast to daily activity, nor does it mean a superficial or alienating type of prayer. Praying continually throughout the day has the meaning of “the prayer of the heart” (Pope Francis), which consists of an uninterrupted relationship of love and friendship

with Jesus Christ. According to Blessed Francis Jordan, no mission can bear fruit without having one's eyes and heart united to Jesus Christ. That is why he expressed it in strong words: *“contemplate daily whether Jesus is the treasure that is in your heart...”*. It is this relationship with the Lord that makes us live intensely the discipleship *“...enlightened and on fire with the fire of his love”*. Much more than mere spiritual activities, the Salvatorian life rooted in Jesus Christ is a daily exercise (personal and communal) of becoming like Him in all that we do.

18. For us, Blessed Francis Jordan is above all the paradigm of a person of prayer. In his context he knew how to live a profound union between prayer and life. Thus, he invites us to do the same, pointing out to us some means that help us to live in a permanent state of prayer, such as cultivating spaces of silence and dialogue as *“friends of our Saviour in the holy tabernacle”*. In the same way he pointed out the place of meditation on the Word of God and of *“spiritual reading as the great nourishment of the soul”* that sustains us throughout our lives. In the same way he proposes the *“examination of conscience”* as a daily prayer that helps us to *“recover our spirit and spiritual growth”* and not to let ourselves be carried away by the spirit of the world. When our salvatorian life is not nourished by these means - and many others - we inevitably end up losing sight of the meaning of our consecrated life and that of putting ourselves at the service of others.
19. Without ever being able to forget, the Founder turns his thoughts to the Virgin Mary, so often exalted by the name of “Mother of the Saviour” and “Queen of Apostles”.



What Blessed Francis Jordan recommends is that the “*Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Saviour and Queen of the Apostles*” should have a privileged place in the prayer of all Salvatorians. First of all, he asks us not to forget to respect, encourage and promote one of the most eloquent devotions of the faith of the People of God. That is to say, to pray the rosary to Our Lady, not as a mere repetition of words, but as a prayer that helps us to meditate on the most important mysteries of our faith. The prayer of the rosary had always accompanied the life of the Founder as a means of apostolate that makes us rediscover a correct attitude towards popular piety. It is a way of prayer of the humble, which, according to Pope Paul VI, “*reflects a thirst for God that only the poor and simple can know.*”¹ And which, according to Pope Francis is “*...a theological place to which we must pay attention, particularly when thinking about the new evangelisation.*”²

1 PAUL VI, Apostolic Exhortation “*Evangelii Nuntiandi*”, 8 December 1975, n°48.

2 FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation “*Evangelium Gaudium*”, 24 November 2013, n°126.

PRACTICE EXERCISES IN HUMILITY

VI

“Since God gives grace to the humble to make progress in their own sanctification and the sanctification of others (...) they should willingly practise exercises of humility, as has been the custom in our Society from the beginning. Let them be mindful to imitate the Divine Saviour, who washed the feet of his disciples (...) and said: I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you”.

20. The vast majority of people who knew Blessed Francis Jordan agree in portraying him as a person filled with the spirit of humility, kindness and gentleness. His own style became a message in itself, of listening, of becoming a neighbour and bearing witness to the Gospel. It is this evangelical attitude of littleness and of one who allows himself to be guided by the love of God the Father that the Founder entrusts to each one of us, his beloved children. As so many other saints have testified, for Blessed Francis Jordan, *“humility and patience are the mother of great works”* (SD I, 81), which is why he asks with determination: *“practice exercises of humility willingly”*. There is no doubt that humility is the best way

to see who we are and the best way to transmit the power of the Gospel. Just as the moon does not shine with its own light but reflects the splendour of the “*sun of justice*” (cf. SD I, 54), the Founder recommends doing the same, through these inseparable binomials “*to progress in our own sanctification and the sanctification of others*”, allowing ourselves to be transformed by the mission.

21. Like any work which is always humble in its beginnings, the Founder began his apostolic work in a hidden and invisible way. For this reason, he asks us not to forget that humility “*has been a custom in our Society from the beginning*”. As we know, the opposite of humility is self-conceit, the temptation to rely solely on one's own strength, on things of appearances and objects of the latest model. That is why the Founder wants us to be vigilant so that the possession of goods and titles does not prevail in our hearts, instead of giving, which is the source of fraternal relationships. I suppose everyone



knows how easy it is to get caught up in the delusions of vanity and the pleasures of consumption. To allow God to act in the depths of our being, it is necessary to empty ourselves of self and to have the willingness to go through a persistent process of spiritual growth, both interiorly and in our personal and community relationships. The Society, according to the Founder, can never achieve full unity and fulfil its purpose without this spiritual foundation of meekness, patience and humility.

