

A DIALOGUE BETWEEN TWO FRANCISES

FRANCIS JORDAN AND POPE FRANCIS
SPEAK TO US OF HOLINESS

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

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

*“The heart
of the Church’s mission
is prayer.”*



Pope Francis - 28 June 2019

The joyful news of the beatification	3
Holiness is living in depth	6
The most beautiful face of the Church	8
To be witnesses each one his own way	9
The hidden holiness of every day	11
The sanctity of small steps	12
The life of each one is mission	13
Silence and stillness before God	15
Holiness without getting out of forgetting action	16
The deception that knowledge makes us holy	17
The deception that the will makes us holy	19
The beatitudes: that is holiness!	20
Patience and meekness	21
Joy and a sense of humour	22
Audacity and apostolic enthusiasm	24
A community path	25
In constant prayer	27
Fight the evil spirit	28
Spiritual discernment	30
With Mary, our Mother	31
Conclusion	33

“If we truly desire our mission and want to become apostles... we must be men of prayer.”



Francis Jordan - 5 January 1900

A DIALOGUE BETWEEN TWO FRANCISES

FRANCIS JORDAN AND POPE FRANCIS

SPEAK TO US OF HOLINESS

THE JOYFUL NEWS OF THE BEATIFICATION

1. Dear confreres, there is a popular saying that says: *“the rainbow shines after the storm”*. This has been the feeling that Salvatorians have lived in this very particular period of 2020. In the first months of the year, we have been surrounded by an unprecedented experience of a pandemic with tragic and painful consequences throughout the world. However, in the midst of the darkness of the storm that generated and inevitable epochal change for all, we have seen the sunlight shine with a long-awaited news: the announcement of the beatification of Fr. Francis Jordan for 15 May 2021. A unique and unrepeatable event! Although we have not reached the time of the post-pandemic, it is our desire to celebrate, thank and share the witness of **apostolic holiness** demonstrated by our Founder, Francis Mary of the Cross Jordan.



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SUPERIOR GENERAL

2. We now see with joy this recognition of the Church that presents to all Christians the holiness of Francis Jordan as a light of God that shines in the night of the world. We value this event as a favourable time to make known his story of evangelical authenticity and to manifest the beauty of his spirituality and apostolic charism. More than a moment of particular euphoria, it is our desire to see this event as a time of grace that calls us to reaffirm the purpose of working together as a Salvatorian Family to strengthen our bonds of communion with the entire Church.
3. The announcement of the date of the beatification of our Founder becomes a strong call from the Spirit of God the Saviour to take a break in our daily personal and institutional time. It is a call to look beyond our usual concerns, an invitation to reflect on



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the meaning of this sign at this special moment in our Salvatorian history. It may be that this event yearns, first of all, to instil a new stage in the Society, in the sense of reaffirming, assimilating, deepening and living our vocation to be “**saints and apostles**”. It is a time to look closely at our vocation to be saints from the unique

and extraordinary perspective of the Founder’s experience. It is an opportunity to develop in us the same disposition that he declared during the spiritual exercises in preparation for

his priestly ordination: “*Let everything be sacred in you (...). Be therefore completely holy*” (SD I / 132).

4. During the times of “lockdown” I have had the opportunity to read a commentary on the Apostolic Exhortation “*Gaudete et Exsultate*” (GE) of Pope Francis.¹ Although the Apostolic Exhortation is addressed to all the People of God, I have been surprised and amazed at the affinities that exist between the teachings of Pope Francis and the spiritual notes of our Founder. In reading, on various occasions, I have contemplated the beauty of the human and particularly the Salvatorian vocation of “Blessed Francis Jordan”, through his deep, apostolic, joyful and dedicated interior life.
5. Therefore, what I want to offer you are some reflections that help to perceive the deep relationship that can be established between the key elements of the call to holiness, presented by Pope Francis in the document “*Gaudete et Exsultate*”, and some concrete facts of the life of Francis Jordan, as he has pointed out in his Spiritual Diary. I must confess that, on entering this discourse, on some occasions I almost had the impression of accompanying a “dialogue between the two Francis” (the Pope and our Founder), speaking about the path towards **apostolic holiness**. In short, what they tell us is not to be afraid of holiness. Maybe we can all become “*next door saints*” (GE 7) and it is worth a try.

¹ PAREDES, José Cristo Rey García. *Llamados a ser santos – Comentarios a Gaudete et Exsultate para la vida consagrada*, Publicaciones Claretianas, 2018, p. 9 - 48.

6. I would still like to point out that this text is in the form of a fraternal letter that asks for a slow reading, which favours the familiarizing with the central idea of the topics proposed here. What I recommend is to read it carefully, pointing out those horizons that help to better understand the intuitions that may arise when approaching the “model of holiness” of Francis Jordan and the invitations to conversion that these same intuitions make to us. Just as for each beatitude, Pope Francis has proposed a concrete opportunity for holiness, repeating: *“this is holiness!”* I also propose at the end of each one of the topics a concrete attitude: “this is the Salvatorian path towards holiness!” However, we can already be sure of one thing: if we want to be authentic holy apostles, beyond a mediocre existence, then we will have to be “men of God”, closely following in the footsteps of “Blessed Francis Jordan, embracing the ideal of living as an apostle beyond borders.”

