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Father Jordan faithful to the Church

When I reflect on “*Fr. Jordan’s faithfulness to the Church*” I am really amazed to see how faithful our Founder was. There is no doubt about his faithfulness and his wholehearted dedication to Holy Mother Church. I would like to point out two incidents which clearly show the faithfulness of our venerable Founder. Personally, I see the great character of the Founder in these two incidents. The first incident was the difficult times in Rome which took place at the beginning of the new foundation and the second was the long visitation from the Holy See.

Let’s take a look at the first incident. As we all know on December 8, 1881 Fr. Jordan and his two companions then Fr. Bernhard Lüthen and Fr. Friedrich von Leonhardi gathered in Rome in the Chapel of St. Bridget for the founding of the new foundation. It was a historic day, Fr. Jordan and his two companions were filled with happiness. While they set to work with all zeal and enthusiasm to advance their undertaking, the first sign of difficulties made its appearance. It was in the year 1882 when the Society was not yet one year old. Writings and pamphlets appeared announcing the new foundation (Apostolic Teaching Society). Cardinals and Bishops had recommended to omit the word Apostolic from the Society’s name, and there was pressure to implement that recommendation. This development was quite unfortunate for the Founder, for by using the word “*Apostolic*” the Founder wished only to characterize the spirit that should animate the members. However, the word was understood in a quite different sense. As much as the Founder loved this word to present the spirit of the Society, it was quite painful for him to drop the word *Apostolic* from the name of the Society. Nevertheless, this experience in the positive view presents us a totally different dimension of the Founder. It was an opportunity for the Founder to show his most respectful submission to ecclesiastical authorities. “*Love the Holy Catholic Church always more; shun no pains and suffering for this beloved Mother (SD I/70).*” This also shows us that the Founder is truly a faithful son of Mother Church.

Let us now look at the second incident. Among the many trials which the Founder had to endure in his life, the visitation from the Holy See was really a long and true test for Fr. Jordan’s faithfulness to the Church. From the early stage in its history until just five years before Founder’s death, the Society was constantly under the watch of the Apostolic Visitor. Every important undertaking and plan had to go through the Visitor’s assessment before there could be any further proceeding. Of course, this action on the part of the authorities did not imply any condemnation. If we look carefully at the situation of the Society at that time; one thing was true: the young Society of Fr. Jordan did benefit from the Apostolic Visitation. In many instances, the Founder looked upon the visitation as a real blessing. The appointment of the Visitor was in various aspects beneficial and in many ways proved to be a protection for the young Society. However, although the authorities required the visitation so that it would be for the best interest of the Society, it nevertheless also had its shadowy sides. In the case of the Founder it was more harm than help.

The fact is that when a community is constantly under the scrutiny of the ecclesiastical authorities, this could only indicate the distrust of the part of the higher authorities. It implied that the ecclesiastical authorities did not put their trust in the work of the Founder. Obviously, this had a harmful effect upon the authority of the Founder, both as regards the

members of the Society and as regards outside affairs. What a painful experience for the Founder, when every time he wanted to help his Society to have further expansion and development, he had to ask the approval of the people outside. Furthermore, it was not so easy for one who was not a member of the Society to visualize all the situations and circumstances of the Society and to hit upon just the right things. Obviously, this situation was really harsh treatment and very often was the cause of untold suffering for the Founder.

It is during the time of trials, that I can see how remarkably faithful our venerable Founder was to the Church. Great trials and terrible sufferings could not stop or lessen his zeal, his determination, his faithfulness, and his respect to Church authorities. On the contrary, it made him more faithful and stronger as a person. Now, as a spiritual son of Fr. Jordan the question is: What does Fr. Jordan's faithfulness to the Church mean to me? First of all, our Founder's faithfulness to the Church challenges me to learn from him to be a faithful person. A faithful person is a trustworthy person. Secondly, I really admire our Founder for his most respectful submission to ecclesiastical authorities. It is really incredible because despite the trials he remained faithful till the end. Thirdly, our Founder's faithfulness to the Church is the fruit of his unshakable trust in God. It is really amazing. No sufferings, no disappointments, and no trials are able to shake his absolute trust in God. This implies that as his spiritual son I must always trust in God.

All of these characteristics of our Founder remind me personally and all of us as his spiritual sons and daughters that we must become first faithful persons. Moreover, as religious our call is not to be successful, but to be faithful. We must be faithful to Christ the source of our life. We must be faithful to our vocation and mission as Salvatorians to continue the works that our Founder has started. And we must be faithful to our Mother Church to whom we belong and share the mission of making God known to all the nations.

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