

# The Spirituality of Father Jordan

Fr. Jozef Lammers SDS



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**The Spirituality of Father Jordan**

by Fr. Jozef Lammers SDS

Salvatorian Spirituality & Charism Series No. 7

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## Table of contents

<b>Explanation of the sources</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Foreword</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Preface</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Short biographical note</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>His Diary</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>I. Dreams and visions</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>II. His vocation</b>	<b>23</b>
1. His vocation as a Founder	23
2. The struggle for his vocation	25
3. In the light of his mission	31
4. Considering the Lebanon event	36
5. Surrounded by the powers of darkness	38
<b>III. His prayer life</b>	<b>45</b>
1. The mystery of prayer	45
2. The essential forms of prayer	46
3. Father Jordan, man of prayer	48
4. Father Jordan and the Eucharist	49
5. Becoming a man of prayer	50
6. Prayer is creating space	53
<b>IV. Growing in prayer life</b>	<b>59</b>
1. Man is what his prayer is	59
2. Period of purification	65
3. The prayer of full union	70

<b>V.</b>	<b>The place of Mary in the life of the Founder</b>	<b>77</b>
1.	A childlike piety to Mary	77
2.	Characteristics of his devotion to Mary.	81
a.	Austerity	81
b.	Cordiality.	82
c.	Simplicity	82
3.	The image of Mary	83
a.	Mother of the Saviour.	83
b.	The Immaculate	84
c.	The Queen of the Apostles.	85
<b>VI.</b>	<b>Consumed by impossible wishes</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>VII.</b>	<b>The fruits of his mystical life</b>	<b>95</b>
1.	Humility as fundament	95
2.	Rocklike confidence in God	99
3.	Burning zeal for the souls	104
4.	His love of the cross	109
5.	His life marked by sufferings	114
6.	The love of the Holy Scripture	121
7.	The Pact with God.	123
8.	The 'Intentio Societatis'	129
9.	The Apostolic Rule	132
10.	His spiritual testament	137
<b>VIII.</b>	<b>Was Father Jordan a mystic?</b>	<b>141</b>
<b>IX.</b>	<b>The Founder and his followers</b>	<b>149</b>

## Explanation of the sources

**ANNALES SDS Salvatorianer-Chronik** – later Annales SDS

Refers to the official journal of the Society, edited by Father Pancatrius Pfeiffer (1916-1938), second Superior General of the Society.

**DSS**

Refers to the series “Documenta et Studia Salvatoriana” edited by the International Historical Commission in Rome. This series contains various volumes. I have been using, gratefully, the biographical volumes of Father Timotheus Edwein, and the volumes containing the diary, the letters and the speeches from the chapter of Father Jordan.

**D**

Refers to the spiritual diary of the Founder, as it is edited in part XXII of the DSS series. I have also been using, very gratefully, the Dutch translation of the diary made by Father Piet Cuijpers.

The diary is composed of four booklets of 8 x 12 cm. The first part has two divisions: the first one has 220 pages, the second one 122. In 1894, Father Jordan had these two parts tied up together, most probably to take them easily with him on journeys. The third part has 35 pages and the last one 42. See DSS XXI, p. X.

**AS I**

“Aussagensammlung I” refers to the testimonies of the contemporaries of the Founder, gathered by Father Camillus Mohr in Gurtweil in the years 1924-1925 by order

of Father Pancratius Pfeiffer. The original texts are kept in the general postulation archives in Rome (APS, G-18. 1+2)

**AS II** “Aussagensammlung II” refers to written testimonies.

In October 1935, Father Pancratius Pfeiffer sent a questionnaire to the Fathers, Brothers and Sisters who had known the Founder very well, in order to be able to introduce the process of beatification. He received fifty-three answers in APS, N 3. 1.3. We quote these enunciations from a typewritten fascicle kept in the archives of Heverlee.

**SUMMARIUM** Is a summary of the testimonies collected in various diocesan processes for the introduction of the beatification. In the reference we find first the name, then the number and finally the page.

■ 6

**AGS** General Archive of the Society in Rome.

**APS** Archive of the postulation for the beatification of Father Jordan in Rome.

#### **DAS GEBETSLEBEN P. JORDANS**

Is my thesis at the Gregoriana in Rome, edited in 1957, being the basis of this book.

#### **TOLD TO THE AUTHOR**

Are enunciations of confreres having lived with the Founder and which have been heard and collected by the author.

## Foreword

On the occasion of the presentation of the book “P. Jordan und seine Gründungen” in 1931, his successor, Father Pancratius Pfeiffer said: “We now have a book with the historical facts of the life of Father Jordan, but this is not sufficient. At this point it is necessary that a book be published which tells us what animated the Founder to lead such a life and where he got the strength to stand up in the midst of trials”.<sup>1</sup> We surely need a historical framework of our Founder and his work, but we cannot live from this framework. We live especially from the inspiration which stirred him and which he has passed on to us, as Founder. This inspiration is also time bound, but it can be passed on because it visibly presents new initiative which can be given contemporary designs.

7 ■

No historian will ever succeed in unveiling the secret of his personality or in giving a clear-cut statement of his work if we do not grant sufficient room for his relationship with God. Our Founder has experienced something with God. The saints are not luminous by themselves. They radiate the light of God, in whom any sanctity finds its roots. Just as in the case of the life of any saint, the life of our Founder is a love adventure between God and him. God who loves the person and the person who responds to this love. God himself composes the melody of life. He Himself is the source of all sanctity. If we fail to listen to this melody, we will never hear the sounds of the song. We must try to find an affinity with

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<sup>1</sup> Fr. Donatus Blondé to the author

our Founder by trying to think as he did. If we want to know Him, we must love Him; we must let Him accost us. We cannot speak as he did, but we can try to live from His inspiration. We hope to make this melody or this leitmotif of our Founder recognizable. The charisma of our Founder is brimming over, a movement of welfare finding its origin in the propelling force of God's love.

This book intends to be a spiritual biography. It deals with the spiritual transformation that happened in the life of our Founder. The historical facts are not interpreted out of a historical reading in the first place, but out of a spiritual dimension in the field of tension between the divine invitation and the answer of the man.

■ 8 To a large extent, the content of this book is based on my thesis at the Gregoriana in Rome in 1954: "Das Gebetsleben Pater Jordans."

Times have changed, theology also. That is the reason why I thought it useful to rewrite the book.

I hope that this publication will contribute to keep alive in us the fire that animated Father Jordan. As the Founder said: *Prayer is where you should get fire and increase it on earth.*<sup>2</sup>

In this book, we quote many texts of the Founder because they enlighten his spiritual shape. His writings have to be interpreted within the frame of his time. Spirituality is definitely interrelated with the historical context and the mentality of a definite period. His desires and his work got a

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<sup>2</sup> Chapter 5.01.1900, DSS XXIII, 366 (in the English Edition of 2003)

shape in that cultural situation. It is now up to us to translate for our time the spiritual dimension of his life.

I think it was a great happiness having met, in the years 1946-1954, many Fathers and Brothers of the first hour and having noted their witnesses. Amongst them were the Fathers Paulus Pabst, Fulgentius Moonen, Dorotheus Brugger, Marcellus Hilger and the Brothers Giuseppe Capparella en Gabriele Manni.

Fr. Jozef Lammers SDS

■ 10



*First available picture of Jordan.  
1861?*

## Preface

“Somewhere in the drawers of the desks of many members of the Salvatorian Family are lying, hidden treasures of life experience as Salvatorians”; this statement from the preface of the first book of the *Salvatorian spirituality and Charism series* becomes clearer, as this book reaches to each of us.

The spirituality of Salvatorian life is inserted in the great movement of following the Saviour and making Him known in a unique and Salvatorian way. The spirituality of our beloved Founder is one of the richest gifts of the Spirit to the congregation and has been the means of many men and women down through the years reaching a great degree of holiness.

11 ■

The heart of Founder’s spirituality with its main elements of an intense search for God, in total adherence to the Saviour and finding expression in fraternal life and apostolic zeal is spelt out in this book by Fr. Joseph Lammers, SDS.

The Indian Foundation is indeed grateful and happy to the author and to the Generalate for the cooperation and the blessing given for the completion of the English edition of the book in India.

**Fr. Vinoy Joseph, SDS.**  
Bangalore, March 2005.



*Francis Jordan doing military service.  
1868*

## Short biographical note

Johan Baptist Jordan was born at Gurtweil (Baden) on June 16<sup>th</sup>, 1848.<sup>3</sup> His parents were of the poorest in the village and they were so caught up in material cares that we cannot speak of a deep religious life. The children – Baptist had two brothers – were mostly abandoned to their fate. When he was 14, his father died from a protracted illness, the consequence of an accident. So far, Baptist had always been top dog with his comrades. After his father's death and his first holy communion, he became more serious and retiring. Because of deprivation in his youth and an over exaggerated inclination to study, he suffered from a nervous breakdown for the rest of his life.

13 ■

After six weeks of military service, he was sent home because of his inability even though the war was going on. Although he had always wished to become a priest, he could not afford the studies because of poverty of the family. So he became a painter and decorator. Nevertheless, at the age of 21, he decided to become a priest. Thanks to private lessons, he was able to jump some classes of the school. Then he went to the University of Freiburg for three years and he was ordained priest in 1878 after the last year in the main seminary of Freiburg.

He was a middle-sized boy, strongly and powerfully built. The evaluation of his character by the responsible of the main seminary was short but revealing: "Unfavourable appearance, very polite, a bit clumsy and a fumbler, but very

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<sup>3</sup> For all the data on his youth: see AS I and DSS XIII-XIV

pious, good humoured with a tendency of being over-conscientious. He works very ardently, but is less practical.”<sup>4</sup>

He was a friendly person, but his ways could at times be somewhat peculiar. As a member of the students’ academy, he was sitting at a table with a glass of beer in front of him that he did not even empty.<sup>5</sup>

During the break between lessons, the students of the University of Freiburg walked in the garden or in the corridors, but he remained in the classroom writing Sanskrit or Eastern languages on the blackboard. He conceded himself very little leisure. In gymnastics, he had the unrivalled last place.

His bishop sent him to Rome in order to study Eastern languages, because he was very talented in languages. There he came in contact with great apostolic men and he learned to know more deeply the religious problems of his time. Because of the spiritual need and the religious ignorance he met everywhere, he was filled with a growing desire to found a teaching society, which would proclaim Jesus, everywhere with all possible means, as the Saviour of the world. So on December 8<sup>th</sup> of 1881, he laid the foundations of the Apostolic Companionship in Rome with two other priests. On December 8<sup>th</sup> 1888 he was able to found the feminine branch of the Companionship with Mother Mary of the Apostles. For the rest of his life, he remained in Rome. In 1915, he had to flee to Switzerland because of the war. He died in Tapers on September 8<sup>th</sup> 1918.

■ 14

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<sup>4</sup> DSS XII, 157

<sup>5</sup> Dean Josef Blattman, letter of 20.05.1928 to Fr. Bonaventura Schweizer

## His Diary

Our Founder made some personal notes from July 1<sup>st</sup> 1875 till April 14<sup>th</sup> 1918, which was only a few months before he died.

These notes are called his “spiritual diary”, but it is definitely not a diary. It is not a story of the daily life of the Founder. There are months and years without a single note. There are no structured texts, no memories, just some scraps, and random indications.

Only twenty percent of the book is personal thinking material, thirty percent are quotations of the Scriptures and fifty percent are quotations of spiritual writers. We will continue calling it “the diary”. In his diary, the Founder is not concerned with himself, but by his relationship with God. The words he uses to narrate the history of his soul and the tribulations of his foundations come from a difficult to fathom depth. He always seeks more deeply to understand and appreciate how God is influencing his life and how he could answer God’s voice in the most faithful way. We must very humbly keep in mind that the life story of our Founder is known only to Him whom he has been serving till the end, God.

15 ■■■

At the end of his life, he gave his diary to Father Victorinus Plieger who was taking care of him. He commissioned him to make sure that the book would never fall into the hands of someone else, because, he said, “*it contains only matters between the Good Lord and myself*”.<sup>6</sup> If we

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<sup>6</sup> *Salvatorianer-Chronik*, vol. 3 (1919), no. 2, 182

are well aware of this, it becomes very clear that a faithful interpretation of this diary assumes that the reader also has a spiritual relationship with the Founder. This feeling is a condition to a good understanding of his diary. We must try to project ourselves in his time, in his theology, in his view of life in order to be able to discover the way God acted in his life.

It is surely an art to learn to read the empty 'pages' in his diary and to let the exclamation marks speak for themselves. The abbreviations, the quotations and repetitions, the empty or left out pages, all have something to tell us. The diary shows us how God's influence gradually gains the upper hand; in fact, the writer does not withdraw from himself, God is pulling the founder to Him. This is the mystical element of the diary: *"It contains only matters between the Good Lord and myself"*.

# I

## Dreams and Visions

If we want to speak about the private life of our Founder, we ought to be very modest. We must honestly acknowledge that we will never know precisely how God's grace is at work in a person. God always respects the autonomy of a person. He will not interfere constantly in anyone's life. On the other hand we know that God is relentlessly busy with the salvation of the world. "In Him we live, we move and we are."<sup>7</sup>

17 ■

Father Jordan's first clear-cut experience of God happened at the time of his first holy communion, on April 7<sup>th</sup>, 1861. He was 13 at that time. During the communion, his restless, distracted behaviour was striking. When later on the parish priest made a remark about this, he said: "*I could not help it, there was a white dove which was gliding above my head and it flew to heaven afterwards*".<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Acts 17, 28

<sup>8</sup> Eduard Jordan, AS II, no. 20; DSS XIII, 85-90

The question we have to ask is not: did he really see a white dove? That is rather incidental. The question is: what happened at that moment in the heart of Baptist? He certainly changed from that day on, and his companions and co-villagers testify to this change. He withdrew from his companions, built a shack in the forest in order to have the opportunity to pray freely. From that day on, he received Holy Communion every Sunday, which was quite unusual at the time. He also went faithfully to confession every three weeks. The parish priest and his companions were astonished at this spiritual change. The story was so well known in the village that, when he later wanted to become a priest, some asked him sarcastically: “Is there a dove gliding above your head again?”<sup>9</sup>

■ 18

Our Founder himself considered this spiritual experience as the turning point in his life. Later on, he told his successor that he had changed completely after his first communion and his father’s death.<sup>10</sup> His parish priest paid special attention to him from this moment on. Once he cautioned him: “Baptist, listen to me. You will grow up either to become someone very good and capable, or it will be the opposite.”<sup>11</sup>

In his youth, the Founder had a couple of remarkable dreams. He writes in his diary: *Once in a dream, as I was being pursued by a great number of persons, and I was fleeing, Mary, with the child Jesus in her arms, appeared to me in glorious splendour. She looked at me so lovingly that I sank to my knees, ready to let that persecution break out over me.*<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> DSS XIII, 85-90

<sup>10</sup> Fr. P. Pfeiffer, *Mitteilungen*, APS I, 85

<sup>11</sup> Johan Müller (schoolmate), AS I, no. 129

<sup>12</sup> D I/121

*Another time, I had to cross over a great abyss and the only way, as I believe, to cross over was on a plank. I was then carried over the abyss by an invisible spiritual being, which I did not see but felt and having happily reached the other side of the abyss, the being left me. The first incident took place at the beginning of my studies after the second one..<sup>13</sup>*

“At the beginning of my studies” is no definite indication of time. It was probably around the year 1870, when he went to college in Konstanz, or in 1874 when he started his studies at the University of Freiburg. He noted these dreams in his diary towards Easter 1878, quite some time after he had them. This shows that he considered them as being a sign of grace. He surely jotted them down so that they might be a source of courage and confidence.

In 1874, after his state exams, Father Jordan travelled to Rome. Four years later, recalling this journey, he writes in his diary: *Never forget that time and encouragement which you experienced in the catacombs of Rome.*<sup>14</sup>

19 ■■■

He describes this spiritual experience in his diary as follows: *O men, who can conceive what you experienced in these holy places. Oh, what sanctity, what beauty when the holy virgins, clothed in white with candles in their hands, passed there, praying and singing, while on the lower level one saw them move on ahead. Oh, the purity and the true faith of the first Christians. No one can imagine it! Most holy and eternal Father, grant that we may quickly join these holy martyrs! O happy moment! O holy moment! O unforgettable moment!*<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> D I/121

<sup>14</sup> D I/107

<sup>15</sup> D I/117

For him, this was a moment of deep faith, an “unforgettable moment” as he still writes seven years later. Some suggest that it must have been a procession of religious sisters, but there were no processions in the catacombs at that time. He speaks about the faith of the first Christians.

He had still another dream during his stay in the Middle East. On May 1<sup>st</sup>, 1880, he arrived in Ain-Warka, 28 km north of Beirut in Lebanon. In his diary, he writes: *A blessed oasis in the barren desert.*<sup>16</sup> One day later, on May 2<sup>nd</sup>, he notes quite vaguely in the third person: *When asleep, he was standing by the bed of the dying St. Aloysius, seized by fever, and was reverently touching him, when the saint himself arose and kissed him who touched him.*<sup>17</sup> This quotation is not very transparent and it has a peculiar style. It could be a quotation out of a book, but because it was written in Latin – the language the Founder mastered very well – we can easily prefer a personal quotation. Who is going to tell us what he meant in this sentence? He reports a last dream: *On October 12, 1885, when the feast of St. Francis was celebrated for us, that night in my sleep I saw St. Francis of Assisi, dressed in a tunic, weeping (in our behalf). I was praying that he would bless the Society and he blessed me and the Society, after which I awoke.*<sup>18</sup>

We can put this dream in a given framework. Whilst Father Jordan resided in Germany, the confessor of the sisters’ Congregation, which he had founded, had complained to the Vicar-General in Rome of some alleged abuses towards the Sisters. The confessor blamed the Founder, with the result that the authorities forbade him to meddle with the Sisters.

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<sup>16</sup> D I/156

<sup>17</sup> D I/156

<sup>18</sup> D I/184

Father Jordan was convinced that he had to defend himself and writes in his diary: *I had the right intention when I resolved to establish and promote the Sisters' Institute. 10.10.1885. Rota also desired that I promote it.*<sup>19</sup>

This was the tense situation Father Jordan found himself in. So it was very understandable that Saint Francis appeared to him on his feast day. He had personally chosen the name of Francis as his religious name and the superior of the sisters was named Francisca. Nevertheless, on October 13<sup>th</sup>, the order of permanent separation came. He wrote in a letter to Cardinal Parocchi, Vicar-cardinal of Rome: *God knows how much I have suffered during the past three years, so much as to be disgusted with life.*<sup>20</sup>

Our Founder lived these dreams and visions as grace-filled. They helped him to overcome insurmountable difficulties. Saint Bernard must have lived something similar when he wrote: "When You visit our heart, the truth begins to shine, the vanity of the world starts fading and fire invades our heart."<sup>21</sup>

21 ■■■

We ought to be very cautious when writing about dreams and visions. We may definitely ask ourselves: Are these descriptions not solely based on subjective experiences, which cannot be controlled? Yet a look at the history of spirituality tells us clearly that dreams in the saints' lives are not exceptional. They occur with nearly all Founders: Benedict, Francis, Don Bosco, ... Dreams and visions, even though this may not be proved directly, are no figments of the imagination

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<sup>19</sup> D I/183

<sup>20</sup> DSS X, no. 200 (without date)

<sup>21</sup> Hymn: "Jesu, Rex admirabilis", 2nd strophe

but events that may occur to people. After all, the Holy Scriptures repeatedly mentions dreams: Jacob in the desert, the dreams of Joseph, and the great visions of the prophets. An angel is speaking to Joseph, appears to Jesus, Peter and Paul. In the Scripture, God speaks to people through dreams. To listen to dreams is no superstition but an encounter with God. Dreams and visions sometimes occur at the onset of events, and can have far-reaching consequences in history.

Through dreams, God can indicate to us what he wants us to do and the ways we should choose. God's language is peace, joy, security and the promise of aid. God can also speak to our heart during the night. "I praise the Lord who is my guide; even during the night my heart urges me to do so."<sup>22</sup> To describe a mystical event aptly depends on the identity of the person. In our dreams, the spiritual reality can make a way into our life. It is not defined in advance that dreams should be less real than what we perceive consciously. In our dreams, we can possibly see a sign of how deeply Father Jordan's life was anchored in God, so deeply that this union was not interrupted by sleep. Dreams are a human description of a divine experience of which Saint Thomas says: "No tongue can put it into words, no letter can express it, only those who have experienced it can believe what it means to be loved by God."<sup>23</sup> Such a dream can brighten up a man's life.

■ 22

Later on, the Founder makes no more references to dreams and visions. Maybe he didn't need to anymore, because he was faithfully conscious of the salutary presence of God.

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<sup>22</sup> Ps. 16, 7

<sup>23</sup> Hymn: "Jesu, dulcis memoria", 4th strophe

## II

### His Vocation

#### 1. His vocation as a Founder

23 ■

It is remarkable that Father Jordan already thought of founding a new congregation long before he was ordained a priest. For him, this was a life's work.

*Already from my eighteenth year, so he told Father Pancratius, I had the impression of hearing a voice within myself telling me that our good Lord wanted something special from me.<sup>24</sup>*

Later, he told one of the Fathers: *While journeying as an associate painter through the great cities of Germany and seeing the great needs of so many people, especially in the port of Bremen, I decided to start studying to enable me to help suffering humanity as a priest.<sup>25</sup>*

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<sup>24</sup> Notes of Fr. Pancratius Pfeiffer, APS I, 85

<sup>25</sup> Fr. Callixtus Waizenhöfer, AS II, no. 6

The first reference concerning the foundation of a congregation goes back to 1878 and is already a call to prayer: *At a suitable time each day take counsel with the dear God. Beg Him for enlightenment so that you fulfill His all holy will and that He becomes known and loved by all.*<sup>26</sup>

As the love of Christ grew in him, so did the desire to let people share in this love: *Jesus Christ, accept me as your instrument and dispose of me as you will. Look, with the help of your grace, I am ready to die for you.*<sup>27</sup>

Two motives come up ever so often: to do God's will and engage himself so that Jesus should be recognized and loved by everyone. From then on he brings his beloved thought ever so often to the forefront, the thought that would later become the aphorism of the congregation, under the authority of Father Pancratius Pfeiffer: "This is eternal life, that they may know you, the one true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent."<sup>28</sup>

■ 24

He would like to bring all people to the sources of salvation, to give salvation to the whole world: *Review the individual nations, countries, and languages of the globe and see how much there is to do for the honour of God and the salvation of people.*<sup>29</sup>

He definitely realizes that he is powerless in facing alone this great need of souls alone: *Oh Lord, in such corrupt times,*

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<sup>26</sup> D I/59

<sup>27</sup> D I/12

<sup>28</sup> D I/83 – Jn. 17,3

<sup>29</sup> D I/63

*exceptional means are necessary in order, with the help of your grace, to put a stop to sin.*<sup>30</sup>

Two years later, as a student in Rome, he writes: *Corruption has reached such a level that with the priest Matatias one could exclaim: "Woe to me! Why have I been born in order to have to see the corruption of my people and the corruption of the holy city, and to live there while it is falling into the hands of the enemy".*<sup>31</sup> He slowly begins to realise in which direction he would probably be able to help people in the best way. He writes in his diary a thought of the parish priest of Ars: *"I often think that most persons who are lost, are lost because of a lack of instruction."*<sup>32</sup> One page further, he writes: *Instruction – instruction, do what you have in mind, do it, if it is God's will!*<sup>33</sup>

## 2. The struggle for his vocation

25 ■

Even though Father Jordan gradually realizes that he is entrusted with a divine mission, he is not spared from uncertainty and doubt. He is afraid of the immense mission. Sometimes, he would like to flee, like Moses and Jonah, far way from God's reach.

