

CHAPEL OF BLESSED FRANCIS JORDAN

A PLACE OF COMMUNION, CHARISM, AND MISSION


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

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*"Pray always
with the deepest humility
and with the utmost confidence.
That nothing separates you
from this."*

Blessed Francis Jordan - SD II/2

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	3
Witnesses of holiness	6
A space of communion	7
Principle and foundation	10
The centre of the liturgy	11
The place of the Word	16
The place of the celebrant	19
Reliquary of the Founder	20
Salvatorian vocation and charism	23
Salvatorian apostolic mission	28
Conclusion	33

CHAPEL OF BLESSED FRANCIS JORDAN

A place of communion, charism, and mission

1. Dear confreres, once again I send you my cordial greetings in this important historical moment that we are living as the Salvatorian Family. I would like to thank you for the many initiatives you are carrying out to celebrate the “*Year of Thanksgiving for Blessed Francis Jordan*”. At the same time, I would like to take advantage of this moment of gratitude to encourage you to grow interiorly and to bring to every person in every environment the deeper meaning of the life and mission of Blessed Francis Jordan. I propose to meditate and to transmit from heart to heart the true scope of the words pronounced by Pope Francis, in presenting the Founder as a model for the present evangelisation of the world: “...*He was a tireless proclaimer of the Gospel, using whatever means the love of Christ inspired him to use. May his apostolic zeal be an example and a guide to those in the Church who are called to bring the word and love of Jesus to every environment. Let us applaud the new Blessed!*”¹



Fr. Milton Zonta SDS
SUPERIOR GENERAL

1 FRANCIS, *Regina Caeli*, 16 May 2021.

2. As I have done on other occasions, I would also like to offer you this year a reflection that will help us on our journey towards a greater authenticity of Salvatorian life; a way of life that can be none other than to try each day without rest to take on the sentiments and the way of life of Blessed Francis Jordan. This consists essentially in letting Jesus Christ occupy the centre of our existence. When this personal encounter with Jesus Christ is lost, we are attacked by the virus of spiritual anaemia, which makes us take refuge in our comfort and our personal interests. If we are not rooted in the experience of finding in the words and gestures of Jesus the authentic face of God the Father, we have nothing meaningful to communicate to others. Only an authentic spirituality of “disciples-brothers” and “missionary-witnesses” can push us to go beyond ourselves, to the true depths of our life, formation, and mission. The interior life must be worked on!
3. Against this background, I would like to offer you an interpretative reading of the remodelling of the chapel of the Motherhouse in Rome in the framework of the beatification of our Founder. I do not wish to say what is innovative about the interior of this chapel, now called the **“Chapel of Blessed Francis Jordan”**. The purpose of this reflection is rather to point out some essential elements about our vocation and mission that are now represented there. Liturgy in the life of the Church is never a private action, but always a communal experience. Therefore, what I am proposing to you is a possible theological reading of the Salvatorian charism and apostolate that is now expressed in this liturgical space.

4. I suppose that the great joy we experienced together when we received the announcement of the Founder's beatification is still very present in everyone's memory. From the beginning, we have included in the agenda of the Generalate the task of choosing the best place for his veneration in the Motherhouse. With the help of architects and specialists in the field of liturgy, the Generalate has led the remodelling project. The "*Centro Artistico Aletti*", directed by the Jesuit, Fr. Marko Ivan Rupnik, artist and theologian, has overseen the artwork and paintings of the liturgical space. The hours of work were so long that the new celebration space - including the preparation of the Founder's reliquary - was ready just in the week of the beatification ceremony. Now that the whole project is almost completed², as is normal, different ways of observing and interpreting the structure of the remodelled space have been noted. Without dwelling here on the many personal approaches, I presume it would be important to answer at least a few questions: What does this liturgical space speak to us in itself? What elements of our Salvatorian identity are underlined here? How is the apostolic holiness of the Founder represented in this place? Finally, the answer to these questions is the content I intend to offer you in this fraternal message.



2 The "*Centro Artístico Aletti*" will conclude its work with the creation of a Way of the Cross, a Tabernacle made of metal and a candle holder for the paschal candle.

WITNESSES OF HOLINESS



5. At the entrance to the chapel are the paintings of Blessed Francis Mary of the Cross and Blessed Mary of the Apostles. The two paintings are the work of Raúl Berzosa, a painter specialising in Sacred Art from Malaga (Spain). Below the name of Blessed Francis Jordan is a relic of a piece of the cincture with which he was buried. Under the name of Blessed Mary of the Apostles there is a relic of a fragment of her body.
6. The image of the Blessed Salvatorians at the entrance of the chapel of the Motherhouse are like torches that accompany us on our journey of holiness. They express two faces of the fullness of the same charism, lived through a relationship of mutual re-

spect and apostolic communion. They are our guides, intercessors, witnesses of Salvatorian holiness, as a gift received from the Spirit of God. Thus, they help us to centre our lives on the one true, living and merciful God. They help us to move away from a mediocre existence and to continue to grow in our unity in diversity, concretely manifested today in the Salvatorian Family.