HOLINESS IS LIVING IN DEPTH

7. In his apostolic exhortation *Gaudete et Exsultate*, Pope Francis asks us to have as our vital objective “to make the call to holiness resound once more” (GE 2). The vocation to holiness does not mean withdrawing from the world and its dangers. Rather, it consists of living life in depth and meeting God in our daily experience-existence, embracing with all its risks the Christian novelty of the dynamics of the Incarnation. For this reason, he recommends, without excluding anyone, to be saints in today’s times “with its risks, challenges and opportunities” (GE 2). In reading the spiritual manuscripts of Francis Jordan, we find a person who has not been satisfied with the complex and conflictive reality of his time, living the mediocrity of a life

without any project or horizon, and that is why he has taken the Gospel of Jesus Christ: “*Oh Lord! Help me and show me the ways...*” aware of his call to collaborate with God in that concrete historical moment: “*Woe to me, Lord, if I do not make You known to all!*” (SD II / 2).

8. In the footsteps of the Founder, we can read exactly what Pope Francis asks of us today not to live a “*bland and mediocre existence,*” far from God (GE 1). In this sense, Francis Jordan’s determination to encourage himself on the path of being a visible sign of God’s love in the world is striking. This is reflected in the deep desire that lived in his heart: “*For you the first and most important thing should always be to become holy and pleasing to God, so to live and so to die. (...) Become great before God, not before the world!*” (SD I / 31) What he manifests is much more than a pragmatic and momentary exterior action, but rather an interior disposition to travel a long and progressive path of conformity with the Lord, until he becomes in the world in the manner of Jesus, just as the apostles did. This was the secret of his deep spiritual life: “*Be truly interior, walking always in God’s presence and conversing with Him.*” (SD I / 180).



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XOXOCOTLA (ME)

Embracing a path of spiritual growth that makes us great before God and not before the world: this is the Salvatorian path to holiness!

THE MOST BEAUTIFUL FACE OF THE CHURCH

9. When speaking of saints, often the first thing we think of are those who are recognized as models of holiness. In fact, a “*great cloud of witnesses*” (GE 3) has preceded us on this path on which they encourage us to move on. However, the realization of the vocation to holiness, as Pope Francis has explained, is not only shown in people with special heroic deeds, but also in those people among whom “*may be our own mothers, grandmothers or other loved ones*” (GE 3), who were able to heroically live the challenges that arose in their lives. From this perspective, we



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can approach the testimony of sanctity of Francis Jordan. We do not find in him a way of living holiness based on extraordinary things or centred on mystical ecstatic behaviours. Characteristic about him was, to be inspired by the inner strength of a number of referential witnesses of a life of faith that provoked him to be a tool of God in the world. In truth, he embraced the desire

to live an authentic faith in daily life, as he well describes in this entry: “*We must train ourselves to do our everyday tasks well, even the most ordinary. For holiness consists more in this than in extraordinary actions...*” (SD I / 33). Holiness in everyday life is the centre of his spirituality.

10. Pope Francis makes it clear that “*the decisive events of history*” were always marked by people “*whom no history book ever mentions*” (GE 8). These people represent the true and “*most attractive face of the Church*” (GE 9), because they bring us closer to God and to all his creatures by their ability to live in depth the *kenosis* of Jesus, to the total nullity of oneself, until becoming complete and absolute donation. Therefore, there is the testimony of so many unknown saints to consider. I would like to recall that precisely on a “Feast of All Saints” (known or not), Francis Jordan lived an experience that has marked him forever, which he has named as: “Pact between the Almighty and His lowest creature” (SD I / 202 - 205). He, “the most unworthy creature” often returned to this event of the provident and loving presence of God that sustained him to continue forward in his apostolic project of becoming everything for everyone, annulling himself to be an eloquent sign of the one true God in the world.

**Living holiness in everyday life
until total *kenosis* of oneself:
this is the Salvatorian path to holiness!**

TO BE WITNESSES EACH ONE HIS OWN WAY

11. We are all called to bear witness of the gospel of Jesus Christ by a life of holiness, although each one has his own way. This vocation, as Pope Francis reminds us, extends to all the baptized: “*the Lord addresses to each of us, the call that he also addresses, personally, to you: Be holy, for I am holy* (Lev 11:45; cf. 1 Pet 1, 16)” (GE 10). Each of us needs to discern his own path to respond to this call and make the best of himself to carry

it out, opening ourselves to the incessant grace of the Spirit received through baptism. Francis Jordan was fully identified with this vision of the universal vocation to holiness. He was convinced that **apostolic holiness** was not a prerogative only of some, but a gift that God makes to all, as he himself expresses in this entry: *“It is the will of God and it is also true that we should all become holy! It follows then that we can become holy.”* (SD I / 79) The grace of baptism is like a seed that needs to bear fruit in all!

12. However, this does not mean that there is only one path that leads to the intended goal and it does not mean that everyone has to follow it in the same way. Pope Francis emphasizes that it is not a matter of simply “copying” the life of a certain saint: *“There are some testimonies that may prove helpful and inspiring, but that we are not meant to copy (...). The important thing is that each believer discern his or her own path...”*. (GE 11). Also in this perspective, it is striking to notice Francis Jordan’s own way of discerning, praying and assuming the particular gift of his vocation as Founder. Although he has known the spiritual wisdom of the great saints of the Church, he has not reduced holiness to imitating a particular model. He has sought his own path: *“Lord, may I carry out (my plan) for your glory, with the help of your grace; help me, I am the most unworthy and the weakest. Lord, when will I found everything for You, my beloved?”* (SD I / 153) He did not orient his life by following “a star”, but responded to his vocation in the key of a constellation of holiness.

