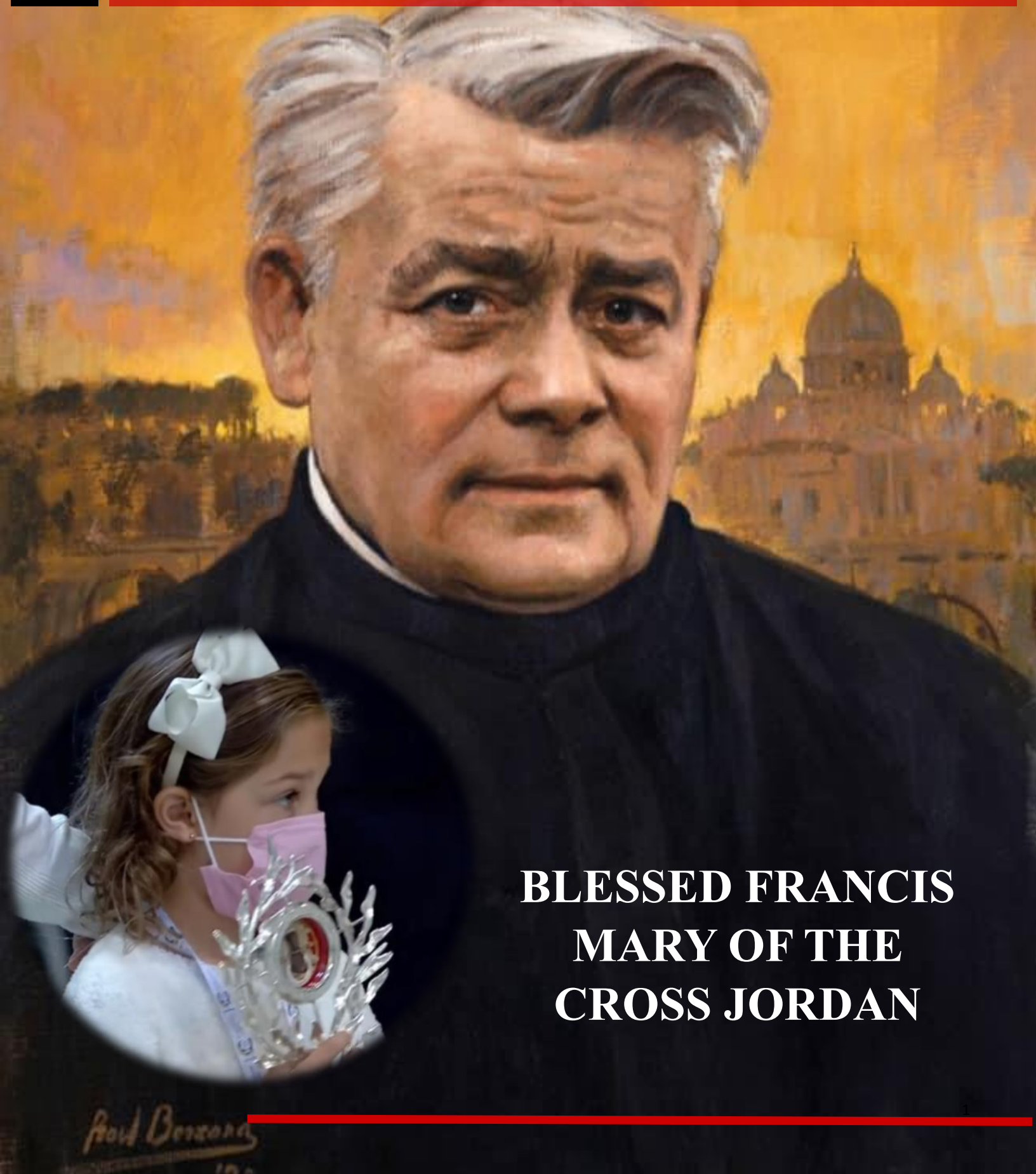


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# IL MISSIONARIO



**BLESSED FRANCIS  
MARY OF THE  
CROSS JORDAN**

*Paul Boncompagni*

## EDITORIAL

Now that our Founder, Blessed father Francis Jordan, has been officially beatified by the solemn proclamation of the Church, Salvatorians all over the world feel very happy. This is an opportunity to reflect and to define again what the religious and spiritual personality of Father Jordan means for us today. Our Generalate has declared a "Thanksgiving Year" which will end on July 21, 2022, the second time we will celebrate the liturgical feast of Blessed Fr. Francis Jordan. At that time, we will have thanksgiving liturgies in Gurtweil in Germany (where Fr. Jordan was born) and in Tifers in Switzerland (where Fr. Jordan died). But we can be truly grateful only because the Salvatorian Fathers, Sisters and Laity have reaped some of the spiritual fruits of the beatification of their Founder.

Through the beatification, the Church recognizes that Fr. Jordan is truly a man of the Church. Fr Jordan, the way he lived and prayed, the way he suffered and worked with passion, the way he guided and provided spiritual food to his community, he did it in a truly evangelical way, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. His spiritual sons and daughters have always believed this to be true, and now we have it, so to speak, in a written statement from the Church. Through this, the Church now also affirms that the way Fr. Jordan sought to be a disciple of the Divine Savior in his life is a way that leads to holiness and that it is a way that is commendable. The beatification of our Founder pushes us Salvatorians to live with double strength, the charism that Fr. Jordan left us: do not rest until all living souls recognize that in Christ, the Savior, we find eternal life, because He is the loving face of the one God.

Finally, all the testimonies speak of Fr Jordan's humility. He came from very simple, even poor backgrounds. He never did a great thing of himself, but he attributed everything he was able to accomplish to God's infinite Providence and he was sincere in this attitude right up to the end. He didn't want his followers to boast. Rather, he wanted them to be like simple ants or bees, always working for the greater good of all, fitting into the plans of the community. Fr Jordan was born in a small forgotten village, far from the greatness of the world, and lived most of his life in the great city of Rome. He also died in a small and forgotten village and was buried in the local parish church. In his native diocese, he is not known. In the Church, when he founded his apostolic movement, many did not believe it. The Salvatorians are, but a small congregation of simple consecrated persons and a relatively small group of lay people. And now, due to the covid-19 pandemic, the celebration of his beatification must also be held on a limited holiday, with only a very small group of people present, almost in a hidden way. These circumstances suit Fr Jordan and call us even more to reflect on the meaning of this simple Founder, who wanted nothing more than "to become great before God, not before men".



