

SALVATORIAN MISSION FOR THE SIGNS OF THE TIME

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Introduction

The world is changing rapidly. Everyone is in the race to reach their goals. The race is becoming faster and faster with no time to rest and see the face of the other. Because of that the world is becoming a weary dry land. All the norms and values are going away. The World is fast becoming like dry land without water. Because of that people are deviating from God. Their faith has fallen away. As Salvatorians we are here to pour out a drop of water to this dry land. Today as Salvatorians we have a vast mission in front of us. How can we transmit our Salvatorian mission reading these signs of the times?

“Our spirit of universality is expressed by all ways and means which the love of God inspires.”
Charter #8

“Institutes of Consecrated Life are thus invited courageously to propose anew the enterprising initiative, creativity and holiness of their Founders and Foundresses in response to the signs of the times emerging in today's world. This invitation is first of all a call to perseverance on the path of holiness in the midst of the material and spiritual difficulties of daily life. But it is also a call to pursue competence in personal work and to develop a dynamic fidelity to their mission, adapting forms, if need be, to new situations and different needs, in complete openness to God's inspiration and to the Church's discernment. But all must be fully convinced that the quest for ever greater conformity to the Lord is the guarantee of any renewal which seeks to remain faithful to an Institute's original inspiration. In this spirit there is a pressing need today for every Institute to return to the Rule, since the Rule and Constitutions provide a map for the whole journey of discipleship, in accordance with a specific Charism confirmed by the Church. A greater regard for the Rule will not fail to offer consecrated persons a reliable criterion in their search for the appropriate forms of a witness which is capable of responding to the needs of the times without departing from an Institute's initial inspiration¹

“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.”

Charter #8a

F. Jordan was always an open-minded person. His apostolic vision was global. *“As long as there is one person on earth who does not know God and does not love Him above all things, you dare not allow yourself a moment's rest...”²*

This is our mission that the Salvatorians must carry on to all four corners of the world.

“Be a true apostle of Jesus Christ. Do not rest until you have carried the word of God to all corners of the earth. Be a true herald of the Most High! Fly like an eagle around the globe and proclaim the word of God”.³

In order to be true heralds to the four corners of the world our Pope Francis challenges priests and religious to contemplate how the Saviour moved about, how He preached, how He saw the world. It must be a genuine mission which speaks with real urgency to each Salvatorian. We Salvatorians must prepare to follow Jesus the Saviour radically.

¹ Vita Consecrata 37

² Spiritual Diary II, 1-2

³ Ibid No. I/182,3

*“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven”.*⁴

Sociologist’s vision of the signs of the times

In the 18th century and even before, there were many sociologists, who brought new meaning to the society. They too were aware of the signs of their times. Their efforts were to build a good society and to intensify good values which were dwindling away slowly from the society even at that time. One of the sociologists, namely Emil Durkheim, pointed out that the society has become a normless society. That is the main reason for suicide. He introduced a special word “anomie”, meaning a lack of social or moral standards.⁵

Asian Culture

We are Asians! Asia primarily is a religious world with a variety of cultures and traditions. Yet there is misery and abject poverty. Who is responsible for this? Due to various reasons many complications are also arising today. But now it has become a universal problem. So it is time for us to position ourselves to resolve these problems and incarnate Jesus Christ amidst everyone. Our mission is challenging and very demanding. According to the word of God and Fr. Jordan we must prepare and be ready for everything and anything. Then our Salvatorian mission will be fruitful all over the world.

We are proud to be born in Asia, the birth place of all major religions. Though the majority is poor, our cultures and traditions are rich. They help us to build relationships with God, with one another and with the universe. The norms and values of our culture strengthen the religiosity of our people even in this modern epoch. Still our churches are full with Christian faithful. *“In the Asian context, the cultural and religious practice of the poor may be a rich source to regenerate the Charism. Once we resonate with the poor in their spirituality and discern their values and elements - simplicity of life, genuine openness and generous sharing, community consciousness, family loyalty and respect for the elders - they can be appreciated and announced as genuine Gospel values no matter to which religious denomination these poor belong.”*⁶

According to our Asian cultures our families are close to each other and we have a patriarchal society. In this society each person respects their elders and women are well protected. But through globalization there is a rapid development in today’s society economically, politically, sociologically by enculturation. Besides, people cannot bear their heavy life style because of poverty and the change of the society. Therefore many migrate in search of better pastures for economic growth. Do they truly find those utopian pastures? Instead there are enormous sufferings and at home untold disasters are taking place in family life. Because of poverty our people find many pathetic conditions in their lives such as prostitution, migration, violence, child abuse, abortions etc. In this current situation Fr. Jordan is asking us to place ourselves in today’s world. As Salvatorians our radical mission is to be aware of the signs of the times.

