

Salvatorian Key Elements

Charism, Mission, Spirituality, Identity

Part III

by International Joint Charism Commission

PREFACE

February, 2007

Dear Salvatorian,

Welcome to Part 3 of the series, *Salvatorian Key Elements: Charism, Mission, Spirituality and Identity*, published by the International Joint Charism Commission (IJCC). In this volume we are pleased to present articles written by members of all three Salvatorian branches from different countries of the world. Each text is unique and can stand on its own. However, we gather them into one publication with the hope that together they can be more helpful in Salvatorian initial and ongoing formation.

Once again, we have chosen short reflective articles that can be read in one sitting. They are placed in a small book that can be tucked into your coat pocket, briefcase or purse. We know you are busy and therefore invite you to allow this little book to be your companion and to challenge you on your own personal journey toward integration of our graced heritage as Salvatorians.

Hopefully the material here will provoke new questions for you rather than provide conclusive answers to your own musings about our lives as Salvatorians. Ask yourself: How do I live the key elements of our charism, mission, spirituality and identity? Which of its aspects do I believe are essential for us as we grow into our future?

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Published by

Wydawnictwo SALWATOR
ul. św. Jacka 16, 30-365 Krakow
www.salwator.com
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Finally, we invite you to converse with one another about these topics. Perhaps you are willing to write your own short reflection and send it to the IJCC. We are eager to add to the growing list of Salvatorian authors in our next volumes. Whatever your response, we hope this little book contributes positively to your life and mission.

In the Savior,

The International Joint Charism Commission

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Salvatorian Charism, Mission, Spirituality and Identity

Introduction

We Salvatorians, men and women, religious and lay, describe our Salvatorian charism, mission, spirituality and identity by stating that these elements are all inseparably related to one another. Charism and mission are two sides of the same coin which are lived out in spirituality. Identity is the composite of specific Salvatorian characteristics which we recognize in ourselves and by which we are recognized by others.

In the beginning, we agreed upon the following working descriptions of the terms.

Charism is a specific gift given by the Holy Spirit to a person or a group for the sake of others so that God be better known and loved.

Mission is that dimension of the charism by which the one who receives the gift is sent to share it with others.

Spirituality is a dynamic way that a person or a group lives out their specific charism and mission given by God.

Identity is who we are to ourselves, as well as how others see us. This is the incarnation of our charism, mission and spirituality.

Salvatorian Charism

The founding charism is the specific gift of the Holy Spirit given to Fr. Jordan for the Church and the world. It is rooted especially in 4 biblical texts which are key to his life and work. They are at the core of the charism he communicates to all of us Salvatorians.

1. John 17:3

And eternal life is this: to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

2. Matthew 28:19-20

Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations; baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you. And look, I am with you always; yes, to the end of time.

3. Mark 16:15

And he said to them, 'Go out to the whole world; proclaim the gospel to all creation.

4. Daniel 12:3

But the wise shall shine brightly like the splendor of the firmament, And those who lead the many to justice shall be like the stars forever.

Key elements found in these foundational texts by which we are called and empowered are:

- .to live eternal life
- .to know the one true God and the one he sends, Jesus Christ
- .to follow in the footsteps of the apostles
- .to make disciples of all nations
- .to lead others to eternal truth and justice
- .to proclaim the universality of Christ's message
- .to be able to discern the signs of the times

Salvatorian Mission:

We Salvatorians are called and sent in mission to announce through our lives and actions the gospel message as contained in the key elements of the charism.

- .to make known the Savior
- .to work for the fullness of life which is salvation
- .to lead others to a conscious awareness of God
- .to support one another in our apostolic commitment
- .to involve others in the mission
- .to emphasize the role of lay apostle
- .to proclaim the message to all people, everywhere and at all times, and to do this through whatever ways and means the love of Christ inspires.

Salvatorian Spirituality

Salvatorian Spirituality is the way we Salvatorians live out our charism and mission in a concrete day-to-day way. Specific elements of this spirituality are:

- .knowing God, that is, experiencing God as the center of our lives
- .trusting in Divine Providence
- .living holiness as a vocation and helping others to do the same
- .manifesting the goodness and kindness of the Savior (Titus:3,4)
- .being people of prayer
- .being poor in spirit
- .having apostolic zeal
- .living out truth, justice, solidarity, and faithfulness
- .being willing to bear the cross for the sake of the mission

- .loving inclusively
- .following the example of Mary by making the Savior known
- .loving the Church
- .living the simplicity of the sons and daughters of God

Salvatorian Identity

We identified ourselves as Salvatorians by the way we live out our charism, mission and spirituality both individually and as a group. We are bonded together in mutual commitment to be the incarnated expression of these key elements through which others are able to identify us as Salvatorians.

**International Charism Commission,
Rome, June 16, 2001**

Matthew 28: 16-20 Implications for Salvatorians Today

by

Sr. Carol Leah Thresher, SDS

I. Introduction

The final verses in Matthew's gospel have become especially important to me in my ongoing formation work with Salvatorians around the world. It is one of the key texts used by our founder Francis Jordan in his early writings and rules for the group. I would like to use this opportunity to come to a better exegetical understanding of this important biblical root of our mission.

A. Mission Focus

Because of my special interest, this paper examines the mission aspects of the text. I do this fully aware that there are many other important ways that this passage can be approached. I encountered this in the limited reading I was able to do for this paper. Scholars point to the pericope's impact on: christology, eschatology, ecclesiology, and trinitarian theology, as well as other areas.¹ While each of these is significant for a complete understanding of the text, I will be unable to pursue them here.

B. Methodology

In order to grasp more fully the meaning of mission in Matthew 28:16-20, I will use the tools provided by historical criticism. This approach will help us discover what the key words of the text meant to the original community for which they were written. In

addition, I will take advantage of some of the scholarship done in the area of narrative criticism. This will help us understand how the pericope itself functions within the gospel as a whole in terms of its impact on the reader. Following this brief analysis, I will move to a specific hermeneutical focus. Here I hope to point toward some of the implications that this foundational text has for Salvatorians today.

II. Exegetical Understanding of the Key Elements of Mission

As I begin a more in-depth look at Matthew 28:16-20, I want to note that a comparison of these verses in the major English translations reveals no significant differences of opinion about key words on the part of the translators. Having said this, I need to acknowledge that Daniel Harrington's use of *Gentiles* in place of *all nations* in v. 19 is an exception to this general observation.² I will return to the case he makes for his word choice when I treat this element of mission in more detail.

A. General Overview of Matthew 28:16-20

This pericope is the final word in Matthew's gospel. As such it draws to a close this gospel which has given special emphasis to Jesus the teacher and his message. It is also the second of only two post-resurrection appearances of Jesus recorded by this evangelist.

Many commentaries suggest that our verses are best understood as a summary of the whole gospel of Matthew. John Meier calls them "the key" to the entire gospel.³ The passage pulls together many of the themes that have been especially important to Matthew's overall message. For our purposes here these include: discipleship, mission and teaching. Narrative critics also alert us to the pericope's function in the life of the implied reader of the gospel. It serves to draw all future followers of Jesus into the post-resurrection mission

of the disciples.⁴ Thus we can see that the general context and structure of the pericope are specifically related to the gospel as a whole and function as an important conclusion to its message.

In order to accomplish his purpose Matthew has stretched his Marcan source to the point where some feel that "in all likelihood Matthew himself composed the passage."⁵ Senior and Stuhlmüller link the pericope's expansive movement into the future (v.20) to the infancy narrative (Mt 1-2) that pushed the Jesus story into "Israel's past and traced the significance of Jesus from the beginning of his human history."⁶ They see that our text has an important function within the narrative. It thrusts "...the leading edge of the Jesus story out into the community's own history...."⁷ As a result the Jesus of Matthew's gospel reaches out and embraces both the significant past and future.

B. Key Words

1. Making Disciples

Here we encounter the verb *mathēteuein* which is used in v. 19 in its imperative form *mathēteusate*. Three of the four times the verb is used in the NT, we find it in Matthew (13:52; 27:57 & 28:19). Obviously it is directly related to its noun form *mathētēs* which figures so importantly in Matthew's gospel.⁸ In our pericope, making disciples is the primary task of mission. The eleven are commissioned to "disciple" others. Empowered from on high (v. 18), the risen Jesus now entrusts his work to the disciples. They are to go forth and do what he has done. As he has "discipled" them they are to "disciple" others.

In early New Testament times the word disciple was used to describe a learner and one who adhered to a great master.⁹ By placing this activity as the principle focus of the mission, Matthew underlines that proclamation of the message is not enough. "The community is

to precipitate the same type of conversion experience that touched the disciples of Jesus: belief in Jesus and transformation of life on that basis.”¹⁰

In light of the significance of this discipling, Lucien Legrand makes a point of critiquing the traditional translation of the participle *going* as *go* in v. 19. “When we translate this participle in the imperative, we falsify its import. We shift the emphasis of the sentence.”¹¹ The real imperative is to make disciples, thus the emphasis is on formation not departure. “It is curious to observe, with even the most competent translators, the insidious temptation to reduce mission to the sole schema of the romantic image of the missionary!”¹² I find Legrand’s comments a helpful expansion and even correction of my original understanding of Matthew’s words.

