

July 2023

N° IX

IL MISSIONARIO



Come and follow me!

Be the Catalyst of Peace

“Make peace, create peace, and be the example of peace. We need peace in the world”

(Pope Francis)

Recently, I was shattered by two images. One was shared by my friend, a Cambodian missionary, of a church completely destroyed by bombing in Sudan. The other one was shared by another friend, a diocesan priest from Manipur, North East India, and was an image of a church completely gutted by mob riots in a recent ethnic clash. War and violence have no particular reason; it could be largely because of political, religious, and economic reasons. There is no particular source. But peace has only one source; God Himself (Cfr. Heb 13:20). We read in the Gospel according to John, how the risen Lord greeted His disciples with peace thrice.

As followers of Christ, we are called to become catalysts of peace. It means we become people who are called to spread peace. We need to get involved in the peacebuilding process. For this reason, we need to experience Christ in us, to affirm that it is possible to become a person of peace and spread it to the people with whom we live. This could be an antidote for a world torn by war and violence.

According to Thomas Menampambil SDB, Archbishop Emeritus of Guwahati, India, a person known for his contribution to peacebuilding between different tribes and recipient of many international awards, peacebuilding could be an effective way of evangelization. He notes: evangelization is “mediating between the various views and cultures and promoting sincere dialogue between the parties out of mutual knowledge, respect and a pinch of sympathy in the heart.” It is an effective way of bringing people closer to God and to one another.

Let there be peace and let it begin with me. I can be a catalyst of peace.

Fr. Johnson Vinoth Kumar, SDS





My name is **Fr. Johnson Vinoth Kumar, SDS**. I am from India. I was born on the 23rd of May of 1979 in Gudalur, Tamil Nadu, in the south of India. I was born in a Catholic family. We are six in the family. I am the third and I have a twin sister. I attended primary and secondary school in my home town. After the secondary school I did a diploma in mechanical engineering for three years. Inspired by one of my former parish priests I rekindled the desire to join the seminary. Guided by the salvatorian Sisters I entered the candidature in the year 2000.

After completing postulancy in 2002 I was sent to Shillong for philosophy studies. My novitiate was in Manila in the Philippines. I professed my first vows in the year 2007. Having completed my regency in the formation house in Bangalore I did a licentiate in philosophy for two years. Between 2010 and 2013 I did a bachelor of theology in Shillong. I was ordained on the 28th of December 2013. For the pastoral experience I was sent to Kanyakumari in the southmost part of the country.

From October 2014 I was appointed as the formator in the minor seminary and also was the vice principle of our school in Assam. In 2018 I went back to Bangalore to begin my doctorate but in the next year I was placed in Warangal as the formator for the philosophy students for three years. During this time, I was also part of the formation commission and attended Jordan international formation school.

In September 2022 I came to Rome to do further studies on formation. For the first three months I attended language classes while staying in the Motherhouse. In December last year I was transferred to the formation house at Tor de' Cenci where I was appointed vice rector and spiritual director.



SOFIA

Salvatorian Office for International Aid

FIFTEEN YEARS SOFIA

The Salvatorians' international fundraising agency "Sofia Global" has been in existence for fifteen years in April 2023. It was founded in April 2008, after the General Chapter of 2006 made the decision to do so. In addition to my work as superior of the Pancratius Pfeiffer Mission Vicariate and as treasurer of the international formation house Mater Salvatoris, I am allowed to work part-time for SOFIA.

Background: why a new fundraising initiative?

The Salvatorians are growing again worldwide. For about 30 years we have observed a renewed missionary dynamic among the Salvatorians. While we were active in 20 countries across all continents around 1990, during the following 30 years 24 countries have been added. This means a doubling of the geographical spread was achieved. In a number of those countries and in a number of these new foundations or missions, after an initial period of establishment the number of candidates and young members is now starting to rise sharply. We are talking about Cameroon, Mozambique, Ecuador, Mexico, India, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, China, the Philippines, Indonesia, Kenya and Uganda. Moreover, there are candidates from even more countries, such as East Timor. In the somewhat older missions, such as Congo and Tanzania, there are already around 150 members with vows. In countries such as Brazil and Venezuela, there are relatively large groups of young men in formation, which bodes well for the future.

Finally, a new development is beginning to take shape. In a number of new foundations, the first period of formation has already passed. There, young members are ordained as priests every year. These then immediately become active in some apostolate. That means that the Salvatorians currently start new parishes every year, have new churches and chapels to build every year, start new schools every year, start new programs in poor neighborhoods, new pastoral and development projects... and so on. That means that the Congregation faces enormous challenges with regard to the initial financing of all these projects and activities.