A SPACE OF COMMUNION

7. As we enter through the door of the chapel, the first thing we notice is its oval or almond-shaped structure. The very arrangement of the wooden pews already expresses a sign of communion, relationship, and fraternity. In the same way, this oval shape represents, firstly, the union of two circles, i.e., the mystery of the two natures, the divine and the human in Jesus Christ. Secondly, the shape of the egg reminds us that this space contains within it the new Life, the Resurrection and Salvation that comes from Jesus Christ. And, furthermore, it makes us see that our life in Jesus Christ is the life of communion in the Holy Spirit as children of the Father. Thus, the very composition of the liturgical space reveals the image of God the Father in all and the consequent communion of his sons and daughters, united fraternally in the Mystery of Trinitarian love.
8. Already in the early centuries, when Christians moved from liturgies celebrated in their houses to public spaces, they began to build in such a way that the space continued to evoke the indwelling of this Trinitarian Mystery, even when there was no liturgical celebration. This means that even when the liturgical space is empty, it conveys the image of the ecclesial-congregational community that we are. In the same sense, more than by words, all the elements in the chapel of Blessed Francis Jordan



constitute a self-portrait of who we are. In other words, people who find their identity not alone, but gathered in an Apostolic Society, working at the service of the Church, from their encounter with the authentic image of God the Father, revealed in Jesus Christ.

9. I would further like to point out that, from the beginning of the process of refurbishing the chapel, we had this objective of not simply creating a space of silence. The new chapel should be a place of encounter. Silence and recollection can be created even in our room, but it is in the chapel that we find the atmosphere of communion. Our church life is more than “recollection”. We are part of the body of Christ, children of the same Father. This explains why in the chapel of Blessed Francis Jordan, there

is no hidden corner in which to pray individually or separately. It is an invitation to overcome a false and individualistic view of our relationship with God. In the chapel, wherever we are praying, we are always a community of brothers and sisters and children praying the “Our Father” together. Our Salvatorian communion is not only an ideal to be realised, but rather a mission-oriented way of living and acting. It is a way of being that is rooted in Trinitarian communion, in the love of God that holds us together and that sustains us in our journey and our progress together.

10. Regarding the layout of the chapel I would still like to point out the theme of our full communion with the Church. A sense of belonging to the Church has been a distinguishing feature of Blessed Francis Jordan’s spiritual journey. It was one of his recommendations: that we be “true children” of the Church. An experience of communion with the Church which, according to the Founder, entails precisely “*teach what she teaches, believe what she believes, condemn what she condemns*”.³ In this sense, the layout of the chapel of the Motherhouse helps us to be aware of the ecclesial nature of the Salvatorian charism; a charism which finds its best expression, not in each one individually, but as a whole among those who share the charism and in unity with all the instances of the Church’s mission. In this sense, we can say that the proposed sacred space is, in itself, an invitation to rediscover and promote the spirituality of Trinitarian communion as our source and model of life.

3 JORDAN Francis, *Spiritual Testament*, 5.

PRINCIPLE AND FOUNDATION



11. In the space of the chapel we immediately recognise the three most important poles of the Eucharistic celebration: the **altar**, the **ambo**, and the **seat of the celebrant**. In addition to these, there is the **reliquary** of Blessed Francis Jordan, located in the central point of the chapel. All the attention is focused on the essentials expressed by these elements built in white marble, called “*calacatta macchia oro*”. The solidity of the marble recalls the fundamentals of our spiritual life, of our communion enhanced in the Son Jesus Christ and of our mission in the spirit of the Founder. The stones are unified by a line of golden colour. The colour gold with its brilliance indicates, in the first place, the path of holiness, to which Blessed Francis Jordan is a faithful witness. At the same time, this line is symbolic of the path we are called to take towards a life of holiness. “*What good will everything else be if we do not strive for holiness?*”⁴,

4 JORDAN Francis, *Chapter Talks*, 20 April 1894.

the Founder continually reminded us. He is the one who has gone before us, indicating not a life that is always perfect, but a deep spiritual life that gives the courage to put all our time, energy, and resources at the service of the Gospel.

THE CENTRE OF THE LITURGY

12. In the chapel of Blessed Francis Jordan, we see clearly that the true centre of the liturgy is the altar. The altar is made of a single piece of stone which reveals uniqueness, simplicity, and stability. This stone is Christ, because Christ is the centre, the “cornerstone”⁵ on which the Church is built. Blessed Francis Jordan had this conviction that without Jesus Christ, the revealer of the Father, our ecclesial life is unsustainable. He sought him with all his strength, especially in the Eucharist, in order to come to love him and to follow him ever more. We can even imagine him praying and writing to himself: “*In all you do, your prayers, etc., act in Jesus, through Jesus, with Jesus, esp. at Mass*”.⁶

13. Another detail for our contemplation is the square shape of the altar, which indicates the four cardinal points, thus evoking a sense of universality. That is, a table where the abundance of the Eucharistic meal is