2. All Nations

The phrase *panta ta ethnē* is also central to our understanding of mission in the text. Its universal scope is in direct contrast to the restrictions found earlier in this same gospel. In Mt 10:5 Jesus specifically tells the disciples not to go to the Gentiles nor to the Samaritans but only to the lost sheep of Israel. Scholars explain the apparent contradiction in diverse ways. Through a word study focused on Matthew’s use of *ethnē*, Hare and Harrington argue that the translation should be *Gentiles* not *nations*. They suggest that “...in Matthew’s overall view of salvation history the kingdom of God has been taken away from Israel and given to a nation (*ethnos*) producing fruits... i.e. the church.”¹³

From my perspective, other commentators argue more convincingly that *ethnos* means *nations* and that the restriction in 10:5 no longer applies in the final age of history.¹⁴ Senior and Stuhlmüller hold that Matthew’s mission theology is the direct result of “...the Gentile’s willingness to respond to Jesus, and thereby transform their lives on

the basis of [his] teaching....”¹⁵ Even though Matthew is writing to a predominantly Jewish-Christian community, he must somehow explain the existent expanding mission to the Gentiles. He does so by showing that God’s grace is offered to all. “For Matthew, then, the church’s mission to the Gentiles is not an accident of history but a consequence of history: an intended act of God appropriate for the final age when the frontiers of salvation were expected to be pushed open to all nations.”¹⁶ The arguments in favor of an inclusive understanding of the phrase are more convincing to me both from the historical critical perspective of the situation in the Matthean community as well as from a literary critical analysis which sees the call to universal mission as breaking down “...the boundaries between the story world of the text and the real world of the implied reader....”¹⁷

3. Baptizing them

According to Mt 28:19, the first activity necessary in making disciples is to baptize them. For the reader who has followed the mission of Jesus throughout Matthew’s narrative this directive comes as something of a surprise. In contrast to John, Jesus did not baptize his disciples. Now he tells his followers to do so in the name of the Trinity. The trinitarian formula alerts us to the possible origin of this part of the commission. No where else in Matthew’s gospel do we encounter such a direct reference to the Trinity. More than likely it is reflective of early church practice.¹⁸

For our purposes what is important here is that the mission of making disciples is immediately connected to the formation of community, church. The ecclesial context in which the original reader of the gospel functioned was legitimated by its origin in the missioning words of Jesus himself. These words provide support for an evangelization method that values the foundation of stable communities. According to Jacques Matthey, they imply “that to

be a disciple means to be a member of a clearly defined people, the Church, with its structures, a certain institutionalization, a tradition and a specific lifestyle either from the ethical or from the material point of view.”¹⁹ For us the modern reader, this suggests that Matthew’s great commission presumes that new disciples are to be incorporated into community. Becoming a follower of Jesus must go beyond a purely private and individual acceptance of Jesus. It involves a public incorporation in a group.

4. Teaching

Finally, Matthew’s author brings us back to one of the key themes developed throughout the gospel. Jesus the Teacher enjoins his followers to teach everything that he has taught. New disciples are to learn the way of life that has been explained in the teaching narratives throughout the whole gospel. The disciples have learned from the Master. Now in the new age, they received the authority to instruct others how to live according to the same principles or “commands” that they received from Jesus.

This injunction further underlines the importance of some type of structure for the new community. Proclamation cannot stand alone. In addition to initiation into the community, authentic mission includes instruction in a way of life. Thus formation is an essential part of mission work. Legrand asserts that, “[i]n Matthew, *mission* denotes a long-term program: sacrament, continuous formation, an ethic in accordance with the new justice.”²⁰ This element not only reflects the ideal of a stable faith community held by Matthew’s original readers but also challenges today’s missionary with important questions about long-term programs.

C. Summary of Mission in Matthew 28:16-20

Having considered the key words that describe mission in our pericope, let us try to draw together what it is really saying. Our

exegesis shows that the Eleven were meant to go and do what Jesus had done with them i.e. make disciples and teach. However, in doing so they were to go beyond the boundaries that had limited Jesus by establishing communities of believers and welcoming outsiders into them.

We might ask ourselves how the Matthean community found the courage to go beyond what Jesus had done. We know they are living in a time when the mission to the Gentiles was happening. In fact, it was impacting their own group. How do they justify the response to Jesus that was already in process? Our clue to their answer lies within the pericope itself.

Things are different after the resurrection. A new age has begun. Jesus has fulfilled the hopes and expectations of the old age. Now he inaugurates something new and the disciples that he has trained are entrusted to carry it out. As they do this, they are assured that he will accompany their creative push into the future with his abiding presence until the end of time (v. 20).²¹ Thus Matthew’s Christology underlies his sense of universal mission and justifies what is already in progress. John Meier points out that the repeated use of the word *all* in the pericope “...convey[s] a sense of fullness of power, mission, teaching, time and space.”²² The death-resurrection event has changed everything.

The dynamic understanding of mission and church that we find in the text means that it has a message for Christians of all ages. This explains its popularity throughout Church history down to the present day.²³ David Bosch challenges Christian missionaries to move beyond its use as a “mere slogan.”²⁴ A more in-depth understanding of it prevents an impoverished reading of the text. Legrand is critical of a traditional way of reading the pericope through the lens of an “...unconscious semi-Pelagianism - a tendency to prioritize human intervention and to relegate the power of God to secondary

status.”²⁵ This approach has often limited the words of mission to a select few who were called to be professional missionaries. Legrand calls this a “betrayal of the gospel.”²⁶ Mission is at the heart of the Christian calling. The injunction of Jesus is to be living out by all his followers. Thus these final words in Matthew’s gospel are for all of us. God’s power given to Jesus will accompany our fulfillment of its challenging call to us today.

III. Implications for Salvatorians Today

A. Foundational Text

While our entire pericope does not appear in Salvatorian documents, verses 19-20 are generally accepted today as one of our key foundational biblical texts.²⁷ Founder Francis Jordan used it specifically on the cover of some of his early rules and integrates its universal call to mission in his insistent use of the phrase *all nations* throughout his writings.²⁸ So we are faced with an important question. How does a more in-depth understanding of mission in this text impact our understanding of Salvatorian mission today?

B. Making Disciples - Salvatorian Methodology

The implications within the Matthean model of mission as disciple-making are vast. First of all it implies preparing people to take up a way of life which will in turn evangelize others. This means that how we engage in mission is extremely important. I think it implies attention to systematic Christian formation and community building. These factors are important challenges today. Here in the United States they call us out of our individualism and tendency to “do our own thing” apostolically. They radically shift our focus from ourselves as agents to the people we serve. We need to ask ourselves, “Are they being ‘discipled?’” Globally, they invite us to move beyond a mere spontaneity to a more careful approach to mission among people of diverse cultures.

C. All Nations - Salvatorian Universality

The universal scope of mission which is so clear in Matthew 28: 16-20 is also stressed by Francis Jordan. Today I believe this element of mission is especially important in a world permeated by the dynamics and institutions of exclusion. All Salvatorians, no matter where we live and work do not have to look very far to find exclusivist tendencies at work. Matthew’s understanding of mission challenges us to recognize and break through any barriers that keep us apart as people. This impacts our personal lives but it also reaches to a deeper structural level of conversion. Economic patterns that create sub-classes must be questioned by our ministries. Social barriers that separate us from others within our society and our world cannot rule our behavior. This is a vast area of creative challenge which if taken seriously will lead us all to re-evaluate our present mission. Serious consideration of our text can spark new courage as we seek to continue the mission Jesus has entrusted to us today.

IV. Conclusion

Much more deserves to be said about the implications of this text for Salvatorians today. If we accept its role as foundational then we need to understand it in greater depth. We must get beneath the “sloganism” with which we have read it in the past. If we do this, it has an important message for the refoundation work we are about as a Salvatorian Family. Without it we will be unable to grasp the depths and breadth of our mission in the 21st Century. With it, we have an important light for our path into the future.

NOTES

- ¹ The bibliographies found in many of the newer commentaries on the gospel of Matthew show the range of important subjects impacted by Matt 28:16-20. For example see Daniel Harrington, The Gospel of Matthew (SacPag 1; Colledgeville: Liturgical Press, 1991) 417.
- ² See Harrington, Matthew, 414.
- ³ John Meier, Matthew NTM, (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1980) 367.
- ⁴ See Dorothy J. Weaver, Matthew's Missionary Discourse: A Literary Critical Analysis, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990) 151-153 and John D. Harvey, "Mission in Matthew," Mission in the New Testament, Eds. William J. Larkin, Jr and Joel F. Williams (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1998) 119.
- ⁵ Harrington, Matthew, 415. Also see Donald Senior and Carroll Stuhlmueller, The Biblical Foundations For Mission (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1983) 236.
- ⁶ Senior & Stuhlmueller, Biblical Foundations, 236.
- ⁷ Senior and Stuhlmueller, Biblical Foundations, 236.
- ⁸ Most commentaries provide and elaborate on these details however I found the following particularly helpful. Michael J. Wilkins, Discipleship in the Ancient World and Matthew's Gospel, Second Edition (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995).
- ⁹ For more details on the Hellenistic understanding of discipleship as well as its roots in the OT wisdom tradition see Wilkins, Discipleship, 42-91.
- ¹⁰ Senior & Stuhlmueller, Biblical Foundation, 252.
- ¹¹ Lucien Legrand, Unity and Plurality: Mission in the Bible (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1988) 79.
- ¹² Legrand, Mission, 79.
- ¹³ D.R. A. Hare and D. J. Harrington, "Make Disciples of All the Gentiles (Matt 28:19)," CBQ 37 (1975) 359.