Fundraising

One cannot cook soup without water. It is at this point that the question of the fundraising of the Salvatorians arises. In nine countries, from the USA to Poland, we work with the classic mission procura and with relatively large donor bases of individual small benefactors.



That model, however, has the same problem as the Church in Europe: the public is aging and thinning out at a rapid pace. That is why in April 2008, just as the international financial crisis was well underway, we founded a new office under the General Administration in Rome with the beautiful name SOFIA: Salvatorian Office for International Aid. The Greek "sofia" means "wisdom". Through our support, we help people acquire the insight, the wisdom, to increasingly take their lives into their own hands and thus to work towards a better future for themselves and their children.

SOFIA marked a radical renewal of Salvatorian fundraising. The office has lay employees, professionals in their field. The fundraising is project-based and seeks institutional partners across Europe.



Three-quarters of the support found comes from foundations, both private and public, both Christian and non-denominational, both government and business. So there are many people and groups who want to support us, because (and if) we do a good job, even if they don't go to Sunday Mass every week.

A school next to a parish church clearly has pastoral aspects, because that school can of course be a great tool for the parish priest in his pastoral work. But it is also clear that the same school has aspects of development, contributing to the intellectual level of the population and to economic and social progress by producing educated people with the necessary capacities. As such, the Salvatorians contribute to the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations with such a project.

We must also dare to say that and we must also dare to call on support for this, especially because Salvatorians work in many countries and in many areas where without our efforts there would be no education, no health care etc. for the local population. Finally, SOFIA's work is also a concrete translation of the social teaching of the Church and of the Gospel, which calls for commitment to one's neighbor: "I was sick and you visited me, I was hungry and you fed me ...". We can add: I was illiterate and you built a school for me. I was an orphan and you raised me. I was exploited and you stood up for me and defended my rights when I couldn't.



Results

After fifteen years, we can look back on 352 completed projects and fifteen million euros in grants. Some of these projects were small (from around 5000 euros) or involved an instrument or equipment.

Informations

Others were large-scale, multi-year and complex (and sometimes received more than 300 or 400,000 euros in support). There are about 85 projects in preparation and in progress. Salvatorians have learned to work more professionally, which is absolutely needed apart from a solid spiritual foundation of projects. And there are more spill-over effects: more structured and need-based approach to our work, more result oriented approach, more understanding of budget and financial reporting, accountancy and accountability.



SOFIA has generated a few daughters. The *Fondazione SOFIA Onlus*, a legal entity in Italy, has been active since 2011. Starting from 2012 the office SOFIA Congo Congo is of great help combining and accompanying the many projects in Congo. In the same year, the *Stiftung SOFIA Swiss* was set up for Switzerland. Since 2018 the project office *Tejiendo Redes* exists, in fact the local project office for the Salvatorians in Venezuela. We hope in the near future to collaborate more closely with project managers in India and in Vietnam.

Not just money: what are we doing it for?

Fundraising is not just about money. The first thing we are asked when we propose a project to an aid organization is who we are, what we do, and why we do it. These are questions about our identity as

Christians and as religious. So why do we do it? What is our motivation and mission?

Fundraising is not just about money, because first of all we invite people to participate in our mission, which is to build a more humane world in Jesus' name. Putting into practice the social teachings of the Church, so to speak. And finally, fundraising is not just about money, because behind the numbers and percentages of each project there are thousands of concrete people with their families, for whom whether or not carrying out that concrete project makes a real difference in their daily lives and for their future. That's what we do it for!



Fr. Piet Cuijpers, SDS,
Director SOFIA

www.sofiaglobal.org



DIACONAL ORDINATION

On June 29, the Church commemorates Saints Peter and Paul, the two pillars of the nascent Church. Because they are the two patrons of the Eternal City, it is a solemnity in Rome, recognized by the civil government as a non-working day. For our community it was an even more festive day because of the ordination as deacons of four of our brethren. As soon as they finished their exams, they left for the retreat to prepare spiritually for their ordination. Meanwhile, at Tor de' Cenci, preparations were hastily made for the liturgical event and the subsequent festivities. More than 190 guests were expected, of whom many would also attend the festive lunch. In short, an impressive logistical issue for our humble community. Happily, we were able to experience the diakonia not only of the ordinands, but of all the members of our formation house.

The diaconal ordination proved to be a celebration of universality. Indeed, the five continents were represented around the altar: the bishop was of European (Roman) origin, while the ordinands came from America (Adrian Novelo), Asia (Joseph Ho Trong Hoa), Africa (Chimogwa Boniface Philipo) and Oceania (Gabriel Da Costa). Since three of them are destined to do their apostolate in Europe the

ordinands also represented hope for the future of the Society of the Divine Savior in the Western countries of the Old Continent. In addition, the bishop reminded the ordinands that the diaconate - that is, the commitment to service - endures throughout ministerial life. Msgr. Gervasi added as the last thought of his homily the importance of love for the Church, being both holy and sinful.