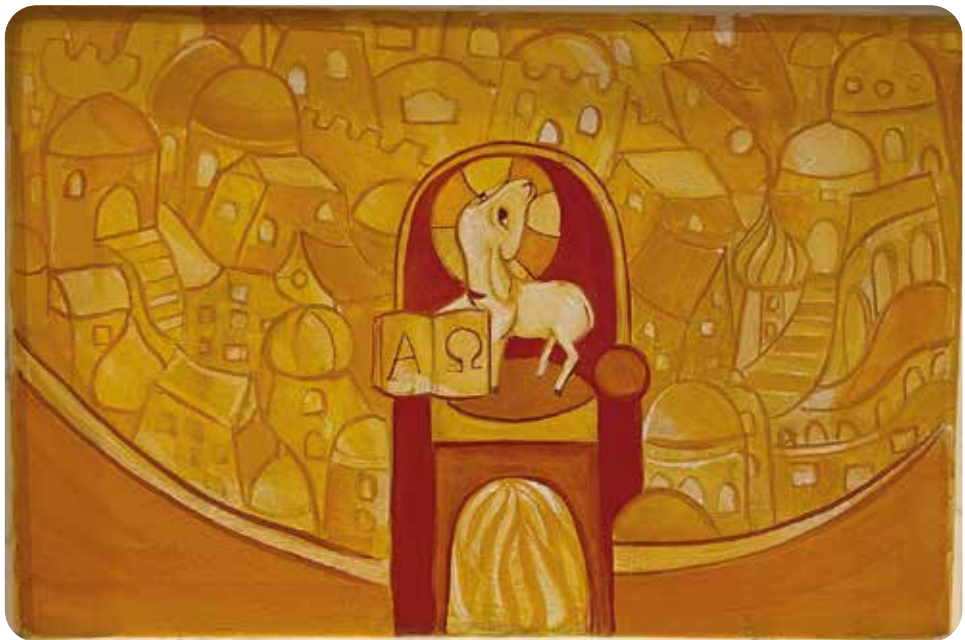


⁵ Ephesians 2,20.

⁶ JORDAN Francis, *Spiritual Diary*, I/125.

offered for the salvation of all. In our homes, even if we are very different in character it is at the table of the Eucharist that we renew and strengthen our union with Christ and through Him, with the Father and with our brothers and sisters, through the power of the Spirit. The daily Eucharist transforms us from within and makes us live and work together. Our identity is that of brothers and sisters in the same Father, by the grace of the incarnate Son and in the power of his Spirit, and not merely that of individuals from different countries. “*Remember that you are all brothers,*”⁷ the Founder kept repeating, to underline this spirit of unity and not division in our Society.

14. **The heavenly liturgy** - On the front of the altar stone is incised the docility of the Lamb in the golden square of the heavenly Jerusalem. In the sacrificed Lamb (with its visible neck wound)



7 JORDAN Francis, *Chapter Talks*, 17 February 1899.

is symbolised the Paschal Christ (beginning and end). From the throne of the Lamb flow streams of water “*clear as crystal*”.⁸ In the golden square there are many windows in which countless rows of saints of all times live.

15. This painting is extremely significant because it shows that in every Eucharist, through Christ in bread and wine, we enter into spiritual communion with the whole Church in heaven and on earth. Each Eucharist gives us a taste of the heavenly liturgy in a spiritual communion that transcends temporal barriers. Both those who live with us here on earth and those who have gone before us in the afterlife, the life without end, participate in it, forming the perfect unity of the communion of saints.
16. Contemplating this image of the city of God, as a symbol of the heavenly community, leads me to recall the Founder’s last greeting to the missionaries on their departure for India: “*Go now in peace and remain closely united with us (...) and may find ourselves reunited one day in our eternal home*”.⁹ Now that this event is distant, it fills our hearts with joy to know that in every Eucharist we live this communion with the divine life that deigned to take on our human condition, divinising it. In every Eucharistic celebration we strengthen our spiritual unity with Blessed Francis Jordan, Blessed Mary of the Apostles and so many Salvatorians of all times who share in eternal life. They support our journey with their intercession and pray with and for us in this beautiful spiritual union between heaven and earth.

8 Revelation 22,1.

9 JORDAN Francis, *Chapter Talks*, 25 December 1891.

17. **The cross of salvation** - Next to the altar is the “processional cross” on a gold-coloured metal pole, which expresses the holiness of God. Two scenes can be seen on it: in the upper part is the image of the Crucified Christ. The Crucified Christ is not naked, as is customary in the crucifixion, but is wearing priestly vestments and with his arms



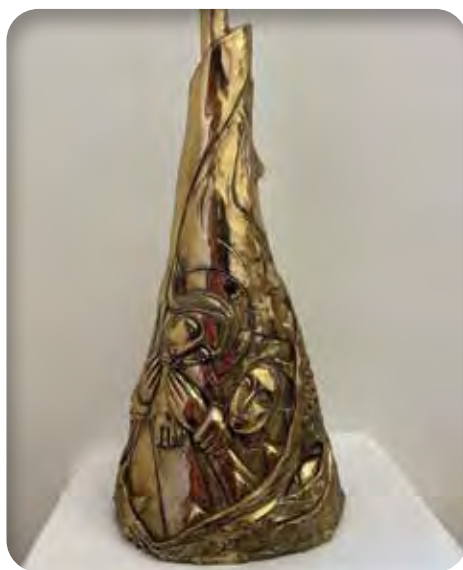
outstretched in the form of a ‘Paschal chalice’. Christ’s priestly vestments do not conceal the wounds, and his stole is even torn by the scar of the lance. This scar is on the right, because the sword was thrust diagonally, from the bottom to the top, from the right to the left, until it reached the heart. In this sculpture we profess that Jesus Christ is the full realisation of the priesthood of the New Covenant. He is the one Mediator and Eternal Priest. He is the new Paschal Lamb, who offers himself on the cross and from this offering a new people is born, the people of God of the New Covenant, which is the Church.

