

FRANCIS JORDAN AND HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS CHRIST

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The task of carrying out an in-depth reflection on this topic, of looking at Francis Jordan and his relationship with Jesus Christ, is quite demanding and, at the same time, exciting. In order to stay on track in the process of understating the Founder's relationship with Jesus Christ – who was the center and passion of his life and apostolic action, and is also the inspiring model for our way of being and living in today's world – I would like to propose a number of questions we can use as points of departure: What are the basic traits of Francis Jordan's perception of Jesus Christ? What are the major perception shifts that took place in Francis Jordan's life as a result of his relationship with Jesus Christ? What experience of Jesus Christ in Francis Jordan's life determined his apostolic approach? I believe these questions will help us live the Salvatorian mission with a deeper spiritual quality.

What I will try to do, in a way, is narrate Francis Jordan's relationship with Jesus Christ, because it is simply impossible to speak about the Founder's spirituality if we separate it from his living contact with Jesus. In the first period of his life, as it often happens to many people, Francis Jordan was satisfied with a faith consisting in acquired knowledge about Jesus Christ, a number of faith statements superficially learned without the necessary conditions for a committed faith. However, Francis Jordan gradually brought his faith experience to the depths of his heart. As we will see later on, he steadily moved closer to Jesus of Nazareth's life style, his way of trusting the Father, and his compassionate attitude towards human beings. Francis Jordan's spiritual journey is deeply inspiring. His journey makes us realize the need to keep striving at becoming adults in the faith, a process that implies delving into the deep roots of this faith, beyond the customs and traditions we have inherited.

Francis Jordan's life story is enlightening for us because it helps us overcome a relationship with Jesus about whom we have little existential knowledge, and which is based on mere repetitive devotions and theoretical information in an abstract way. This kind of faith is not enough. We need a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ based on prayer, meditation on the Word of God, our full self-gift to Him, and our commitment to others through works of compassion and solidarity towards those who suffer. In fact, as we will see later, we are talking about attitudes we must experience and reflections we must interiorize, until we reach the unfathomable and authentic faith with which the Founder invoked Jesus Christ: *"Oh Lord, I wish I could always burn ardently for love of You and inflame everyone. May I be a burning fire, Oh God, and a flaming torch!"* (SD III/20)¹. Perhaps the most decisive question for us today is: where do we find the bright fire that burned in Francis Jordan? Are Salvatorian men and women working toward a deep relationship with Jesus Christ? Are they giving witness (not only with words) to the message of Jesus as the Good News of salvation? Without an intimate relationship with Jesus, our discipleship simply becomes religious mediocrity. Pope Benedict XVI stated this clearly: *"Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the*

**"I throw myself into
Your arms, my Savior
and Redeemer.
With you, for You,
through You and in
You, I want to live
and die."**

**Father Jordan:
Spiritual Diary I, 9:
15 November 1875**

***Charter*
Chapter 3 Preface**

¹In this prayer, the Founder pleads the Savior to make him a witness of light, in the same way as his patron saint, John the Baptist, who was "a lamp that burned and shone" (Jn 5:35).

encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction."². I am convinced that going back to this vital relationship with Jesus Christ, and promoting his spirit, which liberates life and makes it more human, is the crucial point for us today, as the young Francis Jordan intended: *"In all you do, your prayers, etc., act in Jesus, through Jesus, with Jesus (...) Without Him you can do nothing. Without Him what is the use of anything you do?"* SD I/125).

Introductory notes

Before reflecting on how to center our lives in Jesus Christ with Francis Jordan's attitude, I would like to present some preliminary notes.