After the Eucharistic celebration, the new deacons were showered with many congratulations from the exultant assembly. Songs in exotic languages resounded as the meat was prepared, accompanied by copious amounts of beverages. Along with the guests invited by the ordinands, several members of the generalate, other confreres and the Teresian Sisters from the Motherhouse, the provincial superiors of Europe were also present. In addition, the other two branches of the Salvatorian family, namely the lay and the Salvatorian Sisters, were represented. In short, the day overflowed with joy. In the early evening we celebrated the second vespers of the solemnity together, giving thanks to God for all His benefits. Finally, we sat in the recreation room to conclude in fraternity and with more singing this beautiful day.

Informations

Many thanks to all who were involved, and see you at the next one!



Cl. Stefaan Peetermans, SDS

EASTER TIME IN THE TOR DE' CENCI COMMUNITY

After the 40 days of Lent, in which we prepared for the Lord's Easter -in the community, but also personally-, the Holy Week arrived. On Holy Thursday we watched via TV the Chrism Mass, which we experienced last year with so much emotion in St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican. The beginning of the Easter Triduum, which begins with the Mass of the Lord's Supper, however, was another special occasion: all three Salvatorian communities in Rome gathered in the Parish of Dragona, where the Superior General, Fr. Milton Zonta celebrated the Eucharist, with its special rite, the washing of the feet, in front of a full church. This occasion, being also the institution of the Eucharist and of the ordained ministry, ended with a dinner attended by the present members of the three Salvatorian communities: Dragona, Motherhouse and Tor de' Cenci.



Good Friday, with the Passion of the Lord, was the reason why the entire Tor de' Cenci community participated in the celebration at the Parish of the Divine Savior in our neighborhood, where we were also present for the Easter Vigil. The entire Salvatorian community was very pleased to have had the opportunity to participate in these celebrations together with the parish community.

For the Easter of the Lord, with its special celebrations, we returned to our chapel, where it was our task to organize this great feast, in which so many people from the neighborhood participated. Again, our chapel proved too small for the number of people in attendance.

The Easter Octave was not the end of the celebrations: on April 23, quite a big number of people gathered in our festive hall for a neighborhood lunch. Each family brought some food, put everything on the table, and so

we also had the opportunity to taste different traditional or non-traditional foods. Although we were not able to try all the foods, some of the recipes we have already searched on the Internet so that we could cook them ourselves.



One week later the community members gathered around Fr. Agostino Maiolini for the monthly retreat. The Salvatorian charism, the history of his vocation and some passages from the history of the Salvatorians in the Italian Province were among the topics discussed. Although time was limited, the experience we had touched us very much.



Easter Time ended with Pentecost Sunday, when we celebrated Holy Mass in a solemn way, had a festive lunch and concluded the day with community Vespers, also very solemn celebrated.

The activities described here are just some of all that happened during this beautiful time full of Grace, joy and celebrations. We thank the Lord for all that He gives us every day as we are preparing for the last part of the academic year: the exams, which are the proof of what we have studied among the different activities during the past months.

Cl. Adrian Hafner, SDS



DISCOVERING ART:

Altarpiece in the main chapel of the Motherhouse of the SDS Sisters

In his love God has placed in man the idea of the good, the true and the beautiful so that by using it man can attain his happiness. Man, having discovered the presence of this idea within himself, transposes it onto a concrete material, in such a way that this idea has a history and helps the growth of secondary ideas. Considering art in its great richness, while Plato saw art as a “*mimesis*”, that is, an imitation of the idea that lies in the mind of its producer, Hegel found in art the idea at its absolute level.

Taking these two positions into account, we can say that there is a gnoseology to be understood in art. In this sense, our interest in the philosophy of art led us to reflect on the painting on the wall, in front of the altar, inside the Chapel of the Mother House of the Sisters of the Divine Savior. That reflection led us to write a book in French that we would like to summarize here starting from the image of the Holy Trinity toward the image of Blessed Francis Jordan and Blessed Mary of the Apostles in order to end with the figures of the patron saints of the Salvatorian family and those of the other saints found in that painting. The search for the “why” of these characters is the core of our thinking about that painting.