We should always be grateful to God for making us his sons and daughters in this world, having parents, relatives and good friends of religious and non-religious upbringings.

Like many other people, I, Sayon Rukurugu, SDS, was born and raised in a family of Catholic parents. In my family, which lives in Kigoma (Tanzania), there are seven children: five sisters and two brothers. I finished my primary and secondary studies in 2001; in the following year I entered the Society of the Divine Savior. After completing my candidacy and postulancy in Namiungo, I entered the novitiate on December 8, 2003. I made my first religious vows on December 8, 2004 after which I began the preparatory course for philosophy at Morogoro (Jordan University). In October 2005, I began a three-year course of philosophy and then 4 years of theology at the same university. I was ordained a deacon in 2011 and then a priest in 2012 at the Jordan University Chapel in Morogoro.



After my priestly ordination I was assigned to work and live in the community of Masasi, where I served as superior of the community and provincial secretary. After two years I came to Italy for my studies. As of now, I am still pursuing my liturgical studies at the Saint Anselm University and also assisting in the formation programs for our Salvatorian formandi.



I am Ruphin Kabondo wa Kabondo, born on 18/06/1987 in Congo in the municipality of Lubumbashi. I am the second of 11 children. I have already done primary, secondary and philosophy. This year I am finishing my studies of theology.

At the age of five I joined Chiro (a Catholic parish youth organization) and after my first communion in 1995, I served as an altar boy in my parish. I was also part of Saint Bernadette choir and during the holidays I would organize PDG games (supervision of children with catechesis, singing, games, theater and dance). The youth leadership I assumed in 2007 was a commitment to me to preserve the souls for the kingdom of God.

After finishing secondary school in 2010, I wanted to continue with the same ideal of serving the Lord in married life or as a religious. I followed my heart in choosing the latter, but I didn't know which congregation I would join. I only knew the Salesians, because I grew up in one of their parishes. Fortunately, reading a book "Come, Follow Me", I found a list of congregations including a brief explanation of their charisma.

I was struck by the Salvatorian charism and its four biblical verses (Jn 17,3; Mt 28,19-20; Mk 16,15 and Dn 12,3). The key elements found in these founding texts which drew me to Salvatorians are: "to live eternal life, to know the one true God and the One Whom He has sent, Jesus Christ, to make disciples of all nations". For this reason, I have committed myself to the Society of the Divine Savior to lead others to eternal Truth and to spread justice to all nations. "Go into all the world, preach the gospel to every creature, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you ..."

## NEW YEAR CELEBRATION 2020/2021

On this occasion, Mater Salvatoris community organized a special liturgy at 7pm until 8pm, vespers with adoration followed by the chant of the Tedeum. From 20:30, while waiting for the new year 2021, we had a community celebration in the recreation room with different activities. It was a great joy for the whole community. We thank God for this gift of Life.



On 01/01/2021, after the celebration of the Holy Mass of the Solemnity of the Mother of God, we enjoyed a solemn lunch prepared by the rector of the house, Father Charles Mushito and brother Boniface Cimogwa. It's a good sign of serving others.

## UNIVERSITY

On 07/01/2021, after Christmas and New Year break, the Gregorian University resumed its academic activities but via online.



The exams for the first semester officially began on 01/25/2021. But some professors had anticipated their exams earlier: on 19/01/2021, Adrian Haffner had the exam on the Philosophy of knowledge.

On 21/01/2021, Ruphin Kabondo had the exam on the subject Theological Anthropology and on 22/01/2021, Adriano Novelo, Bonifacio, Gabriel, Joseph and Stefaan had their exam on the subject Canon Law.

On 08/02/2021 we received a letter from the vice rector of the Gregorian university, Mark A. Lewis, SJ, that said *“Dear Students, in accordance with what was communicated by the Fr. Rector in his letter of 18 January this year, I wish to confirm that the lessons of the second semester will start with the same modality with which we opened the academic year in October, and therefore with a mixed system (in presence and at a distance). Attached to this communication you will also find the calendar with the indication of the weekly alternation of students in presence based on the matriculation number. I thank you for your commitment and, in greeting you, I take this opportunity to wish you a good start to the semester.”*

The exams of the first semester ended on 10/02/2021. We thank God for all he has done for us. Although the situation was difficult due to covid-19, we were able to finish the semester. Some exams were done at the school, while others were online.

The Easter holidays started on 26/03/2021 and on 12/4/2021, after Easter, the studies resumed. On 28/4/2021, we registered for the exams of the second semester.

## SALVATORIANITÀ

Salvatorianità is a community activity in which Mater Salvatoris community has the opportunity to expand their knowledge about Salvatorian history, literature, spirituality etc. This activity takes place once or twice a month. The first salvatorianità in the year 2021 was held on Sunday, January 10 at 1700hrs, led by Father Piet. He shared to us a little introduction on the development of SOFIA.

On 21/02/2021, Brother Stefaan discussed to us some important basic Italian grammatical rules. The purpose was to improve our writing skills.

On 11/04/2021, father Piet shared to us some information about the tomb of the founder.



On January 30, 2021, Mater Salvatoris community had a monthly recollection with Father Paul, a Salvatorian confrere who resides in Dragona at the moment. We reflected on the apostolic letter *Patris corde* of the Holy Father Francis on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the declaration of Saint Joseph as patron of the Universal Church.

On 05/01/2021, we had a monthly recollection with Fr. Joe Rodriguez on the topic: intercultural community living culture.

## UNIVERSITY (BIS)

On 25/4/2021, Father General Milton Zonta came to Mater Salvatoris Community formation house for the presentation of the document of the Society of the Divine Savior: **RATIO FORMATIONIS SALVATORIANAE**.