1. *The risk of being trapped in the past* - We are living times of deep cultural change everywhere, which affect our way of being in the world and requires from us a very far-reaching vision into the future, beyond any attachment to the past. We cling to the past when we seek an external relationship with Francis Jordan as if he were just a nineteenth-century character with a beautiful life story who left us admirable personal writings. This "Francis Jordan" is interesting only for a few people. The danger of simply quoting the Founder without interpreting his words in order to bring about their evangelizing energy for our times threatens us everywhere. Here I will try to speak about a fascinating Francis Jordan who is a model of spirituality for today's world.
2. *Francis Jordan's spiritual wellspring* -In recent decades, we have carried out many investigations and translations about Francis Jordan's life and writings. However, I do not know of any systematic study about Jesus Christ perceived through the eyes of Francis Jordan. In preparing this reflection, therefore, I focused my attention on the spiritual intimacy contained in the reservoir of his spiritual notes without consulting other writings. As we know, the Founder's Spiritual Diary is not a didactic book. It simply shows his inner life and offers precious examples for us, such as his humility, trust in Providence, Evangelical poverty, contemplation, and life of piety. At the same time, it reveals his special commitment to certain Christian truths, for example the centrality of Christ the Savior, the Spirit of the Apostles, love for the Church, devotion to Mary as support and protection, meditation of the Word of God, and the sacraments. Furthermore, I think his spiritual notes reveal his most characteristic features, for example his austere life style, perseverance, total availability, community spirit, and apostolic passion. In fact, Francis Jordan's Spiritual Diary is a real wellspring where we can drink all the dynamism, inspiration and apostolic intentions of our Founder.
3. *Trying to break new ground* -My reflection does not intend to minimize the studies and interpretations that many Salvatorian men and women have offered in the present and the past. However, in a continuously changing world we cannot stay in the comfort zone of the good things we have achieved so far. The Salvatorian charism is as dynamic as the Spirit, a call to share and promote the responsibility of living the present times. Therefore, the following reflection aims at offering a significant interpretation (among others) of Francis Jordan's spirit, which is always something new. The richness of Francis Jordan's spirituality and vision are inexhaustible. The challenge is to find a new language allowing us to overcome the schemes that have become meaningless in today's world³. Many will agree that plenty of good things are taking place in a number of places, but due to our inertia and limited creativity, few people dare to follow Jesus and take on Francis Jordan's apostolic spirit. Therefore, if we want to be witnesses of Salvation today and collaborate with the Church to turn the world into a more human place, we must return to

²Encyclical Letter « *Deus Caritas Est* » n. 1 (2006); given in Rome, at Saint Peter's, on 25 December.

³Perhaps we need a new language that instead of saying "saving souls" could speak about "healing the sick and wounded life"; instead of "Divine Providence", it could speak about "experiencing God's caring and providential love"; instead of "universality", it could use "inclusive mission" and "not excluding anyone", etc.

our Founder's mystical and apostolic passion. Finding other ways to express our spirituality is not an easy task, but we must strive at it if we want to overcome the state of apathy that makes us prisoners of the past.

4. *Francis Jordan's basic spirituality* - Like all human beings, Francis Jordan had to build his spiritual life and maturity step by step before becoming a model of faithfulness to Christ in the past and the present. However, can we compare Francis Jordan's spiritual heritage with the broad and rich set of spiritualities (Benedictine, Dominican, Franciscan, Carmelite or Ignatian) that have flourished in the life of the Church throughout the centuries? Although we can say that Francis Jordan did not set a new line of spirituality in the classical sense, similar to the traditional spiritual schools, it does not follow that his spirituality lacks a distinctive and unique character. I think we can state that in Francis Jordan's spiritual heritage we can identify a particular way of sanctification and a proclamation of God's all-inclusive love. Our Founder did not conceive an original spirituality, but I do believe he was a spiritual master who indeed offered a particular way of reading and living the Gospel in his time. Francis Jordan, above all, was a man of prayer who loved Jesus Christ most deeply, and was passionate about God's Word. He was a tireless Apostle with an unconditional love for the Church.

Francis Jordan's path as a Disciple of Jesus

The experience of faith has always meant taking the road, as the paradigmatic story of Abraham tells us. Faith has always been an adventure, a bet, "*In hope against hope he believed*", as the Apostle Paul says (Rm 4:18). Francis Jordan's encounter with Jesus Christ is also a gradually unfolding story. It is the account of a spiritual journey that went through different stages, vicissitudes and, of course, periods of doubt and intimate crisis, as he often expressed in his spiritual notes. For example, after the General Chapter of November 1902 he wrote: "*I am Yours, Lord! Help me, never overlook the trials which engulf me*" (SD II/41).

In a more pedagogical than chronological sense, I would propose to distinguish two basic stages in our Founder's experience of discipleship. The first stage includes the life of faith he received from the Church mediations of that time, particularly through the family, the community, the testimony of some people, and the lives of the martyrs and saints. During this period, he emphasizes Catholic devotional piety, which is rooted in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. This kind of devotion appreciates the doctrinal and normative dimension of faith above all, expressing it in certain exercises of popular piety, which in turn nourish and sustain the devotion. Pope Paul VI said that popular piety "*manifests a thirst for God which only the simple and poor can know.*"⁴ As we will see, Francis Jordan's pious practices brought about a strong spirit of piety in him through certain devotions chosen and lived at the service of his charism and love for Jesus Christ.