In fact, the Catholic Church believes in God, One and Triune. This belief in the Holy Trinity is somehow the essential core of the Catholic Christian doctrine. Painters, who through art bring beauty to life, have greatly hinted at the Trinitarian doctrine by making paintings about it. In the painting of the Motherhouse Chapel of the Salvatorian Sisters, the Trinity is seen through the image of the “hand of the Father”, Jesus Christ the Teacher and the Holy Spirit who is represented by the Dove. In fact, the hand of the Father makes us think of His power in “creating” the world and His presence in the history of His people as we can read it in Sacred Scripture and particularly in the Old Testament.

This truth about God the Father was revealed by His Son Jesus Christ, sent by the Father into the world for the salvation of mankind. Here is the

profound reason why Jesus' teaching in that painting is "I am your salvation" as we can read in the book Jesus carries in His hand. By identifying Himself with Salvation, Jesus wants all men through Him to share in the life of His Father which is heavenly bliss. However, knowing the weariness and weakness of human memory subjected to time and space, Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to make men remember all His teaching. In this perspective, it is the Spirit who guides our steps on the sea of history and leads the Church born from the Cross of Christ toward the Heavenly Jerusalem. The painting on which we speak represents the Holy Spirit on the form of the Dove as is customary in the Bible.

Then, in the painting we have the image of Blessed Francis Jordan, founder of all three branches of the Salvatorian family. Francis Jordan, a man of great faith, left the Church at large and the Salvatorian family a legacy: to carry with great zeal the Gospel of Christ everywhere on earth through all means that God's love inspires. That is, this inheritance brings men, without excluding anyone, to the knowledge of the only God and His Son Jesus so that by grasping this knowledge, men may have eternal life (Jn. 17:3).

To carry this idea in all its beauty forward, Blessed Francis Jordan insisted saying, "as long as there is one man on earth, who does not know, does not love above all things God, you are not allowed to rest a moment." This missionary ardor that inhabited the heart of Blessed Jordan also inflamed the heart of Blessed Mary of the Apostles, whose image we find in the painting. Blessed Mary of the Apostles shows us through her life the zeal for God's mission taught by Jesus.

In addition to her zeal for the mission, Mary of the Apostles teaches us humility, patience and obedience in doing the mission because without these virtues, our zeal would cease to be for the glory and honor of God, but for our own benefit or for the welfare of our own selves.

Then, we have the figures of the holy masters of the Salvatorian family: the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Joseph, St. Michael and the figures of the Apostles Peter, Paul and Mary Magdalene. We have emphasized in our book that Salvatorians turn to Our Lady, first because she is the Mother of God as the doctrine of the Holy Catholic Church teaches; then because Mary is Mother of the Church within which Salvatorians live the Charism of Blessed Francis Jordan; then finally, Salvatorians turn to Mary

because that is how Blessed Francis Jordan taught them through his life, words and writings in which the Virgin Mary takes a privileged place. Salvatorians also dedicate themselves to St. Joseph, this saint of great humility, because Joseph in his holy silence, guarded Jesus and therefore became a model of fatherhood, which finds its roots in the Fatherhood of God the Father. Then we have the image of St. Michael, whose name is a very significant question, "who is like God?"