- ¹⁴ For a direct rebuttal of the Hare/Harrington position see John P. Meier, "Nations or Gentiles in Matthew 28:19?" CBQ (1977) 94-102. Warren Carter, Matthew and the Margins: A Sociopolitical and Religious Reading (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2000) 552-553 also develops the same position.
- ¹⁵ Senior & Stuhlmueller, Biblical Foundations, 249.
- ¹⁶ Senior & Stuhlmueller, Biblical Foundations, 240.
- ¹⁷ Weaver, Matt's Missionary Discourse, 152.
- ¹⁸ See Harrington, Matthew, 415 and Jacques Matthey, "The Great Commission According to Matthew," International Review of Mission 69 (1980) 169.
- ¹⁹ Matthey, IRM, 170.
- ²⁰ Matthey, IRM, 78.
- ²¹ See Senior & Stuhlmueller, Biblical Foundations, 241.
- ²² Meier, NTM, 374.
- ²³ See David Bosch, Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991) 56-83 for a thorough treatment of this topic.
- ²⁴ Bosch, Transforming Mission, 57.
- ²⁵ Legrand, Mission, 82.
- ²⁶ Legrand, Mission, 83.
- ²⁷ See "Salvatorian Charism, Mission Spirituality and Identity," working paper published by the International Charism Commission Rome, May 11, 2000.
- ²⁸ See 1883 "Rule of the 3rd Grade of the Catholic Teaching Society," Documenta et Studia Salvatoriana II 175-194 & 211-234. For more on this and Mark 16:15 see Peter van Meijl, "Toward a Salvatorian Christology," Contributions on Salvatorian History, Charism, and Spirituality, Vol. 1 (Milwaukee: 1993) 96-100.

Some “essences” of our Salvatorian perfume

by

Fr, Mario Agudelo Roldan, SDS

*The witness of Father Jordan inspires us
to be persons of prayer,
to embrace the Cross for the sake of our mission,
to have an unshakeable trust in Divine Province
and live a simple lifestyle,
and to have a special devotion
to Mary as the Mother of the Savior.*

[Charter N. 12 III draft]

Introduction

On various occasions, I have had the opportunity to present to members of the Salvatorian Family the key elements of our Salvatorian charism and I have noted two different reactions: on the one hand, great satisfaction that we now have a simple document that shows us what pertains to us as Salvatorians; on the other hand, the feeling that we are not much different from other Christians, nor from other religious families.

Jordan did not have the second reaction because he was convinced that his Foundation had something special and unmistakable, and so he told us: *“Each congregation has its own spirit, and as soon as you stray you go down the wrong track. An apple tree is not a pear tree; a Franciscan is not a Dominican; a Jesuit is not a Trappist.”* (JT 1899/01/13)

Jordan used the analogy of fruit to help us understand that, thanks to our Salvatorian charism, we are a special fruit in the garden of the Church. For this reason, all members of the Salvatorian Family have the responsibility to know and love our unique identity, to preserve it and share it.

We could use the analogy of perfumes to talk about the uniqueness of our Salvatorian charism. There are many types of perfume on the market which at times can confuse the noses of non-experts, but which nevertheless always attract new buyers.

And just as each perfume has a particular attraction because of its fragrance made up of different “essences,” so it happens with charisms. Salvatorians have their own fragrance, made up of many “essences,” and therefore we can bring to the market our own fragrance with the name “Salvatores mundi,” a name which comes from these words of Fr. Jordan: *“This day should admonish us to live as true Salvatorians. Oh, how I wish that in these days you would really fathom what it means to call yourselves Salvatores mundi, “saviors of the world”: Salvatorians.”* (JT 1900/04/13)

We shouldn’t concern ourselves, therefore, that we are similar to other Christians or other religious families, but rather dedicate ourselves to knowing and living our own identity. And so we offer to the world something specific which other religious families are not called to offer.

Every perfume has alcohol as a base, but because of a distinct fragrance that comes from its various “essences,” each perfume is different. The same can be said for charisms. The common base is a radical following of Jesus, the living of the Gospel, and the resulting apostolic service. And even though many institutes are dedicated to similar apostolates, there is something that distinguishes them from

each other: their distinct fragrances with which they permeate the air.

Our Founder was always convinced that God had called him to give the Church a particular Society, destined to be extended throughout the entire world, to be as numerous as the sands of the sea and the stars of heaven, and to offer the way of salvation to all without distinction. Many times he vehemently exhorted his followers to unity so that we would not lose our identity and so that we could be faithful to his project.

Jordan not only exhorted us, but also gave us the testimony of a life so strong and authentic that although we are today more than a hundred (and twenty) years away from the beginning of his project, his fragrance, that is to say, his charism, continues to attract many people who dedicate their whole life to make known and loved the one true God and the one sent, Jesus Christ, the Savior of the World.

A good perfume is noted because its fragrance lasts all day long. That should be our perfume, “*Salvatores mundi*,” since it is of a stupendous quality. To protect this quality, we should follow the instructions of its maker, Fr. Jordan, who said to us on December 2, 1898: “*You can be assured that if you no longer hold to the spirit of the founder, you will sink to the bottom. Therefore, I want to warn you that each of you assumes responsibility if you deviate from the spirit of the founder!*” (JT 12/02/1898)

At this point, we could ask from what source did Jordan take the “essences” to create the fragrance of our unique perfume “*Salvatores mundi*”?

It isn’t difficult to answer this question because these “essences” are the attitudes which he lived his whole life and to which he paternally exhorted all his sons and daughters throughout history. They are

a series of virtues, of strengths, which he cultivated assiduously, which we discover in his spiritual diary and which are inculcated in us over and over through his *Exhortations and Admonitions*. I am speaking of the key elements of our charism. Here I will highlight only a few.

The Perfume “*Salvatores mundi*” has the “essence” of prayer.

Just as one can not be a true Christian without prayer, we cannot be Salvatorians if we don’t convert ourselves into persons of prayer. In Fr. Jordan’s talks we find 246 citations about prayer, an indication of how important the topic was for him and is for the Salvatorian family.

I believe that there exists in all of us sons and daughters of Jordan contrary feelings regarding our life of prayer. On the one hand, we like to pray, we see the fruits it produces in our lives; on the other hand, we have much to do and we don’t take time from these preferred activities to find ourselves alone with God, as Jordan habitually did. This lack of radical commitment to prayer leaves us with a chronic longing for God and a strong sense of imperfection. As long as we stay in this state, which Jordan called lukewarmness, we can not share our unique Salvatorian fragrance with a world that experiences along with us the same longing for the infinite.

Jordan was clear, precise, insistent, and bold in calling us to prayer. On July 25, 1888, he wrote in his spiritual diary, reprimanding himself for his apparent laziness in prayer:

“Francis, pray urgently, Francis! Francis! Francis! O FRANCIS

Dedicate at least seven hours a day to prayer!

O give attention to it and do not omit it!

Worthless Francis! Seven hours a day devote to prayer!

*Inconstant Francis! Devote seven hours to prayer!
Most sluggish Francis! Devote 7 hours a day to prayer,
and if you have not fulfilled them, give yourself a severe
penance.”*

History tells us that our Founder, through love, faith, perseverance, and daily effort became a person of prayer. He discovered that without contact with God it was impossible to follow Jesus and impossible to give to the Church an army of evangelizers.

The following three citations, taken from among the 246 in Jordan’s talks that treat of prayer, should be enough to put us with new enthusiasm on the road to a deeper life of more intense daily prayer, so that we keep alive the fragrance of Salvatorian perfume:

“Our times require men [and women] of prayer. And what good is all our work and struggle, all our preaching and writing, if God doesn’t help! Be assured, time spent in prayer is never lost; and the time we [actually] spend in prayer is by no means sufficient. We pray often, but we must pray even more to progress, to make even greater progress!” (JT 1898/07/15)

“We should become an army of “prayers.” First and foremost be men of prayer! And you know how each one can do this. You don’t have to be a scholar. You know how some lowly, maybe obscure, even despised religious, if he prays humbly and with trust, may accomplish more than ten or twenty others.” [idem]

“If you relax in prayer you can be sure to slide backwards, and little by little, I would like to say, you lose sight of what you are doing. Prayer is where you should get fire and increase it on earth, where you should fortify yourself,

where you should rest when you are apostolically involved in the activities of the world.” [JT 1900’01/05]

**The “essence” of love of the Cross
is another element of the perfume
“Salvatores mundi.”**

Jordan discovered love of the Cross in the abyss of suffering. Sorrow accompanied him from childhood and never left him, even on his deathbed. Motivated by faith and trust in God, he learned to suffer in a biblical sense, never feeling himself a victim or condemned like so many others do.

Jordan, through prayer, understood and lived in his own flesh what the death and resurrection of Jesus mean for a believer. That is, he understood that the one who places his trust in God is always the winner, is able to see in every problem an opportunity, knows how to bring good from evil, and understands that the darker the night, the more brightly shine the stars. The one who lives in the shadow of the Cross (according to Jordan) knows that through the Cross he arrives at the light, through death he attains life, through rejection comes glory, and mysteriously, through sorrow comes joy, because in God’s dictionary only love has the final word and sorrow is obliged to stay in the waiting room.

These words from his *Spiritual Diary*, written in the spring of 1894, confirm for us the joy Jordan felt in embracing the Cross:

“O Cross, O sweet Cross! O Cross which I ought to love and prize most ardently on account of Jesus! O delightful Cross! O Cross, great strength! Would that I might truly know how to suffer with my Beloved, Jesus, my God! O desirable and sweetest Manna for those who know it! Oh, to suffer for Christ and with Christ!” [SD I 208]

Only love is worthy of faith. The one who loves can endure persecution and fatigue and can even shed his blood for the sake of Christ and the Gospel. Humanity hasn't wanted to hear this, much less the world of today, that embracing a life of comfort, well-being and luxury has created a society of injustice and suffering for the poorest on the planet.