Nevertheless, Father Jordan feels the imperative invitation of God: *Prepare yourself for contradictions of every kind, for whatever physical and spiritual suffering may befall you in carrying out your work; however, trust in God, for whom and through whom alone you should and can accomplish it. Never be*

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<sup>30</sup> D I/61

<sup>31</sup> *Skizze*, Archief II, 1; *Das Gebetsleben P. Jordans*, 36

<sup>32</sup> D I/78

<sup>33</sup> D I/79

*cowardly feel about it, but rather be glad if you may suffer much for your Saviour.*<sup>34</sup>

Father Jordan and the saints go the way of their being chosen not in the bright light of grace, but in hesitation and uncertainty. At times, they are inwardly driven by a holy ardour, at other times they know the solitude in the darkness of the night of doubt and loneliness. Hence he is often caught in a terrible struggle between the supremacy of grace and the incapacity of his own person. This struggle is clearly noticeable in his notes: *Don't neglect to carry out that planned undertaking, because it was decided and settled, remember, on frequent occasions. Of yourself you can do nothing but I can do all things in Him who strengthens me.*<sup>35</sup>

■ 26

And elsewhere: *Weigh it over well before you abandon that work. Think of the time when you felt yourself especially impelled to it!*<sup>36</sup> *Carry out that planned work for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.*<sup>37</sup> *Has the dear God not given you a clear sign to what He has called you, when He grants you in the practice of zeal for souls the greatest spiritual joy, consolation and peace of heart?*<sup>38</sup> *Consider again what joy the thought of that undertaking has already brought you. In the times when I was not really enthusiastic about it, the temptations were terrible.*<sup>39</sup> *Do not lose heart in your undertaking, even when obstacles and persecutions, suspicion, derision, contempt and all possible sufferings break out over you; live only in intimate union with God and meditate often*

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<sup>34</sup> D I/84

<sup>35</sup> D I/127

<sup>36</sup> D I/129

<sup>37</sup> D I/130

<sup>38</sup> D I/134

<sup>39</sup> D I/152

*on the examples of the saints; trust in God and give glory to Him alone; you have merited still much more persecution.*<sup>40</sup>

This period of search and doubt lasts for two and a half years. On September 19<sup>th</sup>, 1878, he writes: *Establish an apostolic Society.*<sup>41</sup> Yet only three years later, on December 8<sup>th</sup>, 1881 did he found the Apostolic Teaching Society.

The question comes up rightly: How did Father Jordan come to the conviction that, in this way, he was fulfilling the will of God? It happened to him as to most of the Founders of societies: God awakens in them the desire and that gives them so much peace, joy and certainty, that they cannot doubt anymore.

Father Jordan must have understood this, because he quotes in his diary: *It is God alone who consoles the soul without any preceding cause, since it is the proper function of the Creator to enter into His creature and to change it totally into love of Him. (St. Ignatius of Loyola)*<sup>42</sup>

27 ■

“Without preceding cause” means that such an intense consolation cannot be caused by intellectual powers, or by will power, but happens “in one moment”, “instantly” and unexpectedly.

In those days, Father Jordan writes very often about those moments of consolation: *O my God and my all, how great is my tranquillity when I hear Your voice! – O Lord, remind me if,*

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<sup>40</sup> D I 151

<sup>41</sup> D I/145

<sup>42</sup> D I/37

*by chance, I should forget; may it never happen!*<sup>43</sup> On November 10<sup>th</sup>, 1878 after the holy Eucharist: *Accomplish that work for the honour of God and the salvation of souls. O Jesus, O sweet perfuming balsam in me, a sinner! O my Love!*<sup>44</sup>. And: *It is the will of God that you carry out that work. On December 27, 1879 after holy Mass: and think as you did another time after holy Communion*<sup>45</sup>, or: *After Holy Mass I experienced great consolation on account of the planned work.*<sup>46</sup>

While in Lebanon, at the Convent of the Saviour, he writes: *Repeatedly after Holy Mass I felt a particular urging and joy.*<sup>47</sup>

It is a very old and enduring tradition in the Church to consider the Eucharist as the well of mystical experiences, from the very beginning till the highest peaks. In the same way, God has clearly spoken to Father Jordan, so that he could not doubt anymore without renouncing himself: *O do not neglect to carry out your intention which the dear God has indicated to you (by giving you) so much dedication and love for the supernatural, and so forth. Do not delay, as soon as obedience no longer holds you back.*<sup>48</sup> The thought of the foundation is for him, as he personally writes, *like a ray of heavenly light, renewing and sanctifying.*<sup>49</sup> *Get on with that work soon, because it is your nourishment, which refreshes you in body and soul.*<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> D I/139

<sup>44</sup> D I/149

<sup>45</sup> D I/151

<sup>46</sup> D I/154

<sup>47</sup> D I/156

<sup>48</sup> D I/163

<sup>49</sup> D I/156

<sup>50</sup> D I/134-135

These enunciations point to a deeply religious experience that happens in the core of the soul where, as Ruusbroec says, the core of the human being rests in its “super being”. Catherine of Siena calls the place of this perception “the interior home of the heart” and Theresa of Avila talks about “the interior citadel”, the interior sanctuary where salvation is given. In fact, God is never the result of our own experience, it is quite the reverse. It is not our experience that leads us to God, but God manifests himself in our experiences.

In the light of this description we would like to pause for a moment to consider the “Lebanon experience” of our Founder. In the course of time, there was a growing interest in this “Lebanon experience.” Father Beda Alfred Schneble says: “this Lebanon experience is a modern expression of the beginning of a legend, starting after the death of the Founder and to which the book of Father Jozef Lammers has greatly contributed.”<sup>51</sup> The question is whether the creation of this legend is undeserved. The essential core of the Lebanon experience is clearly summarized in the jubilee book of 1931: “The weeks the Founder stayed in the Lebanon were also weeks of prayer to obtain clarity in knowing whether the interior impulse to found the Society was wished by God.”<sup>52</sup>

29 ■

Meanwhile it is very clear that the Lebanon experience cannot be pinned down to one specific place or moment. It is a graceful event, which was spread over his whole stay in the Middle East.

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<sup>51</sup> Study of Fr. A. Schneble in *Historica SDS*, no. 78/790, 27.02.1978

<sup>52</sup> Fr. Theophilus Muth, *Die Salvatorianer*, Vienna 1931, 5-6

The starting point of any further consideration lies in the words of Father Pancratius Pfeiffer in the *Salvatorianer-Chronik* of 1919: “The Reverend Father told me once that, when he was on the top of the Lebanon and his glance was moving over the Holy Land and he let the multifaceted needs pass through his mind, he heard in his mind, clearer than ever before, the words of the Saviour: “*This is eternal life, that they may know you, the one true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.*” And he said to himself: “*Yes, the Society (to be founded) must proclaim You, O God, and Your only-begotten son.*”<sup>53</sup>

This experience and this quotation must have made an enormous impression on him. In his first Rule of 1882 we find the quotation of John’s gospel in the foreword, it is also the keyword of the Apostolate Rule of 1884. In the so-called “Smyrna-text” of July 31<sup>th</sup>, 1880 it is also a title, together with Dan 12, 3.

■ 30

On April 28<sup>th</sup>, 1941 Father Pancratius Pfeiffer typed out the short notes he had made at the beginning of his priestly life about what Father Jordan had told him. He writes: “On the Lebanon he got the certitude that his planned Society would be created, even if he did not return to Europe alive.”<sup>54</sup>

We still have a very ancient source from 1895, where the master of novices Father Crysologus Raich told his novices: “When the Reverend Father was praying on the Holy Tomb – so he told me – he had an inspiration that the Society that he was planning would certainly be created, even if he were

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<sup>53</sup> *Salvatorianer-Chronik*, vol. 3 (1919), no. 2, 2-12

<sup>54</sup> APS I, 85

not to be the Founder.”<sup>55</sup> The Founder did not feel himself a necessary link; indeed, everything would come from God, wanting the salvation of all men.

### **3. In the light of his mission**

Father Jordan ends his journey report with: *Nun ging's ans Werk*, “and now working began”.<sup>56</sup> The Lebanon event is a source experience having caused a breakthrough. There, the Founder was no visionary, no watcher, he was a listener. In fact, he saw nothing, but he had been listening and what he heard has defined his whole life. Even if he had not yet a clear image of what he should do in the coming years, this voyage has been the spring point of his further life mission. From now on, he would bother only about the salvation of fellow men. He looks for collaborators who want to form an apostolic community. In this prophetic glance, he saw the unheard religious need of the world and the words of St John on eternal life made him conscious that each man has an innate desire to know God. The first official program of the Apostolic Teaching Society he sent to all Italian bishops in early 1881, starts with the following words: “It is the task of this Society to answer the demand our Lord Jesus Christ addressed to his eternal Father before his passion: ‘That the people may know You, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom You have sent’.”<sup>57</sup> In the rule of 1884, as an introduction to the general norms, Father Jordan writes a very personal confession of faith: *The mercy and wisdom of the Creator who wanted to bring this Society into life will also keep it*

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<sup>55</sup> APS G 14, no. 19

<sup>56</sup> Reise nach Africa und Asien im Jahre 1880, p. 35; APS , RB-G. 5.2

<sup>57</sup> DSS XI, 651

*and make it grow.*<sup>58</sup> Whilst his opponents were already predicting the fall of the Society and many of his sons were quitting, he remained quiet. He told his discouraged sons: *Our Society has been called to great things by God. It will grow and spread throughout the world. If I didn't know this, I wouldn't say it.*<sup>59</sup>

This prophetic certitude of God's help has often been blamed. The first visitor, Father Raimondo Bianchi o.p. writes that the Roman congregation of the Religions that Father Jordan assured him of founding, would be on the basis of a higher inspiration.<sup>60</sup>

During a violent campaign against Father Jordan in the press in 1906, they reproached him: "He thinks that he will be infallibly supported by God's Spirit in all his undertakings."<sup>61</sup>

■ 32

Being fully conscious of his mission, he could impose the moral obligation on his followers to accept his vision: *You can be assured that if you no longer hold to the spirit of the founder, you will sink to the bottom.*<sup>62</sup> In extraordinary capital letters, he writes in his diary: *Divine Providence created me.*<sup>63</sup> In 1885, the year of ordeals for the Society, when the separation with the sisters was on hand, he wrote: *I am the Father of the family, who cares for all the children and can give them everything. How painful it is if the children, however, seek help elsewhere. – I have*

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<sup>58</sup> DSS I, 35

<sup>59</sup> Letter of Fr. Konrad Hansknecht, 14.05.1936 – APS, N, 3.12.37

<sup>60</sup> DSS XXI, 269, letter of 10.03.1882; Fr. Pancratius Pfeiffer, *P. Jordan...*, 114

<sup>61</sup> Fr. Pancratius Pfeiffer, *P. Jordan...*, 336

<sup>62</sup> Chap. 02.12.1898, DSS XXIII, 247

<sup>63</sup> D I/185

*given you an untilled land. Why do you go to ask others how you should cultivate it and do not come to me, the Lord? – “I will show the Church that the work is mine”, says the Almighty<sup>64</sup>. And further on, he writes: Act, speak and conduct yourself as if you were an angel sent from God, who speaks to people of nothing else than of his god-given task. Of what use is anything earthly! I am the angel of God the Most High, who sent me to preach to you all the words of eternal life. He who is, Who was and Who is to come, sent me to you to announce His will to you. The King of heaven and of earth sent me. I am the herald of the Most High, of God living forever!<sup>65</sup>*

This morning reminds us the famous words of Dag Hammarskjöld noted on Whitsun 1961: “I don’t know who – or what – asked the question. I don’t know when it was asked. I don’t remember having answered. But once, I said yes to someone, or something. Since then, I know for sure that life is full of sense and that my life, in submissiveness, has an aim.”<sup>66</sup> Father Jordan has never been able to read God’s will like an open book. When they reproached him later on with being too vague in the beginning, he answered amazingly and simply: *I did not receive in my hands the written scheme of the Society from the Good Lord.*<sup>67</sup>

33 ■

The certitude of the mission and the doubt in the realisation do not neutralise each other. God’s help is always present, but it is often hardly recognised when man cannot go on alone. For Father Jordan, it was very difficult to decide where to found the Society. When he was celebrating mass

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<sup>64</sup> D I/166

<sup>65</sup> D I/181

<sup>66</sup> *Merkstenen*, Bruges – Utrecht, 1968, 200

<sup>67</sup> Fr. Pancratius Pfeiffer, *Salvatorianer-Chronik*, vol. 2 (1920), no. 3, 62

at the tomb of saint Peter Canisius, during the Canisius feasts in Friburg, he suddenly saw everything very clearly: *Rome, the centre of Christianity and the privileged place of pure Christian Science, will be the cradle of the Society.*<sup>68</sup>

It is not so clear when an inspiration can be said to be of divine origin. The choice of Rome coincided with his universal ideas, but practically, it was not an intelligent choice. The continuous difficulties with the Roman Curia could have been avoided. There have been so many big religious orders, which have originated in Rome! What more is, Rome, with its marshes, was very unhealthy. Between 1893 and 1902, fourteen young men and seventeen sisters died in the two congregations of Father Jordan. They paid a heavy toll to keep Rome as the heart and the centre of the Society. On that subject, the Founder says the following: *Admittedly certain matters in Rome are disadvantageous, for example the climate, etc. If we focus on this we could ask: why did the All Wise, Omniscient Providence select Rome as the center of the holy church where everyone converges? Why did God not choose a healthy resort? We see that the great Pope Leo XIII, despite the unhealthy situation in Rome, brings all theological colleges here from around the world. You can see that great sacrifices in health are connected with this decision. But Leo XIII looks into the distance. Here the main point is to keep the center of the Society in Rome. As soon as we give this up, the Society is partially destroyed. It is established for the whole world, and as soon as we remove it from Rome it would become tainted with a national character. It would rise or fall with the fortunes of one nation!*<sup>69</sup>

■ 34

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<sup>68</sup> Fr. Otto Hopfenmüller, *Die kath. Lehrgesellschaft*, 1888, 18 and in DSS IV, 140

<sup>69</sup> Chap. 02.12.1898, DSS XXIII, 248-249

The Founder was convinced that he founded the congregation out of a divine mission. In the Rule of 1884, he wrote as an introduction to the general norms, this personal confession of faith: *The mercy and wisdom of the Creator who wanted to bring this Society into life will also keep it and make it grow.*<sup>70</sup> How these experiences made him happy is to be read in a letter he wrote to Father Bonaventura Lüthen in 1884: *The extraordinary favours of God towards the Society are so big, that I am almost moved to tears. I would like to fall down and embrace the Saviour because of His great love he showed and still shows me, the unworthy.*<sup>71</sup>

Our Founder was really a man filled with God. For him, God was the air he breathed, the vivid 'Other One' who spoke to him and required him, to Whom he always tried to answer: humbly, worshipping, serving. He felt himself safe in God's protective embrace.

35 ■

Through this faithful attitude of life, Father Jordan was open to the divine mission that became clear through the need of men. Nearly all saints and particularly the Founders of the religious orders have had divine revelations and visions. There is no doubt that God speaks confidentially to His friends and that he guides those he has chosen for this task.

In the history of the Church, it has always been so that real religious reformations do not arise from institutions or organisations. At the origin, there is mostly a simple discreet person who, through his faithful inspiration, has been able to find solutions for the religious needs of the Church. Let us

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<sup>70</sup> DSS I,35

<sup>71</sup> DSS X, no. 180, 15.08.1884, 130

think on a Charles de Foucauld, or a mother Teresa. Their evangelic way of life opened new ways of recovery and reformation. And strangely enough, they did not seek the needs of the Church, these came to them. Living simply evangelically, they gave others inspiration and force to make their dream come true.

#### **4. Considering the Lebanon event**

The Founder often speaks about an internal certitude he received. It seems that, on certain occasions, he was conscious of coming face to face with the Divine, whatever this conception might have meant to him. This certitude is a constant undercurrent of his life and has an influence on all his actions. The core of this joyful certitude is difficult to describe. In his spiritual life, he lets himself be guided by what he himself experienced or thinks he has experienced more than by ideas presented by others. He also often speaks about an inability to describe or express his experiences: “*I cannot put it plainly*”, “*I don’t know how to tell it.*” Apparently, these spiritual experiences have more to do with feeling than with intellect. Emotional experiences are difficult to share. Suddenly, when the time seems to be ripe for it, he sees certain things in a new light; he gets a new understanding of a matter that is not linked to thinking or reasoning. These kinds of “illuminations” call him to commitment; they exert a remarkable authority on his person. Thus we have to acknowledge that the Lebanon experience which moved him so strongly to dedication cannot be “nothing”, on the contrary, it meant a moment of breakthrough for him. Since that moment ... he “started working”.<sup>72</sup>

■ 36

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<sup>72</sup> Fr. Jordan, *Reise nach Africa und Asien im jahre 1880*, 35

Such a mystical experience, or whatever you wish to call it, has not been a luxurious experience; he has to try to execute the truth he has seen.

A mystical experience can ofcourse be preceded by an underground ripening process. There is absolutely no contradiction between the spiritual and the scientific explanation of the occurrence. We will never have the right to require that even outsiders accept the declaration.

A mystical experience is just “sudden” and mostly short-lived, a moment of clear insight. But the transitory character of such an experience does not alter the fact of the deepness of the insight or of the power of impact to bring about a radical turnaround in his way of living.

The final experience of the Founder was: this is really the start of eternal life, and that eternal life is already starting in this world, in this time. God makes Himself knowable. We are stricken by the fact that the Founder, notwithstanding his conscious choice for a “societas apostolica” let himself be spontaneously inspired by the rule of the contemplative orders when writing rules and constitutions. He would have liked the life in the scholastic houses be a reflection of the life of the contemplative convents. That is why he introduced the confession and the choral prayer even if in many places it was very difficult to practice them in the community due to numerous apostolic activities. In a certain way, he wanted the life in the convent community, as much as possible, to be a reflection of the contemplative convents’ life. He was happy that the apostolic visitor was a Carmelite.

Of course, if our Founder would stand on the Lebanon now, he would probably have another experience. He would perhaps see a world where Christ is crucified anew in so many innocent people. Instead of the word 'redemption', he would hear the word 'liberation', liberation from economic, cultural and spiritual oppression. Our spirituality would be one with open eyes, sensitive to the signs of our time. But he would also speak with words of eternal life and of knowledge of redemption, that Jesus is still active in this world.

## 5. Surrounded by the powers of darkness

Nearly all the Founders and saints have had divine revelations and visions. There is no doubt that God speaks privately with his friends and that he guides those he elected for that mission. But they also had to undergo bitter struggles against Satan and the evil powers. Our Founder also had to share with the faithful of his time his experiences with the mystery of evil and his opinion concerning hell and the devil.

In 1887, Father Bonaventura Lüthen wrote a serial in "Der Missionär" on an exorcism in the Motherhouse.<sup>73</sup> These publications came as a bombshell. Several papers adopted them and edited them as a brochure.

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<sup>73</sup> Fr. Bonaventura Lüthen, "Eine Teufelsbeschwörung" in *Der missionär*, 1887: Jan. 30, Feb. 13, March 13 and 27, April 10 and 24. In 1892, everything was published once more as a brochure. See also Fr. A. Schneble in *Historica SDS*, nos. 437, 440-445, from Sept. 25 till Oct. 22, 1982.

Father Bonaventura Lüthen writes in the introduction that he wanted to publish the facts to the highest glory of God: “It was the superior of the devils the Society had to combat, so it was the will of God.” He feels himself compelled internally to reveal these facts to the public to portray the defeat of the devil. He writes explicitly that he does not express his opinions concerning these facts; he leaves the judgment to the ecclesiastical authorities. For him, only the fruits count. The exorcism, he says, resulted in a spiritual elevation of the whole community and the brother got the authorization to become a priest. It is typical that Father Pancratius Pfeiffer did not speak about these facts, neither in his first biography of the Founder nor in his witness for the beatification.

I don't know if I have to reveal these facts here or to keep silent about them. Spiritual life and the combat against evil go together. We can see that the powers of evil are active everywhere. We do not have to believe in the existence of the devil. To believe is to be confident in someone. We break the power of the evil by not believing in it. Later, the Founder wrote to this Brother: *Obedience breaks his neck*<sup>74</sup>, *don't give him any confidence*.<sup>75</sup>

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It is very clear that this direct confrontation with the dark powers or whatever you name them, have had an indelible impression on the Founder as a defeat of the devil and that it urged him even more to have confidence in the cross of the Lord.

Father Jordan writes very spontaneously in one chapter, about how he sees the devil: *Our opponent, the wicked enemy*,

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<sup>74</sup> DSS X, no. 277, 17.04.1895

<sup>75</sup> DSS X, no. 284, 07.09.1895

*assails the best things. It seems to me, the more sacred something is, the greater his fury against it. He is God's rival and hates in us human beings everything he recognizes as coming from God. If he knows one is dedicated to God, it fills him with a terrible fear and great hatred, and he opposes that person as far as he can, lashing out his fury and revenge. The more sacred the thing he can profane, the greater his joy.*<sup>76</sup> The Founder was convinced that especially hell – what it won't use against a society which has declared open war against it, and which plans to snatch the souls that it already regarded as won. Therefore, hell will be furious and do everything it can to harm the individual members and the whole Society. It fights the new foundations in particular. That's why it is necessary for you to pray constantly. Prayer is the mightiest weapon.<sup>77</sup>

■ 40

Actually, the Church is reserved when speaking about the devil and keeps its distance from phenomena like possession and exorcism. We think nevertheless that, if we want to speak about the spiritual life of our Founder, we cannot leave unsaid his combat against evil. Father Jordan has founded the Society very consciously as an elite group to engage the combat against the devil. *With all their forces, they will defend the holy faith against the enemies of our Mother Church and against the satanic powers.*<sup>78</sup> That is why he put the Society under the protection of Our Lady of Immaculate Conception, who crushed the snake, and why he adopted Saint Michael as one of its patrons. In the first years of the foundation, Father Jordan has been deeply influenced by Saint Ignatius and his view of the fight against evil as a struggle. The words “soldier of Christ”, “combat against the snake” were always in his

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<sup>76</sup> Chap. 18.12.1896, DSS XXIII, 93

<sup>77</sup> Chap. 15.02.1901, DSS XXIII, 400

<sup>78</sup> Rule of 1882, DSS I, 22

mouth: *Let us pray today (December 8<sup>th</sup>) with great fervour to Mary, who crushed the snake, that she might help us to defeat the devil who has such a great control on the immortal souls nowadays. Under the banner of the Savior of the world we have to combat the father of disobedience and the rebel of the angels.*<sup>79</sup>

We would like to mention here an incident related to this combat against the devil.

On January 5<sup>th</sup>, 1887, Brother Felix Bucher, working in the kitchen of the Motherhouse in Rome, gave evident signs of possession. The doctor's opinion was that there was no epilepsy or any other natural illness. The brother did not control his limbs any more. He was pulled up in the air and slapped down on the ground. He had to move his legs or his arms unbelievably quickly into the air. He used blasphemies and emitted animal sounds of a horse, a cuckoo or a cock. These signs were reason enough to ask for an exorcism on January 16<sup>th</sup>. It lasted one and a half hour. Four weeks later, the possession started all over again, stronger than before. The next exorcism took three days, with some breaks. During the exorcism, the aversion was mostly addressed to the exorcist, Father Jordan, who, together with Father Bonaventura Lüthen and Father Thomas Weigang, tried to expel the devil in the name of the Church. Several times, the brother threw the prayer book out of the hands of the Founder. Again and again, he threw the spectacles on the floor and tried to make the attendants laugh by his grimaces. He gave Father Jordan the derisive name of "Father of the wizards". "You can pray and conjure, that you can," he said scornfully, "nobody ever did it as well as you do. The whole

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<sup>79</sup> DSS X, no. 295, 08.12.1895

hell is enchanted. You are bewitching all your children.” He could not stand the fact that the community was gathered in the refectory during the sessions that took place in the chapel. He said to the Founder: “Go tell your children to be quiet.” He once opened the door of the refectory, shouting: “I am Lucifer!” On the way from the refectory to the chapel, there was a statue of Our Lady of Immaculate Conception. The Founder asked the brother to kneel in front of the statue. He did so but not without opposition, and when he stood up again, he said scornfully: “If I am expelled today, it will be her fault, there.” He could not stand the water of Lourdes. When he drank some of it unknowingly, it resulted in an outburst of rage. When Lucifer, as he called himself, arrived at his residence (the brother’s room) and saw a board with the name of Father Jordan, he turned it over so that he could not see the name anymore. Afterwards, he cleaned his fingers as if they had been covered with dirt by touching the board.