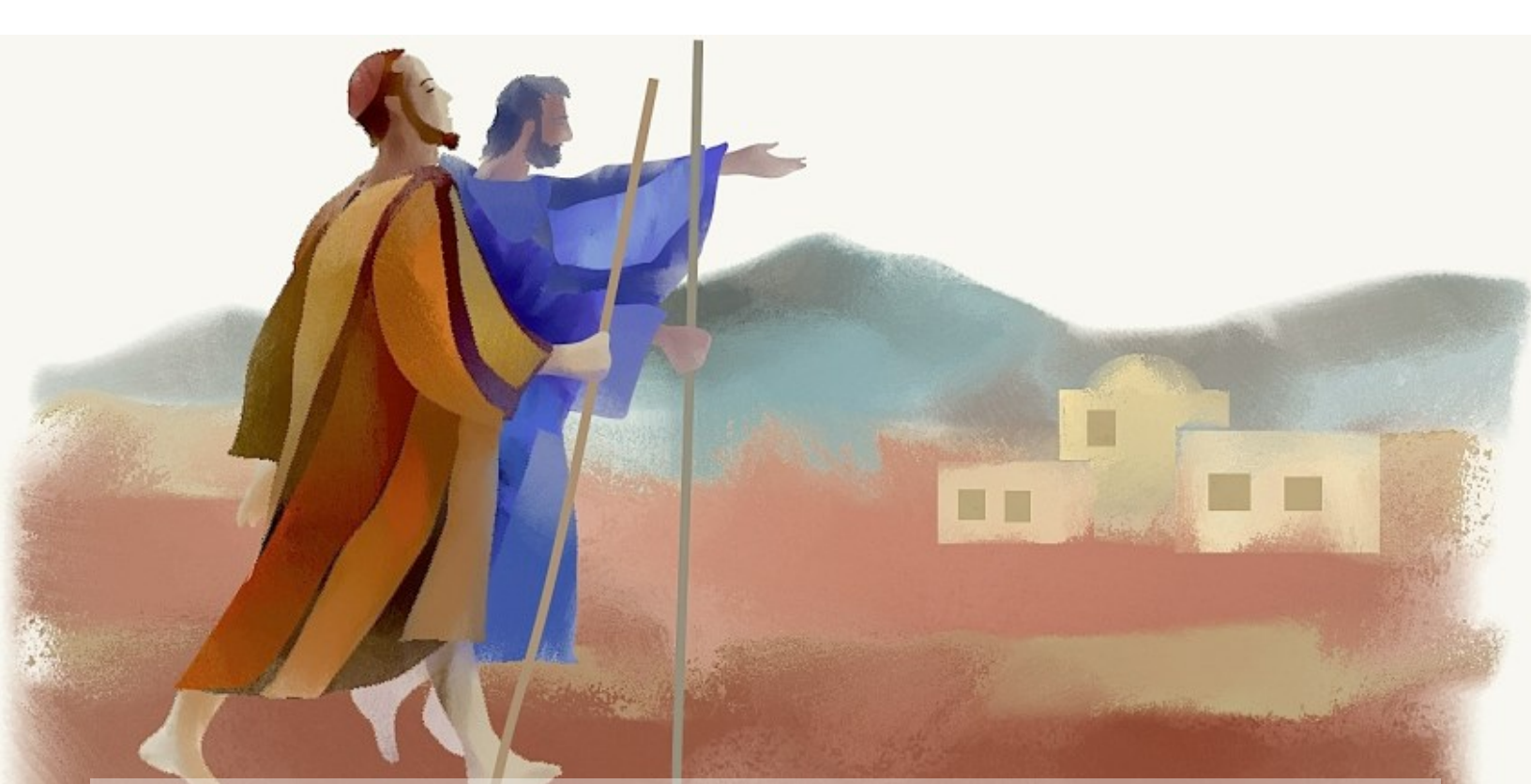
That is, for the honor of God the Father and His Lamb, Jesus Christ, Michael fought the devil as John's Revelation says and won the battle. With this in mind, the Church in general and the Salvatorian family in particular turns to Michael in prayer to ask for his protection against the power of the evil one. Then we have the image of Apostles Peter and Paul, pillars of the Church because they taught together with the other Apostles the words of Christ. By teaching the words of Christ, the Apostles also showed us in their martyrdom that the way to salvation is by the Cross that Jesus himself took. Then we have the image of Mary Magdalene, the woman who went to Jesus' tomb on Easter morning and saw that it was empty.

The figure of Mary Magdalene teaches us to have a deep love for Jesus, whose love brings us out of fear to bring the Gospel of the Risen Christ to the world. That is why Mary Magdalene is known in the teaching of the Catholic Church as the Apostle of the Apostles. Then, we have the images of the other saints such as Catharine of Siena, Francis of Assisi, Clara of Assisi. St. Catharine is mentioned in that painting because she is a patron saint of Rome and Europe.

The images of St. Francis of Assisi and St. Clara of Assisi make us think of poverty in their approach as a promise to God and a bliss of life. Both are depicted in this painting as models of religious poverty, but also as patrons of Italy.

Seeing all the beauty of that painting in the General House of the Salvatorian Sisters, our interest in the philosophy of art therefore allowed us to reflect in order to draw from it the essential elements that would help the growth of our faith. In this sense, whenever the intelligence is in front of a picture or a painting it should immediately think that it is in front of a text. And because every text has as its nature to be interpreted, the intelligence must do so.

Cl. Jean-Luc Kapend, SDS



SALVATORIAN MISSIONARY IN THE WORLD TODAY

Before ascending to heaven, Jesus told his disciples, “Go into the entire world and proclaim the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). This is a missionary command from Jesus to the Church and to all of us missionaries by virtue of our baptism. Aware of this, for more than two thousand years the Church has not ceased going out to proclaim the Good News to all peoples. However, until now, the number of people who believe in Christ is still very small. That command, therefore, always remains an imperative, making it impossible for any Christian, missionary by nature, to be at ease with his Mission. For us Salvatorians, we have to be more committed to this Mission following the example of the life of our Founder. Indeed, Blessed Francis Jordan said that “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.” However, we must ask ourselves what we should do as a missionary of God, of the Church, and of our Salvatorian Society.

