

**08.10.2017**

## **Father Jordan: A man of hope and trust in Divine Providence**

We are daily confronted with various theories, research results and statements we are supposed to believe and consider true. The attitude of trust is one we continuously need in our lives, one that makes our daily functioning possible. Our relations with others, our encounters with them, and our reference to their experience would be hardly imaginable were it not for this basic attitude of trust. Yet one can also speak about the trust that goes beyond the realm of 'tangible experiences,' namely, the trust in God. So how to define this trust, how to define our trust in the transcendent God? What was its nature in the case of Father Jordan? And finally, what kind of invitation does his trust in Divine Providence offer to me?

The attitude of trust implies a relationship. But how can I trust someone I have not met? How am I to trust something I have not experienced myself? The crucial environment where trust is born is provided by the family: it is in the family that the attitude of trust is inspired and where it can find proper conditions to grow and flourish. The environment we live in may turn out very helpful as far as inviting trust is concerned. Donald Winnicott, an English pediatrician and psychoanalyst, used to speak about the parent's 'resonating' attention that marks her relationship to her child. An attentive and trustful parent will inspire in her child the need to explore, accompanied by natural self-trust and by the trust in the surrounding world. Thus the parent's attitude may become the driving force encouraging the child to take another step: one towards God.

My trust in the transcendent God is about my relationship with Jesus, the only mediator between God and us. His word is like a rock (see Ps 18). A similar stance, a personal adherence of a human being to God, but also assent to the whole truth God has revealed, is described in no. 150 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Trust involves considering the thing we trust as absolutely true, as the foundation of our subsequent beliefs, and it involves an assent expressed in an external act of confession. Trust which is not followed by action will not lead us anywhere.

Wincenty Granat, a Polish theologian, holds that an act of trust "is an attitude that involves all the faculties of a human being, affecting all her spiritual faculties as well as her psychological and spiritual life."<sup>1</sup> Thus trust is an element marked by its own dynamics which unifies and consolidates the entire personality of a human being. Trust presupposes hope. God gives the human being the certainty that results from His promise. Having trusted God and assumed the attitude of hope, the human being gives her assent and entrusts all her life to Him.

What did this process look like in the case of Father Jordan? One may point to a deep experience of his which the Salvatorian tradition considers as mystical. The experience in question, which shows Jordan's trust in Divine Providence, took place on September 20, 1860, the day of his First Holy Communion. During the ceremony young Jordan could see a dove hovering over his head. The vision he experienced

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<sup>1</sup> W. Granat, *Teologiczna wiara, nadzieja i miłość* ["Theological Faith, Hope, and Love"], Lublin 1960, 46.

deeply moved him and changed his life. His brother Edward stressed that from that time on Jordan was always a punctual person, was often found praying, went to confession very often and frequently took Communion. In his biography of our Founder, Fr. Pancratius Pfeiffer stressed that the day of his First Holy Communion was indeed the day of a big change in Jordan's life and of his conversion.<sup>2</sup>

Father Jordan's trust in God resulted from his inner experience of Him as someone who cares and is reliable. The center of Jordan's Eucharistic experience was a relationship with the Savior. Many years later he would write in his *Spiritual Diary*: "You, Lord, are my hope, You are my strength, You are my foundation, You are my help, You are my strong protector. In You I place all my hope and my trust!" (II/64). On another occasion, having just taken the Communion, he made a prayerful entry, saying: "Into Your arms, Oh my Savior and Redeemer, I throw myself. With You, for You, through You and in You I wish to live and die" (I/9). The attitude of trust had a central role in his spiritual life, in particular at times of trial: "Use these keys: trust in God and in prayer!" (II/99).

What lesson is Father Jordan giving me today? Being a paragon of trust, he invites me to 'throw myself' into the arms of the Savior. Trust like this is a grace from God that His Divine Providence grants to anyone. I am an impatient person and I always want to skip the intermediate stages so that I can fully trust. Father Jordan is patient in his impatience, which, after being purified, becomes an apostolic strength in approaching each and every human being. Only Divine Providence knows what I will become as a Salvatorian. Father Jordan invites me to entrust myself to God, to give Him, as an offering, my fear of pursuing my existence with the awareness of being imperfect: His hands lead me to His house.

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<sup>2</sup> See T.R. Edwein, SDS, *Francis Mary of the Cross Jordan. Childhood-Youth and Yond Adulthood 1848-1878*, DSS XIII, Rome 1981, 78-81.