22. Jesus' gesture of washing the feet of his disciples is indicated by the Founder as the most expressive way of proceeding for every Salvatorian. He does so by means of this exhortation: *“remember to imitate the Divine Saviour, who washed the feet of his disciples...”*. In other words, there is no mission without getting rid of all forms of display, domination, force, and prestige. In a community where the interests of showing off and exhibiting oneself prevail, the mission is extinguished and dies. The path indicated by Jesus to his disciples teaches us to look at it from another perspective: *“that you also do as I have done to you”*. The gesture of the Divine Saviour in the washing of the feet asks each of us to clothe ourselves with the cloth of humility, care, simplicity, and selfless service. In the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola, so often practised by the Founder, reference is made to the most perfect form of humility: *“to desire and choose poverty rather than riches and reproaches rather than honours, in order to imitate and be more like Christ”*.³ Undoubtedly, this is the way of proceeding that Blessed Francis Jordan has indicated for all his spiritual children.

3 LOYOLA, S. Ignacio. Spiritual Exercises (Second Week), Santander, Ed. Sal Terrae, 1990, p. 107.

MAKE THE SOCIETY KNOWN

VII

“May the growth of the Society (...) be of the greatest interest to all of you beloved children. Promote the good name of the Society by your example and be everywhere the sweet fragrance of Christ (...) Make the Society known, promote its publications, seek benefactors (to support needy candidates) and the Society will grow day by day to the greater glory of God”.

23. Like a gardener, Blessed Francis Jordan dedicated himself to helping the Society to be born, grow and expand throughout the world. It has become a work that continues to bear fruit to this day, but it needs the real and ongoing participation of all Salvatorians. That is why the Founder asserted that *“the growth of the Society is in the best interest of all”*. First and foremost, there is a call here not to settle into a routine and abstracted way of living as Salvatorians. Participation is an unrenounceable commitment for all, because without it, the Society becomes sick, it does not develop and the spirit of the Founder fades away. Salvatorians who limit their way of thinking only within the horizons of their own context run the risk of atrophy and of extinguishing the Society's drive to expand at all levels. This is why the Founder insists on the real

involvement of each and every one to safeguard the Society's purpose, always forming new missionaries to make known, love and follow Jesus the Saviour, the One sent by God the Father. So let us help *“the Society to grow day by day for the greater glory of God”*, overcoming the temptation to withdraw into our own little world, turning our backs on a suffering humanity that does not know Jesus Christ who calls us to a loving relationship with the one true God.

24. At the same time, the Founder asks Salvatorians to follow his example in promoting *“the good name of the Society”* and also, by word and deed, to be *“...everywhere the sweet fragrance of Christ”*. It would be a mistake, by the way, to think that the Society will become known by boosting big events or by spectacular leaps and bounds. As is known, the Society has not developed all at once, but step by step, humbly as a little perfume does, pure and concentrated: it fills the whole atmosphere with its pleasant odour. The Society spread through an endless number of Salvatorians who, even today, by their way of being and acting, their words and deeds, in difficult mission contexts, are a presence of life given by Jesus Christ, without making great noise or blowing trumpets. Just as a little leaven makes the whole lump rise, so the Society fulfils its purpose by helping the Church to grow in a spirit of communion, witness, and mission.



25. In addition to the power of witness, the Founder suggests that we make known the apostolate of the Society in this way: “...*promote its publications and seek benefactors*”. In his time, the Founder used for publications the most apt and modern means of evangelisation, which in today's eyes are extremely simple. Now, however, we have much more advanced publishing tools at our disposal. Think of the networks of new communication technologies with an impressive capacity to reach many, many people at once. Imbued with the Founder's vision, how can we not feel compelled to be present and to use these communication networks to evangelise, inform and communicate what we are and what we do? Although we know that the media, in general, are by no means a substitute for the personal relationships of the apostolate, nor for the experience of community. On the other hand, if there was anything characteristic of Blessed Francis Jordan, it was his tendency never to approach the apostolate as an individual. Rather, he sought to join forces with others, always with the same evangelizing purpose of the Church, for he saw no point in doing things in isolation. The Founder invites us to seek synergy with persons and groups (benefactors) who support the apostolic works of the Church and the Society, also to “...*support needy candidates*”. A final point I would like to stress is that for Blessed Francis Jordan publications and benefactors are like two sides of the same coin. They are never separate. One feeds the other in the very purpose of the Society.