However, let me point out that, a second stage in Francis Jordan's story of faith, which decisively reoriented his life. In October 1877, as we know, he entered Saint Peter's Diocesan Seminary in the Black Forest. The spiritual exercises of Saint Ignatius of Loyola were an important element of the last formation year. The young Founder immersed himself completely in the study of the great spiritual masters, especially André-Jean-Marie Hamon (1795-1874)⁵, and the Jesuits Luis de la Puente (1554-1624) and Paolo Seguezi (1653-1713). This intensive reading, plus his exercises of meditation and contemplation, led him to a more personal and effective relationship with Jesus. Indeed, he deepened his inner life as much as he could, which shaped his intimate friendship with Jesus Christ, so much so, that after his ordination to the diaconate he wrote: "*In your studies delve deeply into theological truths,*

⁴Cf. the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 48.

⁵ A theologian and writer that very much influenced our Founder, who owned his most important writings: *Life of Saint Francis de Sales* and *Meditations for each day, and for the major holidays of the year* (3 volumes)

especially through meditation. Half measures are of little use” (SD I/126). During this period of intense formation, silence and discernment we see the first sketches of “*A Catholic Society of clerics and workers in the Lord’s vineyard from among all nations*” (SD I/124). It is obviously difficult to state this with exact precision, but I interpret this period as a new horizon, in which Francis Jordan became rooted in a more intimate encounter with Jesus, getting to know, love and follow him better. In short, this centrality of Jesus Christ in his life became a path towards maturity and authenticity as a disciple and an apostle of the Kingdom.

I invite you now to take a closer look at these two stages of Francis Jordan’s spiritual journey. They are actually two moments in the same process, which help us understand his experience of faith and deep convictions as a disciple of Jesus Christ and a witness to salvation.

1. The Founder’s experience of believing in Jesus Christ

Francis Jordan, as we know, stood in the religious and spiritual context of the 19th century. At that time, the great social, political and cultural revolutions significantly restricted the strength and operating power of the Catholic Church. To counterbalance this situation, there was an effort to reinforce its spiritual influence through new religious foundations – thanks to the testimony of numerous saints – and the promotion of popular devotions.

One of the main contents of Christian spirituality at the time was the veneration of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. So much so that almost all religious institutes founded in the 19th century include elements regarding the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which was widespread in popular devotion⁶.

All these popular devotion movements obviously influenced Francis Jordan, although there is no evidence of any exaggerated piety in him. On the contrary, he used these means to enrich his spirituality. For example, when he studied at Saint Peter’s Seminary in the Black Forest, he wrote in his Spiritual Diary: “*Always have a picture of the Sacred Heart of Jesus set up in your room for veneration*” (SD //81). When he wrote the first Statutes of the Society in 1880, he also dedicated his apostolic work to the Sacred Heart of Jesus⁷. Moreover, when he started publishing his magazine “The Missionary”, the cover included an image of the Sacred Heart with the following sentence: “My sweet heart of Jesus, grant that I may love you always more”. Even more interesting is the fact that the first sketches of the Society’s official seal included the image of the Sacred Heart. Therefore, we cannot exclude the loving presence of the Sacred Heart of Jesus from Francis Jordan’s spiritual life, since it always inspired him, and perhaps was the premise of his contemplative attitude and tireless missionary readiness.

We must also point out that the devotion to the Heart of Christ (Sacred Heart) usually went together with a special devotion to the Eucharist and the passion and death of Jesus. In fact, these are two essential elements of popular piety that, together with the devotion to the Virgin Mary, were the three main pillars of Francis Jordan’s spiritual life. During the year he spent at Saint Peter’s Seminary, he underlined in his spiritual notes: “I. The Most Blessed Sacrament. II. The Five Wounds of Our Lord Jesus Christ. III. The Most Blessed Virgin Mary, my Mother” (SD I/126). Likewise, as an adult, in September 1905, he pointed out these elements of his devotion again: “The Blessed Sacrament–the Cross–the Mother of God.” (SD II/92).