The Cross is a wonderful fragrance of our perfume that perhaps recalls the smell of myrrh which gives strength, light, peace and hope to a wayward humanity that tries frantically to make eternal this life, to hide and escape death, instead of accepting Christ's example of giving over his own life, finally winning victory over death with his own death.

In his exhortations, Jordan talks 123 times of the Cross. His words, full of fire and love, communicate his own experience, revealing the doctrine of the paschal mystery of which he himself drank, frequently meditating on the Word of God. It was impossible for him to imagine a Salvatorian who was not capable of embracing the Cross for love of the Savior, or for fidelity to the apostolate, or for cause of the mission.

Although each day it can be more difficult for us to accept pain, suffering, failure, contempt and abandonment, and much easier to invent excuses for not accepting the Cross, the Cross is the perfect antidote for selfishness and an effective medicine for mediocrity.

Let us meditate on the following words of our Founder, which overcome the barrier of time and space and come to us today to help us live the new fragrance of love of the Cross each day:

“You know the dear Savior redeemed the world through his passion! Do we want to choose a different way? Therefore, this is my wish for you: that you strive to penetrate it more deeply! Carefully study the cross, this love, and always

live convinced that if you want to accomplish great things for the salvation of souls, you must suffer greatly! May the good God make of all of you true and constant lovers and imitators of the cross!” [JT 1898/10/04]

“The apostolate consists in suffering; and in bearing suffering you will be victorious. Like every Christian in the world, you most especially as disciples of the Crucified must be prepared to suffer in unspeakable ways. Because you preach Christ crucified you must also suffer. Not with big talk. ... You must proclaim only the Crucified.” [JT 1906/02/17]

Unshakable trust in Divine Providence

Today people try to find security by opening one or more bank accounts, by buying all kinds of locks, by using cosmetic and diet aids, by submitting to the tyranny of what is in style, by trying to project a good image, by forming exclusive circles of friends, by filling their houses with useless and disposable things, by taking refuge in a life lived for one self while excluding the poor, by selecting television programs so as to think and worry less, and by trying to protect or better their jobs at all cost.

The result of this crazy race for security is obvious: heart disease, anxiety, worry, loneliness, and a greater insecurity because to the extent that ambition grows, so also grow doubts, economic instability, and emotional instability. What is worse is that many parents are pushing their children into this crazy rat race of consumerism which creates more and more victims of the god money which absorbs all and devours all.

This world urgently needs the special Salvatorian “essence” called “unshakable trust in Divine Providence” which Jordan gave us as an inheritance.

“I would like to leave you a special inheritance: great trust in God. It is very distressing these days to see how little trust there is in the Lord; how humanity wriggles on like a tangle of vermin; how they have forgotten the power of heaven. They do not look up, where our help, power and strength come from. Oh, if people only knew what the Lord has given them through confidence. Only in eternity will you see what you could have accomplished if you had trusted. How poor and needy you were all because you did not build upon the Lord and depend on him for everything.” [JT 1894/04/27]

*“How can anyone say he trusts in God when in all his needs and sorrows and works, when all seems lost, he loses heart? Precisely there confidence in God needs to be established. “When he hopes in me, I will save him.” Hold fast to this trust in God. Live as much as possible according to the will of God; have great, great trust in God in all you do. You will see that each of you, like the Society itself, will become all-powerful. In our wretchedness we build on what people think is laughable. This is how you will build everything. But the Lord is our help; nothing can shame us, even if all hell arrays itself against us. In all your struggles, in all the attacks against you, cry out: *Quis ut Deus*, “Who is like God?” Live in the conviction that trust in God crushes the hellish fiend.” [JT 1894/04/27]*

What a beautiful inheritance, what great “essence” has Jordan given us in this unshakable trust in Divine Providence. It gives us freedom of movement, helps us be available for the apostolate, eliminates all kinds of fear, gives us strength to face dangers, encourages Salvatorian universality, gives security in the insecure world where we live, changes relationships among people, permits us to

rediscover God as our provident and loving Father, and also enables us to rediscover ourselves as brothers and sisters.

A simple lifestyle is another “essence” which gives a special fragrance to the perfume “*Salvatores mundi*.”

Amalia Streitl had a strong influence on Jordan. Enamored by a Franciscan spirit and very radical in her penances, she wanted austerity, extreme mortification and sacrifice to dominate the new foundation, almost as ends in themselves. For Jordan, neither poverty, nor penance, nor other similar values should be considered as ends in themselves but rather “effective means” to reach the central objective of knowing God and Jesus Christ.

Therefore, to effectively follow the apostles, our models of evangelization, Salvatorians of every age cultivate a universal spirit, learn to transmit Gospel values to all people in a simple and accessible manner, form many disciples so that they can themselves share the Gospel with others, and use means of social communication including the most modern, so that the message of salvation reaches all corners of the earth.

Within this dynamic, we resort to another very Salvatorian “essence,” simplicity of lifestyle.

Jordan considered simplicity, which is accompanied by goodness, mercy, gentleness, humility and modesty, as one of the better means of reaching the objective of evangelization.

Simplicity is like air that penetrates everywhere. A simple person is known by all, easily accepted, allowed to get close. Simplicity is indispensable for conserving and sharing universality because it penetrates everywhere and overcomes all resistance. When there

is simplicity, unity among people is possible because no one feels attacked or belittled by a simple person.

Simplicity is a virtue directly related to the Incarnation. God became man so that man could become like God. And He became man in a crib, not a palace, so as to make all people feel welcome. In other words, in a humble cave all could enter, shepherds and kings, whereas in a palace the poor would feel uncomfortable.

Jordan, born in a humble town in Germany, learned simplicity from the cradle and never renounced it, not even when he related with important persons in the Church or science or politics, not having learned so many languages, not upon receiving important missions. Nor was he arrogant or proud when he was persecuted or misunderstood for the originality of his projects.

Let us listen to his voice:

“I would like to admonish you not to underestimate this meekness, this humility, modesty, the culture implicit in general politeness. Do not acquire these qualities in order to please the world but to be more effective! Let this genial spirit become a habit of yours. But don’t think that I am asking you to affect the worldly mannerisms of some people. I simply mean modesty, purity, friendliness, humility, meekness, mildness, mansuetudo, humilitas, humanitas, benignitas, “mildness, humility, human goodness, kindness.” If I’m not wrong there is a saying: friendliness is a compass that guides one through the whole world, through all countries! This illustrates how important modesty and friendliness are: with them one gets along everywhere.”[JT 1898/11/25]

“Even the greatest enemy and uneducated person appreciates meekness and patience, and even the wildest

animals become calm in their presence! Let’s seek to appropriate this mansuetudo, humanitas. There are so many variations: the creator has given some so much that they must struggle to stay within bounds; others have much less and must fight and struggle to acquire them!” [idem]

“Harsh conduct can do great harm, particularly in ministry! A pastor can alienate a whole parish merely through harsh, alienating conduct! Therefore, you should always be quite mansueti, humiles, benigni, humani, “mild, humble, kind, full of human goodness”, and always show a holy modesty, a humble friendliness, especially where danger threatens you!” [idem]

Our special devotion to the Mother of the Savior, another “essence” which gives fragrance to the perfume “Salvatores mundi.”

One of the phrases most known and cited from the *Spiritual Diary* of Father Jordan is this from December 20, 1894: “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.”

Next to that phrase is another which has not been analyzed as profoundly as the first, nor up to now has it been put into practice with all its implications: “As long as the *Queen of heaven and earth* is not everywhere praised, you dare not allow yourself a moment’s rest.”

Why was the Virgin Mary so important for Jordan? Why did he love her so fondly and intensely? And why did he want us to love and venerate her so profoundly? Perhaps because in Mary he found a model of all the virtues that he himself wanted to acquire and of all the projects he wanted to realize. In Mary, Jordan found actualized

all the values of his own spirituality and all the values he wanted his sons and daughters to have. Let's look at it in detail:

The Holy Trinity is the center of Jordan's devotion. Mary, as the beloved daughter of God the Father, mother of God the Son, an faithful spouse of God the Holy Spirit, is the creature who lived most united to the Holy Trinity and therefore is the best guide for us so that we can know and make known the God who is one and three.

For Jordan, an apostolic spirit is basic for Salvatorians. No one was more apostolic than Mary who was the model for the apostles in the whole process of the death and resurrection of her Son. She guided them and prepared them for the coming of the Spirit. She encouraged them in their evangelization.

One of Jordan's objectives was to revitalize the evangelizing effort of the Church. He urged us to love the Church profoundly. Remember the first phrase of his spiritual diary:

"I approve what holy Church approves and reject whatever the Church rejects." and this phrase from his last Will:
"Always remain sincere and loyal sons of our Holy Mother, the Church of Rome. Teach what she teaches, believe what she believes, reject what she rejects."

Who better than Mary can be our mother and teacher of love for the Church? Vatican II said of Mary: *"who [Mary] occupies a place in the Church which is the highest after Christ and yet very close to us. [Lumen Gentium 54]*

When we approach the mystery of the Cross with Jordan, we also find Mary as our teacher. We find her standing before the pain and death of her Son, persevering until the last moment and later as an excellent witness of the resurrection. She is with reason the mother of our hope.

And if we think of unshakable trust in Divine Providence, it is enough to think of the various experiences of Mary -- the annunciation, the visitation, her pregnancy, giving birth, the flight to Egypt, her confusion and suffering when Jesus was lost in the temple, the passion and death of her beloved Son, the silence of her solitude, and her joy at the resurrection – to understand that she is the teacher of Jordan, and our own teacher, in the art of total confidence in God.

