

9. Fr. Francis Jordan- a blessed full of goodness and kindness

by Fr. Leonhard Berchthold SDS, Munich, 1 January 2021

From the Letter to Titus:

“But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour for humanity were revealed, he saved us...”

(Tit 3,4-5)

We Salvatorians claim the expression ‘goodness and kindness’ to capture the spirit of our Society. But where did this originate?

In 1894 our Society received its third and final name: **Society of the Divine Saviour**. With this change, Jesus Christ as Saviour was put right into the centre. Jesus as the Divine Saviour, as the teaching Saviour, as the Saviour of the world shaped everything, determined everything in the Society. The Saviour became our name-giver. This was the name that the founder of the Redemptorists, St. Alphonsus of Liguori, wanted for his community, as a Redemptorist confessed to me years ago. We may regard it as a sign that this name has been ‘reserved’ for us. Until the 2nd General Chapter (1908) our Society celebrated Pentecost as its main feast. Soon after, the choice of the titular feast fell on the feast of the Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world. The scriptural passage Titus 3:4 was particularly prominent in the Christmas liturgy. St. Paul testifies that through Jesus „*the goodness and kindness of God our Saviour appeared*”.

The Greek word ‘chrästotes’ has many, many meanings: Goodness, kindness, loving-kindness, generosity, mercy-heartedness. ‘Philantropia’ means love for a person or love for humanity, which includes people and extends to all people without exception.

In this scriptural passage, Father Jordan found his vocation, his spirituality aptly summarised, to proclaim Jesus, the Saviour, to all nations and peoples (universality); they should recognise salvation in Christ. The leitmotif and method of leading people to Christ is, for him and for all members of the Salvatorian Family, to make „the goodness and human kindness of God” tangible.

As a reminder, he noted this thought several times in his “Spiritual Diary”:

“With God’s grace, train yourself to see the goodness of God in even the smallest things.”

(SD I, 80)

“Gentleness is so important. Oh Jesus, teach us to be gentle as you are gentle of heart.”

(SD II, 66)

“One attracts more flies with a drop of honey than with a barrel of vinegar.”

(SD I, 88)

The real depth of God’s benevolence and loving kindness can only be grasped through personal experience. Thus, Fr. Jordan wrote in a letter to Fr. Lüthen: „*The extraordinary favours of God towards the Society are so great that I am almost moved to tears. ... I would like to fall down and embrace the Saviour for the great love he has shown and is showing me, the most unworthy*”.

(Letter from 15 August 1884 in DSS X.I, Nr. 180, P. 130)

Questions for further reflection:

- What does the scripture Titus 3:4 mean to me?
- Do I know Salvatorians who have radiated the goodness and kindness of God?
- When do I find it difficult to live up to this basic attitude?