## BIRTHDAYS

We began the year 2021 with the birthday of our cook Sabrina on 17/01/2021. It was a great honor for Mater Salvatoris community to participate in this special celebration. Krenar and his family were also present at that time.

February 26, we celebrated brother Herbert Mpwage's birthday. As always, the community celebrated this with great joy.

On March 24, we celebrated the birthday of brother Gabriel da Costa. On May 20, we celebrated brother Adriano Novelo's birthday.

## MONTHLY RECOLLECTION



On 28/05/2021, a student of Mater Salvatoris formation house, Ruphin Kabondo, completed all the requirements from the University. He is the first student from our community to have done that. We thank Almighty God for the gift of knowledge and wisdom of our brother Ruphin.

## NECROLOGY

On Saturday 06/02/2021, the mother of Father Charles Mushitu passed away in Kipushi in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The funeral was held on Thursday 10/02/2021. May Mrs. Maria-Charlotte rest in peace.

On Friday 14/5/2021, Mrs. Justine Masengo, aunt of brother Ruphin, died. The funeral was held on 05/17/2021. May God welcome her into His kingdom.

**Cl. Ruphin Kabondo SDS**

# HISTORY OF THE CAUSE FOR BEATIFICATION OF THE VENERABLE SERVANT OF GOD FATHER FRANCIS MARY OF THE CROSS JORDAN



In his speech to the members of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints in 2019, the Pope emphasized: “every Saint is the incarnation, at a given moment in history, of an aspect of the Gospel”. He also reminded that the process for beatification and canonization is not only a technical and a canonical reality, but also a spiritual one. In this context, we can surely say that the process for beatification of Fr. Francis Jordan has always been present in the minds, hearts and prayers throughout all generations of Salvatorians, both religious and lay, as well as in the lives of those with whom we minister and work. Throughout the years, many people have acknowledged the sanctity of Fr. Jordan by spreading the knowledge of his person and character, by petitioning through his intercession in prayer, and by praying for his beatification. They also encouraged others to do likewise. At the same time, they promoted his values, virtues, and inspiring characteristics of his personality. Many showed deep interest in the beatification process, got involved personally, helped and supported postulation in different ways. The deep faith and participation of all these people deserve the highest praise.

On 3 January 1878, during the year of preparation for his ordination to the priesthood, Fr. Francis Jordan wrote in his Spiritual Diary: “For you the first and most important thing should always be to become holy and pleasing to God, so to live and so to die. Become great before God, not before the world!” We can say that he remained fervently faithful to this resolution, striving for personal holiness and growing

in his relationship with Jesus the Saviour. Many people who met him during his earthly life believed him to be a holy person.

Six years after the death of the Founder, his successor, Fr. Pancratius Pfeiffer, sent a Salvatorian to Gurtweil, the village of birth of Fr. Jordan. This Salvatorian gathered testimonies about the early years of John Baptist Jordan, as well as about his family background. Fr. Pancratius used these source materials when he wrote his biography of the Founder that was published in 1930. Subsequently, preparations for opening the cause for beatification began. In 1935, as superior general, Fr. Pancratius sent a circular letter to all the SDS members expressing his wish that both Fr. Francis Jordan and Fr. Bonaventure Lüthen should be declared blessed and asked everyone to respond to an attached questionnaire concerning the life of the candidates. Fifty-two persons responded with their answers. Subsequently, in the midst of a World War, the beatification process was started in Rome.

A beatification process consists of several processes, the two main of which are the process on the life and virtues of a given candidate for sainthood and the process on an alleged miracle. We present an overview of the main steps of each of these processes.

### STEPS IN THE PROCESS ON THE LIFE AND VIRTUES

1942: Start of the diocesan informative process in Rome

Fr. Pancratius Pfeiffer gave an extensive testimony during nine sessions of the tribunal during 1943. Additional testimonies were collected in the dioceses of Fribourg, Passau, Paderborn, Vienna, Rio de Janeiro, Olomouc and Green Bay. In total, 105 persons gave their testimony about the life and practice of virtues of Fr. Francis Jordan; among them 69 Salvatorians and 17 Salvatorian Sisters.

1945-1956: Process on the writings of Fr. Jordan

1949: Submission of all acts to the Congregation for the Rites

1956: Positio sent to Congregation

1961: Objections by Promoter of Faith (Animadversiones)

At this time, the postulation process focused on gathering historical materials, organizing the archives, and doing the academic research, which would help in gaining better knowledge of the person of the Founder in order to further his cause for beatification. The Society entered into the period of the post Vatican II renewal and began the process for preparing the new Constitutions. In 1971, the International Historical Commission was established. Their primary task was to gather and edit historical sources regarding the person of Fr. Francis Jordan and history of the Society. The work of this commission, which continued for over 40 years, bore the fruit of 24 volumes of *Documenta et Studia Salvatoriana* and made a significant contribution to the renewal of the Society and to the work of Fr. Jordan's postulation.

1982: Responses on Objections sent to Congregation with new Positio

In 1983, the new Code of Canon Law was promulgated, which introduced a profound reform in the procedure for canonization causes. As a result, some important adjustments had to be made in the beatification process of our Founder. A Positio on the life and virtues of Father Jordan had to be prepared with a critical and fully documented biography. Fr. Edwein set to work again and managed to write a voluminous biography of the Founder (DSS vol. XIII-XVII.I). This work remained unfinished, because Fr. Edwein passed away in 1986. Fr. van Meijl continued the work of his predecessor, preparing the documented biography for the Positio, according to the new norms. He devoted himself to thorough historical research on the life of Fr. Francis Jordan and on the history of our Society. In his doctoral dissertation in 1990, he presented an important part of the history of the Society: the period of the Apostolic Visitation 1894-1913. During his systematic preliminary archival research, Fr. van Meijl was able to collect many valuable resource materials, which had not been available earlier. They turned out to be very important for a better understanding of our early history and of the original vision of Fr. Francis Jordan. In these years, the knowledge and the veneration of the Founder grew in the Salvatorian world, under the important impetus of the postulator.