In my opinion, first of all we must remember that Mission is a mandate from God. Evangelization is first and foremost Jesus' commandment, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to every creature. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved” (Mk 16:15-16; cf. Mt 28:19-20). We are called to evangelize, because this is the will of God who wants everyone to know the truth and be saved by believing in Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Tim 2:4). We

Salvatorians must realize that this Mission is divine. It is God's commandment that through Jesus Christ it was entrusted to the Church and thus to all of us. This divine character of Mission is always an important point and reference for all missionaries in the past and in our time today. Because, in carrying out the mission, there are still so many missionaries who tend to trivialize this sacred mission. So many take possession of the Mission and do it according to their own will rather than according to God's will, who is the source of the Mission. Therefore, we Salvatorian missionaries in today's world must remember that Mission is a commandment from God. We are called to carry out this Mission of evangelization, not according to our own will, but according to God's will, and not for our own good, but for the good of the people God entrusts to us.

To be a Salvatorian missionary in today's world, we must also go beyond borders in order to spread the Gospel of God. It is clear that today's world has so many places and people who do not yet know the light of the Gospel. In addition, the Church today desperately needs courageous missionaries to set foot on the road to the peripheries. Pope Francis in his Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World *Evangelii Gaudium* invites us to go out to bring the Gospel to all corners of the earth. The Roman Pontiff wrote: “[e]ach Christian and every community must discern the path that the Lord points out, but all of us are

asked to obey his call to go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the “peripheries” in need of the light of the Gospel.” (EG 20). In the same document Pope Francis reminds us also that “[i]n virtue of their baptism, all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples (cf. Mt 28:19). All the baptized, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, are agents of evangelization” (EG 120). Hence, it is time for us Salvatorians to step out of our comfort zone to make our Savior more known and loved by all people and especially by those living in the peripheries.

In a world where all things become more secular, we Salvatorian missionaries must proclaim the Gospel with holiness of life and prayer life. Missionaries are God's people who bring the Good News to spread the Kingdom of God. They go out because they understand what God desires of them, and ultimately they take responsibility for bringing salvation to all peoples. Therefore, the missionary needs to prepare well the conditions to be fit for the role of a messenger of the Gospel. First of all, the missionary must live and practice holiness of life. The call to Mission derives by its very nature from the call to holiness.

This call to holiness is not only God's will and the requirement of Mission, but also the great expectation of the community of God's people. A missionary is truly a missionary only when he is committed to the path of holiness. Pope John Paul II reminds us in his Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio* that “[t]he call to Mission derives, of its nature, from the call to holiness. A missionary is really such only if he commits himself to the way of holiness” (RM 90). Even as there are today many missionaries who are intellectually well prepared, their mission is not very effective nor welcomed by the people, because they do not see the holiness of the life of these missionaries. People do not recognize that these missionaries are disciples of Jesus. It is clear that the missionary cannot make other disciples of Jesus Christ if the missionary himself is not a true disciple. Therefore, we the Salvatorian missionaries of today must have the personality of a holy disciple of Christ. And with a life of prayer and spiritual cultivation, we grow daily under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

As Salvatorian missionaries, we need to place our trust in God. It is clear that witnessing the Gospel values to humanity implies that missionaries will face many difficulties and challenges in life. Therefore, the missionary must always remember that he belongs to

Christ. He is responsible to bring the Light of Christ to enlighten all nations.

In addition, the missionary must absolutely put his total trust in God. In this way, the missionary will always be steadfast in every circumstance to spread Christ and His Gospel to mankind. Through the missionary saints – especially through our Founder Blessed Francis Jordan – we Salvatorians learn that when we go on mission, we put our trust in God's Providence, which means that we rely on the Lord's power. We do not rely on ourselves – on our own talents, intelligence, strength or ability to act –, nor are we arrogant, proud or conceited when we engage in preaching, but we rely completely and only on God. For the Lord will make our Mission of evangelization fruitful.

The main reason why missionary life should be based on the mystery of Christ is the missionary vocation. The source of missionary life is Christ Himself, who calls and sends. He is the Source and at the same time the object of missionary activities. Therefore, Mission is not limited to teaching a doctrine or serving or helping, but above all it aims at presenting one Person, Jesus Christ, so that He may be known, loved and believed by all.

As missionaries, in the virtue of our baptism and according to our religious charism, we Salvatorians remember that Mission is a commandment from God. We are called to take the Mission of evangelization to people not according to our will but according to God's will. We do this not for our own sake but for the sake of the people God entrusts to us. We must also prepare ourselves well intellectually and spiritually for the Mission, especially through the cultivation of holiness of life and prayer, so that we can effectively engage in the mission we are called to do. In our mission we must also remember that serving with much humility is the best way to open the door to the fire of God's love, which is full of the light of truth and love. Above all, we must trust in God's Providence to go to the peripheries to bring the Gospel to everyone. In the end, I believe that engaging in the missionary journey will certainly not avoid difficulties and hardships, but we should not worry too much, because God always accompanies us.