HELP THE MISSIONS

VIII

*“Help the missions (...) of the Society,
not only through prayer and sacrifices,
but also by obtaining support for them (...)
Let nothing be considered small
to further the growth of God's Kingdom”*

26. Every Salvatorian urges to hear this cry of the Founder: *“help the missions of the Society”*. And perhaps the first and most important thing we must do is to understand our identity as mission, because “being Salvatorian” is much more than fulfilling tasks or doing things for others. Mission is born out of our loving personal relationship with Jesus, our Saviour, who came to make God known to us as our Father. Mission requires total self-giving and total time. Moreover, it is not done on the basis of our own idea or through our own efforts or will. Doing so reveals only a desire for personal self-fulfilment and seeking applause. The Founder's recommendation is that we help the Society to cooperate in the mission of Jesus Christ, knowing that without Him we can do nothing (cf. Jn 15:5). Moreover, it is worth remembering that, in the story of the Acts of the Apostles, it is not the Apostles who are the protagonists. The protagonist is the Spirit of the Risen Christ who sends them. This Spirit accompanies and guides the community towards mission. Understood in this way, the Founder often said that we Salvatorians are nothing without the power of the Holy Spirit.

We can do nothing without being in communion with Jesus Christ, who calls us and sends us to make known the face of the living and true God.

27. In expressing this cry of *“help the missions”*, it is clear that the Founder had in mind the needs and sufferings of Salvatorians working on the peripheries of the world. He was thinking of Salvatorians who in different contexts announce the Gospel to those peoples and human groups where Jesus Christ and his Gospel are not yet known. Or it could also be that this proclamation is still in its infancy and the living and true God is not yet known and loved. Precisely on this point, it is worth keeping in mind the two pillars indicated by the Founder. On the one hand, the value of *“prayer and sacrifices”* and, on the other hand, the necessary *“financial support”* to sustain the missions. On the one hand, it is a matter of encouraging prayer for the missionaries and constant communication with those who are engaged in missionary



activities beyond the frontiers. On the other hand, the Founder recommends that we take an interest in seeking, receiving and being grateful for the support of benefactors who contribute to Salvatorian works. Wherever there is a Salvatorian mission, these two pillars indicated by the Founder always go together: prayer (with sacrifices) and resources (human and financial).

28. There is yet another aspect of the mission mentioned by the Founder which refers to the generosity of the small things and the sharing of the little we have. In this context we can understand this recommendation: *“Let nothing be considered small to further the growth of the Kingdom of God!”*. This is a call to generosity and to trust more than anything else in God's Providence. If the Founder were alive in our time, he would surely point us to the great disease of consumerism which has also entered and settled in many of our houses and communities. I suppose that all of us have already encountered confreres who, driven by ambition, have almost everything. At the same time, they live anaesthetised in their soul, without any ardour for their vocation/mission. Following the example of its Founder, the Salvatorian mission is oriented towards becoming more and more like the *Kenosis* of Christ (cf. Phil 2,1), through a stripped-down life, which will be fruitful and bear fruit only if we learn to share the little that we are and the little that we have at our disposal. The little flour, if shared, becomes bread for all. The more we foster among ourselves a sense of joining forces and fostering a spirit of communion, the more attractive and fruitful will be the Society's presence in the world.

WITH A GREAT HEART AND A GREAT DISPOSITION

IX

*“Since God loves a cheerful giver,
do all that corresponds to your vocation
with a great heart and a great disposition.
Stay away from excessive pessimism,
which is such a dangerous weapon of our enemy.”*

*“Continue to do good, beloved children,
and work with all your strength for the glory
of God and the salvation of souls.
The time is short,
but the reward in return is great.”*

29. The Founder concludes his letter by encouraging us to go forward and to accept the mission without conditions. He invites us, in communion with the whole Society, to live our salvatorian vocation *“with a great heart and a great disposition”*. Here, as we have seen above, in a very graphic way, the Founder is speaking as he himself has lived his vocation and how he has served in the Church. More than words, Blessed Francis Jordan's life is analogous to those who put themselves in the way of Jesus, ready to risk everything to serve others with joy. In short, the Salvatorian vocation has nothing to do with a mediocre or aspirational lifestyle. On the contrary, what the Founder always wanted to see in his

beloved children were attitudes of availability, detachment, and missionary mobility. More than with speeches, his vocation story is a message that encourages us to grow in holiness, to deepen our encounter with the One who leads us to know the living and true God and to bear witness to the Gospel, as a journey that lasts a lifetime.