2006: Submission of 4000-page Positio to Congregation

2007: Approval by historians

2010: Approval by theologians

2011: Ordinary Session of Congregation approves Positio

2011: Promulgation of the Decree on the Heroicity of the Virtues on 19 March

With the approval of the heroicity of virtues, a candidate for beatification receives the title of the Venerable Servant of God. However, for the actual beatification of a person who was not a martyr, a miracle through their intercession is required. Our Founder has always enjoyed the fame for holiness and the people have prayed through his intercession. Since 1921, approximately 500 cases of the graces received have been recorded by the postulation office in Rome.



What has to be proven in a process on the miracle is both the scientific inexplicability of a healing (or an event) and that it is a result of the prayers through the intercession of the candidate for beatification.

### STEPS IN THE PROCES OF THE MIRACLE

2001: study of the records in general archives of the graces received

2006-2007 and 2009-2010: Inquiry in the diocese of Savannah (Georgia, USA)

The medical consultants of the Congregation did not accept the presented documentation on an allegedly miraculous healing.

2015-2016: Diocesan inquiry in Jundiaí, Brazil, which heard 14 testimonies

On 24 January 2014, a couple from Jundiaí found out that they would become parents. Due to difficulties during pregnancy, they had medical examinations done. It became clear that the child, a girl, would suffer from an incurable skeletal deformation. Upon hearing this heart-breaking information, the parents decided to pray fervently through the intercession of Father Jordan, together with other members of the Salvatorian Family. Ultimately, the baby girl was born in perfect health on 8 September 2014. This date is not only the feast of the Nativity of Mary; it is also the anniversary of Father Jordan's death. Both the physicians who took care of the baby and her mother, and other doctors who were consulted, were of the opinion that this case could not be explained by medicine.

2017: Acts validated by the Congregation

2018: Summarium in Italian submitted and approved by the Congregation

2019: Medical Board of the Congregation defines the healing inexplicable by medicine. Theological consultors confirm the healing is miraculous and happened through the intercession of Fr. Jordan. Congregation Session agrees on miraculous healing.

2020: On 19 June, Pope Francis authorises the promulgation of the decree regarding the miracle attributed to the intercession of our Founder.

In the course of the beatification process, the 8th General Chapter in 1953 decided to transfer the mortal remains of the Founder from Tafers to Rome. This happened three years later.

Fr. Francis Jordan offered his life to God, overcoming difficulties with his infinite trust in Divine Providence. With great apostolic zeal, he pursued the idea of involving all people in the mission of the Church, so that everybody may know and love Jesus Christ the Saviour. Through this, he presents the attitudes and values that are important and necessary for the Church today. He offers an inspiring example of Christian life and of apostolic commitment, which is valuable, not only for his spiritual sons and daughters who are members of the different branches of the Salvatorian Family, but for all people. At the same time, pointing to Christ as the Saviour and the source of fullness of life, he encourages all to take a personal path to holiness, to know Jesus better and deeper and to have a personal relationship with him.

Let this time, when we start enthusiastically in our preparation for his beatification, be for us an opportunity to deepen our reflection on the heritage of our Founder in the context of our present realities, so that we may become ever more faithful to our Salvatorian charism and identity. Let it also be an occasion to continue our prayers through the intercession of Fr. Francis Jordan and for making his message and values known.

## SUCCESSIVE POSTULATORS

1938-1955: Fr. Dorotheus Brugger

1955-1970: Fr. Michael Dürr

1970-1973: Fr. Leonard Gerke

1974-1979: Fr. Aloysius Filthaut

1979-1986: Fr. Timotheus Edwein

1986-2000: Fr. Peter van Meijl

2000-2009: Fr. Michal Piela

2000-2009: Fr. Stephan Horn, vice-postulator

2009-2014: Fr. Stephan Horn

2014: Fr. Adam Teneta

(This text is a strongly abbreviated version of the article, written by Fr. Adam Teneta, SDS, and published in *Informationes XII*, no. 10, August 2020, pp. 13-19)

Congregazione delle Cause dei Santi

La Congregazione ▼ Notizie

Congregazione delle Cause dei Santi / Santi e Beati / Francesco Maria della Croce Jordan

Francesco Maria della Croce Jordan  
(1848-1918)

BEATIFICAZIONE:  
- 15 maggio 2021  
- Papa Francesco  
▶ [Celebrazione](#)





## **BEATIFICATION OF FR. JORDAN: CHRONICLE OF TWO UNFORGETTABLE DAYS**

The biggest event in the Salvatorian history from the time of our foundation is the beatification of our Founder, Fr. Francis Mary of the Cross Jordan. It is our greatest joy even in the time of pandemic and restrictions which make it impossible for many to attend this celebration in Rome. The celebration took a lot of time and efforts but it was done in a beautiful and holy way. Due to Covid-19, the celebration was held in a limited way, with only few people present. Others just followed via livestreaming online.

In the morning before entering the Basilica of Saint John Lateran, every guest who came for the celebration, would be given some presents prepared by the generalate and the motherhouse community. Furthermore, prior to the Eucharistic celebration, we had a short prayer together with the priests and all the people who attended the celebration, and followed by a short warming welcome speech from father General Superior and sister Superior of the Salvatorian Sisters. After that, Fr. Charles, Fr. Sayon, and other representatives brought the globe and candles to put under the image of Father Jordan. At 11 am, the

Eucharistic celebration began and the main celebrant was His Eminence Cardinal Angelo De Donatis, the vicar general of Pope Francis. During the celebration of the beatification of Father Jordan, there were different prayers from different continents such as; Asian people, Australian people, African people, European people, and the American people. After presenting all the different prayers from different continents, Fr. Adam Teneta presented a short biography of Father Jordan. Then the celebration solemnly began.