Mary was, without doubt, the best teacher of Jordan in all aspects of his spiritual experience: in prayer, in silence, in the simple life, in goodness, in hope, in love of the Divine Savior, in union with the Holy Spirit, in faithfulness to the plan of God, in response to her vocation, in love of the poor, in the practice of mercy, in her creativity and her modesty.

Special devotion to Mary, explicitly recommended by Jordan many times, is therefore a magnificent "essence" in the fragrance of our perfume "Salvatores mundi"!

"Second, venerate the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Queen of the Apostles and our mother with childlike love and devotion. She has stood by the side of our Society from the very first moment of its inception with her mighty protection and sweet help. Therefore, every child of our Society should render Mary deep veneration and tender love. Wherever the footsteps of our Society fall, Mary's praise and honor should resound." [JT 1890/12/12]

"In addition, we are obligated to promote the veneration of the Blessed Mother in a special way because of the special purpose of our Society.. Therefore, venerate the Blessed Mother well through public and private prayer, particularly through eliminating faults and acquiring virtues. And be sure to recommend to the heavenly intercessor in a

special way the sanctification of all the members and the strengthening of the Society inside and out!”[JT 1899/04/28]

Conclusion

The effort to know and love our identity as Salvatorians produces the beautiful fruit of love for our Society. To love the Society was fundamental for Jordan, as many texts tell us. Let us dedicate ourselves to know the “essences” of our Salvatorian fragrance and to live them intensely each day. That effort will be a stupendous gift to the world, to the Church, and to Jordan who invented us as “Salvatores mundi,” as Salvatorians!

A Lay Salvatorian Perspective of Community

by

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Acknowledgements: I gratefully acknowledge the assistance of S. Rita Ruff, SDS in retrieving articles and Salvatorian sources and for countless hours of thoughtful study of the topic of community as well as critiquing and editing this paper. I am also grateful to the Lay Salvatorians who shared their thoughts about community with me and to S. Aquin Gilles, SDS and S. Jeanette Clarke, SDS for their resources. The community support was a testimony to all the good things said about community in this paper.

A Lay Salvatorian Perspective of Community

The idea of being part of a religious community is what draws lay people to the Salvatorians. Lay Salvatorians belong to various other types of communities that are generally of a *social* nature, such as families, parishes, neighborhoods, clubs, military units, ethnic groups, towns or cities, a state, and a nation. They are drawn to the Salvatorian community, however, because it is a *religious* community. Jesus Christ is the center of a Christian religious community.

Through baptism, each Christian has been called to follow our Savior, Jesus Christ, and to live according to gospel values and the evangelical counsels. Lay Salvatorians feel a call to live the Christian life at a deep level of spiritual intimacy. As interested persons meet lay and vowed Salvatorians, their spirits begin to resonate with what they learn about and experience of Salvatorian history, charism,

mission, and spirituality. The openness, inclusivity, and hospitality of the Salvatorian members draw them to want to participate fully in the Salvatorian community.

I. The Nature of Salvatorian Community

Openness, inclusivity, hospitality, reciprocity, and trust can be thought of as the “capital” (Johnson, 2000) of the Salvatorian community. These invaluable spiritual commodities facilitate inter-community communication and collaboration and allow issues and problems to be resolved more easily among the three branches of the Salvatorian community. These three branches are the Society of the Divine Savior (vowed priests and brothers), the Sisters of the Divine Savior (vowed women religious), and Lay Salvatorians (married and unmarried lay persons). As lay persons move through the process of integration into the Salvatorian community, their sense of self evolves into a sense of self as both “I, Lay Salvatorian” and “We Salvatorians,” lay and vowed.

Indeed, one of the unique realities of being a Lay Salvatorian is that each Lay Salvatorian is as much Salvatorian as any of the vowed Salvatorians. Our founder, Fr. Francis Jordan, envisioned the original “Apostolic Teaching Society” as an organization that would involve all members, lay, religious, and cleric in the mission of making known “the only true God and Jesus Christ whom God has sent” (Jn. 17:3). Lay and vowed Salvatorians were equally charged to accomplish this task. This is in contrast to other religious communities whose founding vision did not include lay members or who invite lay persons to help them accomplish *their* mission. Other religious communities often use the term “*Associate*” to designate these lay helpers. Lay Salvatorians are not merely *associated* with the Salvatorian community but are integral and equal *members* sharing fully in its charism and mission. A woman, who was a lay candidate at the time, Paula Voborsky, said, “I am attracted to

the Salvatorian community by the collaboration and collegiality between the vowed and non-vowed members. I find the Salvatorian community to be supportive and empowering. The Salvatorians is the only community I have found that seeks and values input from the laity.” To be Lay Salvatorian is to belong to an apostolic community. S. Doris Gottemoeller, RSM (1999) states that the hallmark of a religious community is that it *is* apostolic. The essential element is not that its members *do* apostolic works but “that the whole way of life is for the sake of making visible and attractive the love of God” (p. 142). Lay Salvatorians make a public commitment to embrace the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience. This commitment is lived out in a spirituality that strives to manifest to the world “the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior” (Titus 3:4). In a 1997 issue of *The Salvatorian*, Lay Salvatorians JoAnn and Rich Kuphaldt said, “We were very attracted to the loving community of Salvatorians that truly demonstrates God’s love for each of us.” Salvatorians strive to manifest the love of God to all people everywhere. As such, the community welcomes friends and neighbors, immigrants and strangers. Salvatorians are of different genders, languages, cultures, temperaments and backgrounds yet all are united in our charism, mission, spirituality, and identity. This universality is an essential characteristic of the Salvatorian community. We are universal in our membership as well as our mission. Lay Salvatorians speak of desiring fellowship, companionship, or friendship with other members of the community. They desire to become part of a group of like-minded individuals who seek to develop a deeper relationship with God and other human beings. They want to connect with others who love God and want to bring God’s love to all people of this world, people who want to pray and work together to make a difference (Donna Weise, Lay Salvatorian). This connection with other Salvatorians is maintained even beyond the grave. Like members of the Congregation and the

Society, we pray for deceased Salvatorians, lay and religious, and commemorate each one in a special way on the anniversary of his or her death. Our love and sympathy extends to their family and friends.

II. The Structure of Salvatorian Community

Fr. Don Skwor pointed out that the financial crisis of the Society in the US in the 1970s forced US Salvatorians to find a sense of community that differed from the classical definition of “life lived under the same roof” (1977/2001, p. 71). With the liquidation of nearly all Salvatorian properties, vowed Salvatorians were forced to experience what Fr. Don termed a “community without walls,” that is, experiencing a sense of community in things outside of the institutions which, in the past, had been the source of community identity and visibility. Reflecting on this title of Fr. Don’s paper, “Community without Walls,” S. Rita Ruff, SDS (personal communication, 2004) noted that the idea aptly applied to Lay Salvatorians who, according to our vocation, “carry on and support the mission of the vowed religious without the structure and organizational lifestyle commonly associated with religious life.”

According to Rolheiser (1999), the basis for Christian ecclesial community is “a gathering around the person of Jesus Christ and a living of his Spirit” (p. 120). It is a group of people sharing a common life yet, not necessarily, within a common dwelling. What is necessary is that

there be some real sharing of life together, namely that we pray together; that we celebrate our rites of passage together; that we celebrate some of our everyday joys, fears, and feasts together; that we are responsible to each other and open to each other as regards mutual correction and challenge; that we are responsible together for the

ministry...and that we have some common sharing of finances (even if this only means that we contribute financially...). (p. 121).

Lay Salvatorians live this type of common life.

S. Doris Gottemoeller, RSM (1999) makes a useful distinction between the concepts of “community” and “community living.” To her, the concept of community refers to an abstract ideal about which there is little disagreement. Community living, on the other hand, refers to the tangible daily lived experience of community. “*Community living is what happens when two or more people relate to one another in a significant, mutually beneficial, and ongoing way*” (p. 139). This is a good definition of the Lay Salvatorian community since “community living” for us does not constitute living together under one roof. For Lay Salvatorians, community is realized through our relationships, spiritual journeying, and life activities with each other and with all Salvatorians.

Many Lay Salvatorians take an active part in the community. They gather to pray, talk, listen, support, and minister with each other. While each has his or her own ministry, many work alongside vowed members in Salvatorian parishes, institutions, or projects. Many take an active part in the organizational structure, belonging to regional, national or international committees or commissions. Those who are unable to be physically active offer prayers, sacrifices, and daily trials as a contribution to the community (Pat Wondra, Lay Salvatorian). Active participation in community activities contributes to the formation of lasting bonds among community members.

Unfortunately, some Lay Salvatorians exhibit a weak bond with the larger community that seems to mirror a societal trend. Johnson (2000) cites the work of Robert Putnam, a Harvard Professor, to illustrate the loosening or decline of social bonds in America over

the last forty years of the twentieth century. While the membership of certain social organizations, such as the Sierra Club, the National Organization for Women (NOW) and the American Association for Retired Persons (AARP) have seen dramatic rises in membership, the nature of the members' involvement in such organizations has changed. "For the vast majority of their members (Sierra, NOW, AARP, and so forth), the only act of membership consists in writing a check for dues or perhaps occasionally reading a newsletter. Their ties, in short, are to common symbols, common leaders, and perhaps, common ideals, but not to one another" (Johnson, p. 120). This is the way that some Lay Salvatorians relate to the larger Salvatorian community. They may or may not make the requested annual financial contribution or read the weekly newsletter, *Update*, but otherwise participate only nominally in the activities and ministries of the larger Salvatorian community. Such membership is of little value to the Salvatorian community whose nature is apostolic and relational.