Dn. Joseph Ho Trong Hoa, SDS



Detail of an illustration in the Apostelkalender of 1893. The Holy Spirit is in the center at the highest point.

PENTECOST:

SOME REFLECTIONS ON FR. JORDAN AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

A most interesting essay could be written on the relationship between Fr. Jordan and the Holy Spirit. The story of the dove that distracted young John Baptist Jordan during his First Communion is widely known. This event marked an important turning point in the life of the Founder. Much less known is that Blessed Francis Mary of the Cross profoundly experienced the Spirit even towards the end of his life. On December 30, 1916, he wrote in his Spiritual Diary: “‘Temple of the Holy Spirit’. Peace – joy – freshness – fruitfulness – a happy end and eternal joy” (1). Despite the growing ailments of old age Fr. Jordan, comforted by the Paraclete, maintained an admirable patience and inner tranquility. Therefore, it is not surprising that Pentecost was the first titular feast of the Society (2). In this article we will make some brief reflections on the spiritual significance of Pentecost in the young Society.

Talks of Fr. Jordan

Of Fr. Jordan's speeches there are five dated around Pentecost; obviously these words of the Founder are a precious source for addressing the question we have posed. The two discourses of 1897 are the longest: in the discourse at the beginning of the octave of Pentecost, the Founder insists a lot on fraternal charity as a gift to be asked of the Holy Spirit. Charity is not part of the seven 'traditional' gifts of the Spirit, therefore it seems that the Blessed understood that fraternal charity is indispensable for unity in the

Society and in the Church. Later, Fr. Jordan goes one step further. The main threat to fraternal charity is slander, which should “be banished once and for all from the Society” (3). Towards the end of the octave of the same year, the Founder returns to the theme of the Holy Spirit, repeatedly emphasizing the close link between prayer and unity.

From the year 1899 were preserved two speeches during the period of the octave of Pentecost. The first discourse is a reflection on the biblical phrase “Erant perseverantes unanimiter in oratione” (At 1,14), which means “[the Apostles] were persevering and unanimous in prayer” (3). Just as the Holy Spirit helped the Apostles to find the courage to proclaim the Good News, also Fr. Jordan was fully aware that without the Spirit “we can do nothing”. Therefore we must perseveringly invoke the help of the Paraclete, “in these days especially through silent prayer” (4). An impressive example of the Founder's ardent prayer is found in the second Pentecostal speech of 1899, during which Fr. Jordan seems to address God directly: “O come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and light the fire of your love in them” (5).

The Spiritual Diary

The Founder never mentioned the term ‘Pentecost’ in his Spiritual Diary, and even the term ‘Holy Spirit’ appears only 9 times in the 410 pages of the Diary. Nonetheless, there is no doubt that Fr. Jordan

experienced a deep communion with the Holy Spirit, although he also experienced prolonged periods of desolation. On the third page of the Diary, the twenty-eight-year-old John Baptist wrote: “Sanctify your body, Oh man; for it is a temple of the Holy Spirit!” (6) The same expression – Temple of the Spirit – reappears just once in the Diary: in 1916 to be precise, which is forty-two years after the first mention. In this way the indwelling of the Spirit can be seen as an inclusion that brings together a large

part of the spirituality of the Blessed. Thus Pentecost was not a mere biblical event or a theological concept for the Founder, but a basic spiritual attitude.

The Spiritual Diary makes it clear that the Paraclete several times encouraged and comforted Fr. Jordan. For example, on March 25, 1879 he wrote: “After Holy Mass I experienced great consolation over the proposed work” (7). But desolation also made itself felt. Lüthen testified that in 1889 the Founder was going through a period of vocational crisis, especially during the solemnities of Pentecost, Christmas, and the Immaculate Conception. In fact, the consolation-desolation duality is one of the elements that makes reading the Diary so fascinating. Spiritual consolation is closely linked to the action of the Holy Spirit, who “helps us in our weakness” (8). At the same time the saints painfully experience the imperfection of our human attempts to enter and remain in communion with God.

Concluding reflections

Pentecost in the spiritual sense is not a punctual event; rather it is an attitude of confident hope in God. Fr. Jordan practiced this attitude with great perseverance. It is no coincidence that the most frequent biblical quotation in the Spiritual Diary is the first verse of Psalm 31: “In You, Lord, I have hoped, I will not be confounded forever”.