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**People who are credible witnesses in the world,
 from creativity and its own uniqueness:
 this is the Salvatorian path to holiness!**
}

THE HIDDEN HOLINESS OF EVERY DAY

13. The testimony of the saints of yesterday and today is the true light of the Church. However, among the different ways of “reflecting the holiness of God in this world”, Pope Francis calls our attention to the small, everyday and hidden holiness. Among them the styles of holiness that have preceded us, such as Saint Bridget, Saint Teresa of Avila, Saint Catherine of Siena and so many others, the *“unknown or forgotten women who, each in her own way”* (GE 12), have not been forgotten. They have been the true light of a less “apparent” but extraordinary holiness in and for the Church and the world. It is very interesting to find in Francis Jordan’s writings quotes with the thoughts of Angela of Foligno, Catarina of Siena, Teresa of Ávila, Saint Rose of Lima and other holy women who inspired him to seek God. The holiness manifested in known saints and in other simple and hidden ones, was part of the personality and deepest aspiration of the Founder, as he himself expresses in this note: *“Saint Teresa, pray for me!”* (SD II / 88).



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14. Pope Francis makes us understand that holiness is not reserved only to a privileged group of “chosen ones”, such as bishops,

priests, consecrated men and women or to people who have lived extraordinary models of holiness in history. “We are all called to be holy by living our lives with love and by bearing witness



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in everything we do...” (GE 14). We could say that this way of valuing the immense possibilities of holiness, hidden in everyday life, such as the ferment in the dough or the small mustard seed (Mt 13), is very similar to the testimony of Francis Jordan. This sanctity of everyday life, without being seen, was what the Founder wanted to live: “Do not stand out where there is no need, but love being hidden and unknown. That will help you

more in making progress.” (SD I / 62). He has shown a constant, available and satisfied way of working for doing all things well. Rather than seeking recognition from others, he preferred the consolation of feeling accompanied by God.

**Living ordinary service in an extraordinary way:
this is the Salvatorian path to holiness!**

THE SANCTITY OF SMALL STEPS

15. A simple model within everyone’s reach to live holiness is to grow with small gestures. Pope Francis emphasizes that holiness grows in people who show small gestures of love towards others. Simple gestures such as not speaking “badly of anyone”, listening

“with patience and affection”, not avoiding the poor, trusting God and our Mother in pain (GE 16). Small gestures that we can discover in others and that we can make real in ourselves on a day-to-day basis. Francis Jordan is an example of a person who seeks holiness in positive and discreet gestures. Very similar to the examples indicated by the Pope, the Founder formulated for his life: “Regarding the defects of others, other confreres or other nations, I will say nothing, nor I will even think of them. I will think instead of their virtues and excellences and of my own imperfections.” (SD I / 87).

16. Indeed, our life is enriched by the small exercises of holiness that make us live the ordinary “in an extraordinary way” (GE 17). Something that may seem insignificant in our eyes can be great in God’s eyes. In Francis Jordan’s annotations, we find a number of these small gestures that helped him walk towards holiness, in a simple and anonymous way, like this example: “Break bread with the little ones, at least once or twice a week, do not be pulled away for empty reasons (...). Complete the act of humility, by practicing works of humility, like sweeping, and the like” (SD I / 195). There is no doubt that these and other small steps shaped the meaning and flavour of his entire life.

**A life made of small gestures,
covered in simplicity and humility:
this is the Salvatorian path to holiness!**

THE LIFE OF EACH ONE IS MISSION

17. Holiness and mission are inseparable for all who choose to follow Jesus Christ. Pope Francis affirmed it this way: “A Christian

cannot think of his or her mission on earth without seeing it as a path of holiness” (GE 19). Therefore, there is no mission without holiness, nor holiness without mission. The search for holiness characterizes the Salvatorian vocation, with the intensity that Francis Jordan commended for himself: “*Strive ceaselessly for that holiness, which your vocation so greatly requires*” (SD II / 78), well aware that this holiness was deeply apostolic: “... so they may know, love, and serve Him, and find salvation for themselves” (SD I / 202).

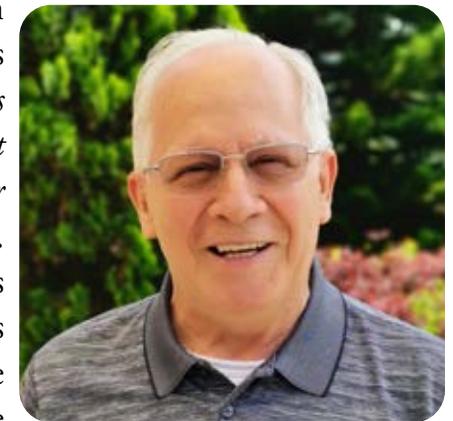
18. In this dimension of the missionary vocation to holiness, Pope Francis encourages us not to be afraid to bear witness to Jesus Christ before others. Holiness, the Pope said, “*will take away none of your energy, vitality or joy*” (GE 32). It is quite the opposite, holiness allows us to discover and be faithful to the deepest part of our being, making us more alive, more human, “...since it is an encounter between your weakness and the power of God’s grace” (GE 34). This is the way by which we find full life. So, we should not be lazy in seeking **apostolic holiness**, without which our life falls ill and loses strength to expand. Supported by God’s grace we can fly high and dream big, with the same intensity and openness with which Francis Jordan envisioned his mission: “*Do not be discouraged, the Lord will help you to carry it out. Place everything in His hands, trust firmly in Him, hope and await all from Him.*” (SD I / 211) Ultimately, our lives are strengthened in mission and lost in accommodation.

{ Making the whole of life a mission:
this is the Salvatorian path to holiness! }

SILENCE AND STILLNESS BEFORE GOD

19. Pope Francis also invites us to value “*moments of quiet, solitude and silence before God*” (GE 29). This is the necessary condition for true dialogue alone with the Lord to take place in us. This spiritual practice of isolating yourself, in a space of exterior-interior silence is necessary. Francis Jordan often sought a peaceful environment to listen to God’s voice and meditate on his Word. For example, in annotations like this: “*Go up on a mountain where you take up the matter with God, and pray most earnestly that your goal may be accomplished...*” (SD III / 8).