18. When we place before our eyes this image of Christ crucified, the first thing that comes to mind is the theme of the cross which is at the heart of the spirituality of Blessed Francis Jordan. For our Founder the following of Christ demands radicalism from all of us. As we know, the driving force of his whole life was to follow Jesus Christ, through a continuous and progressive self-emptying to the end. A personal and paschal relationship described in this way: *“Through Him, the Crucified, in Him, the Crucified, with Him, the Crucified, begin, proceed, perse-*

vere in working for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. Amen.”¹⁰ In the same way he invites us to contemplate Jesus on the cross as an inspiration to love much more and better our vocation and service in the Church. The cross teaches us the greatest love, the faithfulness of God, the ability to tolerate defeat, selflessness and a life given out of love. Contemplating this cross leads us to understand the full extent and consequences of our participation in the one saving priesthood of Jesus Christ.

19. Christ’s descent into the depths of the earth

- At the foot of the pole of the cross is depicted, in relief, the figure of Christ descending into the depths of the earth.¹¹ In this image, the Risen Christ can be seen descending (kenosis) from the entrails of a dragon (the mouth of death), rescuing Adam and Eve by the on the wrists (the point at which the pulse of life is usually measured) and giving them



back their filial life so that they may return to the Father. In this representation, Jesus - the Crucified-Resurrected One - is the “Divine Saviour” who descends to Sheol (the place of death) to the most hidden corners of existence so that all may be saved and have Eternal Life. That is, life in all its fullness in God and with God.

10 JORDAN Francis, *Spiritual Diary*, I/118.

11 Ephesians 4,8.

20. Indeed, in this gesture of Christ's bending down to lift up (save) Adam and Eve (and with them all humanity) we find a synthesis of the central theme that dwelt in the heart of Blessed Francis Jordan. That is, to help to "be saved" as many as possible of those who "*live in darkness and the shadow of death.*"¹² Therefore, before this image of Christ who descends to the depths of the earth in search of the lost sheep, we join the Founder in praying this his prayer: "*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.*"¹³ The Salvatorian message carries this content of helping the Church to keep the doors open: a Church that calls all to know the mercy of the Father and, at the same time, to go out into the world, under the guidance of the Spirit, to bring the Salvation of the love of God who "*wants all to be saved.*"¹⁴

THE PLACE OF THE WORD

21. The ambo in the chapel of Blessed Francis Jordan, in parallel with the altar, occupies a prominent place in the composition of the liturgical space. It is presented in a visually prominent place. It is not a simple lectern, but is made of stone, with adequate solidity and stability. On the front it has a semi-circular shape that symbolically evokes the stone on which the angel sat to announce the Good News of the Resurrection to the women.¹⁵ Thus the ambo - as an icon of the empty tomb - is a witness to Easter and a monument to the Resurrection of Christ.

12 Luke 1,79.

13 JORDAN Francis, *Spiritual Diary*, I/149.

14 1 Timothy 2,4.

15 Cf. Matthew 28,2.

22. This monument suggests the great significance of listening, meditation, celebration, and proclamation of the Word of God for Blessed Francis Jordan. From his youth, we find in his writings, this assiduous disposition to “...meditating, learning, and contemplating Sacred Scripture...”.¹⁶ This is fundamental for us today: to form ourselves continually in listening to the Word of God, especially in the Eucharist. It was for no other reason that the Founder, in writing the Rules of 1882, includ-



ed the daily practice of the spiritual and prayerful reading of “a chapter of Sacred Scripture”.¹⁷ In short, both yesterday and today, an authentic Salvatorian life is not possible without allowing ourselves to be enlightened and renewed through the prayerful reading of the Bible, without listening to and putting into practice the Word of God.

¹⁶ JORDAN Francis, *Spiritual Diary*, 1/139.

¹⁷ Rules of the First Grade of the Apostolic Teaching Society, Rome, 1882, DSS I, p. 24.

23. Mary, the faithful disciple of the Word -

On the front of the stone of the ambo there is a representation of the Virgin Mary captured at the moment of the Annunciation. The red colour of the image indicates divinity, assumed by her through her divine motherhood. The Virgin is enveloped by the scroll of the book, to underline the importance of listening and obedience to



the Word that is incarnated in her. She has an attitude of dialogue and her raised right hand indicates her acceptance of the Word heard. While in her left hand she holds a “ball of yarn”, to indicate that the flesh of the Word of God is being woven in her. This means that, from Mary’s “yes” at the moment of the Annunciation, we not only hear the Word, but we also contemplate it and touch it with our hands,¹⁸ because, in the Virgin Mary, God the Father became visible and was able to dwell among us, in Jesus of Nazareth, Emmanuel, God-with-us.

24. The Virgin Mary has always been an important figure in Blessed Francis Jordan’s journey of faith. She is for him the most holy “Mother of God” and, at the same time, “his mother” from whom he constantly invokes her help and assistance.¹⁹ The fact that he chose the religious name “Mary” and entrusted the

¹⁸ Cf. 1 John 1,1.