■ 42

After February 2<sup>nd</sup>, there were no attacks anymore. After his healing, the brother asked to be ordained a priest. On September 19<sup>th</sup>, 1891, he was ordained. He has been working for forty years as a missionary amidst the “Redskins” in an Indian reserve in Oregon (North America). He served in two churches seventy miles away from each other. He lived there, a poor man amidst the poor who venerated him as a saint. He died in St. Nazianz (USA) on April 13<sup>th</sup>, 1938. His provincial superior witnessed that he had been living as a saint. Notwithstanding that, he had suffered from some obsessions for the rest of his life. The Founder was in continuous contact with him; we know about fifteen letters.<sup>80</sup> He advised him: *To stay in the closest contact with his spiritual*

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<sup>80</sup> DSS X, list of recipients of letters XXX

*father, because the hellish spirit would do anything to get you in its nets. Don't trust him; maybe he may come under the appearance of light. Obedience will break its neck. Persevere on the road it hates so. Invoke Mary, our celestial Mother.*<sup>81</sup>

A few months later, the Founder writes: *It is my experience that, when the bad enemy wants to attack someone, he brings him in conflict with his superiors and tries to arouse distrust. Answer me quickly how you are doing.*<sup>82</sup> Later, the Founder writes again: *Don't give in to the seducer, but stand up for the combat, just as once you did... Persevere; keep what you have because you aren't aware of the scope of the concession to the seducer. Stick to the words of your loving spiritual father.*<sup>83</sup>

The temptations and the repeated attacks of the devil were always very real for Father Jordan. In his diary, he speaks often about this: *The devil works through small transgressions to cause us to lose our vocation.*<sup>84</sup>

43 ■

For him, the first answer is always confidence in God. *Despise the devil. Trust firmly in God. Never lose heart!*<sup>85</sup> *The devil is afraid of us, when we are not afraid of him.*<sup>86</sup> In his letter on the occasion of the silver jubilee of the Society, he writes: *You know how firmly the enemy has raged.*<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> DSS X, no. 277

<sup>82</sup> DSS X, no. 284

<sup>83</sup> DSS X, no. 327

<sup>84</sup> D II/37

<sup>85</sup> D IV/2

<sup>86</sup> D IV/28

<sup>87</sup> DSS X, no. 854

Father Jordan has been living with a totally different concept of theology and with a completely different image of the devil than we do now. But the answer he gave at the time concerning the mystery of evil is still valid: *Far be it from me to glory except in the cross of O. L. Jesus Christ. The world is crucified to me and I to the world.*<sup>88</sup>

The Founder called the evil of the world by its name and he faced it with the power of the Lord's cross. *Eph, 6, 11 - 16* [TEXT]<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Gal. 6, 14 - D I/71, D I/179, D IV/18

<sup>89</sup> *Eph, 6, 11 - 16*

### III

## His prayer life

### 1. The mystery of prayer

45 ■

In an allocution during the chapter, Father Jordan said: *We cannot fulfill our vocations without much prayer. If someone tells me how he prays and how often, I can tell him who he is.*<sup>90</sup> This standard can also be applied to our Founder. There is no better way to know him than to work out how and how much he prayed.

It is in real prayer, that man is fully himself. He is completely alone with his conscience and with God. We can only lift a small part of the veil of this encounter, because we are talking about a world that is not actually ours anymore, but God's. From witnesses, we will learn how human impotence and divine power fuse in a symbiosis.

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<sup>90</sup> Chap. 29.11.1895, DSS XXIII, 47

## **2. The essential forms of prayer**

If we want to speak clearly of Father Jordan's prayer life, it is useful to give a short summary of the forms of prayer. Concisely, prayer can be divided into the way of purification where penance and mortification hold a prominent place, the way of enlightenment characterized by the practice of virtue and finally the way of unity where God takes an increasing hold of the faculties of the soul.

In our ascension to God, we speak about ascetics and mysticism. For us, mysticism means to strive for perfection with a special stress on human activity, particularly the fight against vice and the conscious pursuit of perfection. It seems that we ourselves are carrying out the exercises of piety. The characteristic mark of mysticism is a direct experience of God's presence, in our deepest self, where all images and intellectual thinking end.

■ 46

The first characteristic of a mystical experience is its spontaneity. God himself is experienced directly, without any medium or intermediary. The mystical person experiences God, feels himself directly taken up by Him. Normally, one of the faithful comes in contact with God during prayers, reading God's Word, through a faithful fellow man. On the other hand, during a mystical experience no intermediary is needed and it can overcome a man at a moment he does not expect it. That is why the second characteristic of a mystical experience is passivity. God Himself determines the beginning and the end of that experience. It can not be called up, to order, one can not specify its duration, and it assaults the person very often while he or she is occupied with some work. Thus that contact cannot be described, it is inexpressible and there are simply no words to express it.

The first fruits of such a mystical experience are: an unknown peace, joy, certitude.

It is remarkable that a mystic never sings his own praises about his spiritual experiences with God. If he ever lets anything slip, it is generally in a personal diary or in a conversation with an intimate friend.

Mystical experiences are never free of commitment. They are granted to those willing to accept them for the advancement of the community.

We should not stress too much the difference between asceticism and mysticism. Christian life is a harmonious unity of an active and contemplative occupation. Mystical gifts are not exceptional. I think there are very few people who never had a mystical experience in their life. "All good people have them" says Ruusbroec, "but how do they remain so hidden through out their whole life."<sup>91</sup>

47 ■

But a mystical experience does not make one a mystic. Mystical gifts are not a privilege granted to a handful of selected people, they can overcome an open mind, and they happen more often than we think to ordinary people. It might be a consolation for some people that we don't have to be an example of perfect psychological equilibrium or of a harmonious character to become a great mystic. We can easily state that a mystical life presupposes a more than virtuous life; but it is also true that God can grant His gifts to whom and when He wishes.

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<sup>91</sup> *Die gheestelike brulocht*, Book I, Part I, p. 43

### 3. Father Jordan, man of prayer

Father Jordan wrote next to the holy water font at the door of his room: *Prayer is the biggest power in the world.*<sup>92</sup>

The whole life of Father Jordan establishes the truth of these words. His intense prayer life is the key which grants us access to his private life and provides also the ultimate declaration of the way he overcame all his sufferings, disappointments and trials. In his biography of the Founder, Father Pancratius Pfeiffer puts it as follows: “If Father Jordan did not succumb under the heavy load he was carrying and if the work he called to life did not come to a sad end, we can give no clearer explanation than that his prayer saved him and his work. That’s why he always used the words of the Scriptures: “*Only the mercy of the Lord saved us from ruin.*”<sup>93</sup> He was a man of prayer. Indeed, he was continuously praying. He exploited every free moment to pray. Prayer accompanied each of his works; his whole demeanor, his words and actions conveyed the spirit of his prayer. He had an innate fear of letting others witness his inner communications with God. Nevertheless, this came to the fore in his gaze, in his face and his vivid sighs. When alone in the garden, he liked to pray the rosary which he kept hidden under his mantle or in the sleeve of his robe. While in Rome, he would take a short break every day. He went to the nearby St. Peter’s Church. First, he went to the chapel of the Blessed Sacrament, then to the altar of Our Lady della Colonna and finally to the tomb of St Peter. He prayed with so much fervour and attention that neither environment nor fellowmen seemed to exist for him. Those who witnessed such

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<sup>92</sup> Fr. Cyrillus Braschke, *AS II*, no. 30

<sup>93</sup> Fr. Pancratius Pfeiffer, *P. Jordan*, 388

prayers could never forget it. One day the prefect of the Minor Seminary in Rome saw Father Jordan at the tomb of St. Peter, absorbed in prayer. He called his disciples, pointed to the praying priest and said: "Look how a saint is praying". No wonder that people who saw him there every day called him "il santo".

A Benedictine father said later on that one of his confreres pointed to the praying Father Jordan saying: "Look how he's praying!"<sup>94</sup>

#### **4. Father Jordan and the Eucharist**

Father Jordan spent much time in the chapel. The Holy Eucharist was the focal point of his daily life. Those who saw Father Jordan entering the chapel had the impression that he was secretly attracted to the tabernacle, so deeply he was touched. His genuflection was a homily in itself. Because of his piety, he demanded that all the requirements be respected. When he became older, the celebration of the Eucharist and the prayer of the breviary became a heavy burden because of his scrupulous character. They both became a source of anxiety, stress and pain that called for compassion from his confreres. That was the reason why he rarely celebrated the community Mass after his fiftieth birthday; he preferred also to pray the matins alone in his room, with a confrere. We can find, in his diary, how he felt during Holy Communion: *Rejoice and be glad, timid soul, because the Creator of all will take up His dwelling with you; the King of the heavenly choirs is coming to you; the strong, omnipotent God is coming to you.... Immerse yourself in the ocean of the love of God.*<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> For these data, see Fr. Jozef Lammers, *Das Gebetsleben P. Jordans*, 49-66

<sup>95</sup> D I/149-150

This is a deep mystical image: Immerse yourself in the ocean of God's love. The Eucharist is the final point of the descent of God's Son and of the ascent of men towards God. From his own experience, the Founder could affirm the truth of what Thomas A Kempis wrote: "This grace is at times so great, that the fullness of acquired piety not only strengthens the soul but also the weak body."<sup>96</sup> In an allocution to the chapter, he said: *You should leave the communion rail... like lions spewing fire.*<sup>97</sup> Is it then so amazing that Father Jordan could experience so strongly the presence of the Lord during the Eucharist? For Father Jordan, there was really a vital link between the Eucharist and his life. Jesus Himself taught Fr. Jordan to live and to work through Him, with Him and in Him. The comfort he was granted during the Eucharist has played a vital part in the foundation of the Society.

## ■ 50 5. Becoming a man of prayer

Father Jordan did not reach the stage of uninterrupted prayer spontaneously. For him too, it was an arduous growing. Even as a boy, he retreated to the woods so as to be able to pray. As a soldier, he locked his door in order to pray. When a friend asked him, at the time of his advanced studies, to come to daily Mass with him, he replied: *I cannot afford it, for I need this time to study.*<sup>98</sup> We can understand this answer quite well, yet when he had made progress in his prayer life, he surely studied less in order to be able to pray more. Later on, he even adopted this rule for his life: *First devotion, then science.*<sup>99</sup> He understood this already as a student of Theology.

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<sup>96</sup> Imitation of Christ, IV, 1<sup>st</sup> chapt., 6

<sup>97</sup> Chap. 27.01.1899, DSS XXIII, 272

<sup>98</sup> Letter of Von Rüpplin, 23.01.1925, APS I, 24

<sup>99</sup> Notizen, Archives II, 3

*Moderate your studies, especially those which are not urgently necessary: what would it profit you, if for that reason, you would love God even one slight degree less in eternity... Become great before God and not before the world!*<sup>100</sup> Here, he reaches the state of sacrifice. He has to make time for God and for prayer. *Though your work be ever so much, still spend an hour a day in meditation, if your health allows it.*<sup>101</sup> Quite soon, he feels that one hour a day is not enough. *Our times require men [and women] of prayer. And what good is all our work and struggle, all our preaching and writing, if God doesn't help! Be assured, time spent in prayer is never lost; and the time we [actually] spend in prayer is by no means sufficient.*<sup>102</sup> *Prayer is especially needed in our indifferent times. Dedicate at least three hours a day to prayer.*<sup>103</sup> In his diary, he writes also: *Carry on your spiritual conversation with the Saviour. Sit humbly and docilely at His feet and listen attentively to His words.*<sup>104</sup>

51 ■

*Nocturnal prayer – a treasure!*<sup>105</sup> *More often alone with God; linger more often alone near the tabernacle, detached from all.*<sup>106</sup> *Just think what strength and consolation you have found through prayer!*<sup>107</sup>

When one has experienced God's nearness and power, prayer becomes vital and a secret need. We notice that in the repeated sighs in his diary:

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<sup>100</sup> D I/30-31

<sup>101</sup> D I/48

<sup>102</sup> Chap. 15.07.1898, DSS XXIII, 232

<sup>103</sup> D I/85

<sup>104</sup> D I/65

<sup>105</sup> D II/68

<sup>106</sup> D II/92

<sup>107</sup> D II/30

*Pray – Pray – Pray*  
*Pray – Pray – Pray!*<sup>108</sup>  
*Pray – Pray – Pray*  
*Without ceasing*  
*With great confidence.*<sup>109</sup>  
*Storm heaven with prayer! Do not let yourself be*  
*hindered by anything!*<sup>110</sup>  
*Pray – Pray – Pray*  
*Pray – Pray – Pray – Pray.*<sup>111</sup>

At that time, Father Jordan experienced a great urge to study languages, hence he had to resort to praying during the night. We see it clearly in his diary: *As far as you are able, spend some time in prayer during the night. If your health permits it and your confessor allows it, imitate the dear Savior often in this, that you spend at least a part of the night alone in prayer.*<sup>112</sup> And he makes a private reference to Luke: *“He went out to the mountain to pray and He spent the whole night in prayer to God.”*<sup>113</sup> He admonishes his confreres: *Imitate our Divine Teacher who prayed so much and of whom scripture says: “he was spending the night in prayer”.*<sup>114</sup>

■ 52

Father Jordan told us very little about his nightly prayer. He refers just once to it, when he encourages his confreres to go and pray in the mortuary room of Saint Brigit, Piazza Farnese 16, where he founded the Society: *Pray to St. Brigitta, whom we sometimes besought in her room where we were*

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<sup>108</sup> D II/28

<sup>109</sup> D IV/6

<sup>110</sup> D II/41

<sup>111</sup> D IV/33

<sup>112</sup> D I/135

<sup>113</sup> Lk 6, 12 – D I/64

<sup>114</sup> Chap. 15.07.1898, DSS XXIII, 231

*engrossed in prayer at the midnight hours.*<sup>115</sup> The sacristian, Fr. Efreim Bonheim, had the duty to lock the chapel at night and to re-open it in the morning. Father Jordan repeatedly let himself be locked in and left the room only when the sacristian came to open the door in the morning. The Founder would then hurry to his room, so that no one would see him.<sup>116</sup> What Father Jordan experienced during this nightly prayer will surely remain an unwritten page in his biography.

## 6. Prayer is creating space

Father Jordan had to pray quite a lot before prayer became second nature to him. Prayer primarily concerns God, but it also requires a freely given answer from man. It is not the person who ascends to God. In every prayer, God is bending over His creation, because He wants to dwell in the heart, like He did with Mary, in order to unite with man. Prayer is an art we have to learn and to practice. We learn to pray by praying. Normally, one does not like to pray: one can experience a certain annoyance, an aversion or discomfort. He thinks he can do loads of other things which seem more urgent. We say that we assail heaven with our prayers, but an authentic prayer is surrender to God's will. True prayer coming from our deepest self is generally very rare! Father Jordan knew that very well: *But seek this [i.e., to become holy] in the right way: not in spiritual fancies but through suffering, obedience, poverty, and exacting religious observance. Even if you were in heaven and were able to achieve miracles, unless you practice virtue you are in danger even in the best way.*<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Chap. 11.10.1901, DSS XXIII, 457

<sup>116</sup> Letter of Fr. Engelbert Heilmann 15.12.1935, APS, N, 3.1.2.14

<sup>117</sup> Chap. 20.04.1894, DSS XXIII, 23

Yet even with him, prayer remained a constant mortification: *Pray, even if it is most burdensome and troublesome for you, and if it seems completely useless to you.*<sup>118</sup> Through his prayer, he attained this conviction: *My prayer will never be fruitless provided it is good prayer; either I will be granted what I ask, or I will obtain still greater graces.*<sup>119</sup> *Even though he slay me, yet will I hope in Him.*<sup>120</sup> *You must pray much more, overcome yourself more. He can do all things; trust firmly in Him.*<sup>121</sup> God grants prayer to the one who prays, He looks for us before we can look for Him. Our love can only be a human answer to his first love. Only his firm faith in the power of prayer held the Founder upright. *Pray earnestly, more earnestly, most earnestly and have confidence, because the Lord is almighty, and He who truly trusts in Him will never be confounded!*<sup>122</sup> Through loving perseverance, Father Jordan learned to pray. The following quotation may clarify part of his struggle to get to prayer:

■ 54

*Francis, pray urgently  
Francis! Francis! Francis!  
O FRANCIS  
Dedicate at least seven hours a day to prayer!  
O give attention to it and do not omit it!  
Worthless Francis!  
Seven hours a day devote to prayer!  
Inconstant Francis!  
Devote seven hours to prayer!  
Most sluggish Francis!*

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<sup>118</sup> D IV/21

<sup>119</sup> D I/170

<sup>120</sup> D I/122

<sup>121</sup> D III/19

<sup>122</sup> D III/2

*Devote 7 hours a day to prayer, and if you have not fulfilled them, give yourself a severe penance.*

The 25<sup>th</sup> day of July, 1888 <sup>123</sup>

These words arose spontaneously deep within. They were written from his heart. He means this intention so earnestly that he wants to punish himself severely in case of negligence. He knows quite well that prayer can mean a kind of mortification for him. Has the Founder been praying for seven hours a day? We have a document wherein he tries to schedule those seven hours in his daily timetable. But he has sufficient common-sense to compose a double prayer scheme, taking into account his busy days:

*For God* *With God's help*  
*Save yourself seven hours a day for prayer.*

55 ■

(First scheme)	=	(Second scheme)
6 – 9	= 3	1 ½
10 ½ – 11 ½	= 1	½
2 ½ - 3	= ½	½
5 – 7	= 2	2
8 ¾ - 9 ½	= ¾	1
	7 ¼	5 ½ <sup>124</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> D I/197-198

<sup>124</sup> DSS XVI, 137

Praying for hours during the night is only possible for us humans if God's Spirit Himself sighs with unspeakable sighs.<sup>125</sup> Then the soul can participate in a mysterious way in the exchange of love. As St Paul says: "God has sent the Spirit of His Son to our hearts, calling: Abba, Father!"<sup>126</sup> Thus prayer is not so much a work of our powers, but a gift of God. Through the internal light and through the power of love, the praying man experiences, in a painful way, that he himself is not holy, but broken and guilty. He realises he does not belong with God and feels prompted to run away before God's holiness. At the same time he realises intensely that he needs God's Spirit in every circumstance of his life; that he can only live through God and that he cannot find any help elsewhere. In this way, he is attracted by God's holiness, notwithstanding his sinfulness, purified as steel in fire.

■ 56 In his own typical way, Father Jordan expresses this experience in the following prayer:

Oh, immeasurable greatness and omnipotence of God, oh give me so firm and great a faith and confidence as a person can possibly have with and through You. Oh, I recognize my nothingness, but through You, O Lord, I can do all things. Oh, may You live in me; let me die, and You live; everything which hinders Your work in me die in me, just as You will it.<sup>127</sup>

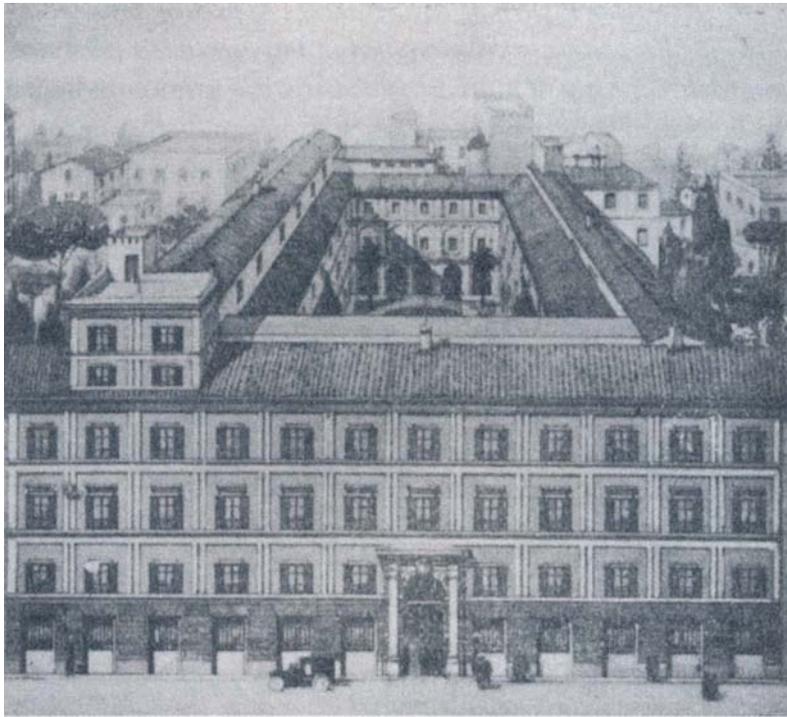
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<sup>125</sup> Rom. 8, 26

<sup>126</sup> Gal. 4, 6

<sup>127</sup> D I/168

All attitudes essential to prayer are present in the above prayer: faith, trust, love, humility, submission and mortification. Thanks to this basic attitude, everything becomes prayer in the life of Father Jordan. It can be said of him, as of St Francis: “He was no longer a man of prayer, but he became totally prayer.”



*The Motherhouse in Rome, Via della Conciliazione 51.  
1895*

## IV

### Growing in Prayer Life

#### 1. Man is what his prayer is

59 ■

Vocal prayer is the entry to private prayer. 'One who does not pray orally will rarely be able to reach inner prayer' is a universal rule. In a Christian community, vocal prayer cannot be ignored. And certainly not the liturgical prayer practiced by order of the Church. When a group prays, Christ is praying as the head of the Church, and the members assemble around Christ.