20. However, this exercise is not an automatism in our daily life. We all know from experience that it is not easy to silence voices and noises that distract, divide and disorient our inner lives. Among the distractions of today, the constant novelties of technological resources are very much in fashion, on which Pope Francis warns us not to “*give ourselves over completely to the devices that provide us with entertainment or ephemeral pleasures*” (GE 30). Evidently, in the time of Francis Jordan these electronic novelties did not exist, however, there was in him the vigilant attitude of not being satisfied with external and superficial stimuli.



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He expresses it, for example, in this simple annotation: “*Avoid useless activities, light reading, superfluous newspaper reading etc.*” (SD I / 135). And in the same way: “*Avoid dissipation, which is a*

danger.” (SD IV / 13) In this way, he could dialogue and expand his interior spaces and his spiritual life.

{ People who reserve moments of silence to find themselves and listen to the Word: this is the Salvatorian path to holiness! }

HOLINESS WITHOUT GETTING OUT OF FORGETTING ACTION

21. The practice of retiring alone and silence are very important. However, we cannot take refuge in this practice as *“fuga mundi”*, so as not to empty the silent depth of the encounter with the



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only true God who is Father. Knowing this God, the Father of love leads us to be with Him in the midst of the murmur of the world and even more in the cries of the wounded and forgotten humanity. Pope Francis calls us to develop the ability to integrate a contemplative gaze into the everyday life. Because, according to him, *“it is*

not healthy to love silence while fleeing interaction with others, to want peace and quiet while avoiding activity, to seek prayer while disdaining service.” (GE 26). We also find this key to building in Francis Jordan life adjusting all aspects of daily life, for example, in his desire: *“build the house of your holiness on prayer, work, strict silence, and mortification”* (SD II / 8).

22. It is not difficult to identify in the Founder a person imbued with a spirituality that involved all his mind, heart and action. He is a living testimony of what Pope Francis calls the ability to combine contemplation and action: *“we are called to be contemplatives even in the midst of action, and to grow in holiness by responsibly and generously carrying out our proper mission”* (GE 26). That is, neither spiritualism alone, nor activism alone, but a path of **“apostolic holiness.”** This is what Francis Jordan proposes for himself and for others. In his life story, there are not “two” Francis Jordans: the one who prays and the one who dedicates himself to the apostolate. There is only one person who contemplates everything according to God’s gaze, as he himself portrays with these words: *“Never omit your meditation, unless it is a duty to do so. See everything in the light of holy faith! All you think, say and do should be guided by faith.”* (SD I / 136). This is authentic holiness!

{ An apostolic life capable of combining contemplation in the midst of the action: that is central to the Salvatorian path to holiness! }

THE DECEPTION THAT KNOWLEDGE MAKES US HOLY

23. Pope Francis has been very incisive in saying that to measure the degree of holiness *“the information or knowledge they possess”* (GE 37) is not useful, nor does *“... to turn the Christian experience into a set of intellectual exercises that distance us from the freshness of the Gospel”* (GE 46). Similarly, in this case Francis Jordan was aware of how much intellectual pride can infect our lives. To avoid this temptation to hide in pure knowledge,

he asks himself: “*What good is all your knowledge if you cannot apply it towards your highest goal, but it lies there like a shuttered library?*” (SD I / 54). In fact, our spiritual life is sustained by reflection; however, it does not consist of a closed system of doctrines or certain theories.

24. It is not the first time that Pope Francis calls attention to the phenomenon of “Gnosticism”². It is a false version that intellectual knowledge in itself makes us holy. In the words of the Pope, it sounds like this: “*a faith which ultimately keeps one imprisoned in his or her own thoughts and feelings*” (GE 36). An individual and intellectualist vision of salvation, focused on content, does not incarnate and does not transform. This conduct “*... incapable of touching Christ’s suffering flesh in others*” (GE 37), is not the salvation that we find in the gestures of mercy of Jesus Christ. I suppose that Francis Jordan was very attentive to this danger of living a faith filled with an intellectual pride that does not lead to touching the suffering flesh of the other-brother who reveals my own flesh. An example of this vigilant attitude, we find among the quotes that he has collected from his spiritual readings: “*I suspect that we can have no devout lives in the world without some active tending of the poor ... sick, etc.*” (SD I / 105). A clear indication of how much the Founder has sought that his spiritual life did not remain focused on intimacy, but on an experience that leads to commitment to others.

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**People who have an experience
of faith that leads to closeness to others:
this is the Salvatorian path to holiness!**
}

2 FRANCIS. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, n° 94.

THE DECEPTION THAT THE WILL MAKES US HOLY

25. Another enemy that can go unnoticed is the phenomenon of “Pelagianism”. A spiritual conduct that enhances willpower and personal effort. People who respond to this mentality, as Pope Francis explained, “*... ultimately trust only their own powers and feel superior*” (GE 49), in their search “*of self-help and personal fulfilment*” (GE 57). Opposing this egocentric spiritual logic, Francis Jordan had a vigilant attitude of not trusting too much in his own strength, as if God did not exist: “*carefully against vanity, self-seeking, self-complacency etc.*” (SD I / 114) and even more: “*Do not say in your heart: my power and the might of my hand have gotten all this for me...*” (SD II / 109).