⁶In 1856, Pope Pius IX, listening to the special interest of many bishops, extended the feast of the Sacred Heart to the whole Church. It was a decisive event. Since then, as a liturgical document says, “*the cult of the Sacred Heart, like an overflowing river, overcame all obstacles and spread throughout the world*”. During the pontificate of Leo XIII, the splendor of the cult of the Sacred Heart flourished thanks to the publication of the encyclical *Annum Sacrum* (May 25, 1899). In this document, the Pope decided to consecrate all humankind to the Heart of Jesus: “*In that Sacred Heart all our hopes should be placed, and from it the salvation of men is to be confidently besought*”. (Cf. González, Manuel Revuelta, SJ. *Evolución Histórica de la devoción al Corazón de Jesús en España*).

⁷“*The Apostolic Teaching Society is consecrated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus*” (cf. ATS Statutes, 16).

Going on with this reflection, I believe it is now worth highlighting the Founder's relationship with Jesus Christ through his particular devotion to the Eucharist and the Passion Narrative. These elements gave Francis Jordan energy and comfort to overcome day-to-day hardships.

- A. *The Founder's Eucharistic devotion* - Undoubtedly, the presence of Jesus in the Eucharist and the Tabernacle were the center and love of Francis Jordan's life. The most influential person for him in this sense was Father Nikolaus Gehr (1839-1924), his spiritual director at Saint Peter's Seminary – whose most famous work had been published in 1877, *The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass*. He helped Francis Jordan to develop an attitude of personal contact with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Among his daily prayer goals, we notice his desire to visit Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament frequently. When he was a seminarian, he wrote: "*Visit Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament at least once a day*" (SD I/90 and SD I/140). As an adult, after a spiritual retreat, he wrote again: "*Linger more often alone near the tabernacle, detached from all*" (SD II/92). For Francis Jordan, the moments of prayer
- In our meditation and contemplation on the Word of God in light of our reality and in the celebration of the Sacraments, we integrate our prayer and action. In so doing, we strive to live our call to holiness and encourage others to do the same.**
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before the Blessed Sacrament were the best opportunity to show gratitude to his Savior and to tell him how much he loved him. I dare to say that Jesus was as alive and as present for him during these moments as Jesus was for the Apostles, and that Francis Jordan placed in Jesus' hands all the decisions, aspirations and actions of his life.

For Francis Jordan, a particular aspect of this devotion was his habit of spending time in contemplation and vocational discernment after the Sunday Mass. There are countless notes in his Diary referring to this particular moment of union with Christ, for example: "*After the holy sacrifice of the Mass! Accomplish that work for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. Oh Jesus, Oh sweet-smelling balsam, in me a sinner. Oh my love!*" (SD I/149). On March 25, 1879, he also wrote: "*After Holy Mass I experienced great consolation over the proposed work*" (SD I/154). After Christmas that same year, on December 27, he wrote again: "...*after Holy Mass, and think as you did at another time after Holy Communion*" (SD /151*). Also on May 2, 1880: "*Repeatedly after holy Mass a special prompting and joy*" (SD I/156*). These quotes are an evidence of how his encounter with Holy Communion renewed his energies and nourished his spirituality as the true "*Bread of Life*" and "*Food of Angels*" (SD I/8). In his path as disciple of Jesus, as he discerned the foundation of his apostolic work, these moments of intimacy with "The Beloved One" became a source of light, strength and consolation for our Founder.

- B. *Devotion to the Passion of Christ* - Francis Jordan certainly knew Saint Thomas Aquinas' statement: "*the Passion of Christ is enough to serve as a guide and model throughout our lives*"⁸. In fact, meditating on the passion and death of Jesus Christ was almost a leitmotif in our Founder's spiritual and apostolic life. Since he was young, Francis Jordan lived a very intimate union with the Crucified Savior and eventually adopted this simple purpose: "*Always carry your crucifix with you!*" (SD I/93). As we know, Francis Jordan had a crucifix in his room together with a picture of the Sorrowful Mother whom he invoked and loved so much. Without doubt, he would gaze at the crucifix and the Sorrowful Mother very often and say a simple prayer, for example: "*Oh Jesus, crucified for me, Oh*

⁸Saint Thomas Aquinas – *On the creed*, 6, 1c

Father, Oh my All. One thing I ask of You, one thing almighty Lord, this I seek! How I wish I could save everyone” (SD I/149). Countless signs like this prove that Francis Jordan sought sanctification through the Passion, and that contemplating the Crucified Jesus was the source of his strong desire to “save everyone”.