### **THREE DIMENSIONS AND TWO VERBS**

During the homily the Cardinal Vicar of Rome Angelo De Donatis said that the witness of his holiness "is passed on into the hands of each one of us." The Cardinal also, recalling the testimony of the new blessed, pointed to three dimensions. "The first is meditating on Scripture": only by "getting to know" scripture, reading and meditating on it, "does one acquire spiritual wisdom for proclamation." The second dimension is the missionary work of Blessed

"Proclaim to everyone in order to save everyone." The third dimension he highlighted is apostolic communion, "the unity to which are called to witness in life." The cardinal then dwelt on the two verbs that recur many times in the texts of Blessed Francis: "proclaim" and "save", words that must also resonate today, which needs "an announcing of love, a perspective of salvation, a gaze towards heaven, towards eternity, to overcome emptiness, boredom, apathy, indifference, superficiality".

### INSPIRED BY THE WORKS OF THE FIRST APOSTLES

Cardinal De Donatis focused his homily also recalling specific moments in the life of Francis Mary of the Cross Jordan, noting how the new Blessed had fully understood" the



the evangelizing power of apostolic communion, of harmony among people who proclaim the Gospel." Founding the Apostolic Society of the Divine Savior for the purpose of proclaiming Christ as the Revealer of

the one true God who saves, he wanted to unite together priests, consecrated men and women and lay people. He was inspired to create a group, a society of people in which all charisms and ministries would shine and be expressed and carried out. He desired that in sharing the one charism, the members of the Apostolic Society would be inspired by the witness, words and works of the first apostles.

### THE SALVATORIAN FAMILY

"Today the witness of Blessed Jordan's holiness," Cardinal De Donatis said in conclusion, "is passed on into the hands of each of us. It is entrusted to the Salvatorian family. The Society of the Divine Savior is an international religious congregation. Today, members of the Society are engaged in apostolic activities in 45 countries around the world. The Sisters of the Divine Savior are present in various regions and are committed to building bridges of charity and justice with people throughout the world.

When it comes to the rite of beatification, the miracle family presented the relic of Father Jordan into the hands of the Cardinal. The couple asked father Francis Mary of the Cross' intercession for the healthy birth of their child after she was diagnosed with a severe form of skeletal dysplasia during the 23rd week of pregnancy.

Following this, there were different prayers which were represented in different languages. As we could see that some people were moved with joyful tears while the beatification of Father Jordan was being celebrated. Thanks be to the good Lord that the celebration ended full of joy, and Father Superior General Milton Zonta concluded with a thanksgiving speech, giving thanks to all the participants who came to celebrate and prayed with us during the beatification of Father Jordan, as well as those who participated online.

After the celebration, all were invited to the Motherhouse in order to make a visit to the tomb of Blessed Francis Jordan and the house where he had lived before. Thanks be to Almighty God for His goodness that He showers upon us, especially to all the Salvatorian family members. The celebration of the beatification of father Jordan was full of joys and love.



*Our community praying at the tomb of the Founder in the renewed chapel of the Motherhouse*

**Cl. Antonio Nguyen Van Dung , SDS**



## DIACONATE ORDINATION DURING A HEALTH CRISIS

The term deacon derives from the Greek word “διάκονος” (diaconos) which means “servant”. In the Catholic Church, there are three “ranks” or “degrees” of ordination; diaconate, presbyter, and episcopate. The diaconate is the first of the three orders in the ordained ministry, and it is distinguished in two ways: transitional deacon which refers to deacons who are preparing for the priesthood and permanent deacon which refers to those who do not plan to be an ordained priest.

In preparation for his diaconate ordination, Cleric Lazarus attended a five-day retreat near Rieti together with nine others, of whom three were from the Diocesan Pontifical Major Seminary of Rome and six from the *Redemptoris Mater* Seminary. The ordination was held on the 8th of May 2021 at the Basilica of St. John Lateran in Rome. It was a day full of joy for the Church, particularly for the Society of the Divine Saviour. After a long formation process, and with the help of all the confreres, the faithful, the Superiors, and by the grace of God, the Holy Mother Church, accepted and ordained our confrere Lazarus Nyang’au SDS, to the Order of Diaconate. Cardinal Angelo De Donatis, the Vicar General of the Holy Father, imposed his hands and pronounced the prayer of

ordination, constituting Lazarus as a transitional deacon. Thus he became a cleric in the real sense of the word, configured to Christ the Servant, and was entrusted with a new responsibility in carrying out the Church’s liturgical worship, especially by proclaiming the Gospel, preaching, and performing works of charity.

Essentially, the ordination brings about a profound change in the life of the one who receives it, as he passes from the lay to the clerical state. At the ordination, the candidate makes a public commitment to certain promises, namely, obedience to his ordinary bishop, and to his Superior. He ought to maintain his religious vows, a life of celibate chastity, poverty and obedience. He must, therefore, be a man of prayer, of good reputation, holding the mystery of the Word in a pure conscience, praying the Divine Office on behalf of the Church and the world (Cfr., 1 Timothy 3:8-9) for he represents Christ as the one who came, “not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mt. 20:28). As a minister of the Word, of the altar, and of charity, the deacon will make himself a servant to all.” [Cfr. the Liturgy of Ordination]

**Cl. Boniface Chimogwa SDS**

## PATERNITY AT STAKE: THE REAL MEANING OF THE SACRIFICE OF ISAAC

The story of Isaac's (near) sacrifice is one of the most famous stories in Genesis and, by extension, of the entire Old Testament. At the same time, it is also one of the most controversial stories, arousing sometimes strong emotional reactions. Can God be so cruel to reclaim the son He had miraculously given to Abraham? Can a God who commands a father to shed his son's blood be trustworthy? The purpose of this article is to examine in detail the biblical account contained in Gen 22, 1-14 in order to discover its real meaning. Once the initial discomfort is overcome, it will become clear why the Belgian exegete André Wénin presents the story as "the pinnacle of Abraham's education". In fact, it is a literary masterpiece that never ceases to surprise.