¹⁹ Cf. JORDAN Francis, *Spiritual Diary*, III/1; III/2; III/3; III/5; III/9.

foundation of his apostolic work under the protection of Mary Immaculate (8 December 1881), gives us a glimpse of the intensity of his love and devotion to the Virgin Mother of Jesus. He repeatedly recommended us to draw close to her, because she is our Mother and model of fidelity to the divine will. Therefore, in our Society, the Virgin Mary is the Mother of the Saviour, the teacher of interiority and listening par excellence. By her life she teaches us the meaning of being humble and available disciples before Jesus. With a confidence equal to that of Blessed Francis Jordan, she accompanies us and encourages us to persevere in the face of trials in the mission.

THE PLACE OF THE CELEBRANT

25. The place of the celebrant is another place that has special symbolic significance in the chapel of Blessed Francis Jordan. Like the altar and ambo, described above, the seat is made of the same fixed structure of marble stone. It is the icon of Christ the Priest and Teacher who, seated, guides, teaches, instructs, and exhorts his People. The presider is thus the re-presentation of Christ



himself presiding over the liturgy, teaching his Church to live fraternity, and inviting all to become a living and life-giving

word to the world. From this symbolism, the priest welcomes, leads, teaches, and blesses in total identity with the person of Christ.

26. Beyond the symbolic and liturgical significance of the seat we can also refer to the place occupied by Blessed Francis Jordan. Thus, the nobility of the seat would evoke the centrality of the office of the Founder, who presides in his spirit over the journey of the Society and teaches us to live his charism authentically today. From this place, he welcomes, guides, sends, and blesses his spiritual sons and daughters, so that God may “... *sanctify you, strengthen and multiply you like the sands of the sea and the stars of the heavens until the end of time*”²⁰, growing always in the awareness of “...*the spirituality of the Society and its mission. ... to remain firmly united in the spirit of the Founder*”.²¹ Moreover, this place in the chapel of the Motherhouse reminds us that the Generalate does not govern in its own name but acts in the name of the Founder. Thus, in this respect, the seat of the President takes on a very important symbolic meaning. It is the representation of Blessed Francis Jordan himself as the guarantor of fidelity and the guideline of the Society’s path, which is made visible through the governance of the Society, principally in the office of the Superior General.

RELIQUARY OF THE FOUNDER

27. As important as if it were the “pupil of the eye” is the reliquary of Blessed Francis Jordan located in the most central part of the chapel. As we know, the mortal remains of the Founder were buried in the old chapel from 31 May 1957, until 29 March 2021.

20 JORDAN Francis, *Spiritual Diary*, I/189.

21 JORDAN Francis, *Chapter Talks*, 2 December 1898.

In the weeks prior to the celebration of his beatification, the remains of his body were exhumed and placed in an urn (artificial glass box) decorated with the emblem of the “Society of the Divine Saviour”. Since the celebration of the beatification, the relics of the Founder occupy this central place, now protected by a large marble slab. The solidity, firmness and stillness of this stone refer to the teachings and witness of Blessed Francis Jordan: a life of tenacity, extraordinary holiness, and missionary zeal in the Church. On the other hand, it is important to note that there is no longer “the tomb of the Founder”, as there was before. What there is now is a “reliquary”, in which what remains of the Founder’s body is preserved. In other words, this reliquary contains the husk of the grain of wheat which did not remain enclosed within itself, but fell into the earth, sprouted, and bore fruit.²² These husks of the grain of wheat that fell to the ground are the most precious sign that impels us to holiness of life and to the mission entrusted to us.



22 Cf. John 12, 24.

28. **Fisherman's net** - In the marble slab above the reliquary there is a hole that allows us to see part of the urn with the relics of the Founder. This opening has a golden metal protection, which has the shape of a "fishermen's net". An element that certainly cannot be overlooked since the fisherman's net symbolically



evokes the entire vocational journey of the Founder: from John the Baptist (fisherman in the stream of Gurtweil) to Francis Mary of the Cross (fisherman in the Church to the ends of the earth). An existence fished by God to become a fisher of men for God. A vocation that was filled with the gift of holiness, as expressed in the name: "*Beatus Franciscus Maria a Cruce Jordan*", inscribed in gold on the stone of the reliquary. In this special place, we find a strong call, a source of inspiration and the necessary intercession to live our vocation also as a story of love for God and missionary holiness, casting nets into the sea of our time.

29. **Light on our way** - On the slab of the reliquary we have placed a lamp in golden metal, just like the ones on the altar and next to the Blessed Sacrament. These lamps are in the shape of an ostrich egg with the shell split in half. In the ancient times of the first millennium, the crypts were illuminated using these shells.



At that time the shells were filled with oil, lit, and used as candles for liturgical celebrations. These egg-shaped lamps primarily represent the life of the Risen Christ: the only light without twilight. The lamp above the reliquary is kept as a permanent light. This light never goes out, because it evokes the spirit of the apostolic charism of Blessed Francis Jordan, which must shine in the lives of Salvatorians of all times. The light of his luminous example capable of inflaming all hearts. The spark of “*burning fire and flaming torch*”²³ that he lit and that has never been extinguished; a fire without limits and universal that continues to summon people of all races, languages, and peoples.

SALVATORIAN VOCATION AND CHARISM

30. In the apse of the chapel there is a painting with two parallel scenes from the Gospel: the testimony of John the Baptist and the Baptism of Jesus. The combination of these biblical passages leads us to meditate on the central theme of our Salvatorian identity and charism.