In addition to verbal language, Francis Jordan also expressed himself in gestures of the purest simplicity and spontaneity, which characterize popular piety even today. He offers a typical example of this religiosity during his visit to the Holy Sepulcher of Christ in March 1880: *“This book was placed on Our Lord Jesus Christ’s tomb, on Mount Calvary, on the altars of the crucifixion of Our Lord Jesus Christ and on the altar of Our Lady, Mother of Sorrows, and on the place where the holy Cross stood and where the Redeemer of the World died” (SD I/155*).* In addition to his personal devotion, this gesture also indicates how the Founder sensed that the suffering of the Cross would mark his personal path before fulfilling the apostolic work he had envisioned as a call.

However, by contemplating the pain of Christ he found the help he needed to overcome his own difficulties: praying better and moving forward towards spiritual holiness. One of his most important spiritual purposes while studying at the Seminary was the following:

**“The witness of
Father Jordan and
Blessed Mary of the
Apostles inspires us
to...embrace the
Cross for the sake of
our mission...”**

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“Let the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ be a constant motive to love suffering with Jesus Christ” (SD I/123). “Meditate often on the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ!” (SD I/144). Later on, as a religious priest, he wrote this personal note showing the spirituality of the Cross he lived: *“Persevere in suffering and in the cross. Oh persevere firmly and heroically. Courage, my child; look upon Me on the cross! Oh, persevere, oh persevere patiently! Embrace the cross and kiss it. Easter morning is coming soon!” (SD I/175).* Actually, the devotional practice of contemplating the Passion and Death of Jesus was one of the most important spiritual sources allowing our Founder to live – internally, intensely and

continuously – what the Savior of the world did for the sake of humanity. Francis Jordan saw the Passion of Jesus as an effective means to achieve inner poverty, based on self-donation to others by emptying ourselves in order to follow Jesus Christ fully.

2. The Founder’s experience of believing like Jesus did

Besides his way of confessing Jesus as the Christ according to popular piety, I believe Francis Jordan was the bearer of a deeper and stronger bond of faith, namely, living the same faith that Jesus lived. At this spiritual level, it is not a matter of “believing in Jesus” but of “believing like Jesus”. The Ignatian spiritual exercises obviously helped him very much to develop a closer relationship with Jesus Christ. The spiritual path proposed by Ignatius of Loyola united him to Jesus Christ more deeply and contributed to developing his sense of being an apostle in the service of the Church.

Therefore, I would now like to ‘read’ together with you Francis Jordan’s path of spiritual development in the light of Jesus of Nazareth’s fundamental experience, that is, his mystical depth and evangelizing mission. I believe these two pivots of the praxis of Jesus throw light on the mission we have received from the Founder: *“...teach all nations (...) to know the true God and him whom he has sent, Jesus Christ. (...) Go, and with perseverance speak all words of eternal life to the people.”*⁹ The practice of bringing these two elements together –

⁹ See Rules 1884.

intimately knowing God and proclaiming the good news of Jesus – led Francis Jordan to full maturity, and is also a summary of his charisma and his fundamental attitude as evangelizer.

2.1 *Discipleship inspired by the mystical experience of Jesus (“Abba”).* Jesus of Nazareth invoked God with the expression “Abba”, which in the context of the Jewish family indicated affection, intimacy, and the trust from a little child towards his father. All sources indicate that Jesus experienced God as someone who was close to him, a beloved father who looks at every human being with infinite tenderness and compassion. This personal experience generated an unconditional readiness in Jesus to work in favor of a more dignified life for everyone, starting with the less favored.

Based on this description, I can acknowledge the same mystical, fulfilling, and humanizing experience of Jesus in our Founder. Wanting to know Jesus Christ as the basis of all knowledge was the pursuit that filled Francis Jordan’s heart and gave fullness to his life. Through his example and teachings, our Founder, whose life was deeply rooted in this union with Jesus Christ, called us to deepen such a union as the first and most important priority in our own lives.

In order to better understand this approach to Jesus’ prayer and spirituality that Francis Jordan experienced, I would like to explore three aspects.