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26. Not seldom do we think that everything depends on our works, forgetting that we only sanctify ourselves by God’s grace. In this sense, Pope Francis recalls that the gift of God’s grace “*... we cannot buy with our works, it can only be a gift born of his loving initiative*” (GE 54). The collaboration of our nature consists in opening ourselves to the action of grace, making the gift received beyond us. Just as the saints avoid placing trust in their own bravery, Francis Jordan knew that he could not count only on his strength: “*Carry out the work you propose, with God’s help!*”

(SD I / 138). Furthermore, from a very young age he had this firm intention: *“Never speak favourably about yourself, about what you know, the good you have done, your pedigree. But if you have reason to hope it may be useful, then do it, but humbly... realizing these things are nothing other than gifts of God.”* (SD I / 13-14). In short, we achieve great things not because we are supermen, but because we open ourselves to the primacy of God’s grace that surpasses human capabilities.

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**Be moulded by the grace of God
that transforms us from inside and progressively:
this is the Salvatorian path to holiness!**
}

THE BEATITUDES: THAT IS HOLINESS!

27. As Pope Francis reminds us, to be saints we must give flesh to what Jesus said in the discourse of the beatitudes: *“In the Beatitudes,*



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we find a portrait of the Master, which we are called to reflect in our daily lives” (GE 63). In each of the beatitudes, there is an invitation not to live in a superficial way, but to put oneself on the path of happiness that Jesus proposes: *“being poor of heart... reacting with meekness and humility... knowing how to mourn with others... hungering and thirsting for righteousness... seeing and acting with mercy... keeping a heart free of all that tarnishes... sowing peace all around us...*

accepting daily the path of the Gospel, even though it may cause us problems” (GE 70-94). The harmony of all these demands calls us to a real change of life.

28. This programme of holiness proposed by the beatitudes immediately makes me think of the “litany to the saints” related by Francis Jordan. A list of women and men chosen by him as a mirror of this spirit, which inspired him towards a true path of holiness. He wanted to adopt the virtues of the saints that he considered essential to consecrate himself ever more to God, in a particular way: *“purity ... apostolic zeal ... mortification ... simplicity ... meekness ... poverty ... faith ... prayer ... patience... doctrine... contemplation... humility... familiarity with Christ”*(SD I / 156-158). More than just theory about holiness, Francis Jordan clearly conveys what for him the meaning is of a fascinating life, which becomes salt and light in the world.

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**People guided by the values of the Kingdom of God,
manifested in the beatitudes:
this is also the Salvatorian path to holiness!**
}

PATIENCE AND MEEKNESS

29. For Pope Francis, a life of holiness relevant to today’s times has the traits of endurance, patience and meekness. An inner firmness with which it is possible *“... to recognize and combat our aggressive and selfish inclinations, and not let them take root”* (GE 114). In this sense, patience and meekness are virtues that ask us for a constant path of mature vigilance of ourselves so as not to become slaves of the evil that lives in us. It is a task for today and for life. Francis Jordan, moved by the grace of God,

made these virtues the pillars of his spiritual life and mission. For example, faced with the sufferings and setbacks of life, he took to himself this teaching of St. Francis Xavier: “*Humility and prudence are the mother of great deeds*” (SD I / 81) and even more this exclamation: “*Meekness and patience, what powerful means these are!*” (SD II / 93).

30. Pope Francis recalls that humility “*can only take root in the heart through humiliations. Without them, there is no humility or holiness*” (GE 118). Also in this case, the inner solidity of Francis Jordan draws our attention when assimilating all the humiliations and setbacks that he has had to experience. In his manuscripts, he constantly asks for the grace to endure the humiliations of the mission and to persevere in its purposes. For example, in this mode: “*Pray to God each day that you will be able to suffer very greatly for His glory and your eternal salvation. Even more, Lord!*” (SD I / 52). And in the same way in this note: “*No sacrifice, no cross, no desolation, no trial, no temptation. Oh! Absolutely nothing should be too difficult for you with the help of God’s grace. I can do all things in Him who strengthens me - Phil 4, 13*” (SD II / 1). Such trust in God leads him to endure the conflicts arising from the mission and his inner struggles.

{ **Continually growing in humility,
patience and compassion:
this is the Salvatorian path to holiness!** }

JOY AND A SENSE OF HUMOUR

31. Another sign of holiness is joy and a sense of humour. Indeed, the Christian life, Pope Francis pointed out, is “*... far from being*

timid, morose, acerbic or melancholy, or putting on a dreary face” (GE 122). Much more than a state of mind or a passing fun, joy is a gift of the Spirit that manifests itself in an existence capable of facing reality and mission with a serenity that is only possible from an inner consolation. Francis Jordan, too, has constantly sought this virtue of an always-happy heart and a positive vision in the midst of moments of darkness and conflict. For example, with this notation: “*Pray often for great trust in God and for joy.*” (SD I / 62). Similarly, with this wish: “*As far as possible try to acquire and maintain a cheerful, happy mood.*” (SD I / 141).



Br. Quis Pascoal António
SÃO PAULO (BR)

32. However, consumerist, superficial and individualistic joy is not a sign of holiness. Pope Francis underlined a diverse joy “*... lived in communion, which shares and is shared ... since fraternal love increases our capacity for joy ...*” (GE 128). When the joy that springs from the heart is lacking, what often happens to us is an attitude of bad humour and rigidity towards others. True joy is always contagious and communal. It is a gift of the Spirit that gives strength and generates new life. In Francis Jordan, we can see this incessant search: “*Strive to serve God lovingly and joyfully, and, above all, lay aside any exaggerated anxiety which displeases*

God, for He is no tyrant.” (SD I / 62). In short, the Lord “*wants us to be positive, grateful and uncomplicated*” (GE 127), Pope Francis commented.