Father Jordan never neglected personal prayer. Apparently, he had no more problems with praying as with breathing. Save his breviary and the community prayers, he never used a prayer book.<sup>128</sup> He was so spontaneous and so

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<sup>128</sup> The older Fathers I asked about this told me that he always prayed out of his heart. The ideas of his breviary and the big intentions of the apostolate were sufficient for him.

filled with God that he made up his prayers himself. A prayer book would have been a hindrance to him. But he learned, in a particular way, to use the liturgical texts as a prayer. The breviary was the prayer of his heart. In the Gospel and in the verse of the psalms, he translated totally his need and his praise of God. He liked to copy those texts and used them as ejaculatory prayers, particularly the quotations referring to confidence in God. That is the reason why he repeatedly advised his disciples to make these texts of the Bible a personal property. Father Jordan once said in a chapter allocution: *We should immerse ourselves in the spirit of the Divine Office. Therefore, don't just pray, but delve deeply into the mystery as far as possible...*<sup>129</sup> *How often we read in the Office: "In you, O God, I have hoped, let me never be confounded!", or "Because he hoped in me I will free him; because he knew my name I will protect him."... Not everyone can progress easily in this; but all of you must try to advance as far as possible. (...) So that you don't go into eternity and only then the meaning and significance of the words dawn on you. What would the dear Saviour say? "He read it and prayed so often, but never paid attention".*<sup>130</sup>

60

Father Jordan warns us also: *Pray the rosary with attention and devotion, actually the way every good prayer should be offered. And this with a view to the life and sufferings of our Divine Saviour, so that by contemplating our Divine Saviour we become like him.*<sup>131</sup>

All the religious have to devote some of their time daily to meditation, in order to achieve a spiritual maturity and a fruitful apostolate. Father Jordan attached great importance

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<sup>129</sup> Chap. 19.05.1899, DSS XXIII, 312

<sup>130</sup> Chap. 10.12.1897, DSS XXIII, 158-159

<sup>131</sup> Chap. 10.02.1899, DSS XXIII, 276

to meditation: *Keep up with your daily meditation, may your heart be with Jesus from early morning, so that you be enlightened by the holy examples of His life and aflame with His love.*<sup>132</sup> *If you omit it [i.e., meditation] only once this is not so bad. But if it happens more frequently on an average, you can be sure that you risk great danger and very serious harm. It is in meditation that one must seek the light and the force in order to protect oneself against the spirit of this world as with an armour.*<sup>133</sup> He considers meditation as a quiet oasis, where one can be refreshed and comforted. One must rest there and renew his vigour for the work and the suffering of the apostolate. One must find there the light and the insight not to lose oneself in a worldly mentality: *Therefore we must never think that because we are called to the apostolate we are in any way called less to spiritual life or that we should curtail self-sanctification.*<sup>134</sup>

Father Jordan didn't like those super-active fathers who could never come to rest or meditation. Any work, according to him, should result out of a true unity with God. *Don't trust your works, your skill, or your learning! If they are not made fruitful by God's blessings, beware!*<sup>135</sup> He was convinced that, to save souls is the work of divine grace. "Because without Me you can do nothing."<sup>136</sup> He told Father Pancratius Pfeiffer: *You can organise as much as you like, if the members don't have the spirit, everything is worthless.*<sup>137</sup> We can only get grace through our union with Christ. The more one lives united with God, the more one will be able to be an apostle. *If we*

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<sup>132</sup> DSS X, no. 1112

<sup>133</sup> Chap. 08.10.1897, DSS XXIII, 129

<sup>134</sup> Chap. 02.12.1898, DSS XXIII, 246

<sup>135</sup> Chap. 12.06.1896, DSS XXIII, 64

<sup>136</sup> Jn 15, 5

<sup>137</sup> Fr. Pancratius Pfeiffer, *Gedankenaustausch*, 312

*want to convert the world, we must have the Spirit of Jesus. We cannot convert the people, only Christ can do this through us: that is why we have to let ourselves be guided totally by Christ and be united intimately with Him.*<sup>138</sup>

This connection is often brought about by a continuous meditation and reflection on the life of Jesus. *The closer we approach the suffering and the humiliated, the prayerful and meditative Saviour, the richer will be the fruits which will grow from our work in the Lord's vineyard. Since we cannot now pray throughout the nights, we need to dedicate at least some hours to contemplation and to the Divine Office.*<sup>139</sup>

What he himself felt faithfully and what he advised others is summarized this way: *If you become men of prayer, then no enemies will harm us; the Lord will destroy them.*<sup>140</sup> *Otherwise, as activity becomes more important than contemplation, the Society will come to ruin.*<sup>141</sup>

62

Father Jordan never stressed a particular method of praying. He often speaks about the conditions of good prayer, but never about a certain method. *With all your strength strive towards perfection, and then I will be at ease. You will then surely find the material. If you don't strive towards perfection, you won't find any material for meditation. If I know you are striving to perfection, then I would say: do whatever you want.*<sup>142</sup>

Because of his simple, childlike heart, Father Jordan was by nature inclined towards simple prayer. For him, just one

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<sup>138</sup> DSS X, no. 226

<sup>139</sup> Allocution at the first General Chapter 06.10.1902, DSS XXIII, 471

<sup>140</sup> Chap. 29.11.1895, DSS XXIII, 48

<sup>141</sup> Chap. 09.05.1896, DSS XXIII, 56

<sup>142</sup> Chap. 02.12.1898, DSS XXIII,

idea was enough to abide totally in the sphere of love, to surrender with joy to the divine will. When he was a seminarian, he wrote for himself: *Praise and thank often, wherever you may be, especially when you see the work of His hands even if it is only in short effective acts and words.*<sup>143</sup>

When reading the allocutions of the Founder, one can notice that he repeats five times the same short idea, as if it were a slogan: “Become men of prayer” or “I must become a saint, therefore, everything has to be holy”.

The more we pray, the simpler our prayer becomes. That may convey the impression that we cannot pray anymore. We cannot formulate suitable or good words and phrases anymore, yet we are not distracted. Constantly, the same idea, the same words come back: “Jesus, how good you are, I am yours”. On the one hand, we want to pray, and on the other hand there is no need to elaborate that idea further on. Surely, Father Jordan has been a master in that prayer of simplicity. He was able to keep on praying for hours; without thinking he was able to formulate many prayers. For him, it was enough to experience the loving proximity of his Lord. He did not need many things to make up good prayers. He knew Jesus was there; he opened his heart to Him and felt happy in that presence. That is truly praying. He writes: *Be the friends of our Lord in the tabernacle: unity with Him ignores all bitterness, and His presence doesn't know boredom.*<sup>144</sup>

63 ■

Father Jordan was able to come to a maximum of decisions with a minimum of reflection. His inner life was

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<sup>143</sup> D I/98

<sup>144</sup> DSS X, no. 1112, 716

entirely supported by a couple of ideas, not arising from intelligence or reasoning, but springing up from the depth of his being. They are expressions of love: short, condensed exclamations: *Pray – Pray – Pray – Pray – Pray – Pray*.<sup>145</sup> Eight times in succession, he writes the word *confidence*<sup>146</sup>, and elsewhere five times.<sup>147</sup> It comes up like lava from an erupting volcano. *All, O Father, all, - all, O God, all, O Jesus, all, O Saviour of the world, I desire most ardently to save all!*<sup>148</sup> This prayer of simplicity gradually becomes a prayer of rest. In the prayer of rest, God directly touches the will and awakens in the souls his wisdom and his light. The will no longer needs images in order to feel united with God. Prayer then becomes a being overwhelmed by the love of God. Surely Father Jordan has known this prayer of rest: *What is more consoling in this valley of tears than to be permitted to enter into such deep relationship with God through meditation and contemplation. O man, when meditating and contemplating divine things, you perform the functions of the angels!*<sup>149</sup> Later on, he is even clearer when he writes: *Carry on your spiritual conversation with the Saviour. Sit down humbly and docilely at His feet and listen attentively to His words.*<sup>150</sup> *Though your work for good be ever so much, withdraw everyday for a few hours with the dear God in recollected prayer and meditation, or when possible, in contemplation, to preserve true recollection and peace or to obtain it again.*<sup>151</sup> *Let nothing upset you or disturb your inner peace; be intent at all times on listening attentively to the interior voice.*<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> D II/28 – D IV/33

<sup>146</sup> D III/7

<sup>147</sup> D IV/33

<sup>148</sup> D II/12

<sup>149</sup> D I/61

<sup>150</sup> D I/65

<sup>151</sup> D I/65

<sup>152</sup> D I/11

Brother Alipius Hansknecht, who cleaned his room and was allowed to enter the room without knocking at the door, said that he found him often in front of the cross, completely lost in prayer. He didn't even notice what was happening. When at last he noticed him, he said: "*I didn't see you*", and: "*Nobody has been here, I hope?*"<sup>153</sup> Love can be so strong that we lose control of our senses. Sometimes, such an experience can take someone completely by surprise. It is no surprising attack, but a loving contact. Such an operation of love is experienced as an undeserved gift.

## 2. Period of purification

It seems that Father Jordan started his diary in 1875 because he was living in very hard times: on the one hand a time of intimate union with God, and on the other hand a rejection in the deepest abandonment and darkness. Prayer becomes more difficult, because there is less space for the working of the intelligence and the imagination due to a loving impact of grace. As long as the god seeker is not accustomed to the active impact of the grace, he feels a certain boredom and aridity. This situation is difficult to describe; it is a mixture of one's own darkness and divine light, of intense love and paralysing aridity. Through reflection and experience, man can come to certain knowledge of his impotence and limitation, but he will never be able to eliminate egotism and self-conceit. Just as the sun's rays hurt a sick eye, in the same way the infused light of the contemplation causes pain and solitude. Saint John of the Cross calls this situation "a dark night", whilst the great saint Theresa speaks of a blindness caused by the blazing light of

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<sup>153</sup> Br. Alipius Hansknecht, APS, N, 3.1.2.45

God's holiness. Our Founder has also known that period of purification.

Some texts at the beginning of his diary give us a certain insight of such a frame of mind:

*What is harder for the earthly pilgrim than to have God withdraw from him and leave him on his own. His fate is like that of a forsaken seaman, left on the lonely sea in the darkness of night. In his fragile vessel and abandoned by all, he is battered here and there by storms and tempests. Even if death's dark night surrounds me, I hope in You and will not be put to shame. A star glimmers over me even in the haze of night; surely it promises salvation in the days to come. In you, O Lord, I have hoped, I will not be confounded forever.<sup>154</sup> Never become faint-hearted and despondent; if there appears to be no way out and your affliction or trial is terrible, know that your Redeemer, in the hour known to Him, will deliver and will comfort you.<sup>155</sup> He writes: O my soul, throw yourself completely into the arms of God; do not lose heart, even if snares are laid for you on all sides; rise up to God, especially in these terrible and indescribable hours of affliction. Know that the good God loves you, even if He strikes you hard and heavy. Do not lose courage still, and in more peaceful days, keep yourself prepared for such violent suffering.<sup>156</sup> Surely, he was well aware that this situation is part of the growth towards inwardness, for only in this period did he take notes of the experiences of mystics: "In patience the soul shows that it has set aside self-love and has clothed itself with the fire of divine love." (St. Cath. of Siena).<sup>157</sup> And on the same page: St. Rose of*

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<sup>154</sup> D I/ 6-7

<sup>155</sup> D I/ 17-18

<sup>156</sup> D I/37

<sup>157</sup> D I/69

*Lima was plagued for fifteen continuous years with severe interior darkness and affliction, in which she felt completely abandoned daily for at least one or more hours.<sup>158</sup> And: St. Magdalene of Pazzi found herself in an abyss of obscurity, resembling a very deep lake, where the first lions which assaulted her were temptations of infidelity, which were so impetuous, that they were even inciting her to deny God, etc. ... "Oh, how many were the darts of fear, of doubts, of mistrust then, when hell came upon me, in a most fierce battle, for five years, to torment me."<sup>159</sup> From the following quotations, we can deduce how much Father Jordan himself had to combat dejection: *Give me back the joy of your salvation. Pray often for great confidence in God and for unrestrained joy. As far as possible avoid moods of anxiety because the Lord is powerful and he can save you. Endeavour to serve God full of love and joy and, above all, lay aside any kind of exaggerated anxiety, which displeases the dear God, for He is no tyrant.*<sup>160</sup> This scrupulous nature was no fear of a punishing God. It was the fear of being separated from the Source of Life. For us, love is: presence and comfort, but in reality, love is: absence, desire, pain.*

67 ■

This alternation of moments of intense presence and arid absence can tax a man heavily. Any lover knows that the union of these contradictory experiences, once intense comfort and then great solitude, can become a torture requiring the faith. But that is exactly what purification is. This way we will experience God's goodness in poverty and emptiness. In fact, deep intimacy with God and extreme abandonment are not opposite one another, but they blend in love. It is clear that we can only experience God's glory in our own

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<sup>158</sup> D I/69

<sup>159</sup> D I/122-123

<sup>160</sup> D I/62

weakness. “You have enough with my grace. Power just becomes complete in weakness... because when I am weak, I am powerful.”<sup>161</sup> Even if God is ready to take up man deeper in his love, he will know emptiness and depression, because the mystery remains veiled. The Founder knew also that such a spiritual poverty is the most fruitful ground where the seed of God’s grace can take root.

We speak about the light of faith, but we have to add immediately that faith never gives evidence. Father Jordan has not been spared from faith testing, which is also called the dark night. He was fascinated by the mystery of love marked by the fear of not knowing. That is why he was so anxious to integrate action with contemplation in his Society. The variety of works, the activity and their botheration can disturb inner unity. “Martha, Martha, ... just one thing is necessary.”<sup>162</sup>

■ 68

In moments of silence and repentance, anyone of the faithful can experience a great inner emptiness, which cannot be filled by external activities, but only by abandonment to God’s love. One never feels so poor as when standing in front of God, consciously and honestly.

In order to try to understand this purification, John of the Cross uses the image of a woodblock thrown in the fire. As long as the block is humid, it cannot catch fire. The wood is crackling and the fire makes the water evaporate. But when the block is dry, it is altered in fire. The infused love gradually consumes the roots of the old man so that we cannot expel ourselves. The aim of purification is not in gaining

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<sup>161</sup> II Cor. 12, 9-10

<sup>162</sup> Lk 10, 41-42

consciousness of one's own sinfulness, but it wants to make man open and docile to the voice speaking out of the burning bramble. This consuming fire can of course cast light on our sinfulness and poverty but it can also make God's unapproachable exaltation evident.

At the end of his life, in August 1911, the Founder put all convents, which were in his name so far, in Father Paulus Pabst's name. When the last one made an observation on this "Look Father, you are a millionaire", he looked, musing, out of the window and watched the Hamberg saying: "*I am only a poor sinner*".<sup>163</sup> God prefers to elect simplicity in which to confide important vocations. Abraham was an old childless man, but he was chosen to be the father of a large lineage. Moses was just a stuttering shepherd when God entrusted him with the mission to lead God's people out of exile. A simple servant was chosen to be God's Mother. This consciousness of one's own littleness and weakness is not paralyzing nor restraining as one would expect, but gives man an unprecedented dynamism, because he discovered in God a support which replaces his own weakness. *I trust in You, because your mercy is greater than my wickedness. I have no other voice to be heard than my deep misery.*<sup>164</sup>

69 ■

Father Jordan experiences the living God like the basis of his existence, like a source of peace.

A contemplative person expects to lose his own will. He wants to empty himself in order to become totally open to the will of God.

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<sup>163</sup> Fr. Paulus Pabst to the author

<sup>164</sup> D I/41

### 3. The prayer of full union

When one opens oneself so openly to God, he will arrive, after a lapse of time, to the prayer of total union, where not only his will but his total being is lifted up to a loving dialogue with God. The intelligence and the memory may be busy with worldly things; but one's will is continuously connected with God. Work and contemplation go together in one single person. Yet there remains a certain tension between one's inner self enjoying God's presence and the external man having to fulfil his mission. "When Father Jordan was somewhere in the house or alone in the chapel, he would be fully absorbed in God's presence. If one had then to ask him something, it was as if he had to make quite an effort to get out of the inner union."<sup>165</sup>

■ 70

Or, like another Father puts it: "When we were talking to him in his room, it could happen that, in the course of the conversation, he would suddenly look at the statue of the Blessed Mother and say a prayer."<sup>166</sup>

As day-to-day people, we think of going upwards from below and we have some difficulty in staying above for a while. Saints think downwards from above and cannot keep busy with ordinary things for a long time without going back to the essence of everything. One of the Salvatorians of the very beginning said: "I cannot remember that he ever spoke to me about something else than God or our apostolic commitment."<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> Fr. Johannes Schärfl, *Summarium*, § 882, p. 193

<sup>166</sup> Fr. Sixtus Kraisser, *Summarium*, § 683, p. 151

<sup>167</sup> Fr. Tharcitius Wolff, APS, N, 3.2.2.51

Father Jordan was able to pray continuously. For mystics it is not difficult to pray constantly; love helps them not only to be with God along with their ideas, but it causes a continuous unity with the Creator. With this kind of uninterrupted prayer, even feelings can fall apart from time to time. Human activity does not slow down the relationship with God; on the contrary, action and contemplation blend mutually in such a way that they form a unity in a deeper sphere. Even the work is not experienced as a brake anymore: “Let us stay united, you and me”.<sup>168</sup> Father Konrad Hansknecht witnesses: “At times he said continual ejaculatory prayers with an intensity and fervour I had never witnessed in anyone else before. When I expressed my surprise about this way of praying, he told me what his confessor said: ‘If I prayed so intensely and said as many ejaculatory prayers as you did, I would have been in a mad-house long ago’.”<sup>169</sup> Praying had become second nature to Father Jordan. His diary witnesses how intensely and with what ardour he prayed: *O Mary! O Virgin! O Mother of God! O Queen of heaven! O holy one! O immaculate one! O my Mother and Queen! I know not how to praise you, O my Helper. I feel more than I can express!*<sup>170</sup> Or: *O Lord! O Almighty One! In You I have hoped, I will not be confounded for ever! I can do all things in You who strengthen me! O Father! Help me! You are my strength, my firmament! Come, come, do not delay, see this man of desires, arise, and help me! O my Father, the Almighty! O Jesus! O Saviour! The Lord will hear the desire of the poor!*<sup>171</sup> The sigh “O” often appears in mystical prayers. It’s an “O”

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<sup>168</sup> Jn 15, 4

<sup>169</sup> Fr. Konrad Hansknecht, APS, N, 3.1.2.37

<sup>170</sup> D I/196

<sup>171</sup> D II/18

of tremendous admiration and loving desire: *O Lord, You know, You know, I cannot express it! I can do all things in You. O God, O Almighty One, O Immensity, O Jesus, O Saviour of the world! Here I am, send me – for you, for souls, for the Church of God. All, O Father, all, all, O God, all, O Jesus, all, O Saviour of the world, I desire most ardently to save all! O save souls! Oh, save souls! I beg and implore you, save souls! Cost what it may, save souls!*<sup>172</sup>

The effusion of God's love in our Founder was so powerful that he could not wish anything else than that this love be effused in others. At this stage of his prayer life, one becomes aware that God is active in him from inside. Father Jordan has experienced this silent action of God's Spirit, otherwise he wouldn't have written these quotations in his diary: *When Paul, who would win the world, went to Rome, bound by chains, God went with him, hidden in his heart as one dwells in a tent.*<sup>173</sup> Or: *"Behold, I am going to Jerusalem, compelled by the Spirit: I beseech you earnestly, I, bound in the Lord."* (Acts 20,22)<sup>174</sup> It is an awakening of the deeper reality of our existence. St. Therese of Lisieux indicates this clearly: "Jesus feeds me at every moment with new food. I find it in me, without knowing how it came there. I simply believe that Jesus Himself is hidden at the bottom of my small heart. In a mysterious way, He keeps busy in me and tells me what to do at each moment." And a bit further, she goes on: "Jesus teaches, without using any words. Just in time, I discover in myself truths that were fully hidden so far."<sup>175</sup>

■ 72

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<sup>172</sup> D II/12

<sup>173</sup> D I/159

<sup>174</sup> D I/170 – see also D II/72

<sup>175</sup> H. Theresia van Lisieux, *Mijn roeping is de liefde*, 1969, pp. 172-173

This inner action of God's Spirit in the heart of a person is not necessarily apparent to the outside world. Hieronymus Jaegen, a bank director in Trier, was blessed with the highest mystical gifts; yet none of his colleagues ever noticed it. The Little Flower had apparently nothing that made her different. Had she not written "The Story of a Soul," out of obedience, we wouldn't have known anything about her now. And yet she wouldn't have been less holy. Who knew that Dag Hammarskjöld was a mystic?

Each mystic follows Jesus in his own way; for St Paul of the Cross, it was the love of the passion of the Lord, for St Francis it was the poverty of Jesus. Even the apostolic zeal of Jesus can permeate a person totally; the great examples here are St Francis Xavierius and St Ignatius of Loyola.

Apparently, Father Jordan also had the gift of healing the sick. One of the sisters of Tivoli was seriously ill. She had asked to pronounce her perpetual vows at the hands of Father Jordan, the Founder. But he was not expected in Tivoli. An inner voice exhorted him to go to Tivoli that very day. Generally, he first went to the fathers. This time, he went first to the sisters. When he heard about the condition and the wish of the sister, he took her vows. Sister Clara Rheinwald died when he was still present. This happened on July 26<sup>th</sup>, 1892.<sup>176</sup>

73 ■

Brother Alexius Berger suffered from serious pains in the throat in so far that he could only take liquid food. They told him: Why don't you go straight to the Founder? He will bless you. When he arrived at Father Jordan's, he told him:

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<sup>176</sup> Sister Liboria Hansknecht, APS N, 3.1.2.46

*“But dear Brother, why didn’t you come earlier? Kneel down!”*<sup>177</sup>  
The founder put both his hands on the brother’s head, blessed him and the next morning, the pain was gone.

The result of God’s many-sided grace is variable and adapts itself to the singularity and the mission of the person. Yet the source is always the same: God’s love for men. On the high feast of All Saints in 1891, the Founder concluded a solemn pact with God where he gave himself totally to the Almighty, hoping that the Creator would help with an iron hand. In his diary, we read that he renewed this consecration on December 21<sup>st</sup>, 1894 when he writes: *Attach yourself closely to the Infinite One and entreat Him to help you. Look for everything from Him who can and will give it!*<sup>178</sup> There is no word that reveals his union with God better than the word he uses here: *Schmiege dich innig*, i. e. “nestle, attach yourself close to” the Almighty, just like a small frightened child clutches its mother. Ardent words with mystical deepness... Later on, Father Jordan put these words in a blue frame. It is the one and only time he did it in his diary, apparently to keep his attention fixed on it.

74

“Attach yourself close to the Almighty”, that is the answer to the prayer of Jesus: “Holy Father, keep them, that you confided to me in your name, so that they be one like us.”<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> Fr. Rudolf Fontaine, APS N, 3.1.2.44

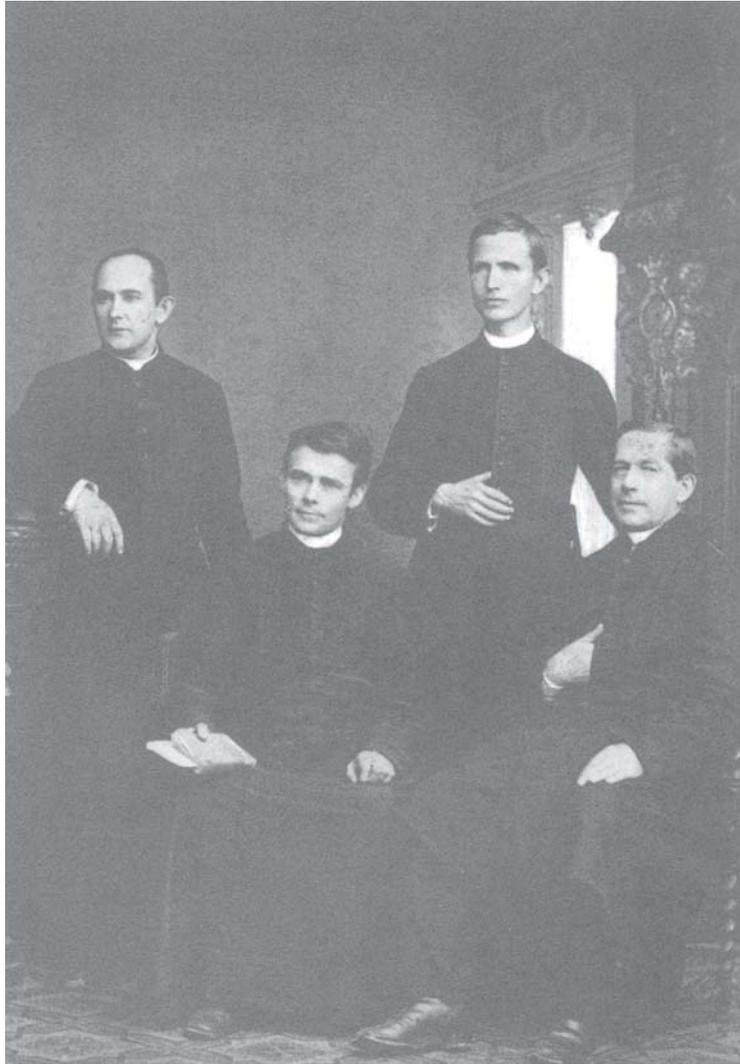
<sup>178</sup> D II/3

<sup>179</sup> Jn, 17, 11

These words of Jesus hold the essence of the Good News, the final destination of men. Hadewijch writes about these words: “These are the friendliest words God ever spoke openly and that we read in the Scriptures.”<sup>180</sup> These words hold indeed the final point and the completion of any spiritual work. Everything is set free and at the same time everything is received in abundance. “Attach yourself close to the Infinite” so that you can be lifted up in a complete union with God.

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<sup>180</sup> *Hadewijch*, Paul Mommaers, 120



*The first members in 1882: (from left to right)  
Friedrich von Leonhardi, Father Jordan, Bernhard Luthen,  
Mgr. von Essen.*

## V

### **The Place of Mary in the Life of the Founder**

#### **1. A childlike piety to Mary**

77 ■

I would not do justice writing about the private life of Father Jordan without mentioning the place of Mary in his life. If we believe that all we possess where grace and salvation is concerned, we possess through Mary, that summarises the life of Father Jordan. His devotion to the Holy Mother of God is based on a mutual attitude of motherly protection and childlike confidence.

This childlike devotion of Our Lady was given him already in his youth. In the archive in Rome we still have a charcoal drawing of Mary with the Child that he made when he was a painter craftsman.