*The sacrifice of Isaac in the Archbasilica of Saint John Lateran*

In the rabbinic tradition, the account of the sacrifice of Isaac is called the Aqedah, which means 'the binding of Isaac'. According to some commentators, the Aqedah must be placed in the context of human sacrifices. The Swiss theologian Thomas Römer, for example, states that the story "cannot be written before the 6th century BC". Still according to Römer, "Genesis 22 prefigures the experience of a God who has become incomprehensible. (...) [The story] refers to the problem of our image of God". Indeed, there have been several attempts to 'neutralize' this problem. For example, André Wénin reports that the authoritative rabbi Joseph Bekhor Shor wrote in the

12th century that God "had only ordered him to go up to the side of the altar". More recently, the psychoanalyst Marie Balmary published a book in which she refers to the Aqedah as "the non-sacrifice of Isaac". In any case, the intentional ambivalence of some passages of the story is clearly evident, not as a defect but rather as a contribution to the narrative richness.

### AN AMBIVALENT ORDER

*And God said: "Take your son, your only son, the one you love, Isaac, and go to the territory of Moria and have him go up there for/as a burnt offering."  
(Gen 22: 2)*

The first character that appears is God, indicated by the plural Elohim. Almost immediately afterwards the narrator puts the second character on the scene: Abraham. It is interesting to remark that the only word that separates God and Abraham is precisely "וְיָצֵא (to the test)". 'Test' is undoubtedly a key word in the Aqedah: the relationship between God and Abraham will be tested in an extreme way and will eventually be transformed. But at this point, Abraham is not aware of all this. While the reader is immediately informed that it is a test, Abraham receives God's order without further explanation until the time of the sacrifice. Furthermore, studying the Hebrew text reveals that "the original reader could understand both 'bring your son up the mountain for a holocaust' as well as the inevitable 'make him rise there (in smoke) as a holocaust'". The exegete Römer perceives in the first verses of Genesis 22 a masterful hint of a "particular dramatic tension".

After being asked to put at stake Isaac, his most precious possession, Abraham sets out. In the next eight verses the reader is held in suspense over the outcome of the story. God is silent, and even Abraham says only a few words, which, moreover, only increase the tension. When Isaac asks where the sacrificial animal is, his father replies cryptically, leaving open the possibility of his son's sacrifice. Arriving at the place of sacrifice, Abraham begins to prepare the wood and places his son on top of it, ready to be immolated. At this point the narrator zooms in on the last moments before the sacrifice, bringing the tension to its climax. Will God allow Isaac's blood to be shed?

## Who was Terach, the father of Abraham?

While Abraham is a well-known biblical figure, his father Terach almost looks like a footnote. Nonetheless it's worth paying attention to the way in which Terach is presented, because he helps us to understand better the life story of Abraham. In the eleventh chapter of Genesis, Abram appears for the first time. His name means "exalted father", so Terach clearly does not show much humility giving such name to his firstborn. Even more disturbing is the death of Haran, Abram's younger brother. As soon as Haran became a father, he "died in the presence of Terach his father" (Gen 11:28). So it appears there was no room for two fathers in the family of Terach. Making matters worse is the sterility of Sarai, Abram's wife. Therefore, a divine intervention was needed to free Abram from his situation marked by death. Only in this way could Abram become Abraham, a "father of many" as the translation of his new name indicates. But the danger had not yet passed: will Abraham be able to avoid the errors of his father? This is in fact the deeper question that gives rise to the story of the binding of Isaac, the only son of Abraham.

## A TREEFOLD TRANSFORMATION

At the very last moment God speaks again, intervening to save Isaac's life. In contrast to the artistic representation reported at the beginning of this article, the messenger of the Lord does not physically intervene, stopping the hand of Abraham. Instead the messenger shouts from heaven and begins a dialogue with Abraham. When the angel calls from heaven, Abraham immediately replies: "Here I am". The patriarch is addressed three times throughout the story – twice by God and once by his son – and all three times the first word of Abraham's response is the same "Here I am". Abraham does not hide himself as Adam and Eve did in the garden. On the contrary, he preserves the openness to God even in the most distressing moment. The reader, who had held his breath, breathes a sigh of relief. Wénin observes that "reaching out and taking the knife was enough to sever what needed to be eliminated", namely the suffocating bond between a son and his overprotective father. Still according to the same author, there is "a radical change in Isaac's condition: the acceptance of his death on the part of his father frees him, so to speak, from his power."

Balmory concludes: "Isaac is no longer a possession [of his father]."

In the end Abraham chooses "not to keep the gift for himself, (...) thus demonstrating that his relationship with God is stronger than the desire to keep Isaac tied to himself." The image of God also undergoes an important transformation, as the French Jesuit Paul Beauchamp strikingly observes. The story begins with the command issued by God *Elohim*, recalling the ancient sentiment of a debt of blood. It ends instead with *Adonai* - "the Lord" - who frees his chosen ones and blesses them abundantly. "As if God were saying: you gave me this image of cruelty, but I came to assume it because there was no other way to get rid of it." So in just fourteen verses a triple transformation is masterfully staged: Abraham, Isaac and even God himself undergo a profound change that favors a better relationship between them, which also opens up to the future. In fact, the narrator "suggests that the encounter opens up to the reader as long as he/she accepts to go to the mountain that God points out to him/her every time He presents a gift." In this way, the narrator invites us to a fourth, equally exciting transformation, namely the one that radically changes our own existence.

*Caravaggio, The sacrifice of Isaac. The animal that will replace Isaac on the altar is depicted on the right side of the painting.  
(Source: Wikipedia)*

**Bibliography:** Balmory M., Il sacrificio interdetto; Beauchamp, P., Cinquanta ritratti biblici; Römer T., Lati oscuri di Dio; Wénin A., Isacco o la prova di Abramo; Wénin, A., Abramo e l'educazione divina

**Cl. Stefaan Peetermans, SDS**



## THE RITE OF BEATIFICATION OF FR. FRANCIS JORDAN, A UNIQUE MOMENT IN OUR HISTORY



The rite of beatification of Fr. Jordan was a unique moment for all Salvatorians as well as the Church at large. The solemn celebration

happened at a moment when the world was still fighting against the current pandemic disease. Because of this situation, many Salvatorians and faithful of goodwill could not land in Rome for this event. Instead, they used all means of communication to participate in the liturgy with the Church in Rome. I thank God that my presence in Rome enabled me to participate fully in the preparations and liturgical celebrations of both the Rite of Beatification in the Basilica of St. John Lateran and (15 May 2021) and Thanksgiving Mass in St. Peter's Basilica (16 May 2021).