{ **Being imbued with the joy of the Gospel that fills life personal and infects others: this is the Salvatorian path to holiness!** }

AUDACITY AND APOSTOLIC ENTHUSIASM

33. Another sign of holiness is audacity and apostolic courage against the temptation of comfort and boredom in mission. In this sense, the lives of the saints invite us to overcome fears and



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LOCHAU (DE)

calculations. Some of them are listed by Pope Francis: “*individualism, spiritualism, living in a little world, addiction, intransigence, the rejection of new ideas and approaches, dogmatism, nostalgia, pessimism, hiding behind rules and regulations*” (GE 134). All those who have known Francis Jordan coincide in pointing out apostolic enthusiasm as one of his most evident virtues.

He has left us the testimony of a person marked by the fire of the apostolic mission, as he himself expresses it in this small plea: “*Oh Lord, I wish I could always burn ardently for love of You and inflame everyone!*” (SD III / 20).

34. Saints moved by their audacity to bear witness without fear invite us, Pope Francis pointed out: “... *to come out of calm and*

anesthetizing mediocrity” (GE 138). In this way, a person with an apostolic spirit, in the manner of Francis Jordan will always have the missionary concern of the first apostles “... *to pass beyond what is familiar, to the fringes and beyond*” (GE 135). This inner energy is repeatedly shown in Francis Jordan’s annotations that made him look beyond: “*fly over the earth like an eagle and preach the word of God!*” (SD I/ 182). Also, in order not to be afraid and to flee from a comfortable life, he writes: “*Always move forward in the name of the Lord toward the goal to be reached.*” (SD II / 59).

{ **Living the vocation of making Jesus Christ known, with enthusiasm and creativity, like the vocation, the apostles had: this is the Salvatorian path to holiness!** }

A COMMUNITY PATH

35. Another sign of holiness is the life of communion. Sanctification, Pope Francis explained, is a “*journey in community, side by side with others*” (GE 141). Indeed, facing your own temptations and the selfish world is very difficult in isolation. The Pope recalled that on several occasions the Church “*has canonized entire communities that lived the Gospel heroically or offered to God the lives of all their members*” (GE 141), as in the case of the blessed Trappist monks of Tibhirine, in Algeria. The availability of living in community makes us leave our desires for leadership. In this, it is striking that Francis Jordan has not sought a self-referential apostolate. He had a deep sense of ecclesiality in dialoguing, consulting, and enlisting other people for the apostolic mission. He was aware that his charism could not subsist based on an

individualistic lifestyle and without fraternal charity. There are various annotations in this perspective, for example: “*Brotherly love, that divine glue! Without it no house can hold together*” (SD IV / 4). “*He who does not have charity towards the other, in no way can carry out the ministry of preaching*” (SD III / 4).

36. Pope Francis recalled that “*sharing the word and celebrating the Eucharist together fosters fraternity and makes us a holy and missionary community*” (GE 142). In fact, a mission-oriented community cannot have a centre other than Jesus Christ in



Br. Leonhard Hager
MISTELBACH (AU)

the Eucharist and in sharing the Word. In this perspective, we understand this thought of Francis Jordan: “*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). Furthermore, in this regard he inspires and enlightens us: “*Serve God alone; nourish*

and strengthen the soul with these three things: the Bread of Life - Meditation - Spiritual Reading” (SD I / 150). Before being a human construction, the life of communion and unity is a gift of the Spirit.

{ People sharing life, faith and mission in community:
this is the Salvatorian path to holiness! }

IN CONSTANT PRAYER

37. Although it seems obvious, Pope Francis has pointed out constant prayer as a characteristic of holiness. The holy person “*needs to communicate with God*”, beyond “*the closed immanence of this world*”, because that is how the Pope wrote: “*I do not believe in holiness without prayer...*” (GE 147). I suppose that Francis Jordan too would make such a statement about this need to communicate permanently with God. That is, when the sentence becomes “*ad-oratio.*” Surely, the Founder has witnessed a life of habitual and prolonged prayer, even living in a permanent state of prayer. What he wanted most was to grow in faith and carry out God’s will. On each page of his manuscripts, he makes us see the value and depth of his inner life, with quotes like these: “*Whoever desires to do great things must be a person of prayer!*” (SD II / 81). “*Prayer is the greatest force in the world*” (SD II / 103).



Fr. Kumar Irudayasamy
PARAMARIBO (SUR)

38. Pope Francis recalls that Saint John of the Cross advised to “*endeavour to remain always in the presence of God*” (GE 148) in everything one does. In a practical way, this constant presence of God and in God in prayer acquires its culmination in “*the prayerful reading of the Word of God...*” because “*it enables us to pause and listen to the voice of the Master. It becomes a lamp*

for our steps and a light for our path...” (GE 156). In response to his desire to grow in faith in Jesus Christ, Francis Jordan, as a student, has devoted himself to the practice of prayerful reading of the Word. So much so that later, although he had an intense apostolic life, the use of meditating on the Word of God, became one of his most important tasks of the day. In order never to forget this commitment, he writes: “*Put great effort into meditating, learning, and contemplating Sacred Scripture...*” (SD I / 139). “*Study sacred scriptures intensively!*” (SD I / 150). Personal or community prayer is the guarantee of a solid and progressive spiritual life.

{ **Living radically united to the Saviour,
in a state of permanent prayer:
this is the Salvatorian path to holiness!** }

FIGHT THE EVIL SPIRIT

39. In life, we learn very early that there is no growth without crisis, nor victory without struggle. So the road to holiness is not romantic at all. According to Pope Francis “*it is a constant struggle against the devil, the prince of evil*” (GE 159). The holy person permanently fights against any negative action of the devil and “*those who do not realize this will be prey to failure or mediocrity*” (GE 162), the Pope explained. By the way, we all in some way have already been victims of this destructive force or have been tempted by evil. So many times Francis Jordan expresses these moments of interior darkness, of temptations and of his fight against the spirit of evil. He does not hide these periods of crisis, as for example some days before his ordination: “*Oh my Jesus, excessive trials and temptations have come upon*

me!” (SD I / 105). He is also attentive to the traps of evil for this purpose: “*Always be humble and beg God for perseverance. For how many have already fallen frightfully into the snares of the devil!*” (SD I / 155).

