

INPUT FOR PERSONAL OR COMMUNAL REFLECTION

10. Father Francis Jordan, anchored in fidelity to the church

by Fr. Stephan Horn SDS, Bad Wurzach, 1 February 2021

With the word 'faithfulness' we associate an attitude of close solidarity that proves itself in good times, but above all also under stress and in conflicts. The joy in the Church matured in Johann-Baptist Jordan especially between 1875 and 1880, the years when he was approaching the priesthood and considering a call to confront the loss of faith in Europe. When we read his Spiritual Diary of these years, we also see how he becomes familiar with the saints through his spiritual reading, starting from the time of the early Church. He finds their wisdom and example encouraging to place himself entirely at the service of Christ and His Church. He feels the closeness of the Lord especially in Holy Communion. But he also experienced a living Church in genuine Christians whom he met during these years, e.g. at the Lay Catholic Congresses, but especially in personalities such as the missionary bishop Wilhelm Mas-saia and Don Bosco, to whom he entrusted the questions of his vocation.

It was also Don Bosco who, soon after Pope Leo XIII's first blessing, told him to be prepared for resistance, especially from bishops and priests. He then encountered this when the name he had chosen for his community was not granted to him despite good reasons. He had fought for it with courage and good reasons; it was in vain. He experienced a particularly great disappointment in connection with the crisis of his first Roman community of religious sisters. In a draft letter to Pope Leo, he poured out his heart: he had wanted to speak to his superior (Cardinal Vicar Lucido Maria Parocchi) and defend himself, "but I have not been heard, but I believe that God Almighty has heard me". The Pope confirmed the decision of his vicar. A few months later, he is in similar distress - so much so that he drafts a spiritual testament as Founder; in it, his loyalty to the Church as guardian of the Gospel shines brightly.

Fr. Francis of the Cross Jordan:

"Remain sincere and loyal sons of our mother, the holy Roman Church. Teach what she teaches; believe what she believes; condemn what she condemns."

(Last Will and Testament in SD (2011), p. 346)

On 5 May 1899 Fr. Francis candidly told his Roman house community that the bitterest cup they must be prepared for is not that „of the adversary of salvation, of the evil enemy who hates what is of God”, and not that „of the evil men who attack us, because we oppose them”, and not that „of men who mean well but do not understand

well”, but that which is handed to them by the ecclesiastical authorities who „put obstacles in their way” instead of protecting and supporting them. And he concludes, „So, if you want to be apostles, you must be ready to drink the fourfold cup of suffering.” (cf.: DSS XXIII, p. 351ff)

Fr. Francis of the Cross Jordan:

It is so necessary, so important in our time, to help the Holy Church, which is contested, fought against, reviled and slandered from all sides [...] God has called you in these distressed times to ... work and fight for the holy Catholic Church ...”

(DSS XXIII, p. 520)

Questions for further reflection:

- In what do I find the most joy in the church?
- How do I overcome disappointments I have experienced with the church?
- How can I help others to love the church and remain faithful to it despite everything?