The Rite of Beatification of our Founder was very unique. It had both aspects of spiritual (contemplative) and emotional. During the Rite, some were moved with the event to the extent of shedding tears. I believe these were tears of joy. Sincerely speaking, for many Salvatorians and especially those who physically participated in the liturgy, the rite of beatification of Fr. Jordan was a touching moment. Our hearts were filled with immense joy, peace, and love for God, the Church, and Society. This attitude of prayer implied

that the liturgy was well-prepared. Thanks to the liturgical commission appointed by the Generalate, and all the faithful for their valuable cooperation. The liturgical commission consisted of both sisters and fathers/brothers. The commission prepared two sections of the liturgy: the prelude and Mass. The prelude aimed to spiritually prepare the assembly for the rite of beatification of Fr. Jordan. The prelude had many elements: special greetings from our general superiors, special prayers for each continent, words of Fr. Francis Jordan, and common Salvatorian hymns. Likewise, all three branches of the Salvatorian family participated fully in the event. The intercessions of the faithful during the Mass were made in six languages by Salvatorians. Our young brothers in Mater Salvatoris International Formation House were not left behind, they served as acolytes not only in St. John Lateran but also in St. Peter's Basilica. The Rite of Beatification of Fr. Jordan was a celebration that clearly showed the universal character of our Society. Principally, it was the feast of the universal Church but with a strong Salvatorian image. We all thank God for such a unique opportunity because many generations of Salvatorians dreamt of the event but they could not witness it with their bodily eyes except you and me. How lucky we are! We thank God and ask Him through the intercession of Blessed Francis Jordan that we may always remain true Salvatorians and faithful workers in His Church.

**P. Sayon Rukurugu, SDS**



### 22 YEARS AGO IN ROME

On March 19, 1999, St. John Paul II visited the Motherhouse of the Society of the Divine Savior in Rome and prayed in front of Blessed Francis Mary of the Cross Jordan's tomb.

### 123 YEARS AGO IN MERANO

Blessed Francis Mary of the Cross Jordan arrived in Merano in 1898 in search of a healthier climate for the clerics whose health and sometimes life was threatened in Rome due to unfavorable conditions (heat and malaria).

Initially, the community lived in Fahlen Castle, where the Collegium Marianum SDS was opened on May 24, 1898. The community later moved to a newly built house. In the years 1905-1906 the existing monastery was built. After the Society was organised into provinces by the General Chapter in 1908, some administrative units opened their own formation houses and this house was no longer needed.



At the beginning of 1912 the Salvatorian Sisters bought it. It is currently used as the provincial office of the Province of South Tyrol of the Congregation, as well as guesthouse and boarding school for female students.

(This text and photos were taken from the page of the "Archives of the Polish Province of the Society of the Divine Savior"

## HUMAN MATURITY



Very often the difficulties in our communities do not necessarily come from a deep evil inherent in ourselves but from immature reactions of our perceptions regarding personal and interpersonal relationships. Our responsibility is to promote our growth.

*Psychological questions*

Maturity is a process of growth that needs to be realized. It consists of a state of fullness in many dimensions of man. We will briefly discuss the physical, emotional, intellectual, moral, social and religious dimensions.

Emotional maturity is the part which includes a certain emotional balance coming from the control of impulses and instinctive reactions.

Intellectual or (mental) maturity is the ability to enjoy knowledge and objective judgment on personal reality and a genuine acceptance of oneself, avoiding certain subjective understandings of one's human existence.

Social maturity refers to an acceptance of self, of becoming truly capable of integrating one's needs and of accommodating other people.

Moral maturity can be defined as an integration of the norms and rules imposed from the outside and are overcome and amplified in a deeper vision of life with an impetus to adhere to supreme values. The sense of justice becomes the seed from which moral conscience can flourish over time.

Religious maturity is the complex and delicate one to deal with. Like any process of maturity, religious maturity also has a gradual development; a progressive deepening and a gradual maturation to arrive at a union with the transcendent being.

In summary, it is essential to keep in mind that none of us can be considered perfectly mature, since we are all on the way, that is, we are still growing.

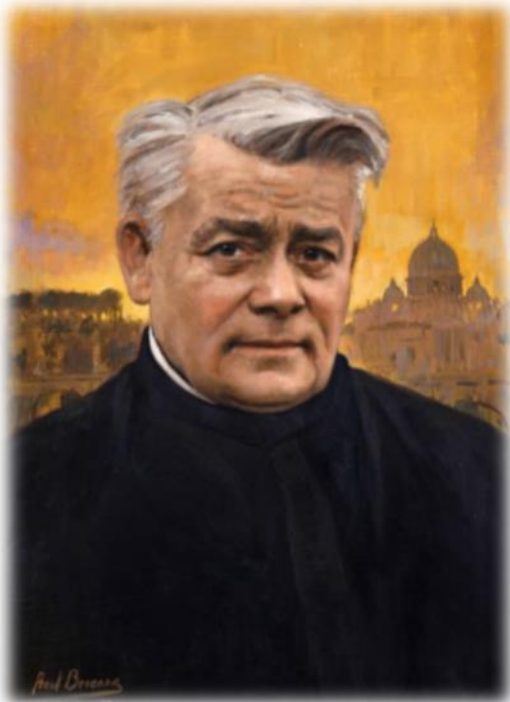
**P. Charles Mushitu, SDS.**

### *Do you know that...*

In the academic year 1892-1893 there were 103 Salvatorian students enrolled at the Gregorian University in Rome? Silence was mandatory at the university as well as in the seminary. During the breaks it was forbidden to look for other groups of religious and to speak with them.