30. In this his last exhortation the Founder asserted with determination: *“keep away from an excess of pessimism”*. No one more than he himself knew that we should not be carried away by a certain pessimistic or discouraged outlook, especially when problems overcome our strength. In fact, we cause enormous damage to the community when the spirit of pessimism comes to dominate, or bitterness or despondency. These are usually very sad situations because there is no longer a belief in the action of God's Spirit. What prevails is a position locked in a single point of view that everything is wrong and/or dying. Instead, it is precisely the Holy Spirit who heals us from sterile lamentation and pessimism. It is worth reminding ourselves of how often the Founder invites us never to lose confidence in God's Providence and to start again as often as necessary. So, in the difficult times we live in today, it is of great consolation to hear this recommendation not to let ourselves be sickened by the obstacles inherent in the different contexts of our mission. Let us not allow that pessimism and negative feelings make us old or make us sick inside!

31. The Founder ends his circular letter with these words: *“Continue to do good, beloved children...”*. With renewed ardour, he invites us to continue in the mission, carrying within our hearts the strong desire to work for *“the glory of God and the salvation of souls”*. Through this expression

known throughout the ages - which has inspired the saints in their consecration and service to the Church - Blessed Francis Jordan wanted this also to be the major goal of his apostolic work. Therefore, the ultimate purpose of the Society and all that we do is not to glorify ourselves. On the contrary, for the Founder, it was the end to be sought in the service and fulfilment of God's will. *“Work with all your strength...”* wrote Blessed Francis Jordan, as if to emphasise that we should not be tempted to seek worldly glory, personal well-being, and honours instead of serving others for the glory of God and the salvation of our brothers.

The true glory of God is to manifest his presence of forgiveness, love, mercy, and salvation in the world. Therefore, what the Founder asks of us is to have the courage not to give up the mission of glorifying the Father with all our strength (word and deed) so that all may have life, beyond all limits and measures.



CONCLUSION

32. Before concluding this fraternal message, I would like to confess that the account of the dream described at the beginning of this letter is not entirely true. It is not true that I had such a dream, nor is it true that I found our Founder's letter on my office desk. However, this does not detract from the fact that this letter of Blessed Francis Jordan to his dear confreres exists. It is authentic and is in the archives of the Mother House! It is a circular letter (written in Latin and German) which the Founder, on Passion Sunday 1913, sent to the whole Society on the occasion of the 1600 years of the Triumph of the Holy Cross, in 313 when Cristianity became a legal religion of the Roman Empire. On holding this document in my hands, the first thing that struck me was the timeliness of each of the nine recommendations that the Founder wished to emphasise in his time. Exhortations that are addressed to every Salvatorian, as a father who loves his children and is concerned for their growth.
33. As I said before, in studying these recommendations - which in their original form are much more extensive than I have summarised them here - I have been touched by the great affection with which the Founder addresses his fellow missionaries, calling them: **"BELOVED SONS"**. Although the Founder wrote this letter particularly to the members of the Society, I think I can say that the contents are for all Salvatorians (lay men and women, religious men and women), his spiritual sons and daughters throughout the world. I would therefore like to invite all Salvatorians to meditate on and assimilate this message of Blessed Francis Jordan because of its spiritual and formative character. More than abstract

or theoretical contents, the themes mentioned here touch on a vital and profound Salvatorian spirituality, accompanied by a life of meaning and gestures of apostolic holiness.

34. I invite you to take the time to read this document a second time, trying to imagine the scene of the Founder addressing these recommendations to every Salvatorian, in whatever place and situation he/she finds him/herself. Perhaps, beyond my limited comments, I suggest that you answer these questions: what other observations and feelings do these words of the Founder resonate in your heart? Finally, I hope that this written message - among other materials at our disposal - will help us to live in the strength of the spirit of Blessed Francis Jordan, walking together in the same direction (in the Society and with the other branches of the Salvatorian Family) and together we will help the Church to bring Jesus Christ to all places and contexts, both geographical and existential.
35. Finally, on the occasion of the Christmas season, I would like to greet you on the festive celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ: the light that shines in the darkness of the world and gives meaning to our Salvatorian consecration. Let us not forget that the **Feast of the Nativity of the Saviour** has a fundamental place in our fraternal and apostolic community. The birth of Christ the Saviour is **our religious feast par excellence**, because in it we recognise the name and the face of the love of God the Father who “*came to seek and to save that which was lost*” (Lk 19:10). No one is excluded, no Salvatorian can feel strange or distant from proclaiming this message to the world.
36. It is therefore known that, for pastoral reasons, in some contexts it is impossible to celebrate the feast of the Nativity of the Saviour in community. However, I invite you to find

another suitable day to celebrate in community this feast which is the principal feast of our Society. Moreover, as in other years, I invite you, on Holy Christmas Eve, not to forget to stop in front of a crib and to pray for one another, especially for the missionaries and for our elders. Together let us ask the intercession of Blessed Francis Jordan to help us to live the Saviour's Christmas with depth and inner adoration. Through his intercession may we know how to welcome the face of the Living God, who comes to be with us and teach us to reach out to our smallest and neediest brothers and sisters.