III. Lifestyles and Concerns

Vowed Salvatorians profess the vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience. As religious, they live a lifestyle that "inculcates and fosters interior and exterior habits that have proved helpful in following Jesus Christ closely" (Cerullo, 2002, p. 273). Lay Salvatorians recognize this and, therefore, want to imitate the religious members, looking to them as models of the Christian lifestyle par excellence. "The vowed have more of what I need/want" (Fred Kaspar, Lay Salvatorian).

Lifestyles and expressions of community are different between vowed and lay members. Since Vatican II, vowed members of religious communities have faced social and economic issues, such as dwindling numbers, fewer vocations, a greater percentage of elderly members, withdrawal from sponsored institutions, loss of parish

rectories or convents as residences, living in residences apart from one's place of ministry, choosing to rent or own residences, and living alone or with fewer members than in the past. Vowed Salvatorians have addressed these concerns and also struggle with uniquely Salvatorian issues, such as boundaries and collaboration between the Society and the Congregation and with the Lay Salvatorians. Lay Salvatorians, on the other hand, are becoming more numerous and struggle with developmental and organizational issues at local, national, and international levels. They also face the same issues that lay people have always faced, such as living in rented or privately owned residences, and living alone, with another person(s) or with family. Lay Salvatorians must provide for themselves throughout their lifetime without being able to rely on the financial support of the community. Lay people belong to "family" in a way that vowed Salvatorians cannot.

Married Lay Salvatorians have relationships with spouses, children, and grandchildren and responsibilities to home and family that are not possible to vowed religious. Both married and non-married Lay Salvatorians can freely choose to live and minister in any area of the world, including areas near parents and loved ones, a choice that may not be possible to vowed members called to minister in specific Salvatorian institutions or localities. Lay Salvatorians are expected to put family responsibilities first, before those of the Salvatorian community, whereas vowed members generally place community obligations before those of family.

Lay Salvatorians are different from each other and from vowed Salvatorians in terms of their educational levels, theologies, and spiritualities. The majority of Lay Salvatorians have not had years of formation or education in a convent or seminary. They may have very different ideas or theologies about important aspects of Salvatorian life, such as church, charism, mission, or spirituality. Lay people

tend to have a more “worldly” spirituality, finding God in everyday situations rather than in times set aside for prayer or retreat. The prayer of laity often reflects work and family life. Vowed members, especially priests and brothers, may be more focused on building the Church while lay people tend to focus on building God’s Kingdom on earth (Nangle, 2001). Such differences are potential areas of concerns between lay and vowed members.

Our late beloved Holy Father, John Paul II, expressed his concerns about the involvement of lay persons with religious in a 1988 encyclical entitled, *Christifideles laici (The Fidelity of the Laity to Christ)*. Over-involvement in the activities and ministries of a religious community at the neglect of responsibilities outside of the religious community is, according to the Pope, one of two great temptations faced by lay persons who become actively involved with religious (*Christifideles laici*, §2). The second great temptation he identified is that of compartmentalization, that is, the temptation to separate faith from life, the acceptance of the gospel from actually living out the gospel (*Christifideles laici*, §2). “When what we teach and what we live contradict each other, the message will not attain its objective” (Boesing, 2005, p. 15).

Both Lay and vowed Salvatorians share concerns about companionship, proximity to other community members, and proximity to work or ministry. Both value the witness of simplicity according to the evangelical counsel of poverty. Both groups attempt to live Christian and Salvatorian values and commitments in the midst of American middle-class individualism, privatism, and materialism. Knowing the issues and concerns that each other face can facilitate understanding and support between vowed and Lay Salvatorians.

IV. Ways to Build and Nourish Community

A sense of mutuality, that is one branch benefiting from the interaction with another, was noted by Fr. Don Skwor, SDS, in his 1980 address to friends and benefactors of the Society in College Park, Maryland. At that time, he wrote,

We wish to single out in a special way the loving support of our brothers and sisters of the Lay Salvatorian Associates. It is they who challenge us to articulate our identity ever more clearly and to exercise a ministry to one another in a healing helping manner. Their incorporation into the community and the effect they have had on it is living proof of the Founder’s wisdom which recognizes the healthy, broadening dimensions they bring to community. (Skwor, 1980/2001, p. 120)

Maintaining healthy relationships between and among members takes effort on the part of each one. “As people’s relationship with God must be strong, so must their relationships with others be mature, rich, and fulfilling” (Markham, 2002, p. 457). As full members of the larger Salvatorian community, Lay Salvatorians are not turned in on themselves but make their own the concerns and priorities of the other two Salvatorian branches on both the national and international levels. Healthy relationships involve independence as Lay Salvatorians and interdependence as members of the larger Salvatorian family. The celebration of Salvatorian feasts and rituals that incorporate Salvatorian spirituality and tradition strengthen our bonds and identity as Salvatorians. We are “lay and religious journeying together and sharing life with each other” (Barbara & Frank Tomsik, Lay Salvatorians).

Maloney (2003) has suggested five significant elements of an invigorating religious community’s ecosystem. He suggests that

prayer, meetings, the apostolate, meals, and fun are elements that can build and nourish communities. Lay Salvatorians share all of these activities with each other or with the larger Salvatorian community. We relate to each other and support one another in times of prayer and reflection, in times of joy and sorrow, in sharing our talents and resources for collaborative meetings and projects, in working together to fulfill our Salvatorian mission, and in fun times (that always seem to include food), such as picnics and socials. Our interactions help us “to keep our passion alive” (Cerullo, 2002, p. 274).

Relationships within the Salvatorian community are multi-dimensional: spiritual, emotional, financial, and social. All of these dimensions are “integrated in a mutually beneficial and ongoing way” that contributes to the “integrity and well-being of each participant” (Gottmoeller, 1999, p. 140). We Salvatorians “have also the wonderful way of accepting, encouraging and challenging people to be the best they can be” (Clairemary McDermott, Lay Salvatorian).

Lay Salvatorians overwhelmingly report that relationships among Lay Salvatorians and between lay and vowed members are the same. “We are all striving for the same goals, we are all welcoming of each other and we care for each other” (Ed & Ann Griffin; Eugene Moore). “Our call in life is certainly different, but the basic call to holiness and developing a relationship with God is the same” (Pat Wondra, Lay Salvatorian). “We gather to pray or work together for the same reason” (Rosemary Hetzel, Lay Salvatorian). “Not only can we learn from them (vowed) but they from us” (Carol & Joe Schmidt, Lay Salvatorians). A union of hearts and minds seems to equalize relationships between lay and vowed members of the Salvatorian community.

One of the aspects of the larger Salvatorian community that Lay Salvatorians most appreciate is the opportunity for developing and strengthening one’s spiritual life. “The challenge is for religious to deepen or solidify their own faith, hope, and love and to help lay people do the same, and for lay people...to do the same for religious” (Abeyasingha, 2003, p. 202). In sharing Salvatorian spirituality, vowed members can assist Lay Salvatorians to mature in their spiritual lives and in making the connection between their involvement in the Salvatorian community and their responsibilities in the professional, social, cultural and political world.

Lay Salvatorians know that community building takes effort. “You know how in a building one stone sustains the other, each in its place. It is like that in the organism of the Society” (Jordan, 1939/1998, p. 109). Praying, playing, and working together are seen as building blocks. Being available to help with community activities and participating in projects or events are ways of showing interest and support of the community. Taking responsibility for and working together to achieve goals is a powerful force in creating unity and bonding with other community members. Every member needs to feel a part in planning for and carrying out community activities in order to appreciate celebrations of our collective achievements. Communication, clarification of expectations, making community gatherings a priority, reaching out, and staying in touch all contribute to building and maintaining a healthy community.

How can we tell if we have a healthy community? Schneiders (2000) suggested several criteria that are useful in judging whether or not we have built a healthy Lay Salvatorian community: level of involvement, quality and quantity of leaders, sense of belonging, sense of group pride, and the desire to share community with others. We might ask ourselves some of the following questions to

gauge how well we have built and nourished our Lay Salvatorian community.

How many Lay Salvatorians take an active role in community activities, ministries, projects? High involvement is the first sign of a healthy community (Schneiders, 2000). The second sign of a healthy community is a good number of qualified members who make themselves available for leadership (Schneider). How many Lay Salvatorians are willing to make themselves available for leadership in a sector, a province, or on an international level? The third sign is that all feel welcome, valued, and affirmed in a healthy community. How does each Lay Salvatorian feel about his or her place within the Lay Salvatorian community? Do we rejoice in each other's accomplishments or do we respond with jealousy? Do we enjoy being in each other's company or do we dread getting together? Group pride is the fourth sign of a community's health (Schneiders). Do we have a sense of group pride as Lay Salvatorians? Do we consider our vocation a gift, a privilege? And, finally, are Lay Salvatorians interested in attracting other lay people to the community? This is the fifth sign. "A clear sign of a healthy community is the happiness of its members and their desire to share their life with others" (Schneiders, p. 402).

Community life is not all roses. It requires the practice of difficult virtues, such as self-discipline, generosity, kindness and patience. The universal love, which our Founder, Fr. Jordan says characterizes Salvatorians, is "true, ready to make sacrifices, patient, attentive, sympathetic, impartial, universal, not one-sided, active in word and deed. It should embrace all" (Jordan, 1939/1998, p. 120). At this point in our history, we face many challenges within and among the three branches of the Salvatorian community and tolerance of each other is imperative when addressing those challenges (Brunzel-Lauri, 2005).