- a) *Knowledge of the Savior based on the Bible* –From the time he was a student, Francis Jordan tried to know Jesus Christ by meditating on the Scriptures. The Bible was the book of his life. Through the Word of God, he started becoming acquainted with Jesus and gradually rooted his life in the Gospel’s message. It is clear that “getting to know someone” in Biblical language does not only imply an intellectual understanding, but also a deep experience of this person’s presence in our life. Likewise, our Founder’s effort to know Christ amounted to developing a personal bond of communion with him. Hearing, meditating, living and celebrating the Word of God was the most important thing in his life because, as Saint Jerome said, “*for ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ*”. I would like to point out that Francis Jordan took one of his most beautiful resolutions precisely from Saint Jerome thanks to a quote he found in a book: “*Read Sacred Scripture often; even better, never let the sacred reading leave your hand... Let sleep find you holding the Bible, and the sacred page supporting your nodding head*” (SD I/145). I think these reflections are enough to make us see how Scripture inspired and guided Francis Jordan’s steps. In Salvatorian spirituality, therefore, Scripture is the irreplaceable nourishment we need to achieve an intimate knowledge of Jesus Christ, the Word of God who became flesh. He is the living Word of God that Salvatorian men and women bring to the world through their words and gestures¹⁰.
- b) *Trusting God as a key element* –As we know, trust permeates the entire Gospel. Jesus’ trust in the loving kindness of the Father was absolute. In a similar way, this was a fundamental attitude for Francis Jordan. He also felt the words of Jesus as a personal invitation: “*Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me*” (Jn 14:1). Throughout his life, the Founder’s attitudes indicated that the Father of Jesus was always supporting him as the source and wisdom of life. We are often impressed by the way our Founder fully dedicated himself to welcoming the strength of God’s infinite love in his heart. As the following prayer indicates, trusting God did not mean indifference or passivity for him, but an extraordinary source of support: “*You, Lord, are my hope, You are my strength, You are my foundation, You*

¹⁰The Concluding Document of Aparecida (2007) expressed very beautifully what “knowing Jesus” means for us: “*Knowing Jesus is the best gift that any person can receive; that we have encountered Him is the best thing that has happened in our lives, and making him known by our word and deeds is our joy*” (29).

are my help, You are my strong protector. In You I place all my hope and my trust!" (SD II/64). As a post-communion prayer, he once wrote: *"Into Your arms, Oh my Savior and Redeemer, I throw myself. With You, for You, through You and in You I wish to live and die"* (SD I/9). After reaching spiritual maturity, when everything in life falls in place, he wrote this phrase: *"Use these keys: trust in God and in prayer!"* (SD II/66). Letting an unwavering trust in God's Provident Love guide us is ultimately a primordial aspect of our Salvatorian spirituality.

- c) *Spending time alone with the Lord* - Francis Jordan always took meticulous care of his communication with God in silence and solitude. Many people remembered him as a person who often retired to pray and *"...remain in the closest union and communion with Jesus, without Whom you can do nothing"* (SD I/134). We just need to read his spiritual notes to find the Founder in person praying. The Spiritual Diary portrays his most intimate moments alone with Him who we know loves us beyond measure. His notes often show how he felt before this "You", with whom he could always talk, in whose company he never felt alone. The expressions of affection he uses in his notes, as if he were with someone to whom he was united by deep love, are very touching: *"my Beloved"* (SD I/107); *"my heart's beloved"* (SD I/143); *"Spouse of my soul"* (SD I/144); *"Oh Jesus, Son of the living God, I am completely Yours! To suffer for You! All for You! Oh moment of ineffable grace!"* (SD II/86). The spiritual energy coming from Francis Jordan's prayer and meditation was so strong that nothing and no one was able to divert him from his path. From my point of view, this was not only a feature of his life but one of his most important legacies: the greatest power to change anything in our lives comes from our constant dialogue alone with Jesus, our Master and Savior.

- 2.2 *Discipleship based on Jesus' experience of announcing the Good News (Kingdom of God)* - All sources indicate that Jesus inaugurated his salvific activity not talking about himself or simply about God, but proclaiming the Kingdom of God as a good news event. The Kingdom of God was, without a doubt, the core of his preaching, his deepest conviction, and the passion that inspired all his activity. The Kingdom of God is the key to understanding the sense he gave to his life. This is the right attitude to understand his message about God who is already here looking for a happier life for all, trying to fill his creation with compassion. With his message about the arrival of God's Kingdom, Jesus invites all people to change their heart and their way of looking at reality.

When we look at Francis Jordan's pastoral practice, it is easy to realize his clear intention to reach the most distant places, to go out and meet the people without excluding anyone. According to the Founder, the greatest thing anyone can do in life is to offer people the opportunity to find Jesus and his message of salvation. For this purpose, the Founder organized and sent out groups of missionaries as an "apostolic task force" to plant the essence of the Gospel in people's heart. His deepest desire was to "save souls", which in modern language would mean he wanted to save the entire person and every person. In other words, he wanted to give himself completely to others, and do his best so that the greatest number of people possible could have life in fullness.