When he was a seminarian, he saw, in a dream, how Mary smiled at him and offered him protection.<sup>181</sup> He writes in his diary: *Never neglect to cherish and to foster a childlike devotion to Mary at all times; let her be your advocate in all things. O Mary, take and accept me as your unworthy servant for all eternity!*<sup>182</sup> When he was in the seminary in Freiburg he introduced the “vivid rosary” and distributed prayer cards where the concerned student found what he had to pray.<sup>183</sup> His test homily as a deacon dealt with the Litany of the Holy Virgin Mary.<sup>184</sup> He always ended his breviary prayers with an antiphon to Mary. On December 8<sup>th</sup>, 1880, he and Joseph Hartmann, his housemate and fellow student in theology, promised, in front of the statue of Our Lady of Everlasting Assistance in the church of the Redemptorists on the Via Merulana, to start the foundation of a new religious community.<sup>185</sup>

78

This mutual relation of motherly protection and childlike confidence is revealed in a wonderful way at the foundation of the Society. Mostly, the foundation of a congregation is attributed to the assistance of Mary. Our Founder did the same, in full conviction. When sending the first missionaries to Assam (India), his adieu was: *Venerate the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Queen of the Apostles and our mother with childlike love and devotion. She has stood by the side of our Society from the very first moment of its inception with her mighty protection and sweet help.*<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> D I/121

<sup>182</sup> D I/120

<sup>183</sup> Dean Josef Blattmann (schoolmate), letter of 20.05.1928 to Fr. Bonaventura Schweizer

<sup>184</sup> DSS XII, 117-121

<sup>185</sup> *Salvatoriaans Jubileumboek*, 106

<sup>186</sup> Chap. 12.12.1890, DSS XXIII, 5

He dedicated his foundation to Mary, when it was only living in his ideas and projects. Just before his ordination as a priest, on July 20<sup>th</sup>, 1878, he writes in his diary: *With the help of God and the assistance of the Blessed Virgin Mary and under her protection, lay the foundation for the Catholic Society as soon as possible; delay no longer than is necessary!*<sup>187</sup>

On March 13<sup>th</sup>, 1880 he put the first draft of the Society on the tomb of the Saviour and wrote in his diary: *Invoke daily the Most Blessed Virgin, the Patroness of the Society.*<sup>188</sup>

When on August 19<sup>th</sup>, 1880, he was praying at the tomb of Saint Canisius in Friburg, it was as if a voice told him: “Go to Einsiedeln. There, everything will become clear.” The day after, he celebrated the Eucharist in the sanctuary and remained there in prayer in front of the shrine till four o’clock in the afternoon. All the dark clouds disappeared and once back in his room, he wrote the outline of his Society.<sup>189</sup>

79 ■

The Reverend Father founded the two communities on the high feast of Our Lady of Immaculate Conception. Father Pancratius asked him: “Why that particular day?” He answered: “*Because God decided so.*”<sup>190</sup> But in “Der Missionär”, Father Bonaventura Lüthen gives a clearer answer: “Let us today invoke Mary with great devotion, so that She who crushes the dragon might help us to combat the devil who is exercising such a great power nowadays on the immortal

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<sup>187</sup> D I/141

<sup>188</sup> D I/153

<sup>189</sup> *Erinnerungen* of Fr. Guericus Burger, APS I, 93

<sup>190</sup> *Chronik des Röm. Scholastikates*, allocution of Fr. Pancratius Pfeiffer on 08.12.1936

souls.”<sup>191</sup> On March 11<sup>th</sup>, 1883 he chose the monastic name Francis Mary of the Cross.<sup>192</sup>

On his desk, there was a statue of Our Lady of Lourdes. In her hands, he always put some small papers with special prayer intentions, for example: “*O Mother, help*” or “*Mother, Narni, save it*”, “*pay the debts*”.<sup>193</sup> We saved 120 of those papers. During his afternoon wanderings towards St Peter, he always went praying in front of Our Lady of the Pillar, and during his stay in Freiburg, he always went for a short walk towards the chapel of Bürgeln.<sup>194</sup>

To mark his confidence in the assistance of his heavenly mother, he generally started each new foundation on one of her feast days. Tivoli on July 2<sup>nd</sup>, Visitation of Our Lady to Elizabeth; Lochau on September 15<sup>th</sup>, Our Lady of Sorrows; St. Nazianz on August 15<sup>th</sup>, Our Lady of the Assumption; Wealdstone on July 9<sup>th</sup>, the Miracles of Our Lady; Hamont on September 21<sup>st</sup>, Our Lady Redeemer of the Slaves.

Each convent had the name “Collegium Marianum”. It was one of his great joys when a bishop entrusted a Mary sanctuary to the Society, such as Noto and Narni. He was eager to free the last father for that purpose. When still alive, the provincials urged him to give up Noto and Narni, because they had no future anymore, but he always resolutely refused.

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<sup>191</sup> *Der Missionär*, 1881, 1

<sup>192</sup> D I/168

<sup>193</sup> DSS XXI, 7-17

<sup>194</sup> Fr. Paulus Pabst to the author

## **2. Characteristics of his devotion to Mary.**

### **a. Austerity**

At a time where the litanies were growing longer and longer and the titles of Our Lady more numerous; Father Jordan maintained a very austere and strict devotion to Mary.

Father Paulus Pabst, novice master at the time, wanted to give the Society a clear-cut Marian character. He taught the novices to do everything “through Mary, with Mary and in Mary”. The twelfth year of the existence of the Society became a Mary year and was closed with a solemn ceremony and a consecration to Our Lady made by the Founder. At the end of the jubilee year of 1893, they introduced the habit of wearing the rosary on the cincture. At the beginning, Father Jordan resisted it because it could be an impediment to apostolate. When he eventually gave in, he wanted just a small rosary like the one we can still see in the archives in Rome.<sup>195</sup>

81 ■

When we collect all the texts of the Founder, we notice that he was very scanty with texts on Mary. Yet Mary was always present in everything he did. He was eager to speak in short about Mary and wrote short exhortations of the increase of the Mary devotion. But he remained very austere and discreet in all this.

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<sup>195</sup> Fr. Dorotheus Brugger to the author

## b. Cordiality.

Father Jordan's devotion to Mary was not the fruit of study or science; it came directly out of his heart. For me, his love to Mary was a pure gift from God. He may have experienced that he was never turned away when he took refuge in Mary with full confidence. Very consciously, he consecrated himself to Mary, hoping that she would unite him more and more with the redemptory work of Jesus. He liked to pray the rosary so much because for him, it was a prayer from the heart. His prayer life had been kept so simple through this childlike piety to Mary. The first followers testify that the piety the Founder showed to Mary was not artificial and was not exaggerated, but that it was spontaneous and natural. In the parlour of the chapel, there was a statue of Our Lady of Sorrows at the foot of the Cross. A father saw him there in prayer, with stretched arms, and murmuring: "Bitte, Bitte!" (please!)<sup>196</sup> For him, Mary was the motherly image of God. According to him, there shouldn't be a single Salvatorian without a tender, soft love and devotion to Mary.<sup>197</sup> For, 'She can show us the way towards Jesus', as the Founder writes in the prayer of consecration of December 8<sup>th</sup>, 1893: *Make us faithful followers of Jesus Your son, and of the saints and apostles, so that we can follow their footsteps till death.*<sup>198</sup>

■ 82

## c. Simplicity

The Founder's devotion to Mary was of an admirable directness. It came from his heart, did not need either logical arguments, nor books: it was carried on by his childlike love.

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<sup>196</sup> Fr. Paschalis Schmid, *Summarium I*, § 1047, p. 233

<sup>197</sup> *Der Missionär*, 1891, 6

<sup>198</sup> DSS XII, 4-5

It is difficult to explain that directness, but, for the one who truly loves, it is not difficult to understand. Everyone can follow this devotion to Mary in his own way, because it transcends human limits. The condition is that this devotion finds its source from and relies on the spiritual foundation of confidence and imitation. His piety was a contagious power totally leavening his life; it was like a leitmotif vibrating in a musical composition in new ways thus making it enjoyable.

### **3. The image of Mary**

Our Founder has his own image of Mary. She has a face resembling Christ's; she has everything Christ is asking us. She is the one Jesus loved the most. After all, everyone has his own image of Mary in his heart. There are as many images of Mary as there are faithful. If we want to describe our Founder's image of Mary, we can do it on the hand of a triptych. In the centre, the image of Mary, Mother of the Saviour, on the sides the image of the Immaculate and of the Queen of the Apostles.

83 ■

#### **a. Mother of the Saviour.**

During his youth, Father Jordan hardly received any signs of love from his own mother. With his two brothers, they were often left to fend for themselves because his mother had to work a lot and hard on the fields.<sup>199</sup>

Through his devotion to Mary, his heart could pour out all the love he could not show in a human way. In his conversations, he liked to call Mary in the Italian way: *la*

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<sup>199</sup> AS I, nos. 129 and 176

*nostra cara mamma celeste*.<sup>200</sup> In his diary, he generally calls Mary: *Mater Dei et Mater mea*. He wanted his followers to venerate Mary with affection and childlike love. *In the Society, there should not be one single person who does not have a tender, soft love and devotion to Mary*.<sup>201</sup> Nowadays, when speaking about Mary, the words “tender, fervent, cordial” may sound questionable. Yet the words of the Founder are not so far away from the enunciations of the Conciliar Fathers who were not afraid to use the same words. The Church asks us to approach Mary with “childlike and pious attachment”, to consider her as “a most loving Mother”<sup>202</sup>, the “generous Mother of the Divine Saviour”.<sup>203</sup> “She takes care of the brothers of her Son with motherly love.”<sup>204</sup>

## b. The Immaculate

84

In the Mary triptych with the central image of the Mother of the Saviour, we have on the one side the image of the Immaculate. Our Founder thought of the image of the Apocalypse: “A Woman, covered by the sun, the moon under her feet and on her head a crown with twelve stars.”<sup>205</sup> She will crush the head of the hellish dragon. For him, Mary was the Woman who must help him in the combat against the dark forces.<sup>206</sup>

The image of the Satan’s combat against the Woman was strongly stressed in the time of Father Jordan. The devil

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<sup>200</sup> Br. Giuseppe Capparella to the author

<sup>201</sup> *Der Missionär*, 1891, 6

<sup>202</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, no. 53

<sup>203</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, no. 61

<sup>204</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, no. 62

<sup>205</sup> Ap. 12, 1-6

<sup>206</sup> See “Statutes of 1882” in *Manna*, Dec. 1881; Chap. 29.12.1895, DSS XXIII, 53

was a reality. The Founder saw him clearly at work in the warlike atheism in Germany and in the fanatic action of the Mason in Italy. Whilst exorcising Brother Felix, Father Jordan experienced the satanic power in a very special way.<sup>207</sup> He was deeply convinced that *hell would turn against a society which has declared open war [against it], and which plans to snatch the souls that it already regarded as won.*<sup>208</sup>

At the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Society, the Founder writes to the members: *Look how violently the devil has combated.*<sup>209</sup>

Nowadays, we hardly use these words or expressions anymore. We don't see the devil at work anymore. When hearing about exorcism, we knit our brows. Yet if we want to stay sober and honest, we can see the evil powers at work nowadays. And to us, Mary is a bright light of hope, as the Constitution of the Church testifies in its epilogue.

85 ■

For Father Jordan, the Immaculate was a sign of faith and hope that good will defeat evil.

### **c. The Queen of the Apostles.**

At the other side we see the image of the Queen of the Apostles. According to the brother who painted this image, Mary is the central point of our apostolate. It is she who sends the missionaries to all parts of the world. It is she who inspires the apostolate of the press. It is she who protects the sisters in their care for the sick and the children. It is she who engenders vocations to the Society. She inspires the

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<sup>207</sup> Fr. Bonaventura Lüthen, "Lucifers Erscheinung in Rom", 29.12.1895

<sup>208</sup> Chap. 15.02.1901, DSS XXIII, 400

<sup>209</sup> DSS X, no. 854

Salvatorians to dedicate themselves with all means and ways so that Jesus would be known, loved and glorified more and more. That is the reason why the Society has the duty of proclaiming Mary's praise in any place it settles.

When in Friburg (Switzerland) because of the war, the Founder wrote to Father Fulgentius Moonen in Rome: *Send me, as soon as possible, the handwritten catalogue of 1915; it is on my table under the feet of the Madonna. But take care that the papers in the hand of the Madonna don't drop.*<sup>210</sup> A nice childlike gesture to express how Mary herself had to protect the members.

The 12<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Society was commemorated in Rome by a solemn celebration in honour of Our Lady with a consecration the Founder himself had written. There he asks: *Make us faithful followers of Jesus, your Son, and of the holy apostles, so that we can follow, faithfully, their footsteps till death.*<sup>211</sup> That was the reason why, as Father Jordan writes, *The Society has to proclaim the glory of Mary wherever it gained a foothold. It should be our sweetest striving to dedicate ourselves so that the glorious Mother and Queen be praised by all generations.*<sup>212</sup>

On September 5<sup>th</sup>, 1891, the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Society, the ecclesiastical authorities gave the Founder the authorisation to consider each first Saturday of the month as a particular day of Mary.

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<sup>210</sup> DSS X, no. 1200

<sup>211</sup> DSS XII, 4-5

<sup>212</sup> DSS X, no. 1112

## VI

### Consumed by Impossible Wishes.

The love of God can become a burning fire in a human. Jesus says: "I came to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it would already be burning."<sup>213</sup> Christ's love and the love of Christ break through all limits and all times. Saint Therese of Lisieux says it also: "I would like to cross the whole earth, proclaim Your name... I would like to proclaim the gospel in the five continents simultaneously till the farthest islands."<sup>214</sup> Impossible and yet sincere wishes.

87 ■

In the same way, Father Jordan wished to proclaim Christ's gospel to all men, and by all possible ways Christ's love inspires. This unquenchable fire knowing neither time nor limits consumed him from the start of the foundation. Universality is the first characteristic of the foundations of Father Jordan. *During Christmas night (1896), an outrageous*

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<sup>213</sup> Lk 12, 49

<sup>214</sup> H. Theresia van Lisieux, *Mijn roeping is de liefde*, p. 162

*urge to save all mankind came over me.*<sup>215</sup> On his name day in 1897, he writes: *I would almost like to say, with a holy assurance, that God's will showed itself to me recently. The Society has a noble mission!*<sup>216</sup>

88 This untameable desire often became a great purification for him. He had the impression that his Society did not meet with his ideal. Moreover, his unbridled zeal for souls was strongly restrained by the apostolic visitor. He was not allowed to found new monasteries, to make any debts, to accept candidates who were not able to pay their board wages. With painful impotence, he saw how each convent, because of the initial difficulties, was caring for itself in the first place and did not think of the totality. The apostolic charism *for all and everywhere* was in danger of disappearing. He also noticed how action threatened to take the upper hand over contemplation. It was a painful experience causing a feeling of disappointment. He went through his own Gethsemane. Father Lüthen writes: "On Whitsun and on the Foundation day, Father Jordan suffered the greatest temptations; he wanted to abandon everything; he was disgusted with the Society which, in fact, he loved so much. It was a terrible situation."<sup>217</sup> Father Jordan writes from Lochau to Father Lüthen on September 3<sup>th</sup>, 1902: *The direction of the Society is hard for me to take, I suffer from it... Unfortunately all this has a bad effect on my spirits and my health. This year I became grey to such a great extent, that this attracted attention to me.*<sup>218</sup> These deep disappointments, especially during the first General Chapter opened on October 6<sup>th</sup>, 1902,

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<sup>215</sup> Notizen, Archives II/3; see *Das Gebetsleben P. Jordans*, 106

<sup>216</sup> Chap. 04.10.1897, DSS XXIII, 127

<sup>217</sup> APS, G, 14

<sup>218</sup> DSS X, no. 617

stirred the desire to create a new congregation. More than before, he was conscious that the apostolate had to be strengthened by prayer. On October 9<sup>th</sup>, he writes in his diary: *O Lord, to You alone may praise be given both day and night. I set a guard over your walls, O Jerusalem: all day and all night they will not cease to praise the name of the Lord.* Two pages further, on November 21<sup>st</sup>, he writes: *A new era is beginning on the feast of the Presentation of the B. Virgin Mary.*<sup>219</sup> When writing this, he is thinking of the new foundation.

How this new foundation should be, is written in a few outlines: *O Lord, for Your glory and for the salvation of souls, according to the intention. I intend to found an Order of holy virgins and an Order of men who will praise Your Name day and night and devote themselves to suppliant prayer to You. O Lord, help me; in You I have hoped, I will not be confounded for ever. (Monks and Nuns) In the Nun's branch there should be choir Sisters and lay Sisters. The religious habit (can be) similar to the oriental. Besides prayer, meditation, the recitation of the Office and practices of penance, they should, when possible, engage in study, but a necessary relaxation should not be lacking.*<sup>220</sup> And further: *Oh, that I could establish in every city at least a group of holy virgins to spend day and night in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, the Saviour of the world, hidden under the appearance of the (Eucharistic) Bread. I can do all things in Him who strengthens me.*<sup>221</sup> A month later, he writes: *O Lord, why have You forsaken me? O almighty God, help me! Rise up to help me! O Lord, You are omnipotent, why do You not help me? In you alone I trust, You are my firmament and my refuge! (January 14<sup>th</sup>, 1903.)*<sup>222</sup> This desire to found a new "order" is very

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<sup>219</sup> D II/40

<sup>220</sup> D II/42-43

<sup>221</sup> D II/44

<sup>222</sup> D II/45

peculiar. He was already faced with the greatest difficulties of solving the problems of his own two congregations. He had already had an apostolic visitor because of his financial management. He was 54 years old, suffered from nerves and from gastric ailments. And the aim of this new congregation to be founded was not so different from those that already existed. He even wanted to recruit the first collaborators of the new foundation from his own congregation. But they were indispensable there. He addressed even his best young priests, who were quite astonished and even worried.<sup>223</sup> They asked for the advice of Fathers Lüthen and Pancratius. But these did not take the projects of the Founder seriously. They already knew about these impossible projects and also about the troubled mind of the Founder. As we can read in his diary, this impulse must have been a continuous source of sufferings and tension. He wanted to do so many things, to extend them and deepen them. It was mostly in the evenings and during the nights that he was tortured by these impossible projects. He sought solace in the prayer: *Dedicate yourself to prayer especially during the evening and by night. Nocturnal prayer – a treasure!*<sup>224</sup> The consequence was that sometimes in the morning he was not rested and therefore strongly stressed and unkind. He could then, in his chamber after breakfast, shout at someone in such a way, that the others fled!<sup>225</sup> This continuous tension between willingness and impotency was for him a source of inner pain. *In You, O Lord, I have hoped, I will not be confounded forever. (January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1903.)*<sup>226</sup>

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<sup>223</sup> Fathers Lukas Klose and Paschalis Schmid to the author

<sup>224</sup> D II/68

<sup>225</sup> Study of Fr. A. Schneble, no. 79/99

<sup>226</sup> D II/45

But even the great friends of God do not always get what they wish. Obviously, Father Jordan knew that too. He writes in his diary: *For the glory of God and for the salvation of souls, establish with the help of God a Society in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary Immaculate. O Lord, help me; I am ready for everything, trusting in You. O Saviour, You who became man for us, arise, help me with Your strong hand! O Mother of God, be my protectress and my powerful helper! (March 24<sup>th</sup>, 1905, Vigil of the Annunciation of the B. V. M.)*<sup>227</sup> And further on, he writes: *No matter how great your interior and exterior sufferings may be, and, oppressed by darkness and fear, there seems to be no escape, trust firmly in God, unite yourself more closely with Him and act unflinchingly according to your resolved purposes. God will not try you beyond your strength and He will bring the matter to a happy conclusion. Always go ahead in the Lord!*<sup>228</sup> This was written on April 9<sup>th</sup>, 1905 and on April 19<sup>th</sup>, he writes: *With the help of God, establish the Society for the glory of God and the salvation of souls! Oh, how much good can be done!*<sup>229</sup> He had to bear this heavy cross for seven years.

91 ■

The last time he was very determined to execute his project was from April 26<sup>th</sup> till 28<sup>th</sup> 1908, when on pilgrimage to Our Lady of Loreto. *The die is cast – united solely with God, accomplish (it) through Christ Jesus crucified. All peoples, races, nations, and so on, all.*<sup>230</sup>

Father Pancratius Pfeifer, who read the book, does not speak a single word about this in his biography. He was a businesslike man, who wanted to avoid, in his biography of

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<sup>227</sup> D II/87

<sup>228</sup> D II/87-88

<sup>229</sup> D II/88

<sup>230</sup> D II/114

the Founder, anything that could unnecessarily give umbrage, but that is the reason why up till now a whole chapter of the Founder's life was kept hidden. Yet the texts of the diary treating about the intention of establishing a new foundation have to be read in that light. Only then we can notice that nearly every note of the diary contains this tension. It has been an inner and personal problem between the Creator and his creature. It was a pain as from a fire that burned in the soul of the Founder. *Rise up like a fire!*<sup>231</sup> It is not by accident that Father Jordan links this immense desire to his "pact".

He writes: *O God Almighty One, show me Your will! Mother of God, my Mother, intercede for me, that I may carry out and fulfill the Pact. (January 8<sup>th</sup>, 1909)*<sup>232</sup>, and further: *O almighty God, help me according to the Pact (January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1909)*<sup>233</sup>, and on February 5<sup>th</sup>, 1909: *Keep in mind the Pact you have made with God! But not under pain of sin.*<sup>234</sup>

■ 92

Because of his great confidence in God, Father Jordan could not be satisfied with just the facts. He writes for himself: *If you wish to obtain something from the Lord, you will obtain whatever you ask through prayer.*<sup>235</sup>

Father Jordan created the core of his prayer out of his "desires". His helplessness in realising his immense desires became a place of encounter with God. Through prayer, the wood became so dry that it has been able to be consumed totally by the fire of God's love.

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<sup>231</sup> D II/44

<sup>232</sup> D II/121

<sup>233</sup> D II/121

<sup>234</sup> D III/1

<sup>235</sup> D II/72



*Bl. Mother Mary of the Apostles  
1833 - 1907  
First General Superior of the Sisters of the Divine Saviour*



*Father Jordan in the year 1900*

## VII

### The Fruits of His Mystical Life

#### 1. Humility as fundament

95 ■

When you first met Father Jordan, you came under the influence of his personality. He was not like any other, he was different.

How was he? That is difficult to define... He never tried to please people and did not act for the sake of appearances. He radiated a certain aura. Everybody felt happy with him, even the simplest man. His unity with God spoke through his whole personality. That made him somehow childlike, unaffected. Father Paschalis Schmid testifies: "The most remarkable impression I remember of Father Jordan is that he always lived with the consciousness that God was living in him. He did not act; God was acting with him and in him."<sup>236</sup> By nature, he had a friendly, joyful and open

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<sup>236</sup> Fr. Paschalis Schmid, *Summarium*, § 1054, p. 235

character. He was always ready for action. He did not allow himself time to be caught up in his ideas. He could share his own experiences with great enthusiasm and emotion, but he regretted that others did not receive them the same way. Once he complained: *“It is just as if a small child came running to announce some good news and got a bucket of cold water on its head.”*<sup>237</sup>

His first confreres testify: “He had an admirable modesty. He loved contradiction.” “He was openhearted and informal; nothing was kept hidden in his speech or in his being. Pretence and lies were unknown to him. His whole being breathed sincerity.”<sup>238</sup> Father Cajetan Oswald writes: “Our Founder was ‘etwas Ganzes’ (something whole)”<sup>239</sup> or, like Father Pancratius Pfeiffer said later, “a true Israelite in whom there is no dishonesty.”<sup>240</sup>

96

Humility was, for Father Jordan, an attitude of whole dependence on God, an acknowledgment that our whole existence is a gift of God. Out of his faithful attitude, he was aware that everything he was and everything he had was thanks to God. Directing himself consciously towards God, any other orientation fell away and all abilities were consolidated.