An element of tension among Lay Salvatorians and members of the larger Salvatorian community may emanate from the fact that both groups are made up of men and women. This changes the dynamic of the groups since men and women differ in feelings and their expression, values, and information-processing (McDonald & McDonald, 1997). Interestingly, Blessed Mary of the Apostles, Co-Foundress of the Sisters of the Divine Savior, searched for a religious community made up of both men and women. In 1856, while searching for such a community, she wrote in her diary, "I liked best to study in Holy Scripture how, in the time of Jesus, the apostles and devout women worked together for Christ...and I wanted to find such a convent..." (Study Group Mary of the Apostles, 1994). While one author has tried to convince men and women that they have originated from different planets, this simply isn't true. All of us have originated out of God's same creating love and have the potential to use our differences as complementary gifts to our communities. We model ourselves after Fr. Jordan and Blessed Mary whose shared vision inspires our collaboration. "Interaction between religious and laity is a constant source for mutual growth and support" (Lay Salvatorians, USA, n.d.).

VIII. Significance of Belonging to the Salvatorian Community

Lay Salvatorians report many personal and communal benefits because of membership in the Salvatorian community. Highly valued is the status of Lay Salvatorians as equal members of the larger community, of "rub(bing) shoulders with religious as close friends" (Fred Kaspar, Lay Salvatorian) and sharing in the life of vowed members. Community support is a gift, especially noticeable in times of crisis when Salvatorians reach out to each other from near and far. Lay Salvatorians appreciate the "fellowship, relationship, and kindred spirits that give authenticity and encouragement

to our mission in life” (Ann & Ed Griffin, Eugene Moore, Lay Salvatorians). They feel enabled. Being a part of the Salvatorian community gives them a focus for ministry and, for some, is an extension of the ministry of their own Salvatorian parish (JoAnn Kuphaldt, Lay Salvatorian). It provides opportunities for spiritual development and a sense of “becoming a bigger more integrated part of Church” (Barbara & Frank Tomsik, Lay Salvatorians). Being a part of the community gives one encouragement in prayer and the practice of the spiritual and corporal works of mercy (Rosemary Hetzel, Lay Salvatorian). As Lay Salvatorian Donna Weise noted, the key to the significance of community membership is *belonging*, “belonging to a great group of loving and caring people who want to make a difference and share life with others who have similar views and values.”

IX. SDS Community VS. SDS Family

In recent years, it has become increasingly popular to refer to the union of the three branches of the Salvatorian community as the “Salvatorian Family.” This was a sticking point for early US Salvatorians who feared that the image of *family* would connote that the members of the Society were the “fathers,” of the Congregation, the “mothers,” and the lay, the “children,” an obviously weak and inferior status in the family. The term *family*, therefore connotes a hierarchical structure rather than one of equality which would be more suited to a description of Salvatorians.

In addition to suggesting a hierarchical structure, the word *family* can suggest domination, control, rivalry, squabbles, violence, or dysfunction. A strong objection to the use of the word *family* to refer to Salvatorians is derived from the fact that many marriages in the US fail leaving children with negative images of parents and families. In spite of this fear, however, the designation as “family” has persisted,

largely because it is a universal concept widely understood across the many cultures present within the “Salvatorian family.”

Lay Salvatorians who prefer the term *family* over *community* view Salvatorians as brothers and sisters (Rita Whitmore, Lay Salvatorian) or as co-children of God, making every Salvatorian a sibling. This idea once prompted me to suggest that the initials “SDS” behind a Lay Salvatorian’s name could be explained to those who inquired as *Siblings of the Divine Savior*. It has also been suggested that the term *family* is more intimate than *community*, connotes a stronger bond, seems more inclusive of the three branches, is a word that is more familiar to lay persons, and promotes a greater feeling or realization of closeness. “We have tremendously stronger ties with the concept of family. We have been a part of family since we were conceived in the womb and we have had an intuitive understanding of the concept probably from our birth...” (Jim Anderson, Lay Salvatorian).

Zajac (2002) surveyed women religious and found no consensus among them as to whether they thought their communities constituted a type of family. “Regarding the often mentioned familial nature of community, there was much disagreement. Some denied that it is a family, some described it as ‘like’ a family, and others claimed that it is ‘more than’ a family” (p. 377). Lay Salvatorians have reached no consensus either as some continue to prefer thinking of Salvatorians as just that, Salvatorians, others have no preference, and some have strong preferences for or against “Salvatorian family.”

IX. Conclusion

The support that we receive from each other in community seems to be the most common reason for following Jesus Christ as a Salvatorian. We minister to others and to each other. Our apostolic work is service, caring, and sharing but, as Fr. Don Skwor, SDS, has pointed out, our work becomes a ministry because of our solidarity,

our sameness as Salvatorians. This oneness as Salvatorians is the basis of our community life. “The better we live a fraternal and apostolic community life, the more it becomes a sign of God’s love and prophetic witness that Christ abides in us and unites us in love” (The Constitution of the Society of the Divine Savior, 1984, §411). Together all Salvatorians work to fulfill the vision of Fr. Jordan that everyone, everywhere knows the “only true God and Jesus Christ whom God has sent” (Jn. 17:3).

X. Reflection Questions

The questions in Section IV (p. 7) could be used for reflection about whether or not we have a healthy Lay Salvatorian or Salvatorian community. Other questions about topics covered in this paper that might be helpful for reflection or discussion are these:

1. What do lay people look for when they contemplate joining the SDS community?
2. Of what significance is belonging to a religious community for you as a lay person?
3. What do you do as “community” and/or as a member of “community”?
4. How do you build and/or maintain “community”?
5. How are relationships to other Lay SDS or vowed SDS the same or different?
6. In your mind, is there any difference between “Salvatorian community” and “Salvatorian family”? Do you prefer one term over the other? If so, why?

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The Spirit of the World and the Key Elements

by

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Introduction

Our Founder wrote little about politics and economics. His life as a man of faith, completely religious, seems to have distanced him from those themes, not a simple feat in his days. And that absence of words on themes that we could call "worldly" sometimes seems strange to us, especially the laity who are often anxious to know about these issues which concern us and touch us daily. And even more so today, when religious men and women as well as priests openly address problems such as AIDS, war, or globalization, it seems strange to us that someone like our Founder (a man who knew how to take his place in the world and influence it in a notable way) did not directly express his opinion on the many problems and difficulties of his time.

As I was preparing a contribution for the National Encounter of Lay Salvatorians of Colombia (a movement which is 15 years old and beginning to show signs of tiredness, that has suffered its first disillusionments and is preparing for a complex future), I found various references in the texts of the Founder to what he called "THE SPIRIT OF THE WORLD." And so I wrote a simple paper for my lay SDS companions in Colombia, reflecting on some of the circumstances which had disrupted our movement, causing some to leave, creating divisions which blocked the development of true communities, or other such problems which undoubtedly have

affected other Salvatorian groups (lay or religious) in other parts of the world.

And it was exactly as I was writing that paper that I discovered, as I have said, the concept of THE SPIRIT OF THE WORLD, about whose content and worth I would like to reflect a little, confronting it with the key elements that we have identified in the International Charism Commission as essential for our way of being “Salvatorian.”

1. The Concept of “The Spirit of the World” for Fr. Jordan

Fr. Jordan was not only a contemplative religious. On the contrary, his life was a constant fight to make real, here and now, the Reign of God. At the same time, he was a man of prayer, profoundly spiritual, who went much farther than mere external observance of the minimum. As I see it, he was not someone who categorically separated the spiritual from the worldly. On the contrary, he understood perfectly the interaction between the spiritual and the material, much more than any philosophical discussion, to the point where his life was, as we have said, an existence intensely spiritual with very tangible, successful results.

I believe, therefore, that he developed this concept of the “Spirit of the World” from the perspective of faith, but with a very clear understanding of the reality around him.

Jordan’s world and our world, though different in thousands of details, are not, in essence, very different, and this means that the concept of the SPIRIT OF THE WORLD has for us today a strong validity or relevance as we read the words of the Founder that we have chosen for this work.

But, concretely, to what is our Founder referring when he speaks of the SPIRIT OF THE WORLD?

Chapter 8 of *Exhortations and Admonitions*, made up of three parts, seems to give us clear clues about the significance of this concept, which Jordan developed from a vision of religious life and for religious life.

In the first section and from the very first words, it seems that our Founder differentiated two different and opposed worlds: the ordinary world and the religious world. Nevertheless, immediately we find expressions which make disappear this categorical division, when he instructs Salvatorians, “You should be in the world but not of the world.” It is clear, however, that the one who opts for religious life ought to “renounce the world,” or better, this SPIRIT OF THE WORLD.

The SPIRIT OF THE WORLD has the capacity to infiltrate strongly the priests, “influencing their actions and ways of thinking.” This spirit is made up of “certain manners of thinking” that “have taken root even in good people.”

“The one who has been penetrated by the Spirit of the World will not have much comprehension of truly spiritual things.”

The SPIRIT OF THE WORLD seems to be a way of thinking that asserts itself from outside the life of faith, formed by those “false principles” that without exactly excusing sin, subtly lessen us and encourage a “lukewarmness” that impedes advancement in the way of perfection that should be the path of every Salvatorian. In contrast to these “false principles,” the Founder talks of principles proper to a RELIGIOUS SPIRIT.

Finally, Fr. Jordan refers to rationalism as an evil proper to the SPIRIT OF THE WORLD, saying that “in practice, a rationalist can never be a good Catholic.”

We believe, then, that our Founder, from his particular way of seeing and living, knew to identify as an enemy of religious life, of faith, and of the way to perfection, the SPIRIT OF THE WORLD, that is, essentially, the ideology proper to those immersed in preoccupations purely material and mundane, dismissing or undervaluing the spiritual dimension of humanity.