In order to better understand the missionary dynamism of Jesus who tried to reach every person, translating it into Francis Jordan's experience, I would like to point out three aspects.

- a) *Apostolic zeal and awareness of the mission* -There is a strong apostolic zeal in the life of Francis Jordan, following the example and indication of Paul's words: *"Woe*

to me, Oh Lord, if I do not make You known to all!" (SD II/2) Proclaiming the Gospel was a duty for him, an obligation that occupied his life entirely. This is why the Founder always tried to keep in mind the testimony of the men and women who, out of their great love for Jesus Christ, were passionate for humanity, for the world, and particularly for those who suffer. By following the example of so many witnesses of Jesus Christ, Francis Jordan became a committed, loving and enthusiastic man who never allowed himself a single moment of rest. Deeply imbued with the fire of the Apostle Paul, he described his life project as follows: *"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!"* (SD I/182) During the days he was getting ready for priestly ordination, this yearning of his heart was clearly visible: *"Oh, holy apostles flying through the world evangelizing all! Oh inscrutable zeal..."* (SD I/138). This energy and passion in Francis Jordan, which reflected the Mission of the Apostles on Pentecost, is still fascinating today for many men and women and prompts them to proclaim with a loud voice the wonders of God's salvation in different situations and places. The Founder wanted to highlight that the zeal of the first apostles is not dead, and that the fire ignited by Christ cannot be contained. The following maxim had a central place for Francis Jordan during the years when his work was expanding: *"Go in the name of the Most High and enflame all"* (SD II/21). It was a visionary declaration of the missionary zeal overflowing from his heart, expressing his passion for Jesus the Savior, and his burning love for all nations. It was not a cold and determined conviction, but the awareness of living in a state of mission to proclaim Christ, to make him known and loved. The spirit of Jesus and the Apostles is a fire prompting us to undertake the renewal process that Francis Jordan wanted to encourage in every person, always and everywhere.

We make the eternal truths of the Word of God and our Faith accessible to persons of any culture, race, ethnic group, social class, nationality and religion.
Charter # 8c

- b) *Salvation is for all (compassion)* - Francis Jordan certainly looked at the world with the same compassion with which Jesus did. The Founder's main concern was to collaborate with God's plan for the salvation of the entire world. Rather than reaching the poor and those who need the light of the Gospel, the mission for him aimed at the "conversion" to Christian values, according to the mindset of the time. However, I believe the intention of Francis Jordan's charism was to proclaim God's Providence to all, without excluding anyone. Today we say that the mission of promoting God's salvation leads us to become a sign of God's love bringing everyone together into a loving relationship with Him. The Founder often expressed this awareness through short prayers as the following: *"Oh Lord, how I wish I were intimately united with You and could lead all to You!"* (SD II/75), and also *"Oh Jesus, crucified for me, Oh Father, Oh my All. One thing I ask of You, one thing almighty Lord, this I seek! How I wish I could save everyone"* (SD I/149). Likewise, the decision to send his first missionaries to India shows this fundamental attitude of protecting and healing people, trying to reach those who suffer the most. Before asking others to live Jesus' attitudes of not excluding anyone from his love and not denying anyone his forgiveness, the Founder wanted to do so himself. Meditative reading led our Founder to take notes in his Diary, such as the following: *"Treat your neighbor with the same love as if he were Christ Himself"* (SD I/55), and also *"I suspect that we can have no devout lives in the world without some active tending*

of the poor. (...) etc.” (SD I/105). In a world in need of salvation, speaking about Jesus Christ leads us primarily to understand the needs of the poor, because active compassion towards them is the essence of Jesus’ message. Pope Francis said that: “...if we take the poor from the Gospel, we can’t understand the whole message of Jesus Christ”¹¹. This perspective of compassion for the poor, which the Founder also highlighted, applies to us, Salvatorian men and women, and prompts us to give witness to salvation, becoming signs of life and hope in a broken world.