23 JORDAN Francis, *Spiritual Diary*, III/20.

31. **Testimony of John the Baptist** - The scene opens with John the Baptist depicted as a man of tall stature and dressed in camel's hair. His feet are immersed in the river Jordan with its waters polluted by the sin of a humanity that does not know God. John the Baptist has a fixed gaze, as if he is speaking to us. His right hand is over his heart, the "*Paschal Lamb*", demonstrating the most central thing he wants to communicate to us: "*There is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world*".²⁴ With his left hand, he illustrates his words by pointing directly to the Person of Jesus: "*There is the Lamb of God whom you must follow.*"²⁵



32. As we know, our Founder had a great appreciation for the figure of St. John the Baptist. Besides having this name given to him by his parents, he spoke of John the Baptist countless times as an example of the authentic Salvatorian.²⁶ John the Baptist was a great example of an apostolic religious, the Founder explained, because with his life and words he was the first witness of Jesus. With his witness he helps us to recognise in Jesus the "lamb sent by God" who takes away "the sin" of the world".²⁷ He did not draw attention to himself but knew how to stand aside to point to the Saviour of humanity. According to the Founder, this is

24 John 1, 29.

25 John 1, 36.

26 Cf. JORDAN Francis, *Chapter Talks*, 23 June 1899.

27 Cf. John 1, 29.

the Salvatorian way of proceeding: to point to Jesus and to invite to follow Him, so that in Him each person may know the one true God and may be saved from the sin that keeps us away from Him. Indeed, this is our vocation to be a “*burning and shining lamp*”²⁸, pointing out where the true light - God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God - is, which triumphs over darkness.²⁹ Emphasising the humble figure of John the Baptist, Blessed Francis Jordan did not promote himself or his impetus. His message was to root in us the greatness of this vocation to spend himself, to be consumed in the mission of pointing to the One who “*shows us the face of God and makes known to us the name of God*”.³⁰

33. “**This is my beloved Son**”

- The second act is portrayed the Baptism of Jesus as it is described in the beginning of the Gospel.

“As soon as he was baptised, Jesus came up from the water. Then the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God come down like a dove and rest up on him. At the same time a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my Son, the Beloved; with whom I am well pleased’”.³¹

The figure of Jesus is that of a stripped man, without garments of glory. He has immersed him-



28 John 5, 35.

29 Cf. Nicene Constantinople Creed.

30 BENEDICT XVI, Audience in the Paul VI audience hall, 16 January 2013.

31 Matthew 3, 16-17.

self in our miseries and our humanity, also represented in the earth-coloured water of the river Jordan. This water, dark and dirty, is the exact image of a humanity made of mud, without light, extinguished by sin. Jesus emerges from the waters, wrapped in the red colour of his divinity, looking upwards, at the moment when the wall of the heavenly vault opens. On high we see the hand of God the Father, whose sleeve is red because He is the true God. His hand is shown completely open, because He definitely makes Himself known as Father through His Son, in a profound relationship of love. In the same representation we see the Holy Spirit descending upon Jesus. The Spirit is the communication of immeasurable love between the Father and the Son descending upon the humanity of Jesus. Thus, is made known the face of the one true God who reveals himself in the incarnation of his beloved Son. It is worth noting that in the representation there are no longer any boundaries between heaven and earth. The heavens have opened, never to close again, for through Jesus we truly know the Father, whom no one has ever seen.³² Finally, I would still like to note that Jesus is portrayed with one foot moving towards the desert, as if to indicate the beginning of his mission of salvation, facing the temptations of sin, which keep us from knowing the love of God the Father.



32 Cf. John 1, 18.

34. This entire depiction highlights a key thought of Blessed Francis Jordan. From his perspective, spiritual superficiality was one of the main problems of the Church of his time. A living experience of God was lacking in the lives of Christians. So, in response to this reality, he began an apostolic work with the aim of promoting, instructing, and making known the teachings of Jesus, the beloved Son of the Father. Only in Jesus Christ can we know the “one true God”, for as Jesus said to Philip: “*Whoever has seen me has seen the Father*”.³³ In this we learn that the one True God is not solitude, but Trinitarian communion of love, gift, and overflowing communication.
35. We can also identify in this representation the theme of apostolic consecration which is born of Baptism. In the teaching of Blessed Francis Jordan every baptized person, whatever his or her state in life, is a missionary in the world. So in founding his apostolic work what he proposed was to help the Church in the mission that all, without excluding anyone, “...*may come to know more and more the one true God and the one whom he has sent, Jesus Christ, so that they may live holy lives and save their souls.*”³⁴ Today we discover, better than in times past, that the essence of the Salvatorian charism is centred on making present the personal encounter with Jesus Christ, since He is the way that makes us know the endearing love of God the Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit. Likewise, because we are aware “...*from our own experience, that it is not the same thing to have known Jesus as not to know Him, it is not the same thing to walk with Him as to grope for Him, it is not the same thing to be able to listen to Him as to ignore His Word...*”.³⁵