So Father Jordan knew he was loved by God without limits, and he let himself be dragged into the space of God’s love, of which he could not plumb the origin. He found the

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<sup>237</sup> Fr. Pancratius Pfeiffer, *Salvatorianer-Chronik*, 1918, 180

<sup>238</sup> AS II, no. 138 of the Fathers Ogerius Bartsch, Heribert Winkler, Dunstan Wimmer and Simeon Heimann

<sup>239</sup> Letter from C. Osswald of October 1962, APS, I, 110

<sup>240</sup> Jn 1, 47

way towards God through the experience of his own weakness. He learned to accept his faults and knew he was loved by the Lord, in spite of his weaknesses. Accepting his weaknesses, he was able to modify them. Indeed, one can only modify that, which has been accepted internally. He could not boast of the good he might do which was considered a gift from God. He tried to see everything through God's eyes and to please only God. In the choice of his apostolate, he did not let himself be guided by human criteria of a rich background of efficiency. The region of Assam for example was not wanted by any other congregation, but for Father Jordan it was no reason to decline the offer. The Mary sanctuaries, Noto and Narni, were deficient and had no future; he accepted them, nevertheless, and never expected to abandon them. His simplicity was a kind of naivety without any double meaning. Therefore, it was difficult to discuss any project with him. It is always difficult for someone who is not a saint, to give away everything and consider only God's will.

97 ■

Father Jordan's expectation was that his followers would accomplish their task in the world out of the same simplicity. He described it as "humility". He did not have many or complex explanations about humility. He always repeated the same things and spoke with such conviction that one understood that he was completely submerged in his ideas. *We can do nothing without humility... Therefore, if we really want to achieve great things for our own salvation and for that of our neighbours we must lay a deep foundation of humility. In fact, the higher we want to raise the building of our own salvation and that of others, the more deeply we must dig the foundation. Without humility our works are useless; without a foundation our accomplishments are liable to collapse... You know that just as the valleys soak up the rain, so the humble soak in grace; but no*

*water collects on the mountainsides.<sup>241</sup> The greater the building of our self-sanctification is to be, the deeper the required humility... How can we count on God if we don't possess humility?<sup>242</sup> Lack of humility is the chief danger to your holy vocation! No one loses his vocation through lack of studies or lack of talent, but only through lack of humility! If knowledge is not tempered by humility, obstacles will arise... First, humility. First, virtue! Knowledge comes on its own. Be confident of this.<sup>243</sup>*

The Founder was very much at ease with the scholastics and the novices. They could always enter his room freely and were often waiting together at his door.<sup>244</sup> Father Athanasius Krächan tells us: "As young scholastics, we often went to see him to ask his advice and he always knew how to help us in a father- like and intelligent way."<sup>245</sup> The Founder considered these visits very seriously. At the end, he always invited us to come back with the same words: "*Why don't you come back oftener?*"<sup>246</sup>

■ 98

A simple man knows he is united with God. He lets himself be carried in the wave of God's love for mankind. Father Jordan learned to look at a person as God sees him, and to love him as God loves him. He can then dedicate himself totally to God in order to free himself for the happiness of his fellow people.

Out of his relationship with God, Father Jordan knew that man, essentially, is a poor being who has to ask God for

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<sup>241</sup> Chap. 05.02.97, DSS XXIII, 110

<sup>242</sup> Chap. 09.06.1899, DSS XXIII, 321

<sup>243</sup> Chap. 25.09.1896, DSS XXIII, 72

<sup>244</sup> Fr. Sixtus Kraisser, *Summarium*, § 692, p. 152

<sup>245</sup> Fr. Athanasius Krächan, *Summarium*, § 777, p. 170

<sup>246</sup> Fr. Apollinaris Thoma, *Summarium*, § 910, p. 199

everything. Our first reaction to this enunciation could be: “Is man then so indigent, so little and dependent?” But if we want to think more deeply about this enunciation, it also speaks about the great dignity of man. We can live through God. Being able to live exclusively through God is the deepest poverty, but also the highest nobility. That is our freedom. The opposite of sin is not virtue, but grace. After all, the power of God reaches completion in human weakness. Father Jordan has been able to accept his weakness very consciously: “*I am only a poor sinner*”,<sup>247</sup> conscious that he may live through God’s grace.

Humility is not making oneself artificially little, but the recognition and acceptance of one’s weakness in the confidence that God is meeting me in my impotence. Thus Father Jordan attained profound peace and simplicity. He accepted his impotence and weakness in the certitude that God loved him this way and that he might partake in his omnipotence.

99 ■

## 2. Rocklike confidence in God

When someone is immersed in God’s love, that love brings about first of all a unity of will. Such a one is moved by God like a pen in the writer’s hand. Human certainties lose color to the same extent that we can share God’s omnipotence. *If we want to accomplish great things, then we must also have great trust. Human frailty is so great that we can do nothing without the grace of God. If we are separated from divine help, if we have little or no trust, then what poor creatures we are, we who cannot even pronounce the name of Jesus without*

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<sup>247</sup> Fr. Paulus Pabst, AS II, no. 144

*God's grace? Then how much less will we be able to accomplish great things for his glory!*<sup>248</sup> That is the reason why Father Jordan wanted so desperately never to be separated from God's will. God's will was worth more than his life. That's why he was always praying: "Lord, show me your will". Or: "Speak Lord, your servant is listening; Lord, what do you want me to do?" When he had to take important decisions, he used to complain: "If only I knew God's will." Basically, to be confident in God means to live the alliance with God to its extremes. Very often, we find exclamations such as these ones in his diary: *O Lord, help me, show me the way! Without You I can do nothing. I hope for all things from You. In You, O Lord, I have hoped, I will not be confounded for ever.*<sup>249</sup>

100

*Lord Jesus Christ, here I am, send me to do your work! May your will be done! Speak, Your servant is listening! Do what You will with me whom You have tried exceedingly! Lord, let it be done as You will. Speak, Lord, O Lord, speak!*<sup>250</sup> The more setbacks or tribulations he met, the more intensely he asked for God's help: *Work, suffer, endure, pray, sigh, trust in God, do all – all – all for Him! Oh how good He is toward you. If you could only comprehend this better!*<sup>251</sup> *Live this trust so the Society itself will become all-powerful, and no power of hell, no worldly power will be able to overcome it... If you only trust your own skill, the future will teach you differently... Our help comes from above!*<sup>252</sup> *A man who directs his steps only according to the calculations of human wisdom will never be able to build on the extraordinary help of heaven, he will never accomplish great*

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<sup>248</sup> Chap. 15.06.1894, DSS XXIII, 32

<sup>249</sup> D II/2

<sup>250</sup> D I/146

<sup>251</sup> D II/59

<sup>252</sup> Chap. 27.04.1894, DSS XXIII, 25-26

*things.*<sup>253</sup> *Because he has hoped in me, I will free him. I will protect him because he has known my name. (Ps. 90)*<sup>254</sup>

Father Jordan was always confident in God, and his confidence has never put him to shame. Father Dominicus Daunderer says: “Father Jordan’s confidence was so great, that, considering it more closely, we could consider it as reckless and naïve. I myself have experienced how this confidence in God was several times rewarded in an extraordinary way. One day, he got 30.000 marks from one sole benefactor in Germany, another time 15.000 marks, and several times even bigger amounts, arriving always at the moment when the Society was in the greatest difficulty.”<sup>255</sup>

The day of the foundation, Father Jordan had no money. But Von Leonardi, one of the two who’d have liked to have founded the Society with him, promised to bring him a large amount of gold to start the press. But, on his way to Rome, in Florence, his gold was stolen.<sup>256</sup> So the foundation of the Society lay only in his confidence in God. Notwithstanding opposition, he has been able to found 24 monasteries in 12 different countries. For years, he single-handedly maintained 200 people in the Motherhouse. All the more reason to call the motherhouse “Collegium de Divina Providentia.” For years, he had been living, threatened by bankruptcy. Businesslike arguments were not convincing for him, because the most important factor was lacking: God’s help! When the first father was sent to Hamont in Belgium to found a

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<sup>253</sup> D I/200

<sup>254</sup> D I/162

<sup>255</sup> Fr. Dominicus Daunderer, *Summarium*, § 585, p. 131 and also the letter of Fr. Jordan to Br. Amilian Rempel of 21.09.1913, DSS X, no. 1144

<sup>256</sup> *Die Salvatorianer*, Vienna, 1931, 10

monastery, he asked the founder where he could get the money. The answer of the Founder was: “*God is good and rich, He will help us if we do our duty.*”<sup>257</sup>

This answer of the Founder was no bromide. He meant: *You must do it like this. Yes, everything depends on God, but work as if everything depends on you!*<sup>258</sup>

When he was a scholastic, Father Bonaventura Schweizer heard him saying: “*When you have great confidence, you can experience God’s proximity and this way, you get a vivid relationship with God. Look how good and powerful the Good Lord is. How did I buy the Motherhouse and the college in Tivoli? I don’t remember that we had even 100 marks cash. At present, we have totally paid for Tivoli, and as far as the Motherhouse is concerned, there is so much left that we can pay off the debt without any problem... You should have a great confidence in God.*”<sup>259</sup>

■ 102

In the life of Father Jordan, God proved to be reliable and that it is better to trust God than men. In 1883, he went desperately to Germany to see a friend, because he owed him 4500 marks that he had to pay immediately. Lead by Providence, he went aimlessly to Würzburg. Once there, he celebrated the Eucharist in the morning and implored Mary: “*Mary, you must help me.*” After mass, he was inspired with the urge to visit a well-known priest. He spoke very frankly with this man about his financial worries. He was surprised to hear the priest telling him that somebody had come to see him a couple of days earlier and gave him precisely 4500 marks “for a good cause”. During the afternoon, he read in

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<sup>257</sup> Fr. Fulgentius Moonen to the writer

<sup>258</sup> Chap. 03.12.1897, DSS XXIII, 153

<sup>259</sup> AS II, no. 30

his prayer book: "Look, Mary is our hope. We take refuge with her when in affliction, so that she can free us. She came to help us."<sup>260</sup>

In his annotations, we can read:

1894: *Two people sent me 2000 marks, enough to meet our debts.*

1896, December 25<sup>th</sup>: *The Good Lord has helped Assam in a very special way.*

1897, August 14<sup>th</sup>: *In an unusual shortage of money, our Mother helped us with 4000 marks.*<sup>261</sup>

During the chapter of July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1896, he said: *God has sufficient resources and he always proves this! One example: we had no money for this trip to America and today three thousand marks arrived from Germany from an unnamed person, "For the trip"!*<sup>262</sup>

103 ■

Father Jordan writes to Brother Ämilian Rempel, the mendicant friar, to encourage him: *Last month, I asked someone to make me a "Deo Gratias" rosary with 33 beads, in memory of the 33 years of Jesus; shortly afterwards, the Good Lord sent me 33.000 marks.*<sup>263</sup>

In 1897, when the Founder was seriously sick, the suppliers rushed to claim the money of the overdue accounts.

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<sup>260</sup> *Apostelkalender*, 1920; Fr. Otto Hopfenmüller, DSS IV, 146-147

<sup>261</sup> *Annales Soc. Cath. Instructivae*, 1894.

<sup>262</sup> Chap. 03.06.1896, DSS XXIII, 69

<sup>263</sup> DSS X, no. 1144

Brother doorkeeper put him off, saying: “Confidence in God”. The butcher replied: “Confidence, confidence, I cannot buy oxen with confidence”.<sup>264</sup>

Once the material need was so big that bankruptcy was nearly inevitable. As he often did in such situations, Father Jordan went to the statue of the Mother of Sorrows and remained there praying for several hours. Suddenly, he rose and passed the corridor as if waiting for someone.

The chime rang and he opened the door immediately, something he normally never did. In front of him stood a representative of the order of the Trinitarians, handing over Father Jordan an envelope. He opened the envelope and found 33.000 marks, exactly the amount he needed. Wanting to thank the Trinitarian, he turned around but the man had vanished. Inquiries came up with no result.<sup>265</sup> In his so-called testament, he writes these words as a strong testimony: *Only in God you should put your hope and confidence. He will take up your defense with the power of a warrior. Woe if you rely only on men or worldly possessions. And: Consider confidence in the Divine Providence an eternal inheritance. It fosters you as a loving mother.*<sup>266</sup> Charles Péguy says: “The faith I love most, says God, is confidence.”

■ 104

### 3. Burning zeal for souls

The most charismatic mark of the personality of the Founder was his zeal for souls. In one of his prayers, he calls

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<sup>264</sup> Br. Giuseppe Capparella to the writer

<sup>265</sup> Fr. Bonaventura Schweizer, AS II, 38; Fr. Joseph Klimke, *Summarium*, § 1478, p. 337; Fr. Ogenius Bartsch, AS II, no. 153

<sup>266</sup> APS, B 105

himself “a man of desires”.<sup>267</sup> He was always thinking holistically; he gathered everything in his apostolic love. No country, no nation, no means was excluded. He wanted to use all the means God inspired him with, so that he never came to the end of his plans.

Father Konrad Hansknecht tells: “The Founder was a man of outrageous intensity. When he came to Drognefs, I was ‘kaputt’ each time and I did not know what I was doing, I was so monopolized by his all-demanding nature. We had to think about so many things with him, he proposed so many projects and problems. He was outrageously impulsive and spontaneous.”<sup>268</sup>

When the Spirit has established his home in the heart of a man, we cannot make any distinction between the love of God and the love of one’s fellow man. “God’s love is poured in our heart by the Holy Spirit.”<sup>269</sup> The same love binds us with God and our fellow-man. Father Jordan could not speak with God without speaking of the salvation of men, as he could not speak to people without speaking about God’s love.

105 ■

Out of his unity with the Savior, he saw the world and people in a different way. For the Founder, the vocation to the apostolate was participation in the incarnation of Jesus, the Savior of the world. He was ready to offer his life for all men, because Christ also shed his blood for all men. In man, he saw the reflection of God’s glory, the image of the suffering Christ. In one conversation, he repeated with predilection the words of saint Catherine of Siena: “*If anyone could see the*

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<sup>267</sup> D II/18

<sup>268</sup> Letter of Fr. Donatus Blondé to the writer, 05.12.1956

<sup>269</sup> Rom. 5, 5

*beauty of one single soul, he would wish to die a hundred times each day to save it.”*<sup>270</sup>

In his first rule, he wrote: *The spirit that animates them is the love of God and of fellow-men... Such a love is as a fire blazing, such a big apostolic sacrifice that they offer everything for the salvation of men.*<sup>271</sup>

The Founder likes to speak about fire, because fire also includes everything and does not exclude anything. He prays: *O Lord, that I may always burn ardently for love of You and inflame all. May I be a burning fire, O God, and a flaming torch!*<sup>272</sup> He wanted his disciples to be consumed by the same fire. *O Almighty God, send a flood of holy fire on the people, particularly on my followers; may it continue to burn in their hearts as long as they live till the end of times, to the glory of God and the happiness of people. Increase them as the stars in the sky.*<sup>273</sup>

■ 106

The zeal of souls is always the fruit of prayers. It is not us loving God; He loved us first. This zeal to bring all people to the divine life is also the origin of his vocation as Founder. *O Lord, O Father, O God and Creator, should not those living under the dreadful night of paganism come to know Your goodness and mercy... Jesus Christ, accept me as Your instrument and dispose of me as You will. Look, with the help of Your grace, I am ready to die for You.*<sup>274</sup> He felt, not only the love due to Christ, but also for every man whom Christ died for. He writes in

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<sup>270</sup> D I/169, see also the chapters of 11.05.1894, 08.04.1899, 29.04.1898, 06.05.1898, 27.01.1899 – DSS XXIII.

<sup>271</sup> DSS I,21

<sup>272</sup> D III/20

<sup>273</sup> APS G, 7.5 (autograph, notes of Fr. Jordan); DSS XXI, 5

<sup>274</sup> D I/12

his diary: *As long as there is one person on earth who does not know God and does not love Him above all things, you dare not allow yourself a moment's rest. As long as God is not glorified everywhere, you dare not allow yourself a moment's rest. As long as the Queen of heaven and earth is not praised everywhere, you dare not allow yourself a moment's rest. 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. Let no betrayal, no infidelity, no coldness, no abuse lessen your zeal! But everything through Him, with Him and for Him.*<sup>275</sup>

He wanted to share this apostolic zeal with his followers. He wanted all the members of the Society to share in his concern for souls. On his desk, there was a small terrestrial globe, and when students came to see him, he showed them the countries still waiting for the message of the gospel. In the corridor in front of his room, where the brothers had to wait very often, there were maps with religious statistics. When reading letters from missionaries, the face of the Founder was filled with radiant warmth so that everyone could see the inner joy lighten up his face.<sup>276</sup> The sending out of new missionaries was always a high point of his life, full of inner joy for him. The Founder was happy that most of the scholastics came to see him every second or third week. He always spoke about his apostolic concerns. He said to the young Father Bonaventura Schweitzer: *The world is hungry for priests. We could immediately use a thousand priests.*<sup>277</sup> To father Athanasius Krächan, he complains: *If only I had the*

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<sup>275</sup> D II/I

<sup>276</sup> Fr. Timotheus Moser, AS II, no. 16

<sup>277</sup> AS II, no. 16

*means and the people to help everywhere.*<sup>278</sup> Father Elisäus Gabelseder witnesses: “I always had the impression that our Reverend Founder could not possibly pray in any way than an apostolic way, he immersed himself very deeply in his work. Each of his words seemed to breathe zeal for souls.”<sup>279</sup>

The responsibility of the missionary region of Assam was a heavy burden on his shoulders. Concerning this, he said, during a chapter: *However, let us consider the needs of the world. In the single prefecture of Assam, which is entrusted to us with its population of more than 7,000,000, each hour 30-40 people die without baptism...*<sup>280</sup>

Opening the First General Chapter in 1902, he said: *Finally, most precious sons, remember that the spirit of Christ is a spirit of universality, not of particularity. Because Christ died for all, our Society too has a universal character.*<sup>281</sup> In another chapter, he says: *I am convinced – my heart often tells me – that our Society, if you conform to God’s will, will win many souls for heaven.*<sup>282</sup>

It is strange that our Founder, who was so concerned about the salvation of souls, did not often carry out the practical work necessary for the conversion and care of souls.<sup>283</sup> From 1880 to 1882, he sometimes celebrated the Eucharist in the church of Saint Brigitta and, in May, sometimes the evening service. He never did parochial work,

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<sup>278</sup> AS II, no. 16

<sup>279</sup> AS II, no. 9

<sup>280</sup> Chap. 11.03.1898, DSS XXIII, 198

<sup>281</sup> Address of 06.10.1902, DSS XXIII, 471

<sup>282</sup> Chap. 08.04.1898, DSS XXIII, 207

<sup>283</sup> Fr. Augustinus Borchert, *Summarium*, § 262; Fr. Guericus Bürger, *Summarium II*, § 286

no work for the youth, no home visits; to our knowledge, he never heard confessions but all the same he was an apostle through his burning zeal for souls, given to him from inside and literally consuming him. On his deathbed, he sighs: *O if only I could convert the whole world.*<sup>284</sup>

The Founder feels himself to be a herald who has to summon all living beings for a holy combat. He often feels himself as a prophet of Armageddon; he thinks that the eschatological revelation is imminent. He writes: *Shout mightily like a trumpet through all the regions of the earth, that every creature may hear! Fly as an eagle and as an angel and with a great voice call all the living to the holy battle to fight for the supreme Commander with the army and sublime array drawn up in battle. Rouse and summon the sleepers! Spur the inactive! Shout, shout as the angels who, with the trumpet, convoke the living and the dead to eternal judgment! Fear not, for I, the almighty Lord, am with you and I will be your powerful helper.*<sup>285</sup>

109 ■

#### 4. His love of the cross

When, on Passion Sunday 1883, Father Jordan chose the name “Francis Mary of the Cross” as his religious name, he was, out of his faithful insight, conscious that he could only fulfil his mission as Founder in so far as he entered the mission of Jesus whose cross is the highest expression of his love and self gift. Out of this conviction, he wrote in the diary: *Far be it from me to glory except in the cross of O. L. Jesus Christ.*<sup>286</sup>

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<sup>284</sup> DSS XXI, 19

<sup>285</sup> D I/190

<sup>286</sup> D I/71

Glory in the cross of the Lord Jesus was, for him; to be willing to distance himself from his own performance, of his own will in order to enter “in that state of mind which was in Christ Jesus”.<sup>287</sup> Driven by the love of Christ poured out in his heart, God’s Spirit took possession of his person in such a way that Jesus himself lived his desires of salvation in him. In his first rule, he writes: *The spirit animating the members is the love of God and fellow humans; such a love is like a fire from which such a great apostolic zeal arises that they offer everything, even themselves till spilling their blood if that pleases God.*<sup>288</sup>

Father Jordan loved the cross because it is the source of salvation. It is through the cross that salvation came into the world. The one who wants to bring salvation to the people has to love the cross. Like a reflection on his religious name, he writes in his diary:

110

John Mary Francis of the Cross, therefore:

*The cross is your life,  
The cross is your salvation  
The cross is your crown  
The cross is your glory  
The cross is your hope  
The cross is your shield  
The cross is your protection  
The cross is your portion  
The cross is your joy.  
For it belongs to me to glory in nothing but the cross of  
Our Lord Jesus Christ!*<sup>289</sup>

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<sup>287</sup> Phil. 2, 5

<sup>288</sup> DSS I, 21

<sup>289</sup> D I/179

On the next page he writes:

*Hail O cross!*

*Hail, O cross, (our) only hope.*

*It belongs to us to glory in the Cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ, in which is salvation, life and resurrection. The sign of the cross will be in heaven, when the Lord comes to judge.*

*Behold the cross of the Lord, flee, armies of the adversary: the lion of the tribe of Juda conquers.*

These are biblical words coming directly from his heart. Words wherein the love of Christ and the burdens of the people are merged. For him, the cross is an event of resurrection; joy arises from sorrow, life comes to being out of death, weakness is modified in power.

He writes to Father Bonaventura Lüthen: *Let us keep an eye on the fact that it is our mission to follow the poor, despised, suffering Jesus. O, could that be clearly written in our deepest heart. Then God's benediction will stream down.*<sup>290</sup>

111 ■

He said to the sisters: *Everything we do for the salvation of immortal souls must be grounded in Christ crucified... The cross alone brings us salvation and peace. The more of the cross and humiliations you experience, the more you will accomplish... Whoever fears suffering cannot be an apostle.*<sup>291</sup> *Whoever doesn't want Calvary is useless.*<sup>292</sup>

Through love, he was so united to the cross, that he could write in his diary: *O Cross, O sweet Cross! O Cross which I*

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<sup>290</sup> DSS X, no. 185

<sup>291</sup> Address at the Sisters', 08.02.1904, DSS XXIII, 479

<sup>292</sup> Chap. 24.02.1899, DSS XXIII, 282

*ought to love and prize most ardently on account of Jesus! O delightful Cross! O Cross, great strength! Would that I might truly know how to suffer with my Beloved, Jesus, my God! O desirable and sweetest Manna for those who know it! Oh, to suffer for Christ and with Christ!*<sup>293</sup>

Further on, he quotes: “*Of all the interior gifts which the Holy Spirit pours out into our souls, the most distinguished one is the gift to overcome oneself and to suffer gladly out of love for God.*” (S. Francis of Assisi).<sup>294</sup>

In the general archives, there is a draft of a particular chapter the Founder wanted to include in the Constitutions, but that was rejected by the Congregation of the Religious in Rome because it held too many texts of the Holy Scripture.

■ 112

What the members must know about suffering for Christ!

The members must know that they contribute more to the salvation of souls by suffering a lot rather than through external performances. That is why they must know that they are called to suffer more for Christ than to work towards the external.

They will strive to be able to say with Paul, the apostle of the people: For it is up to me to glory in nothing but the cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ, through which we have been saved and redeemed.

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<sup>293</sup> D I/208

<sup>294</sup> D IV/10

That the sufferings of Christ be a shield, impenetrable and terrifying for the enemy.