Secondly, let’s not forget that Pentecost also has an important ecclesial dimension. According to Fr. Skwor “we must remember that the strength [of the Holy Spirit] is not given for us but for our mission” (10). Indeed, the Holy Spirit is a Spirit of communion who “builds up, animates and sanctifies the Church” (11). Therefore it is not surprising that the Founder cultivated a personal devotion to the Holy Spirit, and asked the confreres to invoke Him for the growth of the Society and for the “somewhat lukewarm” members (12).

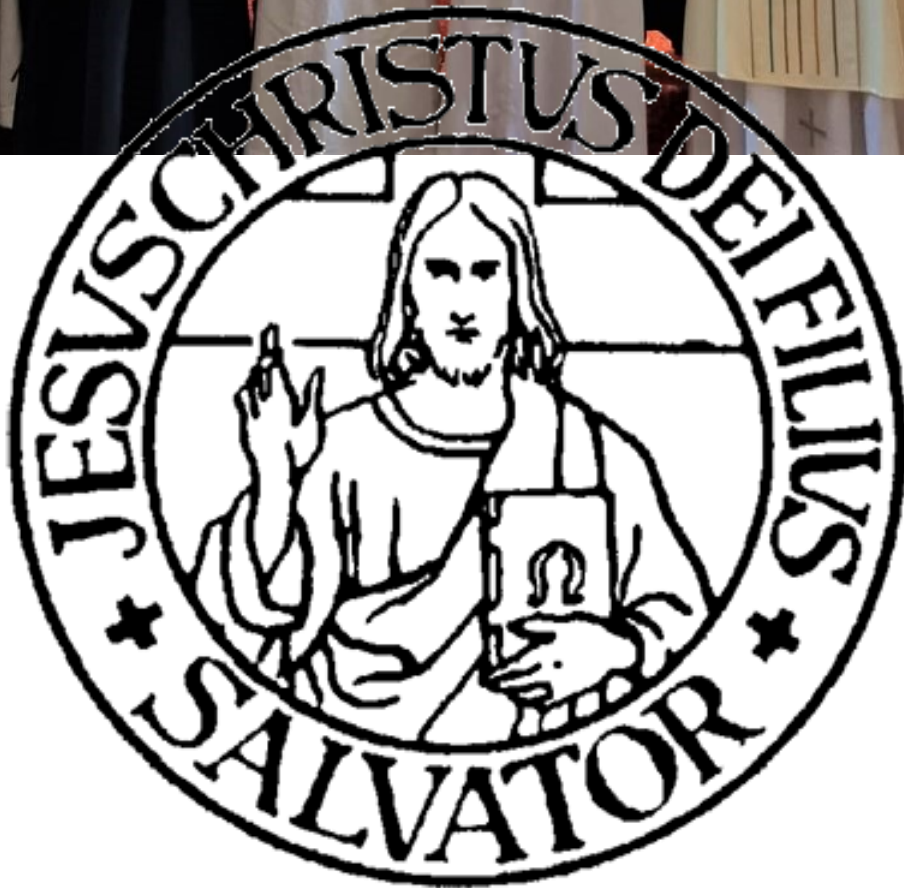
Arriving at the end of this little research, I realized that the spirituality of the Founder and of our Society is more 'Pentecostal' than I thought. Together with universality and unity, some common elements of Pentecost and Salvatorian spirituality are the conjunction of prayer and mission. “Save souls!”, exclaimed Fr. Jordan in his Journal towards the end of his life (13). The Founder was “ushering in a new Pentecost”, Fr. Skwor concisely stated (14). Let us ask the good Lord for the fire of the Holy Spirit to carry on the Mission that Jesus has entrusted to us through Blessed Francis Mary of the Cross.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. IV/33
2. Cf. *Spiritual Diary*, p.319-320
3. *Talks of Father Francis Mary of the Cross Jordan*, 1897/06/04, p.114
4. Cf. *Talks of Father Francis Mary of the Cross Jordan*, 1899/05/12, p.311
5. *Talks of Father Francis Mary of the Cross Jordan*, 1899/05/19, p.315
6. I/3
7. I/154
8. Cf. *Spiritual Diary*, p.161
9. Rm 8,26
10. SKWOR, D. *A Triage on Salvatorian Identity*, p.207
11. CCC, 747.
12. Cf. *Talks of Father Francis Mary of the Cross Jordan*, p.310-311
13. IV, 30.
14. SKWOR, D. *A Triage on Salvatorian Identity*, p.209

Cl. Stefaan Peetermans, SDS



MATER SALVATORIS COMMUNITY
TOR DE' CENCI, ROME
2023