33 John 14, 9.

34 JORDAN Francis, *Statutes of the Apostolic Teaching Society*, 1880.

35 FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 266.

SALVATORIAN APOSTOLIC MISSION



36. The entire back wall of the chapel again combines two biblical scenes: the Ascension and Pentecost, as they were combined in the ancient iconography. According to Jesus' own words, He had first to rise to the Father so that the Spirit could descend upon us.³⁶ In fact, without the Holy Spirit, the apostles cannot bear witness, i.e., there is no mission without the descent of the Spirit. Moreover, these two scenes of the Ascension, together with the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, lead us to reflect on the universal Salvatorian mission, our fundamental identity of following Jesus Christ in the footsteps of the apostles.
37. At this point, I would like to draw attention to the dominant colours of the paintings in the chapel: from yellow ochre to orange red. These colours, according to the artist Marko Rupnik, represent the deepest colours of human consciousness and existence. They are the colours of the tissue, of the entrails that we

³⁶ Cf. John 16, 7.

can physically distinguish during gestation in the womb before birth. With this in mind, the first communities used these colours to represent the great events of Salvation, as an anticipation of the birth towards the definitive life for which we are on the way: *“Come, blessed of my Father! Take possession of the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world...”*³⁷

38. **Ascension of the Lord** - At the top of the wall is depicted the story of the Ascension of the Lord, as described in the Acts of the Apostles³⁸ and the Gospel of Matthew.³⁹ In the centre is the glorious Christ ascending to the abode of the Father. Christ sits holding an open book⁴⁰ and makes visible the wounds that indicate the human reality of his body, indicating that he has taken our humanity to sit at the right hand of the Father.⁴¹ He contemplates us with a gaze that observes, captivates, summons, and sends. With his right hand he makes the gesture of priestly blessing and sending out on mission. However, the Ascension is linked to the group of apostles in the scene below. They are those apostles who look at Christ (contemplatives) who ascends towards the Father, while others are in an attitude of missionary depar-



37 Matthew 25, 34.

38 Acts 1, 9-11.

39 Matthew 28, 16-20.

40 Revelation 4, 8.

41 Cf. Nicene Constantinople Creed.

ture (apostolic). However, all of them have their feet turned outwards, going out to the ends of the earth, to the peripheries of the world. The two angels at Christ's side bear witness to the divine presence. They both have one hand towards Christ and the other towards the world, inviting the apostles to a full incorporation between contemplation of the mystery revealed in the Risen One and apostolic action. They invite the apostles to nourish their life of faith and to bear witness animated by the Spirit of Christ, in the certainty that He will return in the same way as they contemplate Him in the Glory of the Father.

39. This representation, first, leads us to reflect on the Founder's appropriate insistence that we have Jesus the Saviour as the effective centre of our life. If there is no clarity about the meaning of this spiritual centrality in the living person of Jesus Christ, the Salvatorian life no longer has any meaning, and its apostolic mission becomes empty and meaningless. Hence, the essence of our spirituality is personal union with the "gaze of Christ the Saviour", for it reveals to us the gaze of the Father, in the power of his Spirit. He looks at everyone, but He looks at each one of us. His gaze imprints on us the desire to follow him, fills our life with meaning and directs our gaze towards the world. The more we are rooted in the Person of Christ, the revealer of the Father, the more certain it is that our apostolic action, guided by his Spirit, will not remain just words or a simple strategic organisation.
40. As depicted in the painting, there are two distinct gazes of the apostles: one of contemplation and the other of action. The two gazes complement each other and are characteristic attitudes of the Salvatorian way of following Jesus Christ, inspired by the spiritual life of Blessed Francis Jordan. Our Society, said the

Founder, is “wholly contemplative and active”, contemplation is used to ignite you with the Holy Spirit. I would like to say, contemplation is like pouring oil into a lamp so that it burns and shines. Without it the lamp will go out, and the light, the ardour will cease.”⁴² Given this, we understand that there are not two kinds of Salvatorians, those who pray and those who are engaged in apostolic activity. There is only one way of living the Salvatorian vocation: that of an authentic contemplative in action.

41. **Pentecost and Missionary Sending** - The Acts of the Apostles’ account of the Pentecost event is depicted at the bottom.⁴³ Christ is the main character of Pentecost, as expressed in the Gospel of Matthew: “...he will baptise them in the Holy Spirit and fire.”⁴⁴ In this representation, the Holy Spirit descends like tongues of fire and creates the apostolic community. Mary, in the midst of the apostles, is in the position of prayer. She is the image of the whole Church invoking the coming of the Holy Spirit. She looks towards us, the community that celebrates the liturgy today and remembers God’s saving



42 JORDAN Francis, *Chapter Talks*, 23 June 1899.

43 Cf. Acts 2, 1 - 4.

44 Matthew 3, 11.

action in the world. The apostles are organised in groups of three, since the mission is always communal. They all wear sandals and a cloak, symbols of unity and service, like the cloak of Jesus in a spirit of detachment and total trust in Divine Providence. They are in an attitude of going forth: “*Go therefore and make disciples from all nations*”.⁴⁵ The apostles carry in their hands symbols of preaching (scroll) and of the sacraments (bread, wine, and oil). These elements of the word and the sacraments - symbols of the Church’s means of salvation - can also be interpreted by us as signs evoking the diversity of the means of evangelisation.