*That the members understand how they are ennobled if they make themselves one with Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Crucified!*<sup>295</sup>

These words are like a testament. It was the Founder's desire that that we enter increasingly into the limitless mystery of Jesus' passion on the cross. In his diary he writes: *Why are you afraid to take up the cross, which leads to the kingdom? In the cross is salvation; in the cross is life... In the cross is infusion of heavenly sweetness. In the cross is perfection of sanctity. Take up your cross, then, and follow Jesus, and you shall enter into everlasting life. The whole life of Christ was a cross and martyrdom.*<sup>296</sup>

*The works of God prosper only in the shadow of the cross.*<sup>297</sup>

113 ■

Father Jordan, himself, called the love of the cross his favourite theme for sermons. Indeed, the cross is the sign of God's love towards us. In the weekly chapter, he often spoke repeatedly and with emotion: *Even if you seem to accomplish so much, work upon work, if you don't suffer greatly, then don't count on, don't expect anything!... Through suffering, through patient suffering, you will call down blessings from above!... You know the dear Saviour redeemed the world through his passion! Do we want to choose a different way? It is a well-known principle: an apostolic religious always succeeds in proportion to his sufferings!*<sup>298</sup> *You know that an apostolic laborer accomplishes*

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<sup>295</sup> *Skizzen für das Schuldkapittel, APS G*

<sup>296</sup> *D I/189; Imitation of Christ II, 12*

<sup>297</sup> *D I/163*

<sup>298</sup> *Chap. 04.10.1898, DSS XXIII, 234-235*

*more through sufferings than through efforts. That is why the Divine Saviour said: "I will show him how much he must suffer", not how much he must preach, how much he must work, or how many he must convert... Whoever doesn't want Calvary is useless.*<sup>299</sup>

## 5. His life marked by sufferings

All through his life, the Founder entered more and more into the mystery of suffering. Anyone studying the life of the Founder deeply, reaches this conclusion: this man must have suffered a lot. The growth of his inner life is certainly determined largely by his health. Father Pancratius Pfeiffer writes: "Generally, he rejoiced of a good, although not very strong, health."<sup>300</sup>

■ 114

I think Father Pancratius wanted to obscure, partly, the sickly condition of the Founder. The testimony of his brother, Father Justinianus Pfeiffer, is probably more correct: he testifies that the Founder has been in good health hardly more than a quarter of an hour since his ordination.<sup>301</sup> The Founder does not speak about his physical discomforts. He always suffered from a delicate stomach. Not much has been written about his neuralgia, probably not to weaken the lustre of his personality. His nerves were a source of great discomfort. His secretary, Father Magnus Wambacher, had to rewrite the letters sometimes two or three times. When he lost patience, the Founder admonished him: *Be patient, anything*

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<sup>299</sup> Chap. 24.02.1899, DSS XXIII, 282

<sup>300</sup> Fr. Pancratius Pfeiffer, *P. Jordan*, 400

<sup>301</sup> Fr. Justinianus Pfeiffer, *Summarium*, § 1131, 256

*out of love of God.*<sup>302</sup> Because of his weakened nerves, everything stressed him directly and strongly, so that Father Bonaventura Lüthen would say: “We cannot imagine what he must suffer.”<sup>303</sup>

It is not very clear from which disease Father Jordan died; maybe it was stomach cancer? What tormented him during his last years bears a strong likeness with the Parkinson illness. A heavy respiration, trembling hands and the stiffening up of the fingers are some of the symptoms. Once he had crossed 50, he rarely celebrated the community mass, because, at the communion, his hand remained blocked in the mouth and his fingers stiffened in such a way that he could not release the host.<sup>304</sup> That is why he generally celebrated mass in the small chapel. For him, the homilies of the section of the mass and the breviary were a real torture because of his scruples. He didn't like to pray the breviary alone. That is why he was generally aided by a confrere.<sup>305</sup> Father Jozef Bergmiller tells: “One day, when the Founder was terribly agitated because of financial problems, I told Father Damian: You'll pray the breviary with the Founder today, you are the quietest. Afterwards Father Damian told me that he had not been able to pray either. The Founder had been so nervous that he was trembling and groaning out of tension. He, himself, had tears of compassion in his eyes.”<sup>306</sup>

115 ■

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<sup>302</sup> Fr. Magnus Wambacher, *Summarium I*, § 1230-31, 278

<sup>303</sup> Fr. Pancratius Pfeiffer, *P. Jordan*, 401

<sup>304</sup> Brothers Giuseppe Capparella and Gabriele Manni to the author

<sup>305</sup> Br. Giuseppe Capparella and Fr. Lucas Klose to the author

<sup>306</sup> AS II, 86

Father Ambrosius Suter tells of a time when he served dinner in Drogens (CH), when the Founder was on a visit. The Founder was suddenly shocked by such a twitch that he dropped the serving dish with the meat.<sup>307</sup> The Founder could absolutely not stand thunderstorms. He was not able to stay in his room then and would walk around in the forecourt; his hair was so electrically loaded that it seemed to be sparkling.<sup>308</sup>

In the evening, his spirit was very alive and so active in thinking and planning that he could not fall asleep. In the morning, he was not wide-awake and was unsupportable and awkward until breakfast. The tension between “will” and “not being able” was a continuous source of inner suffering for him. So we can read in his diary: *O Jesus, I am suffering great trials. O Lord, show me the way I should walk.*<sup>309</sup> *O Lord, almighty God, how I am constrained! See, here I am. Behold the blood of Your Son.*<sup>310</sup> Or: *Great suffering and affliction which abated this evening. Interior and exterior suffering.*<sup>311</sup>

■ 116

When someone said something, our Founder would react violently and fiercely even before he had heard the complete sentence. He thought it was terrible that he often hurt people by such fierce and sudden reactions initially. During the second General Chapter he left the meeting hall in a bad mood, mumbling: “Gemein”.<sup>312</sup> The Founder has had to learn to accept these weaknesses without becoming

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<sup>307</sup> Fr. Ambrosius Suter to the author

<sup>308</sup> Br. Giuseppe Capparella to the author

<sup>309</sup> D II/70

<sup>310</sup> D II/94

<sup>311</sup> D II/55

<sup>312</sup> DSS XIV II, 819

dispirited or rebelling against them. Maybe it seems a bit strange, but most of the members did not bother about these human weaknesses.

In a chapter, Father Jordan spoke about the quadruple chalice each apostle has to drink. It is our mission to drink the chalice our Lord is drinking. And how shall we drink it?

First we will receive it from hell, from the opponent of salvation, from the fierce enemy... who hates us and pursues us when we work to destroy his empire and spread the kingdom of Jesus Christ... But this cup is one of the easier ones to endure.

A more bitter cup comes from evil people. That is the second point: to be pursued by those evil people who attack us because we confront their passions.

117 ■

The third cup an apostolic person must drink and which is much more bitter is the one prepared for him by good people when they misunderstand him, his plans and his intentions; when, as a result of this, people believe they are doing something good when they obstruct them. That is the third cup, but not yet the most bitter.

*The last, if God should pass it to you, is when even those appointed by God to support and guard you, even the church authorities, lay obstacles in your path. This is the fourth and most bitter!* <sup>313</sup>

Everybody knows that Father Jordan spoke in this chapter about his experiences with the cross he had to bear himself. He knew the ambushes of the devil; that was his first cross. In his diary, he writes: *The devil likes to disturb prayer and offers resistance with devilish fury against interior and higher prayer, against great works for the salvation of souls, against the thought, desire and striving to become holy, against reasonable works of penance and mortifications of every kind.*<sup>314</sup> On the occasion of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, he writes: *You know how the enemy carried on!*<sup>315</sup>

His second cross was his anxiety, and especially his fear of sin. *I don't want to sin* were the words he used continuously. He even tried to avoid the shadow of sin. Till his deathbed he repeated *nolo peccare*: I don't want to sin.<sup>316</sup>

■ 118 His confessor advised him not to go to confession unless with a known confessor, because of this anxiety.<sup>317</sup>

This anxiety was the more painful for him because it made it difficult for him to bear the final responsibility as a general superior. That is why Father Bonaventura Lüthen was God's gift for him. The Founder would go to his room several times every day to ask: *Can I be quiet?* Father Pancratius Pfeiffer writes: "One must have strong nerves and a lot of patience to listen to him quietly so that he could get rid of his doubts". It seems it was a time-consuming occupation. But the Founder would say: *You have to be patient, God has permitted this.* Father Bonaventura Lüthen commented: "The

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<sup>314</sup> D I/91

<sup>315</sup> DSS X, no. 854

<sup>316</sup> DSS XXI, 30

<sup>317</sup> Fr. Conrad Hansknecht, AS II, no. 43

Founder would have gone too far with his burning temperament and his unbridled impulse of enterprise.”<sup>318</sup>

The third chalice was his followers. Young scholastics complained about him to the visitor; confreres set one another against him and tried to remove him through the elections. During the General Chapters they acted with the slogan: “Away with the Founder!” At the General Chapters of 1902 and 1908, during the election of the general superior, he only got the absolute required majority in the third round. He had to watch how many young priests, who had studied at the cost of the Society, were searching for a bishop to become a diocesan priest as soon as they were ordained. In a circular, he writes how painful that was for him: TEXT<sup>319</sup>

The fourth painful chalice is his suffering under the Church. Very comprehensible! Suffering under the Church is inevitable, because there has never been and never will be an ideal Church as long as it is run and peopled by human beings. The Church is a Church of humans, a Church of sinners. Even holy people have had to suffer under the Church, like Saint Francis, Saint Catherine of Siena, Saint Peter Canisius, Newman and Blaise Pascal. The Founder had to suffer, because his universal vision did not agree with the Roman centralism. He had to experience the stiffness of the ecclesiastical authority that paralysed and slowed down his spiritual dynamism. Suffer under the Church means: suffer under rusted ecclesiastical structures. By trial and error he had to learn how to manage conflicts with the ecclesiastical authority. His apostolic zeal has been tied up by the ecclesiastical structures.

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<sup>318</sup> Fr. Pancratius Pfeiffer, *P. Jordan*, 400-406

<sup>319</sup> DSS X, no. 627

The cardinal vicar of Rome told him in 1885: “The Holy Father has been told a sea of slander about you”<sup>320</sup> The rule which, according to him, he has written under God’s inspiration has been replaced temporarily by the rule of an outsider. He got a papal visitor who had been able to clip the wings of all his great projects for twenty years. It was forbidden to accept poor students, to found new convents, to negotiate loans without his permission. That was the bitterest chalice.

Father Jordan drank the chalice of suffering with courage, without complaining, without getting bitter, because he was convinced that *the works of God prosper only in the shadow of the cross*.<sup>321</sup>

120 Concerning the doctrine of the Church, he gave his approval radically and totally. In 1901, he writes on the top of the first page of his diary: *I approve what the holy Church approves and reject whatever the Church rejects. As far as the law on fasting is concerned, he tried to obtain dispensation for his scholastics. He never prescribed the more severe penances like wearing a hair shirt and nightly watching, which were customary in those days. He understood that the Church is constructed on the love of Christ and the mutual love of the Christians. In his diary, he quotes the words of Pius X: “We cannot build the Church on the ruins of charity.”*<sup>322</sup> He was eager to give up everything else for unity and love.

At the end of his life, he wrote on a special page of his diary a kind of résumé of his complete faith, thinking: *I firmly*

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<sup>320</sup> DSS XIV, 496

<sup>321</sup> D I/163

<sup>322</sup> D III/4

*believe all that the holy, Roman Catholic Church believes and presents for belief. I want to live and to die in this holy, Roman, Catholic faith. If I have done, said or thought anything in my life against the holy, Roman, Catholic faith, of if anything should have happened in any way whatsoever against it through those under my charge, I herewith retract it and reject it. Friburg, Switzerland – January 5<sup>th</sup>, 1916. Fr. Francis M. of the Cross Jordan.*<sup>323</sup> These are the words of a man who entirely reconciled himself to life.

## 6. The love of the Holy Scripture

Our spiritual life is nurtured not only by the divine Bread, but also by each word coming from God's mouth. The faithful reading of the biblical texts is an ideal preparation for inner prayer. Saint John says pertinently: The miracles you find here were written so you believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God and so that you can have life in his name through your belief.<sup>324</sup>

121 ■

The faithful reading of the Scriptures has the power to give us the same inner enlightenment as was given to the first apostles. The divine Word we pick up during the homilies and prayer will permeate more and more our daily life “to irradiate the knowing of his glory in the face of Christ.”<sup>325</sup>

When he was in the synagogue in Konstanz (1870-1874) Father Jordan chose quite early the study of Hebrew and at the end of his studies in the synagogue, he was able to read the Hebrew Bible quite well. At the university of Freiburg

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<sup>323</sup> D IV/15

<sup>324</sup> Jn 20, 31

<sup>325</sup> 2 Cor 4, 6

(1874-1877) he studied the original texts in Hebrew and Greek and got the evaluation: “excellent and extraordinary zeal”.<sup>326</sup> The bishop would have liked that Father Jordan obtained a doctorate in eastern languages so that he could hold a chair at the Freiburg University.

As a seminarian, Father Jordan was already conscious of the particular power of God’s word: *Finally, I will read the Sacred Scriptures with the greatest reverence and devotion, not passing over it quickly, but reading with a spirit that is quiet and attentive, especially to the things that are useful in making me humble myself.*<sup>327</sup> *Always read the Sacred Scriptures with great reverence, and on your knees, at least when you are alone.*<sup>328</sup> Elsewhere, he writes: *Put a lot of effort into meditating on the Sacred Scriptures, learning it, contemplating on it; using a good commentary like Maldonati, Cornelius a Lapide.*<sup>329</sup> *Study the Sacred Scriptures intensely! May you serve God alone; may you nourish and strengthen the soul with these three things: the Bread of Life – meditation – spiritual reading. Rome, Nov. 27, 1878.*<sup>330</sup>

■ 122

He sought his apostolic spirit that always characterized his Society in the Scriptures. He sought inspiration in order to know God’s will. He stated the fundament of the Society on four texts of the Holy Scriptures. They are the title of his first publications.

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<sup>326</sup> DSS XII, 61

<sup>327</sup> D I/68

<sup>328</sup> D I/68

<sup>329</sup> D I/139

<sup>330</sup> D I/150

“This is eternal life; for men to know you, the only true God, and to know Jesus Christ, whom you sent”<sup>331</sup> “Those who are wise shall shine as the brightness of the expanse; and those who turn man to the righteousness as the stars forever and ever”<sup>332</sup>

“Go, then, to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples: baptize them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you.<sup>333</sup> “Look, we have left everything and follow you. What will we have?”<sup>334</sup>

Although the Founder was able to read the Holy Scriptures in the original language, the Scriptures were never the objects of pure study for him. He wanted to learn to know Jesus through it. One of his first prescriptions for his followers was: *They will read a chapter of the Holy Scriptures every day.*<sup>335</sup>

123 ■

## 7. The Pact with God.

In Father Jordan’s diary, we find three remarkable pages, namely in part I from page 202 to A204. They were so worn-out that they were stuck together with adhesive paper. He writes these pages on All Saints day 1891; they are a kind of “pact” with the Almighty. On the right upper corner, he noted five more dates later on, probably because on these days, he renewed that pact very consciously: 30.10.1892 – 21.12.1894 – 16.11.1897 and 8.1.1909. Finally, on April 20<sup>th</sup>, 1903, he copies once more the whole text in his diary.

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<sup>331</sup> Jn 17, 3

<sup>332</sup> Dan 12, 3

<sup>333</sup> Mt 28, 19

<sup>334</sup> Mt 19, 27

<sup>335</sup> Rule 1882/DSS I, 24

Today on the Feast of All the Saints, this Pact was made between the Almighty and His lowliest creature.

- 1) The said creature gives himself totally and for ever to his almighty Creator.
- 2) The creature gives and will give to his Creator, whatever the Creator has given, gives and will give to him.
- 3) The creature, trusting with all his powers in the help of the Almighty, not in that of man, submits to His reign the whole world, i.e., all persons who now or later live, so that they may know, love and serve Him, and themselves find salvation.
- 4) The creature will lead also the irrational creatures to the service of the Almighty.

■ 124

- II. The creature confidently expects from the Almighty these graces, through the merits of Our Lord Jesus Christ and the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary:
  - 1) The Creator will clothe his creature with great sanctity, above all, with humility so that, as far as this is possible, he may be a useful instrument of Divine Providence and may faithfully fulfill his promises, and after this life He will receive him into eternal life.
  - 2) *The Creator, in His omnipotence, will assist His creature with a strong arm, to accomplish what he has proposed.*<sup>336</sup>

How seriously he considered this “pact” is to be found in the various references he makes to it in 18 years, for example: *No matter what sufferings break out over you, always*

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<sup>336</sup> D I/202-204

*go ahead in the Lord according to the purpose on page 52, trusting in the Lord with the greatest confidence. (18.09.1904)<sup>337</sup> One year later, he writes: Command in such a way that one obeys gladly. O God, help me according to the Pact! (01.07.1905)<sup>338</sup> He speaks about “our Pact” – between the creature and the Creator, and later: Go ahead and act courageously according to the Pact, confiding in almighty God, who will free you from all your enemies and so forth. (30.12.1906)<sup>339</sup> Or: O God, almighty One, show me your will! Mother of God, my Mother, intercede for me, that I may carry out and fulfill the Pact. (08.01.1909)<sup>340</sup> O almighty God, help me according to the Pact; I have hoped in You, I will not be confounded for ever! (22.01.1909)<sup>341</sup> Keep in mind the Pact you have made with God! But not under pain of sin. (05.02.1909)<sup>342</sup> The pact has everything to do with his irresistible impulse to create a new congregation. O Mother of God, my Mother, intercede for me. O Lord, I trust in You. May your grace help me; I can do all things in You who strengthen me. Show Your power and raise up a new (holy) phalanx. (20.02.1909)<sup>343</sup> Later, he does not refer to the pact, again because he does not refer any more to the foundation of a new congregation.*

125 ■

Several times, God has made a covenant with His creatures. With Adam, through the tree of good and evil as a visible sign. There have always been people who made a covenant with their Creator, mostly in the form of a consecration. For example, Saint Theresa of Lisieux and Saint

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<sup>337</sup> D II/79

<sup>338</sup> D II/91

<sup>339</sup> D II/104

<sup>340</sup> D II/121

<sup>341</sup> D II/121

<sup>342</sup> D III/1

<sup>343</sup> D III/1

Elizabeth of the Trinity, who, in the same way gave an answer to the deeply experienced love of God. The same way, the pact of our Founder has been written out of the deepest of his being; out of an abundance of love finding its source in God himself, as he writes: *May God, who has given the will, also grant the accomplishment!*<sup>344</sup> It is the love of God itself streaming continuously in him, pushing him to a complete kenosis so as to be able to live totally through God's love so richly poured out in his heart.

It is surprising that the different confreres, having written about the spirituality of the Founder, and having read the spiritual diary hardly mention this pact. In the light of all that we know about the founder, this is indeed surprising. If we want to consider it humbly and in an accepting manner, it is really revealing, even if it raises some questions that are difficult to answer.

■ 126

Only out of the mystical experience of the Founder can an answer be given. For him, the whole of creation is permeated with God's love: Jesus, the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end of all creation. The Founder shows a certain kinship with the spirituality of Saint Francis who saw a reflection of God's glorious love in all creation.

In 1877 already, we find a prayer in his diary where he confesses in front of the heavenly court and all the creatures that there is nothing good in him and that is why he testifies that all good in him comes from God: *Lord Jesus Christ, my Saviour and Redeemer, God alone, one and triune, ineffable and incomprehensible for ever! Oh, a most wicked sinner am I before You; my God, on my knees I confess before you and before the*

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<sup>344</sup> D I/203

*whole heavenly court, before all creatures, that of myself I am so deeply evil; neither can I effect any good whatever without you, my Lord and my God; wherefore, before You and before all creatures, I declare that whatever good is in me is from You, and whatever good I have done or may do, it is with Your help that I have done it, am doing it or will do it. To you alone honour, strength and glory from all creatures for ever and ever. Amen.*<sup>345</sup> That speech about the Creator and creatures is also strange; it is talking from distance, smallness and dependence but it also says that he is united with God through a mystical unity, together with all creation, that he considers a reflection of God's glory.

When reading the whole text, it is the unity with God that strikes one most. Only this unity with God can give a key to this mystical text. In the pact, we find his preferred words, loaded with such a dynamic intensity that we don't find elsewhere. "Totally", "with all his powers", "always and always", "all people", "know Him", "love, serve and find salvation in this way". He can contract this pact only because he is convinced that God, who gives the will, shall also grant the ability to achieve. This is not about two equal partners; the pact emanates from the weaker one but is the answer to the experience of God's love and fidelity. Creator and creature are linked to one another. He knows that God is head and shoulder: the strongest. Being part of creation, he wants, on behalf of humanity and all beings, to give an answer to God's love so that it will come back in the plenitude of the eternal being. God alone can bring that pact to fulfilment. Indeed, it is only out of pure love that God can contract a covenant with men. One experiences something from that unbridgeable

distance between the Creator and the creature. Usually, God contracts the covenant; here, it is the creature that binds itself so to make God known, loved and served by all men and the whole creation. The creature will not appropriate for itself anything of what it has received or will receive. Everything will be lifted up in the limitless love of the origin. That is why he hopes that the Creator will enrich him with great holiness becoming clear in great humility, giving all glory back to God.

The favours Father Jordan obtained through prayer from the Creator gave him a foretaste of the complete unity with God: *The said creature gives himself totally and for ever to his almighty Creator, and after this life He will receive him into eternal joys.*<sup>346</sup>

128 It is remarkable that our Founder places so strongly the active and the passive aspect opposite each other. He writes: The creature... 1) gives himself totally; 2) gives to his Creator whatever He has given, gives and will give to him; 3) the creature trusts in God's help; 4) the creature will lead the aberrant creatures to the service of God.

On the other side he stresses even more the passivity involved in the pact: 1) the creature hopes that the Creator will clothe him with great sanctity; 2) the Creator will receive his creature into eternal joys; 3) He will assist his creature to accomplish what he has proposed. In the power of the Almighty he chooses the way of kenosis like a process of purification. He gets out of himself so that he knows that he is carried by God's creative power.

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<sup>346</sup> D I/202-203

Father Jordan has an insight into God's bottomless love. How deep I might descend into God's love, I will never reach the bottom because there is none. God's love is bottomless. Father Jordan reached this dizzy bottomless abyss in his prayer. Therefore, all these exclamations, these sighs, the feeling of impotence in expressing himself. He always felt more than he could express.

It remains an enigma how the Founder came to this pact which influenced his life so strongly. We don't know where he got the inspiration, what was its cause.

## **8. Then 'Intentio Societatis'**

As soon as the Founder was back from his voyage to the Holy Land, he wrote a basic text in his diary that he called "Intentio Societatis", i.e. the aim and orientation of the Society.<sup>347</sup> First of all, he writes a prologue as he has often done, wherein he explains his own vision about the Society:

129 ■

### **Orientation of the Society**

That it prosper greatly and spread everywhere and accomplish much for the honour of almighty God and for the salvation of souls, and that it be without blemish or wrinkle, pleasing to God and serving Him alone.

O how great was the fervour of all the religious at the beginning of their holy institute! How great was their devotion in prayer! How great their zeal for virtue! How fervent the discipline that was observed. (Imitation of Christ I, 18)

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<sup>347</sup> D I/157

Afterwards, there were eight quotations of the Scripture that must lay down the fundament of the apostolic life and give shape to the imitation of Christ. His inspiration as Founder is found in the Holy Scripture. He is a living example of some of his favourite texts that will serve as a guideline his whole life through.

Praying, he noted the following texts: *Follow me and I will make you fishers of men; and they left their nets at once and followed Him.*<sup>348</sup>

He builds the apostolic mission on this call of the Lord. God always has the initiative. We can only give an answer to his call.

130 *Everyone who has left home or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands for my name's sake shall receive a hundredfold and shall possess everlasting life.*<sup>349</sup> The condition which precludes being an apostle of the Lord is the apostolic abandonment of any possession. The one who loves someone or something more than the Lord is not worthy of Him. That was his total conviction of faith. The Founder wanted a total and radical abandonment, whole and complete. That was the evangelical disposition.

*Go, stand in the temple and announce to the people all the words of this life.*<sup>350</sup> The Founder was probably very familiar with those words, because he repeats them later in the Apostolic Rule.

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<sup>348</sup> Mt 4, 19-20 – D I/157

<sup>349</sup> Mt 19, 29 – D I/157

<sup>350</sup> Acts 5, 20 – D I/158

*They that are learned shall shine as the brightness of the firmament and those who instruct many to virtue will shine like the stars for all eternity.*<sup>351</sup> That has always been one of his favourite texts: “Shine like the stars of the firmament”. We have to give testimony of the joyful hope living in us.