Source: Positio p. 1004-1005





## The Founder speaks to us

“O God my beloved father, help me,  
in You I trust, You can do everything.

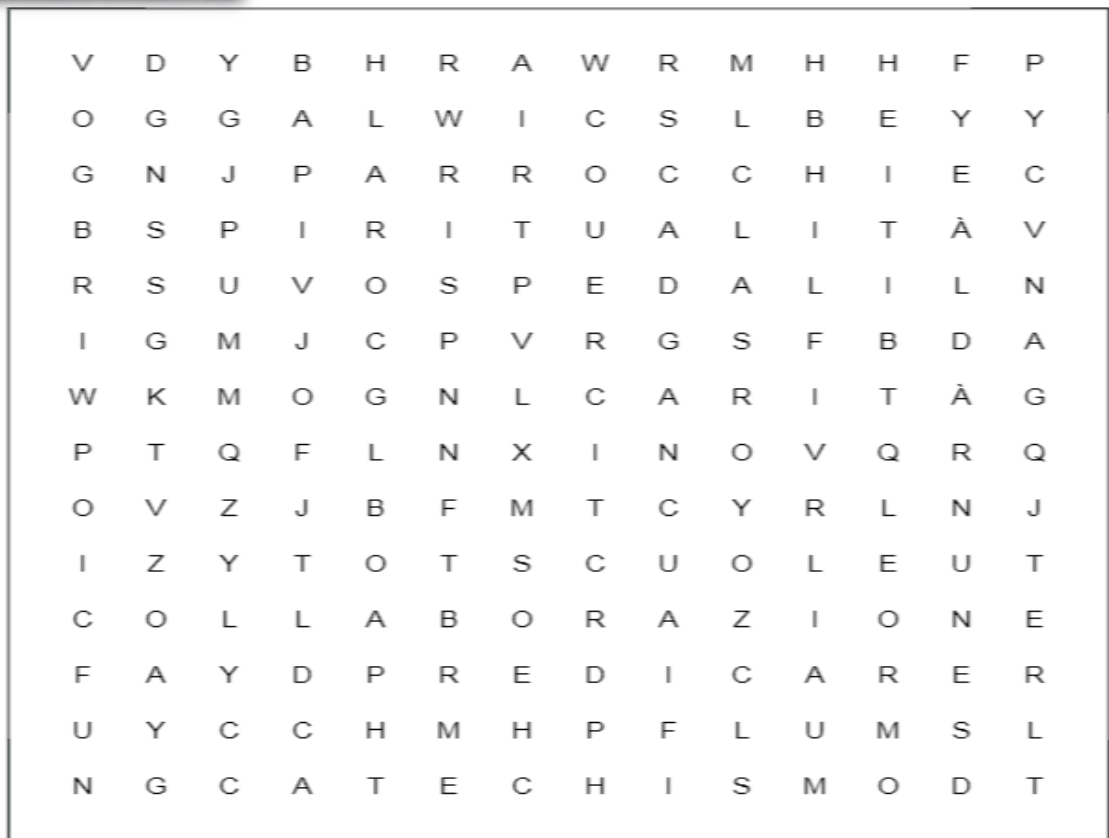
Oh, send me!

O Mother of God, all-powerful intercessor,  
I place my lot in your hands. Help me, protect me.

O God, look, look upon poor humanity, save it!  
Oh, send laborers into Your harvest.”

Spiritual Diary of Blessed Francis Jordan, IV, 5  
(Freiburg, 26 October 1915)

## Apostolati salvatoriani



[www.educolor.it](http://www.educolor.it)

Cl. Adrian  
Hafner, SDS

Carità  
Collaborazione  
Parrocchie  
Spiritualità

Catechismo  
Ospedali  
Scuole  
predicare



Formation in Salvatorian spirituality



Community work



Easter Vigil

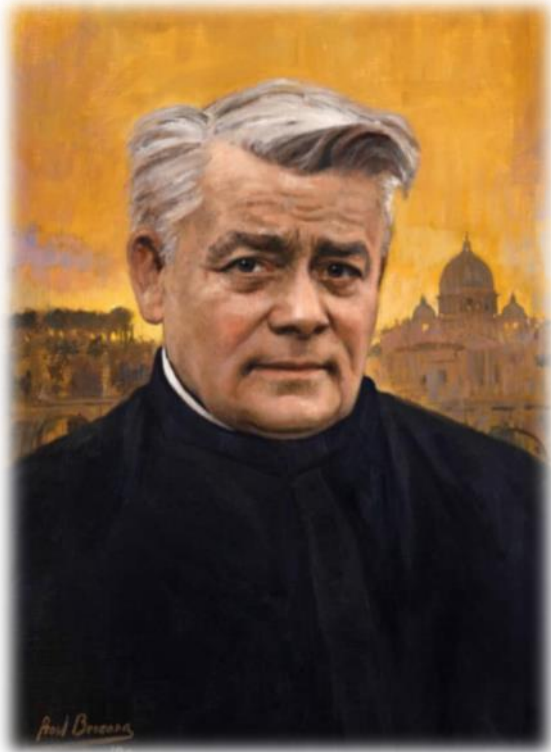


Dinner together with Austrian confreres



After sport

### Prayer through the intercession of Blessed Francis Mary of the Cross Jordan



O God of goodness and kindness, we thank you for inspiring Blessed Francis Mary of the Cross Jordan with a profound love and knowledge of You, the one true God and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent to be our Divine Saviour.

We implore the fire of your Spirit to enflame all the baptized to be apostles in the mission for the salvation of all people everywhere.

We invoke the intercession of Blessed Francis Jordan for our own personal intention of...

May he accompany us at significant and challenging moments in our lives.

And if it be your will, may he be recognized as a persevering and faithful saint whose apostolic life manifested Your strength through his human weakness.



Prayer at the grotto of Lourdes in the Vatican gardens after the thanksgiving Mass at Saint Peter's Basilica.



**Mater Salvatoris Community  
Tor de' Cenci, Roma**