40. Pope Francis has explained that the Word of God is our weapon to confront and to “... *quench all the flaming darts of the evil one*” (GE 162). In addition, he added that, “*Christian triumph is always a cross (...) borne with aggressive tenderness against the assaults of evil*” (GE 163). The testimony that we have received from Francis Jordan is filled with exactly this confidence that we are not alone in this fight against evil. For example, in this resolution: “*Never lose heart, never lose courage, but trust in God, even when the devil makes trials and dangers seem insurmountably difficult...*” (SD I / 94). Another detail to take into account is the way in which the Founder impressed on his followers his love for the Cross and all that it represents. The Cross has been his identity and an impulse towards holiness, guided by the deep conviction that: “*In the Cross is salvation, in the Cross is life...*” (SD I / 189) and above all that: “*The Works of God prosper only in the shadow of the Cross*” (SD I / 163).



Br. Lazarus Moti
MOTHERHOUSE (IT)

{ **Constantly fighting against all evil
that enslaves and deprives human beings
of their dignity as children of God:
this is the Salvatorian path to holiness!** }

SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT

41. Every day we are subjected to countless possibilities of distraction “as valid and good”. How to know if something comes from the Spirit, from the world or is bad? To answer this question, Pope



Fr. Paul Wilkin
TUCSON (USA)

Francis explained, “... *the gift of discernment has become all the more necessary today*” (GE 167). Discernment is not the same as making an assessment. Discernment is a style, a way of being and acting that leads us to discover where the Spirit of God is speaking. Although with other names, Francis Jordan has revealed

himself a master in distinguishing what came from God and what was from the spirit of evil. For example, in this wish: “*However much work you undertake for the good, turn toward God a few hours each day in recollected prayer and meditation, or if possible in contemplation...*” (SD I / 65).

42. In this way, discernment is a gift that we must ask the Holy Spirit, because as Pope Francis explained: “*discernment is necessary not only at extraordinary times (...) it is a means of spiritual combat for helping us to follow the Lord more faithfully (...) to make us move beyond mere good intentions*” (GE 169). I suppose that we all need to educate ourselves in this exercise of discerning the voice of God in the midst of so many other voices in daily life. We need to get used to this interior attitude of reflecting on the

means that the Spirit of God predisposes us to respond to our apostolic vocation. This gift of wisdom was alive in the heart of Francis Jordan, as he himself affirms: “*Always be recollected, and no longer get distracted. Always abide in the presence of God.*” (SD I / 93). How important it is today to be formed in authentic spiritual discernment!

{ People seeking continually to discern God’s
will in their context:
this is the Salvatorian path to holiness! }

WITH MARY, OUR MOTHER

43. Pope Francis very often ends his speeches with an invocation of help to the Virgin Mary. According to the Pope, she is “*the saint among the saints*”, *blessed above all others. She teaches us the way of holiness and she walks ever at our side*” (GE 176). Far beyond a simple devotional act of his time, Francis Jordan had a particular appreciation for the Virgin Mary, the holy Mother of God. It was such a great appreciation that it led him to decide to choose for himself the name “Mary”, which he repeatedly acclaimed: “*Mother of God and my Mother*” (SD II / 46 and II / 49). Every time he was in prayer, he invoked the Mother of Jesus, to face life with her help and to have the strength to do great things for God: “*You are my Mother! Help, defend, protect me! Oh my Mother!*” (SD II / 119).

44. Pope Francis said that the Mother of Jesus: “*consoles us, frees and sanctifies us*”, when we talk with her without saying many words, since it is enough to mutter over and over again: “*Hail Mary...*” (GE 176). In this regard, I suppose it is very significant to

allude that, in the last years of his life, Francis Jordan continued his love for the Virgin Mary even more, with these and other



Fr. Nelson Barbieri
MANIZALES (CO)

invocations: *“Oh Mary! Oh Virgin! Oh Mother of God! Oh Queen of Heaven! Oh holy One! Oh Immaculate One! Oh my Mother and Queen! Oh my help, I hardly know how to praise you. I feel more than words can express!”* (SD I / 196). Much more frequently he addressed the Virgin Mary, as, for example, in his visit to the Marian Shrine of the Einsiedeln monastery, in Switzerland, where he prayed before the Black Madonna:

“Oh Mother of God: help me! Be my strong helper! See, I am yours” (SD II / 117). Our path of holiness will always be united to Mary, Mother of the Saviour, from the moment that Jesus has given her to us as mother, saying: *“Behold your mother”* (Jn 19:27).

{ People finding the vitality of faith in the Virgin Mary, who sustains the small and humble: this is the Salvatorian model towards holiness! }



CONCLUSION

45. It is my hope that this letter, in the form of meditation, will encourage each confrere and the local community to enthusiastically prepare for the celebration of the beatification of our Founder. In this celebratory journey, I recommend you not to forget the other branches of the Salvatorian Family, benefactors, relatives and friends, to live this event that goes beyond the limits of our Society. On our website (www.sds.org) you can find resources for the celebrations and advertise the luminous life of Francis Jordan. I am very happy to think that there will be no lack of creativity or willingness to spread and make the spirit of holiness and apostolic zeal of Francis Jordan grow, in the most different contexts of the world. In addition, I propose to gather people in our houses, schools and other apostolic centres to witness the live broadcast of the ceremony through our website, as we will indicate.
46. Finally, before this very important event of the beatification of our Founder, I would like to greet each one of you, confreres of all ages.
47. To the **elderly and sick confreres** of our Society, who bear the evidence of age and illness, I thank you for your testimony, wisdom and the donated history behind you. You are the historical memory of our Society. I would like to invite you to be inspired by Francis Jordan with his grey hair, who accompanied the youngest, dedicated to reading and prayer. I invite you to pray in a special way for Salvatorians throughout the world so that we may take advantage of this grace of the beatification of our Founder to grow in holiness and missionary-apostolic zeal.