⁴ Mt.5:13-15

⁵ Masters of Sociological thought –Lewis A. Coser

⁶ Salvatorian Key Elements Part 2 page 113

*“God so loved the world that he gave his only Son as Saviour. Moved by the deepest need of people to find life and to know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom he sent Francis of the Cross and Mary of the Apostles founded our Congregation”.*⁷

Solidarity as fundamental call for the mission as Salvatorians

Salvatorian mission invites us to be responsible for each and every one. Pope John Paul II spoke about the North-South division in the world as well as a division between the first world (wealthier people) and the third world (poorer nations). When we apply this to us, knowing and having seen the real situation in our society, with the spirit of our founder we must have always the preferential option for the poor. We must be in solidarity with them.

Being in solidarity is one of our main characteristics as Salvatorians. Especially we who are living in the third world country must be one with those who need us. One of the social encyclicals of Pope John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (The Social Concerns of the Church) mainly speaks about solidarity. The Pope wanted to speak about solidarity with the whole world through this encyclical. Mainly it speaks about the gap between the rich and the poor.

*“Solidarity is the appropriate response to the fact of interdependence and the need to overcome the gap between rich and poor”.*⁸

*“The message of the Church's social doctrine regarding solidarity clearly shows that there exists an intimate bond between solidarity and the common good, between solidarity and the universal destination of goods, between solidarity and equality among men and peoples, between solidarity and peace in the world .”*⁹

Through solidarity we bring about unity among all. Always it is a path to peace. Solidarity calls for the members of the society to recognize each other as persons not simply as instruments or means. As Salvatorians it helps us to serve the needs of all, especially the oppressed and the marginalized.

Actually solidarity is a Christian virtue and in the same way it is a virtue for all humankind. On the other hand it is a person's commitment for the common good.

*“The common good does not consist in the simple sum of the particular of each subject of a social entity. Belonging to everyone and to each person, it is and remains “common” because it is indivisible and because only together is it possible to attain it, increase it and safeguard its effectiveness, with regard also to the future.”*¹⁰

Common good must be served in its fullness. It helps to achieve people's potentials and their wellbeing. The rights and duties of individuals and groups must be harmonized under the common good. We must have the Salvatorian courage to face these signs like our founder Fr. Francis Jordan. He was a man who followed Jesus radically. As he says:

*“Here I am, send me-for you, for souls, for the Church of God. All, O Father, all, all O God, all, O Jesus, all, O Saviour of the world, I desire most ardently to save all! Oh, save souls! Oh save souls! I beg and implore you, save souls! Cost what it may, save souls!”*¹¹

Christian ethics for the Salvatorians

Christian ethics is well summarized by Colossians: *“Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set*

⁷ SDS W. RoL #2

⁸ Sollicitudo Rei Socialis 38-39

⁹ Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church,194

¹⁰ Ibid chapter 4, 164

¹¹ SD II/12

*your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry?"*¹²

*If you would enter life, keep the commandments."*¹³

Conclusion

In this contemporary world we must bring these moral values to the people. These values must be a good response to the signs of today. Fr. Jordan also tried his best to bring ethics to society. He fought constantly to bring the reality to the society, which was going away at that time. Today also we can see many symptoms of poverty, inequality and lack of values for human life. Many are seeking their dignity which they do not have. In the society some are fighting for their rights and duties. This is the real world today and this is the time for us to raise our prophetic voices as Salvatorians; and in the same way we must bring our Salvatorian spirituality to the society and to the needy.

Biblical prophets have been inspired by justice and they always raised their voice against injustice. They bring solidarity with all: *"The prophet's intelligence strengthens the weak in the search for the common good and the reestablishment of justice."*¹⁴

Jesus also raised his voice against injustice and to create a new society. He was also aware of the signs of the times. Jesus radically worked for structural changes in His society. Fasting and prayer was His methodology. Fr. Jordan also had a prophetic mission in his life. He followed Jesus the Saviour and became a man of prayer. Like him we must immerse ourselves in deep relationship with Jesus, the Saviour.

*"Whenever you undertake anything important that seems to you most useful and good, test it while you still can by withdrawing for a few hours of recollection with God, before dedicating all your strength to it."*¹⁵

Then God gives us the strength and courage to be in solidarity with the needy, to raise our voices against injustice. As we are Asian Salvatorians our main task is to uplift the poor, to be in solidarity with them. We can no longer remain with structures and traditions that are not suitable for today. As Salvatorians we must take a bold step forward in a radical way for our mission, reading the signs of the times.

*"All for the greater glory of God and for the salvation of souls"*¹⁶

Reflection Questions

1. Re-read the Salvatorian Family Charter in light of this article.
 - a. Note words or phrases that speak to you and ask, "What is this saying to me and how will I respond?"
 - b. 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. The author writes of responding to the signs of the times from the perspective of an Asian and a sociologist. Whether you are an Asian Salvatorian or not, after reading this article describe Asian cultural values that can enhance our Salvatorian missions in all parts of the world

¹² Col.3:1-6

¹³Mt. 19:17

¹⁴ Fr. Jordan: Prophet from his youth- Fr. Milton Zonta SDS

¹⁵ SD 1/65

¹⁶ SD1/67