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Father Jordan living in the shadow of the cross and courageously enduring suffering

Courage in Christianity reflects how deeply one loves God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent. In this understanding, courage therefore, presupposes the Cross, sufferings, but also success. As we read from various sources of the history and charism of our Society, we encounter many courageous Salvatorians who offered their entire lives for God and His Church. Fr. Francis Jordan and Blessed Mary of the Apostles have been enormous gifts to the Church as they were both filled with missionary zeal.

Fr. Jordan, like many other founders of religious congregations was a man of prayer, humble and courageous to face challenges to his missionary vision. Fr. Jordan, drawn by Jesus' command to his disciples to "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Mt. 28:19), founded a Society that would fulfil this call. He wanted to establish a Society whose mission would involve all people and nations. Moved by obedience to the Church he changed the name of the Society from The Apostolic Teaching Society to The Catholic Teaching Society – which did not describe the deeper intention of his vision. Some of his collaborators left because they did not see any future for the Society. But he never lost hope, he believed that the time to realize his plans by the Church would eventually arrive.

Fr. Jordan aimed to establish a missionary society which would involve men and women, religious and the laity. The later separation of the first group of sisters from the Society was another moment of great sorrow to him. He could do nothing but look for alternative ways to have again sisters of the Society. Hence, the founding of a new female congregation as a branch of the Catholic Teaching Society was a pleasant moment for him. He believed that the future of the Society depended on members devoted to missionary zeal. Despite the fact that the Society had few members, still he sent some to work in the mission lands. However, while some members could not stay in the missions because of interpersonal conflicts, others left the Society due to personal reasons. Problems were ongoing, as in the following years he had to change the Society's name from the Catholic Teaching Society to The Society of the Divine Savior. Likewise, his vision suffered a setback by the outbreak of the First World War (1914) – which interrupted to a great extent not only the Society's mission plans but also its growth.

As we ponder on the above few expressions of some hard moments in the life of Fr. Jordan, we can now understand well and bravely affirm: Fr. Jordan lived in the shadow of the cross and courageously endured sufferings. He faced so many difficulties to his founding vision from outside of and within the Society and the Church too. His courageous spirit reminds us that if we are truly united with Christ, eventually all problems and discouragements become trivial. Our founder believed in St. Paul's teachings in Romans saying that we are "heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him" (Romans 8:17).

The few challenging moments to Fr. Jordan's vision, as indicated above, show that prayer-life, obedience, persistence and courage were among the characteristics that continued to vibrate in Fr. Jordan's life. He worked always for the future of the Society, and he wished that his spiritual sons and daughters would work for it too. In the Founder's time there were some members who left because they could not see the future of the Society. Today, the trend seems to be changing, the big problem among young professed members is not about the future of the Society but rather their future in the Society. What comes first in their minds is their fate and not the goal and destiny of the Society. When we think of ourselves first and the Society later, surely we think contrary to our Founder. But when we think of building the Society first we think in the right direction of the Founder's spirit.

As spiritual sons and daughters of Fr. Jordan, we need not only to embrace his spirit of love for the Society and the Church but also his courageous and long suffering spirit for God's mission. He could live under the shadow of the cross and courageously endure sufferings because he hoped in Jesus Christ. The most precious gifts we can offer our founder are praying hard, conducting and caring for missionary works, living our vows, trusting in God, dying for the Church, and fighting against any kind of individualism.

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