42. Above all, this representation evokes the “apostolic” and “constructive” purpose of Blessed Francis Jordan’s work. In its beginnings Pentecost was our principal feast. The Society spread, stimulated by the example of the apostles, and exalting the Virgin Mary as Queen of the Apostles. The identity of the Salvatorian, according to Francis Jordan, was that of the “apostle” at the service of the Church, in the strong and original sense of the word. The Society of the Divine Saviour is therefore characterised as an “apostolic body” which, guided by the Spirit, holds as essential the ability to use all ways and means to reveal to the world the one true God. It is not simply a matter of working hard, but of working in a spirit of discernment, unity, and openness towards all. To this end, we must fight against the temptation to close in on ourselves, against the disease of “provincialism” which causes us to lose communion between the Units. Although this path of universality is not always easy, it is of fundamental importance that our initial formation be oriented towards this perspective of the charism and towards a greater cooperation among us.

45 Matthew 28, 19.

I am convinced that this is the most opportune task we have and the most appropriate response to the times today. We can do nothing alone, without the impulse of the Holy Spirit who guides us, the Society, and the Church. An image of the Church has been wonderfully represented in the figure of the Virgin Mary, gathered with the apostles. She - Mother and Model of the Church - is present in every Eucharistic celebration, helping us in our mission to know, love and follow Jesus Christ who teaches us to invoke God as Father of all.



CONCLUSION

43. Before concluding this commentary on the chapel of Blessed Francis Jordan, I would like to invite you, in the life of our communities, to take some concrete action on the identity and fidelity to the legacy of our Founder.
44. As I have explained above, the event of the beatification led us to remodel the chapel of our Motherhouse in Rome. We have tried our best to offer an appropriate space for the veneration of a person who has “infected” us to follow in his footsteps of holiness and passion to evangelise. That is why I would like to draw attention to the fact that we can no longer present our Founder as we did before his beatification. Blessed Francis Jordan is now

beyond the borders of the Salvatorian Family. He is part of a group of witnesses of the Church who by their lives have shown the way of the beatitudes. That is why I think it is opportune to encourage an open dialogue among us (where this has not yet been done) about what we could do more and better to present “Blessed Francis Jordan” in the places of mission where we are active. I would like the results of this community decision to have a significant impact on the place. Let it be an action that goes beyond simply hanging a picture or adding a small statue somewhere in the house, so let us be creative and show how important the figure of Blessed Francis Jordan is! He is our model of holiness in today’s world. At the same time, I would like once again to give thanks for the creativity and diversity of means that many communities are using to make known and promote the veneration of the Founder.

45. Furthermore, I would like the event of the refurbishment of the chapel at the Motherhouse to become a strong stimulus to optimise the prayer spaces in our houses. However, although there are Salvatorians who have a great appreciation for sacred spaces, I have visited certain places where there is a total neglect of this inherent dimension of our life. We can all understand that, when we find a dirty chapel, damaged or broken liturgical objects, it is not difficult to conclude about the spiritual quality of the people living in such a house. Let us not forget that liturgy means entering into the mystery of God which is prolonged in our spirituality and mission. As far as this is concerned, I propose to take the opportunity of the present occasion to invest and perhaps renew whatever is necessary for a better quality of spiritual life. Let us be bold and generous in creating the prayer environment that echoes God’s beauty, from the archi-

texture to the books and liturgical objects, without luxury, but solid and dignified. In doing so, we are reaffirming something essential to our life choice, and at the same time, a necessary action for our ongoing formation. In all this, it is perhaps worth recalling a saying used by the Founder that “*not progressing means going backwards!*”⁴⁶

46. Finally, I would like to greet you on the occasion of the Christmas festivities at the end of the year. Everywhere there is a variety of celebrations and festivities, often noisy, but very little connected with the birth of Jesus, our Saviour. Yet, the Feast of Christmas has a fundamental place in our Salvatorian life.



MARKO IVAN RUPNIK - NATIVITY, 2020. CHURCH OF SAINT BASIL, ROME.

46 JORDAN Francis, *Chapter Talks*, 15 April 1898.

For it is our religious feast par excellence, for in it we celebrate the revelation of the one true God and Saviour of all. Of course, it is understandable that in some contexts, for pastoral reasons, it is impossible to celebrate the feast of the Nativity of the Saviour in community. Even so, what I strongly recommend to you is to find the best way to celebrate the Feast of Christmas with the community. If it is not possible on Christmas Eve, let it be on another day that is convenient for all. Likewise, on Holy Christmas Eve, do not forget to come to a crib and to pray for each other, especially for the missionaries and for our elders. So let us take care of this and always go forward as brothers with God's grace and in the company of Blessed Francis Jordan. Thank you very much!

afildon Jordan SJB
Superior General



SELF-PORTRAIT

He grew up without a royal background
and without desire for vainglory,
for he preferred to discern the ways of the Spirit
with the desire to do great things for the glory of God
and for the salvation of all.

He found in the Word of God
his greatest strength and wisdom,
he overcame all his adversities,
convinced that in the works of God
God's works prosper only in the shadow of the cross.

With his humble manner, and an unshakeable faith,
he helped the Church in her mission
to make known more and more
the face of the one true God
revealed in the words and deeds of Jesus.

He understood the breadth of his call
to evangelise by every available way and means,
being open to the world and to the peoples,
in an endless horizon.

He awakened in the hearts of many
the vocation to be salt of the earth
and light that enlightens,
burning and spreading in unity,
excluding no one.

Blessed Francis Mary of the Cross Jordan
is a gift of the Spirit of God who dwells in us.

He is a living and active presence
that gives us the strength
and perseverance to follow in his footsteps.

Milton Zonta SDS



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