MARKO IVAN RUPNIK - NATIVITY, 2011. SAN SEBASTIANO CATHEDRAL, BRATISLAVA

37. On behalf of the members of the General Council, secretaries and other collaborators, my best wishes to all for a **merry and blessed Christmas of the Saviour** and a blessed 2023. Thank you very much!

Francis Jordan
Superior General

FRANCIS MARY OF THE CROSS JORDAN



BELOVED SONS

HEALTH AND PATERNAL BLESSING IN THE LORD

- I.** In all things and everywhere,
always keep before your eyes your holy vocation,
which is to mould Christ in yourselves and in those around you.
In order that you may manifest this,
be very attentive to observe faithfully the Constitutions...
- II.** You, superiors who are in charge of your brothers, be vigilant (...)
be constant whether it is opportune or inopportune,
denounce, question, correct with all patience and wisdom...
however, you children, obey your superiors (as fathers in Christ)
and submit to them, for they care for you...
- III.** Observe the Lord's commandment
with the greatest diligence: love one another.
By observing this, all will know that you are disciples
of the Divine Saviour. Thus, you will be imitators of the holy apostles,
who were of one heart and soul.
Where there is love, there is God; where there is God, there is peace.
The love of Christ gathers us together in unity...
- IV.** The Society, because it is meant for all peoples,
remains connected to all peoples.
Therefore, embrace all with the same love,
making no distinction of race or nation...
- V.** Encourage continually the spirit of prayer (...)
Contemplate daily whether Jesus is the treasure
that is in your heart so that you may be enlightened
and enkindled by the fire of his love (...)
Be friends of our Saviour in the holy tabernacle (...)
Do spiritual reading as great food for the soul (...)
The examination of conscience helps to restore courage
and to encourage still greater growth.
May your most pleasing aspiration be that all generations
bless our Blessed Mother and Queen (...)
by daily worshipping her through the holy rosary.

VI. Since God gives grace to the humble to make progress in their own sanctification and the sanctification of others (...) they should willingly practise exercises of humility, as has been the custom in our Society from the beginning. Let them be mindful to imitate the Divine Saviour, who washed the feet of his disciples (...) and said: I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you.

VII. May the growth of the Society (...) be of the greatest interest to all of you beloved children. Promote the good name of the Society by your example and be everywhere the sweet fragrance of Christ (...) Make the Society known, promote its publications, seek benefactors (to support needy candidates) and the Society will grow day by day to the greater glory of God.

VIII. Help the missions (...) of the Society, not only through prayer and sacrifices, but also by obtaining support for them (...) Let nothing be considered small to further the growth of God's Kingdom!

IX. Since God loves a cheerful giver, do all that corresponds to your vocation with a great heart and a great disposition. Stay away from excessive pessimism, which is such a dangerous weapon of our enemy. Continue to do good, beloved children, and work with all your strength for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. The time is short, but the reward in return is great.

Rome, SDS Motherhouse, Passion Sunday, 1913

F. Ferruccio e Croce Jordan

TO A YOUNG MAN WHO WOULD LIKE TO BECOME A SALVATORIAN

*Stay at home!
if this idea makes you restless and nervous,
because only your own ideals and desire
will not be enough to follow this path.*

*Don't come to us if for you the Church is still like a stepmother
and you do not love her like a mother;
Do not come to us if you are not prepared
to give yourself completely and unreservedly to this healthy madness;
Don't come to us if you think you will do a favour
to the Society of the Divine Saviour.*

*However...
Come if you wish to live a personal relationship
of authentic friendship with the Person of Jesus Christ.
Come if for you the Gospel and the service of others,
is the centre of your life.*

*Come if you have a broad back and a sufficiently strong body
a cheerful and generous spirit,
a flexible and open mind
and a heart bigger than the world.*

*Come if you enjoy joking and laughing with others
and...sometimes, laugh about yourself.*

*Come...because to know the Divine Saviour
and make Him known in word and deed
will be the best thing that can happen to you in life.
Everything else is taken care of from there.*

Milton Zonta SDS

(Poem inspired on a text of Pedro Arrupe, S.J.)





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