- c) *Carrying the cross of each day* -It was obviously not a random choice for Francis Jordan to adopt the religious name “*of the Cross*” (SD I/168) on Palm Sunday, March 11, 1883. This name was more than a pious title. His notes contain a hymn describing what the title “*of the Cross*” meant for him. The cross was the Founder’s life, his salvation, his crown, his glory, his hope, his shield, his protection, his heritage and joy. As a conclusion to the hymn, he added: “*For I should glory in nothing but the cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ!*” (SD I/179). He confirmed this years later with the following words: “*Oh Cross! Oh sweet Cross! Oh Cross which I should love and prize most ardently on account of Jesus!*” (SD I/208). Therefore, the cross is a key element in Francis Jordan’s life and spirituality to the extent that now we take for granted that no Salvatorian spirituality is possible without the cross.

The death of Jesus on the cross was not an isolated event in his biography but a fact summarizing and fulfilling his entire life and mission. Likewise, following Christ was not an abstract or theoretical activity for our Founder. For Francis Jordan, being a disciple of Jesus meant giving his life without holding anything back, being ready to undergo any hardship in order to achieve a more dignified world and a ministerial Church. He did not only try to make sense of day-to-day suffering but was also convinced that “*The works of God prosper only in the shadow of the cross*” (SD I/163 and II/73). As we know, he used to hand a cross to the missionaries when he sent them out, asking them to proclaim: “*Christ crucified*”.¹² Through this gesture, Francis Jordan tried to make his sons and daughters understand that the cross intrinsically belongs to the followers of Jesus. The cross for us, according to the Founder, is a symbol of the saving dynamism of God’s love, which welcomes us and fulfills our lives in Christ the Savior, inviting us to follow his example and serve those who are crucified in today’s world.

Conclusion

A great love for the Savior of the World is the main feature of Francis Jordan’s spiritual life. Resolutely bringing Jesus Christ to the center of our life, moving from a routinely professed Christ to a new, personal and existential relationship with Him, is our first and most crucial task today. This living relationship with Jesus obviously develops throughout life. As we have seen, Francis Jordan’s journey in the footsteps of Jesus implies taking concrete steps of faith, overcoming doubts and attachments, until we discover that no one answers our deepest questions of meaning like Him.

Francis Jordan’s spiritual process encourages us to move from a passively inherited to a consciously chosen spirituality as disciples of Jesus who are committed to the Kingdom. Therefore, our faith should neither ‘clone’ the traditions of the past nor look for trendy novelties. It should be a new response to the Gospel as we read it through the lens of the questions, sufferings, joys and hopes of our time. In this sense, the Founder’s journey of faith is calling us to conversion, to a learning process, to live a vital and intimate dialogue with Jesus Christ and take on his passion to evangelize.

¹¹Cf. Pope Francis’ homily at the cathedral of Manila, Philippines (January 16, 2015).

¹²Cf. Francis Jordan’s chapter talk dated January 17, 1890.

We should add that the Salvatorian mission has no future without a deep Christocentric spirituality. Knowing Jesus Christ and his message of salvation, and at the same time making Him known by all, are two essential aspects of our Salvatorian spirituality. They go hand in hand. Indeed, Salvatorian spirituality will be genuine only if it leads us to apostolic missionary commitment; likewise, an apostolic action that is not nourished by a profound relationship with Christ the Savior is unconceivable. Keeping together our mystical experience (knowing the God of Jesus Christ) and our evangelizing mission (make Christ and his message known) is essential and indispensable if we really want to overcome the spiritual mediocrity that threatens us today.

According to our Founder, leading people to know Jesus Christ better and love him always more is the most beautiful gift we can give to the world. For us Salvatorians, knowing, loving, and proclaiming the Savior is actually like our heartbeat, like the air we breathe. Our way of life is motivated by and rooted in Jesus Christ. In fact, before going to Rome to found the Apostolic Society, Francis Jordan wondered: *“Where can you rest if you are not totally in Christ?”* (SD I/145). And, at his final moment, in the small hospital in Tifers (Switzerland), badly weakened by disease and as he was about to find rest, Francis Jordan’s last words show how his deep personal relationship with Jesus had been the primary key and fundamental option of his life. Among other phrases of encouragement, gratitude and forgiveness, he very slowly repeated the following prayer to the One who had been his Master and Savior throughout his entire life:

“Oh Jesus, I love you! Oh Jesus, I love you! (...)

My Jesus, I am yours! I am yours, only yours!

Oh Jesus!!¹³”

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. How do you find inspiration and strength as a Salvatorian-in-mission from Fr. Jordan’s profound relationship with Jesus his Savior?

¹³ See last words of our Founder, recorded by P. Pfeiffer between August 26 and September 7, 1918.