

THE SMYRNA DRAFT (July, 1880)

FROM THE FAMILY CHRONICLE

Our venerable founder came to recognize his apostolic vocation in a definite way already as a young priest of thirty-two years while visiting the Holy Land. During Lent of 1880, he had dared to place the rough draft of his planned foundation on the Holy Sepulcher of Our Lord in Jerusalem. At the beginning of July that same year while in the Lebanon Mountains he experienced a breakthrough to full awareness of his holy vocation in a peak moment of grace-filled inspiration and he very clearly recognized where his mission was anchored: "Eternal life is this: to know you, the only true God, and him whom you have sent, Jesus Christ." (Jn. 17,3)

Jordan had hardly returned to Rome when he began with his work. He labored over the composition of the Statutes for the "Apostolic Teaching Society" while at Donauworth in Germany during the first days of October, 1880. They proved to be far from complete. Yet, at the end of November this enthusiastic young apostle had the courage to present a short rule to the Holy See, with the sole purpose of getting the Church's permission to launch his daring enterprise. However, it was immediately made clear to him that he had, in his apostolic enthusiasm, come to the wrong address: he was in fact still completely under the jurisdiction of his bishop back home. It is too bad that neither the "Jerusalem Rough Draft" nor the "Roman Short Rule" has come down to us.

One may wonder: Was it coincidence or was it the servant of God Francis Mary of the Cross Jordan himself who had a hand in the surfacing two years ago of a document in which he had drafted a short outline of the "Apostolic Teaching Society"? The Postulator General, at the invitation of the Capuchin archivist, looked through the papers left by Cardinal William Massaia, the former Bishop of Galla in Ethiopia and discovered this early plan of the young Father Jordan.

John Baptist Jordan had drafted this plan in July 1880 in Smyrna where he was on pastoral supply substituting for the Superior of the Capuchin Monastery. On July 31, he sent this Latin draft of his planned work to Rome to his fatherly friend Bishop Massaia, to get his approval and blessing. This newly discovered document providentially surfacing now, falls precisely between the "Jerusalem Rough Draft" and the "Roman Short Rule" and provides us with a bridge connecting these two lost or sunken pilings.

The nascent founder called the draft a concise outline of his plan in his cover letter to Massaia, but we can really see that it is much more than just a basic pattern according to which his plan was to develop. The "Smyrna Draft" is much more like a seedling, which in itself bears already its later more mature form. We recognize quite clearly, for example, the Gospel roots of the plan in the Farewell Discourse of Jesus at the Last Supper, the apostolic heritage, the Catholic temperament, and the universal character of this sound and healthy seedling, which the Mother of the Lord has taken over into her special sponsorship.

We sense with awe that here, once again, as is so often the case in the life of God's kingdom, a Church in miniature -- another expression of the mystery of the Church -- comes to see the light of day. But read and judge for yourself.

Fr. Timotheus Edwein

Smyrna, July 31, 1880

Most Reverend Monsignor,

Having already spoken to Your Excellency in Jerusalem and at Beirut about the foundation of a Society of which I here send you a concise outline I dare to approach Your Excellency once more.

The good God has blessed our undertaking; there are already various members, among them also Bishops. Patriarchs of various rites are encouraging us.

Now we intend to found the first house in Rome, i.e. in Italy, at the center of Catholicism, where a few of the First Grade will make the novitiate and we shall establish ourselves beginning with poverty, but we still need the blessing and a few encouraging words of the Holy Father for this.

Knowing that the word of Your Excellency is very powerful with the Holy Father, I ask you with all my heart to have the great kindness to help me with a few words of intercession with him. For in a week I shall leave for Rome and I will explain our undertaking in an audience, and we shall ask for the blessing and for a few words of encouragement from the Vicar of Christ

Thanking you in advance for all your help, I humbly ask you to remember our Society in your good prayers, and, with the highest esteem, I am

Your humble servant

John Baptist Jordan

*Address: Largo dell'Impresa n. 2
Rome*

In Honor of the Omnipotent God

*But the wise shall shine brightly
like the splendor of the universe.
And these who lead the many to justice
shall be like the stars forever. (Dan 12,3)*

*Eternal life is this: to know you
the only true God.
and him whom you have sent,
Jesus Christ. (Jn 17,3)*

The Apostolic Teaching Society under the Sponsorship of the Blessed Virgin Mary the Queen of Heaven

The goal of this Society is that, with the help of divine grace the members work not only for their own sanctification and perfection but with the aid of that same divine grace also labor and toil intensely devoting themselves—by instruction, formation and teaching through the spoken and written word wherever in the world the greater glory of God will require it according to the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, "Go to all peoples and teach them..."—so that every thinking creature may more and more come to know the true God and Him whom He has sent, Jesus Christ, live a holy life, and save his soul.

The Society Has Three Parts

First Grade

Priests of all Catholic rites and lay people, who, having left all like the holy Apostles, "behold we have left all and followed you," devote themselves totally and in every possible way through the spoken and written word, and above all also in schools and seminaries for the indigenous in their own lands, as professors, doctors, teachers, preachers, writers, printers, catechists, etc., wherever the greater glory of God will call for it.

For women, there are sisters who, being joined by similar statutes, educate the girls.

Second Grade

Only well educated and scholarly people, clerical and lay, who already have their own profession and remain in their careers. They join the Society with the purpose of rejecting with all their energies in every way possible all false education and teaching and of spreading and promoting Catholic education and teaching as far as they are able and their own professions allow, mutually helping one another and bound together in a holy unity. A Latin periodical will be published for them.

Third Grade

Both lay men and lay women: They shall be part of the Society in such a way that they will reject all anti-Catholic and false education and teaching. They will protect the children entrusted to them from wrong teaching and anti-Catholic schools and see to it that they receive a good Catholic education and upbringing. For at least half an hour each week they should devote themselves to instruction according to the books and periodicals published or recommended by the Society.

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Resonating with Father Jordan in the Smyrna Draft

1. **Who** are the apostles? Priests of all rites, lay people, educated and scholarly, clerical and lay, lay men and “lay women.”
2. **What** do the apostles do? They proclaim, instruct, form, teach; labor and toil.
3. **When** do they do these things? Now, with urgency, Assumed from other contexts.
4. **Where?** Wherever in the world the greater glory of God would require it (2 times). To all people. Also in schools and seminaries.
5. **How?** With the help of divine grace, intensely, through the spoken and written word, according to the words of Jesus, leaving all and following Jesus, totally, in every possible way, under the sponsorship of the BVM, the Queen of Heaven.
6. **Why?** So every thinking creature may more and more come to know the true God and Him whom God has sent, Jesus Christ; to live a holy life; and to save one’s soul.
7. **Under what circumstances?** As professors, doctors, teachers, preachers, writers, printers, catechists, parents, children, et al. [“Faithful to the Holy Spirit in each one of them.”]