*No one will receive the crown unless he has competed according to the rules.*<sup>352</sup>

*No one fighting for God entangles himself in worldly affairs.*<sup>353</sup> The idea of a struggle, fighting for the faith, being a soldier of Christ was something personal to the Founder. Later on, he let himself be inspired very often by the combative ideas of Saint Ignatius: to combat under the banner of Christ against the devil.

*Obedience is better than sacrifice.*<sup>354</sup> And he adds the words of Saint Jerome: *Obedience is the greatest liberty; the one who attains it can scarcely sin any more.*

131 ■

*Christ was obedient unto death, even death on a cross.*<sup>355</sup>

When meditating these eight texts, we can somewhat distinguish how Father Jordan thought of his foundation. A loyal and complete imitation of the Lord, a radical and apostolic way of life, complete abandonment of worldly things, total dedication to the Kingdom of God. The Founder must have been hard hit, when in 1902; the ecclesiastical

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<sup>351</sup> Dan. 12, 3 – D I/158

<sup>352</sup> 2 Tm 2, 5 – D I/158

<sup>353</sup> 2 Tm 2 4 – D I/158

<sup>354</sup> I Kgs 15, 22 – D I/158

<sup>355</sup> Phil. 2, 8 – D I/159

authorities issued a declaration of prohibiting the inclusion of scriptural texts in the constitution.

## 9. The Apostolic Rule

The so-called Apostolic Rule<sup>356</sup>, totally permeated with quotations of the Scripture, was characteristic of his love and knowledge of the Scripture.

Reading it, we are struck by the numerous texts of the Scripture:

*Beloved ones, (Pe 2, 11)*  
*teach all people, (Mt 28, 19)*  
*most of all the children,*  
*to know the true God*  
*and the One He sent, Jesus Christ. (Jn 17,3)*  
*I beseech you in front of the face of God*  
*And have Jesus,*  
*Who will judge the living and the dead?*  
*At his apparition a kingship: (2 Tim 4, 1)*  
*Proclaim the word of God. (Heb 6, 5)*  
*Insist in convenient or inconvenient times;*  
*Admonish and teach with great patience.*  
*Go and tell the people with perseverance*  
*all the words of eternal life. (2 Tim 4, 2)*  
*Proclaim and write the heavenly doctrine to all, without*  
*stopping. (2 Tim 4, 17)*  
*That is the will of God, (1 Theses 4,3)*  
*Beloved,*  
*That all know the eternal truths. (Jn 17, 3)*

■ 132

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<sup>356</sup> DSS I, p. 33/Rule of 1884

*I beseech you not to abandon  
Proclaiming the intentions of God, (Ac 20, 27)  
So that you could say with St Paul:  
“I am guiltless of the blood of whomever”. (Ac 20,26)  
Don’t stop admonishing everybody day and night,  
Even through their tears.  
Let not any opportunity escape  
To proclaim and teach the doctrine of God  
To all, publicly and from house to house. (Ac 20, 20)*

Father Jordan uses a chain of biblical texts wanting to write his most intimate ideas. He is completely hidden behind the words of the Lord. So the rule has a particular authority for us, because it leans on the word of the Lord and on the tradition of the first Church. The Founder considers himself a prophet who has to proclaim the message in God’s name: he uses the words of Saint Paul: “I beseech you in front of the Face of God and of Jesus”<sup>357</sup> That is what makes this rule so worthy for us.

133 ■

The Apostolic Rule is not a result of intellectual reflection or a measurement of ability. The Founder wrote that charismatic text out of an inner experience. On May 31<sup>st</sup>, 1901 he said in a chapter: *I can tell you that no rule I have written gave me so much heavenly solace as the one I wrote down before the Most Holy. Tears of bliss overcame me, as if to confirm that this is God’s will.*<sup>358</sup>

Heavenly approval is often different from an ecclesiastical one. The Founder wrote this Rule in 1884. When

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<sup>357</sup> 2 Tim 4,1

<sup>358</sup> Chap. 31.05.1901, DSS XXIII, 431-432

he asked for the approval of the constitutions in 1886, this very rule concerning the apostolate was removed by Mgr. Jacquemin, the ecclesiastical visitor, because it contained too many quotations from the Scripture. He was too charismatic. Constitutions have to be written in clear and precise judicial terms. In the edition of the constitutions of 1888 this Rule has been restored under pressure from the Society. In 1896, it disappears definitively from the constitutions.<sup>359</sup> After the Council the constitutions have been revised and the Apostolic Rule, during the general chapter of 1981, was added as the prologue to the constitutions and was approved as such by the ecclesiastical authorities in 1983. Nowadays, this Rule adorns the constitutions as a foreword, because it is not so much an assignment that has to be executed totally as a spiritual attitude that must animate us anywhere and in everything.

134

*Beloved* is the starting word used by Father Jordan in his Apostolic Rule, and he repeats these words twice in the middle of the text as an exceptional expression of his fatherly feelings. He does not give any directives to his followers, but he is appealing to his sons out of a deep commiseration of his apostolic heart. Apparently, it is the only time he speaks so heartily in the constitutions to the members of the Society. Whilst the text of the Lebanon refers to the universality of the objective, “that all may know you”, this testament refers to the universality of the salvation. The word “all” appears nine times in different gradations.

This Apostolic Rule is as it were the answer to the Lebanon experience. Here also, the words “eternal life” and

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<sup>359</sup> Fr. Paulus Pabst to the author



*Picture of Fr. B. Luther, the right hand of Fr. Jordan.  
1846-1911*



*Fr. Pancratius Pfeiffer,  
successor of Fr. Jordan and the General Superior  
1915-1945*

“to know the true God” are clearly mentioned in the foreword, as in the Constitutions of 1882 and 1884.

## 10. His Spiritual Testament

The so-called Spiritual Testament<sup>360</sup> is one of the most charismatic writings of the Founder, together with the Apostolic Rule. It is a holograph writing in Latin, on a spare sheet of paper. There is no date, just a title: “Rom, Borgo Vecchio, 165\* Generaldirektion der Katholischen...” and bearing the title underlined “Testament”. In the first lines of this document, Father Jordan called it “his last will”.

Substantial data proves that this document has certainly not been written at the end of his life. There are different opinions as far as the date and the motivation is concerned, based more on suppositions than on facts. There is no concluding argument to link this Testament with the separation of the first sisters (1885) or with the serious illness of the Founder (1897).

137 ■

What makes the Testament so striking is the fact that we can find it almost completely in the famous will of Saint Francis of Siena.

In the 6<sup>th</sup> month preceding his death, he was then 45, April 1226; Hugolinus brought Francis to Siena, to see a famous specialist. One night, he became deadly sick and they feared he would die. Brother Benedictus was called from Prato and Francis dictated to him a benediction for his brothers. This testament counts only five verses and can thus not be

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<sup>360</sup> AGS B, 105

confused with the will Francis wrote a few months later in Portiuncula, numbering 45 verses.

The Siena Testament must have been in Father Jordan's spirit, because some sentences are taken literally in the text of the Founder.

We give here the text of Father Jordan's so-called Testament and we add at each point the reference to the Testament of Saint Francis.

#### Greetings and benediction to all brothers

Last will of Father Francis Mary of the Cross-to his spiritual sons, living now or at any future time in the Society:

■ 138

“Note how I bless all my brothers, who are now in the order or who will reach it till the end of the world.” (1<sup>st</sup> verse of St. Francis' Siena Testament)

1. Consider as eternal inheritance the confidence in the Divine Providence. It fosters you carefully like a loving mother. (Cfr. Ps 54, 23 – Ps 77 – Mt 6, 25 – I Pe 5, 7)
2. I deposit in your hands sustained poverty like a valuable treasure and an exceptional pearl that God will re-claim from you at the judgment day. (Mt 13, 44 – Mt 2, 36.)

“May they always love and sustain our lady of holy poverty?” (4<sup>th</sup> verse of the Siena Testament)

3. Put your hope and confidence only in God. He will take up your defence with the power of a battling hero. (Jr 20, 11 – Ec 4, 33)

4. **Woe if you trust only people or worldly possessions.**  
(Jr 17, 5 – 7)  
  
Stay conscientious and loyal sons of our mother the holy Roman Church; teach what it teaches, believe what it believes and reject whatever it might reject.  
  
“May they always be loyal and submissive to the prelates and all the clergymen of Holy Mother Church.” (5<sup>th</sup> verse of the Siena Testament)
6. **Love each other in the Holy Spirit. Let everyone know your love.** (II Cor 6, 6 – Phil 4, 5)  
  
Know that I loved you very tenderly; I want you to love each other. (1 Jn 3, 23 – Jn 13, 1.)  
  
“May they ... always love each other.”? (3<sup>rd</sup> verse of the Siena Testament)
8. *Be holy, develop and spread through out the whole world, till the end of time. (Gn 1, 28 – Mt 18, 20).*

In the name of the Lord. Amen.

The Founder formulates in four points the fundamental virtues he wants to give as an eternal testament to his Society:

- 1) **Confidence in Divine Providence**
- 2) **Sustained evangelical poverty**
- 3) **Conscientious loyalty to the Roman Catholic Church**
- 4) **Mutual and fraternal love.**



*Fr. Jordan at his 70th birthday.  
1918*

## VIII

### Was Father Jordan a Mystic?

Anything we know about Father Jordan makes it very clear that he lived in close unity with God, which was not a result of ascetic exercises or human efforts, but only a gift from God. With him, we find the same words and notions we find with most mystics. Repeatedly, he knew moments of spiritual ecstasy, consumed by God's love. If we love God like the Founder did, without ever having seen His face; if we follow God without ever having heard his voice; if we can follow Him loyally and submissively till death, then we can speak of mysticism. If a deep joy is mastering us when the cross oppresses us, if we keep peace during hours of human despair, then we can expect that God's Spirit is active in us. That is the reason why it was not difficult for the followers of Father Jordan to call him "Reverend Father" like Father Bonaventura Lüthen did, and to consider him as a "man of God".

141 ■

For Father Jordan, sanctity was not synonymous with perfection. He knew too well his own imperfections and often encountered the deficiencies of others. He also knew that

virtuousness, per se, does not make a saint of someone. Holy is someone who can experience God's proximity in an exceptional way; someone who, often without knowing it, brings God nearer to his fellow men and makes him approachable.

Essential sanctity is mostly hidden from men because it exists under the pressure of daily tensions and deficiencies. Moses also ignored the fact that his face radiated a holy glow after he had spoken with God. This radiation is sometimes noticeable to people who are open to it; others don't have any feeling for it. The Founder considered himself a poor man who had to ask God for everything; but to others he was often a reflection of God's presence.

142 The absolute will to become holy was for him the fundament of personal sanctity. God wants our sanctity. During a chapter, he spoke about his personal experience: *But seek this [becoming holy] in the right way: not in spiritual fancies but through suffering, through obedience, poverty, strict religious observance... The lukewarm never become saints... Let storms come from within or without. Even if all hell and the whole world should judge against you, say to yourselves, "I must be holy, whatever the cost". What good will everything else [great sufferings, works, dreaming of converting all nations etc.] be if we do not strive for holiness? One holy person will do more than thousands and thousands of others.*<sup>361</sup>

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<sup>361</sup> Chap. 20.04.1894, DSS XXIII, 22-24

Father Jordan knew that God is the only holy one. He is the Saint of Israel.<sup>362</sup> For the Founder to become holy meant: “to live from that state of mind that was in Christ Jesus”<sup>363</sup> and to be consumed by the fire of his Spirit. Especially in the short congratulations he used to send to the members, he would express this in different and complementary terms. For example, to Father Robert Waltz he wrote: *May Christ live in you.*<sup>364</sup> To the sisters he wrote: *May the Spirit of Jesus Christ inspire all of you and make you work much to the honour of God and for the good of the poor humanity.*<sup>365</sup> And to his confreres: *May the good Lord grant you much grace, dwell and act in you, and be your happiness, your salvation and your all.*<sup>366</sup>

## **His sanctity was an apostolic sanctity**

For Father Jordan the striving for sanctity was essentially apostolic. He was not interested, primarily in his own perfection or in any reward. He wanted to become holy as he was convinced that only in this way he could save souls. He became a priest because he felt responsible for the salvation of people. All prayer, all labour, all efforts and worries, and also his mystical experiences were always directed towards this only purpose: to save souls, to make people participate in the divine life that has been offered us in Christ. For him, personal sanctification was for the benefit of the salvation of his fellow men.

143 ■

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<sup>362</sup> Hos 11,9

<sup>363</sup> Phil. 1,21 and 2,5

<sup>364</sup> DSS X, no. 991, 11.06.1909

<sup>365</sup> DSS X, no. 1150, 01.01.1914 (to Sister Ambrosia Vetter)

<sup>366</sup> DSS X, no. 997, 05.01.1909

Community life, also, was defined by the apostolate. He wished that prayer and contemplative life inspire and animate apostolic activities. The mystic is the one who can open his eyes and heart to the suffering of the people and cry out against social abuses. In the times of the Founder, mysticism was a suspicious word, a master key for anything that was vague, mysterious or extraordinary.

In our times, the word mysticism is regaining its apostolic meaning. It is a life lived through faith, a spreading of God in the darkness and the senselessness of society. People don't ask for proofs of the existence of God anymore; they ask for an experience with God.

The desire to make people participate in divine life was the passion of Father Jordan's life. The fire Jesus brought to earth consumed him.

■ 144

In his diary we can read: *Here I am, send me – for you, for souls, for the Church of God. All, O Father, all, all, O God, all, O Jesus, all, O Saviour of the world, I desire most ardently to save all! Oh, save souls! Oh, save souls! I beg and implore you, save souls! Cost what it may, save souls!*<sup>367</sup>

One may call those words the soft sighing of the Spirit, who desires to pour out his love upon all people. The compassion for people grows as one is more united with God in love. Apostolic zeal is simply the love of God being poured out into our hearts and wanting to flow to others. Action and contemplation spring from the same source. According to our Founder, on the one hand, prayer must inspire

apostolic life and on the other hand, apostolic activity should flow from the abundance of contemplation. The Founder's desire to save all people is proportional to the intensity of his inner union with God. His love for God is, in essence, identical to his ardent desire to make all people participate in this love. *All, O Saviour of the world, I desire most ardently to save all!*

From his diary it clearly emerges that his love for the people is a stimulus to ask God to inspire and assist him in accomplishing his apostolic projects. Trust (confidence) in God and worldly action are, for Father Jordan, two facets of the same reality. He had become such a man of prayer that his daily tasks did not hinder his continual prayer. His near collaborators, fathers who went around with him every day, were surprised to see that although he was so continuously buried in prayer, nevertheless he was equally concerned with the personal well-being of all. The usual daily occupations didn't jeopardise his deep union with God.<sup>368</sup>

145 ■

The Founder didn't experience any contradiction between prayer and apostolate. Service to people is also service to God: it is religion; while prayer that does not include service to one's fellow man is self-deceit. One can admire the balance between contemplation and action in Father Jordan's life, but to follow him therein is difficult. He teaches us that we can attain an intense prayer life through service to our fellow people. His compassion for people taught him to pray and their distress urged him to found his congregation. *Our Society is both: wholly contemplative and active. Contemplation is used to inflame you with the Holy Spirit. I would like to say,*

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<sup>368</sup> *Summarium*, Fr. Pancratius Pfeiffer, pp. 16-17, § 9; Fr. Paschalis Schmid, p. 233, § 1047

*contemplation is like pouring oil into a lamp so that it burns and shines. Without it the lamp will go out...<sup>369</sup> what is a true Salvatorian? Two points are especially necessary: an apostolic spirit and a religious spirit.<sup>370</sup>*

God gave our Founder an ardent zeal for souls, considering all who would come after him, so that they may still be a part of this apostolic fire.

Father Jordan realised that he had to be the torchbearer of the apostolic fire that he wanted to light in the hearts of his followers. Already, at the inception of the Society he wrote this prayer: *O almighty God, send a flow of holy fire upon the people, especially upon my present and future children, so that it may continue to burn in their hearts – during their lives, as long as they live – till the end of time, for the honour of God and for the salvation of souls; multiply them like the stars in the firmament.<sup>371</sup>*

146

Father Cajetan Oswald writes: “We have always venerated our Founder as a saint; in fact, we did not consider him as a superior. Others governed. We never had the slightest reason to criticize anything in him. Because of his nervous sickness, he could not socialise freely or easily, but his goodness and modesty made up for his appearance. His face was irradiated by a deep smile, an unusual one, without any superficiality.”<sup>372</sup> One could compare the Founder with a mountain whose peak stays in full sunlight, whilst the slope and valleys are still covered with dark clouds and fog. In his deepest self, he was united with God by the light of

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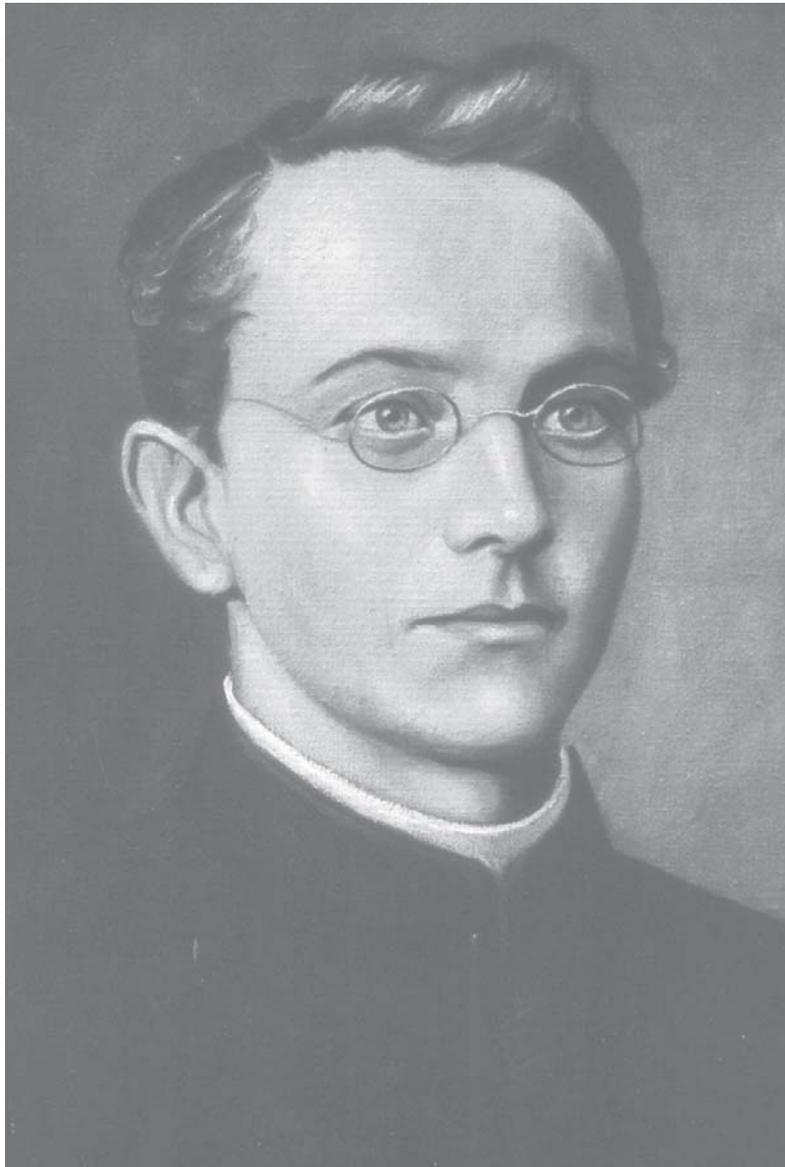
<sup>369</sup> Chap. 23.06.1899, DSS XXIII, 330

<sup>370</sup> Chap. 17.05.1901, DSS XXIII, 426

<sup>371</sup> DSS XXI, 5

<sup>372</sup> Fr. Cajetan Oswald (APS I, 110)

contemplation in a very fervent way, whilst his normal capacities were deprived of the light by human weakness or illness in such a way that he was quiet and resigned, and anxious, down-hearted and sinful at the same time. Just as light and fog on the top of the mountain can blend with one another, so can illness, nervous disorder and solitude go together with holiness. Human weakness and divine power meet in the heart of a lonely man. God does not require human perfection, only the abandoning of one's will to share in his passionate love, so that all men can share in the salvation of Christ.



*Fr. Otto Hopfenmuller,  
first Superior of the Assam Mission, 1890*

## IX

### The Founder and His Followers

Father Jordan is still living in his Society. He said in an address in the chapter: *It is the mind of the Church that after the death of the founder, she calls attention to the spirit of the founder.*<sup>373</sup> As a Founder, he knew he was responsible for his Society: *always and forever, even when I am no longer alive!*<sup>374</sup> A Founder does not die, as long as we are willing to nurture ourselves with his spirituality, but *If you don't stick to the spirit of the founder you will have a Babylon, and Babylon fell.*<sup>375</sup>

149 ■

The Founder retains the function of signpost for his Society. The Salvatorians venerate their Founder to the extent that they are eager to remain in continuous dialogue with him. In a certain way, one can enter into a dialogue with him every day; one can ask him questions and get an answer

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<sup>373</sup> Chap. 13.01.1899, DSS XXIII, 266

<sup>374</sup> Chap. 22.10.1897, DSS XXIII, 137

<sup>375</sup> Chap. 13.01.1899, DSS XXIII, 267

to them. This spiritual bond causes a unity within the communities of the Society.

There is no need to praise the Founder highly as a person. He had his deficiencies, shortages and peculiarities just like anyone of us. Let us, therefore, consider the Founder as the person he was. The biggest difference between the Founder and us is that the Founder knew how to accept his deficiencies and he tried his whole life through to improve them. He accepted his deficiencies as a cross he bore because of his love of Christ.

We, Salvatorians, venerate our Founder as a saint because he experienced, in an extraordinary way, the proximity of God in the ordinary things of daily life; because his life was a vivid comment on the gospel. Even now, God is still writing the history of salvation in the lives of the saints.

■ 150

Sure, the Founder was also a child of his time. The theology, the spirituality, the pastoral theology of that time had defined the whole of his thinking and speaking. He could not present us with any other spirituality than a dated perception of the gospel, with the stresses of his time. And yet... that is the characteristic of prophets: he ran ahead of his time. He understood the necessity of the apostolate of lay people, the universality of salvation, the necessity of the apostolate of the press. Real reformations inside the Church have always been carried out by saints: people who have experienced and proclaimed their faith in an original way.

Father Jordan proved, through his life, that it is not those who work the most outwardly who are the greatest apostles, but those who let themselves be transformed into another Christ, in love and in prayer. At the beginning of World War I, he

writes: *May the divine Saviour confirm his congregation with humble, simple, ascetic members filled and animated by his spirit against the spirit of this world. May the Almighty form you to become true disciples of the crucified Saviour!*<sup>376</sup>

He shows us a simple way to sanctity: *Seek this to become holy in the right way: not in spiritual fancies but through suffering, through obedience, poverty, exact religious observance... If you want to become holy you must become like the divine model... men of sorrow, men of mortification, men held in contempt, men derided, men of suffering.*<sup>377</sup> He writes in his diary: *And you, whoever you are, may desire just as great interior graces as God bestowed on the great saints for this reason: to be able to love God just as much as they. Yes, for this reason, even a desire to have ecstasies like the saints – through which as St. Teresa testifies, they advanced so much in the love of God – would not be reprehensible.*<sup>378</sup>

151 ■

The life of Father Jordan is a brilliant testimony for anyone who wants to mould his life on the sources of salvation. In his apostolic life, our Founder wanted, through a remarkable simplicity, to bring to a synthesis, contemplation and action. The fundament of his mission was a rocklike confidence in God. In that way, his apostolate was practiced very intensively and he was able to keep hope vivid, surmounting any pessimism.

Now it is our task to keep the Founder's dream alive and to contribute to its realisation. Indeed, "Where vision is lacking, there the people run wild; when this vision unites with the doctrine; then our founder's vision and dream will become a reality."

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<sup>376</sup> DSS X, no. 1169, 03.09.1914

<sup>377</sup> Chap. 20.04.1894, DSS XXIII, 23

<sup>378</sup> D I/81-82



*Pope John Paul II praying at the tomb of Fr. Jordan*

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