48. I thank the **young confreres** (in formation and religious) for the enthusiasm they show in following Jesus Christ in the Society of the Divine Saviour. You are not only the future; you are the present with your contributions of innovation and joy. I invite you to be inspired by Francis Jordan in his youth, determined to overcome all obstacles and to seek God's will for his life: a humble and brave boy who from his faith knew how to walk against the current. Furthermore, I invite you to prepare for the beatification by strengthening your interior life and offering yourself generously for the new mission situations of the Society.

49. To the **fully active confreres** who have the responsibility of protecting the apostolic works of the Society, I thank you for your generous service and sense of belonging. You are first and foremost "men of God", today's apostles who help people to know and follow Jesus Christ. I invite you to be inspired by Francis Jordan in his maturity, writing his spiritual notes and, at the same time, dedicated to accompanying, instructing and sending Salvatorians on mission to the peripheries of the world. I would like to encourage you not to live comfortably or isolated, but to seek support in the community and keep alive the enthusiasm that makes you see the beauty of the Salvatorian apostolic vocation.

50. To all, **confreres in general**, I invite you to live this time in preparation for the beatification of the Founder, as a "*kairos*" of God to meditate on our common call to holiness in the different places we live. Let us not miss this opportunity for grace. Let us find ways to enter the interior life of Francis Jordan and understand all that God has accomplished through

him. Therefore, let us ask the Lord for the gift of **apostolic holiness** so that, equally enflamed by the fire of the apostolic mission and growing in the capacity to live like the Founder, we may continue to advance with more courage and renewed Salvatorian enthusiasm.



MARKO IVAN RUPNIK - 2019. CHURCH SAINT FR. PIO (SAINT GIOVANNI ROTONDO)

51. Finally, as Christmas arrives, "the main feast of our Society", once again I would like to invite you to celebrate with profound meaning the birth of the Divine Saviour: the Good News of God for humanity. This year we have much more reason to celebrate this feast together. Let us especially contemplate the love of God incarnate that has been shown in the life of **apostolic holiness** of Francis Jordan and in the history of each one of us.

In celebrating Christmas, do not forget to pray for each other. Let us pray together from different parts of the world, forming a single choir of confreres united with their Founder, giving thanks to God, with the following prayer from his Spiritual Diary (I / 9).

*“Praise the Lord, my soul,
for His mercy is great from age to age.
Rejoice you Seraphim and Cherubim,
rejoice you angels and archangels,
rejoice you all the angels of heaven and praise the Lord,
rejoice you holy apostles and evangelists,
rejoice you patriarchs and prophets!
Rejoice you holy martyrs
rejoice young holy men and maidens,
rejoice you innocent children,
rejoice all you saints of heavenly court.
Rejoice and be glad for the Lord is doing great things for me;
He will dwell with His unworthy servant!
Rejoice at this.
Be glad and marvel, for the Lord is wonderful. “*

Merry Christmas everyone!

afilton Jorda 815
Superior General

**Holiness is
raising your eyes toward the mountains;
it is intimacy with the Father
who is in Heaven.**

**From this intimacy lives the person
who is aware
of the limits
and difficulties of his path.**

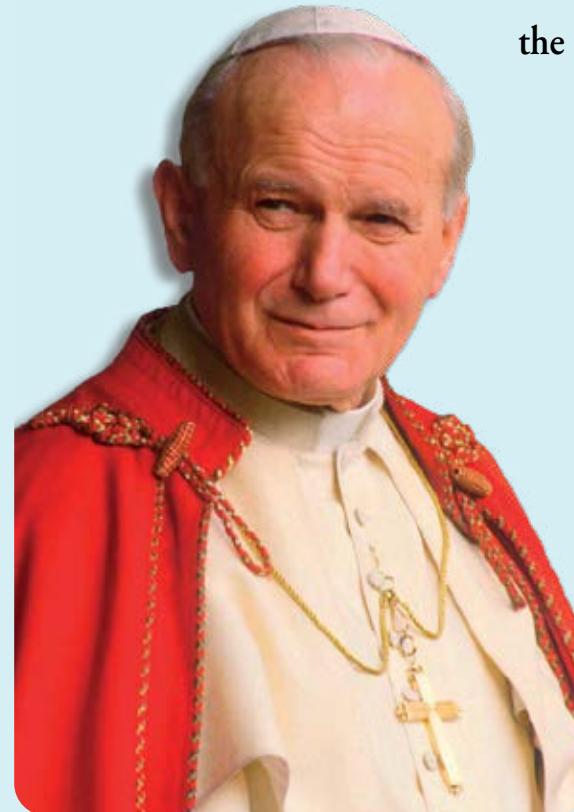
**Holiness is
being aware of being "protected";
protected by God.**

**The saint knows very well
his fragility,
the precariousness of his existence,
his capacities,
but he is not scared,
because at the same time
he feels safe.**

**The saints,
despite feeling much darkness
in themselves,
they feel they were
made for the Truth of God.**

**Where others doubt,
they see clearly.**

Saint John Paul II
Florence, Italy - 19 October 1986





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