Every age has a particular ideology, certain principles which are in effect in every minute of history and rule the destiny of humanity with such effectiveness, and that which is worse, with such subtlety, that at times it is difficult to recognize them.

Of course, the exhortations of Father Jordan, directed at the religious Salvatorians of his day, are completely applicable today to all members of the Salvatorian family, and in one sense even more strongly to the Lay Salvatorians who do not enjoy the advantages proper to religious life and who are necessarily tied to “the world” in every aspect of existence.

Then, the question arises: what relationship can we find between the SPIRIT OF THE WORLD and the key elements?

2. Today's World

The media recently talked about two dangers that fill all the inhabitants of the world with fear: terrorism and bird flu. Concerning the first, we hear constant news about the search for and judgment of those who have participated in deeds so horrible as the attack on the twin towers, the bombing in the subway in Spain, and the attacks carried out in England. We are also informed about the war in Iraq, suicide attacks in Palestine, Iran's nuclear ambitions, and similar themes, all of which have given rise to a generalized fear of an imminent catastrophe coming from the East. It seems to us that there exists an immense risk to our world because of terrorism.

The news also informs us daily of the advance of a sickness which threatens to become the “plague” of the 21st century. It is a virus which at first was present in wild and domestic birds but has jumped over to about 150 human beings who have died from this as of yet incurable disease.

Nevertheless, while the war in Irak has cost the lives of about 4,000 soldiers and the bird flu has claimed less than 200 victims, statistics tell us that each year five million children die of hunger, a problem that can be solved without arms or strategies of security, an evil whose solution we have known since our most remote origins. And to this horrifying statistic we could add other horrifying ones that are well known

These symptoms of poverty, inequality, and lack of value for human life reveal the way of thinking of this world in which we live, because behind these realities there is a philosophy, some principles which, with great success, create this world of today and constitute precisely the SPIRIT OF THE WORLD which, as we will see, is the principal enemy of faith and a spiritual life.

The world of today is presented to us as a universe built on a firm base with clear rules: supposedly we are part of a free world, democratic, which values the equality of every human being, which believes in the individual's capabilities and offers each one the possibility to compete in equal conditions to obtain happiness (which is a combination of economic well-being, pleasure, and peace).

Each of us should self-actualize through our own efforts, believing in our personal capabilities, seeking to exercise our own individual liberty so that our joy will be both merited and personal. Competition is indispensable to achieve efficient productivity, and so the one who cannot be competitive should disappear, deserving the destiny which has come only through his own fault.

This economic vision dictates that only a very high efficiency in production can enable us to provide what the world needs and thus end poverty, which is simply the result of inefficient production. Therefore, it is important to create huge companies, accept infusions of large amounts of capital, and make sure that competition is left free, so that the stronger win and take responsibility for the destiny of the world.

But we all know that in the real world these are lies. Equality among people does not exist. Democracy is also an illusion, because the only participation they have given us in government is to vote, often with much manipulation and among two or three candidates who are tremendously similar to each other.

Well-being and happiness through productivity is another lie. Today the world produces more goods and has more important advances than at any other time in our history. Nevertheless, never have misery, unemployment, malnutrition, and violence reigned with such tyranny and, more than all, never has there existed such profound differences between, the rich and the poor.

We have discovered that free markets and globalization are tricks that allow the most powerful companies to take advantage of the marketplace, leaving medium-sized and small business in ruins. The reality is that with the presence of the huge companies in Latin American countries, we are neither less poor nor more happy.

Finally, we can see that competition among human beings in the search for happiness, which today's world promotes, has simply created people who are isolated and egotistical. Often they ignore feelings and values of solidarity in order to fight for their own survival and to obtain much desired success for themselves alone.

In order to maintain the status quo, which is so inhumane, the world of today has its own spirit. And perhaps the most dangerous risk

of this SPIRIT OF THE WORLD is, as we have begun to see, individualism, that is, the idea that the important thing is the person considered by himself and that he is the basis of society.

A "leadership" understood as the capability to command, conquer, and obtain money or power is valued. Personal courage is praised, the ability to stand out, even by bending the law or breaking it. In our world the individual is placed as the center and end of all activity, as the principal protagonist of the universe. And this way of viewing humankind goes so far as to include our relationship with God (up to this point, the modern world has not been able to ignore it completely), seeing it as individualistic, that is, between the individual and God.

A similar attitude allows for a religiosity proper to each person, in the sense that each person can and should establish his own particular relationship to God, apart from any communitarian or social consideration. Under this type of thinking, completely "personalized" ways of being religious quickly evolve, ways in which one picks and chooses from various beliefs to create his spirituality, giving birth to a plethora of esoteric phenomena, sometimes with magical thinking, which are principally individualistic creations of spirituality.

Now, it is not bad to give value to a person, to an individual, just as it is not bad to develop a personal relationship with God. The problem is to stop with this vision favored by the world and as a consequence end up forgetting, or even rejecting, the communitarian aspect of our human existence.

If we look at our world, we will see that there is a certain tendency to denigrate any type of association that does not have as its objective to make money. This is a consequence of an individualistic vision of humanity. Even more so, any group which seeks to restore social consciousness, that protests, that questions the dominant system is

rejected, painted as harmful, discredited, or even annihilated. That is the case with non profit organizations, labor unions, or community associations, which are habitually described as rebellious, subversive, or at least suspicious. Only associations of a religious character get a certain respect, but only when they don't get involved in politics.

The spirit of our world, then proclaims individualism, makes the world revolve around the individual person and his personal well-being. It converts him into the center of the universe and even proposes a religiosity completely personal, according to what the individual wants, with no other considerations. Moreover, this spirit of the world which we live discounts all that is communal and social, surely because it knows that in the communal and social lies a danger for the order that reigns in the world.

Of course, this "spirit of the world" affects every one of us and it clashes strongly with the key elements that we have identified as proper to our Salvatorian way of life.

3 The Success of the Spirit of the World

The individualism which our world proclaims with such force seems to be the original sin which keeps us from seeking the Kingdom proposed by our Savior. We are selfish, even with love. From my point of view, the worst thing of all for a person is the loss of a communal sense, of a sense of belonging to and being committed to a society, because there is no love without "the other" and love has no sense except for "the other."

The Church in a large part of the world is made up of parishes where the members simply assist at the Eucharist with no connection among those present, without knowing one another, without neighborhood communities in which they try to grow together. An individual, alone, isolated, disconnected from a community, loses his capacity to fulfill himself as a Christian. His prayer has less sense, his cross

becomes simply suffering, his confidence in God is lessened, he acquires erroneous feelings, his relationship with the Church is weakened.

Salvatorian universality, this precious jewel inherited from our Founder, loses its sense when individualism takes over, for why would one go out to all men, in all places, by all ways and means?

With individualism, there is no room for evangelical poverty, a simple lifestyle, and material solidarity to the extreme that "giving" stops being a form of sharing and is converted into an excuse for not working to bring about real sharing and solidarity, and "receiving" becomes a dehumanizing acceptance of charity.

Rationalism --the intellectual aspect of individualism-- clearly viewed by our Founder as a great danger, generates a systematic criticism which in turn produces a permanent dissatisfaction with religious proposals because it asserts that the relationship with God and the community should be intellectually coherent, or even perfect, forgetting that the spiritual life is an experience of life that is much deeper than the mind and reason can explain and that is marked by the imperfection of our nature.

The SPIRIT OF THE WORLD, this strong force which smilingly passes through churches and offices convincing us of our rights, which does such damage in religious houses as well as in a community of laity by sowing disputes, that changes love into possessiveness and causes us to create our own idea of what love is, that manages to change solidarity into making someone dependent, and that makes a relationship with God at times magical and utilitarian, this SPIRIT OF THE WORLD is the biggest enemy of our Salvatorian way.

That which is most grave, as our Founder indicated, is that this SPIRIT OF THE WORLD insinuates itself secretly and subtly in our life, in our hearts, in our way of being. It doesn't need that we

have great vices to annihilate our Salvatorian search. It is enough that it inserts itself in the little corners that we leave for ourselves, in the whims that impede the development of true communities, in the attitudes that allow us to give preference to the personal. The SPIRIT OF THE WORLD is strong in the ideas we cultivate about our own personal happiness, in the convictions that push us to develop a relationship with God in our own manner, without obligations or rules, without interaction, without community life, without consciously being critical of the signs of the times.

How difficult it is at times to notice this in ourselves and even more difficult to weed it out. How well our Founder understood this!

Living the Simplicity of the Sons and Daughters of God

by

Fr. Paul Portland, SDS

On the wall of my bedroom hangs a large replica of a bottle cap. Its radius is about 12 or 14 inches. It is “Coca-Cola” red with the familiar letters of “Coca-Cola” in white and a large silver bow on the top. Almost anyone in the world would recognize it. It was snatched last year from the official Christmas tree of Cuernavaca, the capital city of the state of Morelos, México. The 25 to 30 foot tree (it is hard to judge the size of a tree standing alone in the middle of a huge open space) stood in the center of the main square, its only decorations dozens of these “Coca-Cola” bottle tops.

The governor of the state had been (or still is????) a Coca-Cola executive, as was Vicente Fox, the President of México. The governor decreed that only Coca-Cola products could be sold in government buildings of the state, squeezing out products of Boing-Pascual, a worker-owned local cooperative producing soft-drink type fruit drinks of higher nutritional value and less sugar. México has one of the highest, if not the highest, per-capita consumption of soft drinks in the world. There is a black market in the United States for Coca-Cola produced in México because of its elevated content of caffeine and sugar. In a country where water is scarce and where much of the drinking water has been polluted by industrialization, soft drinks are a big business. Coke and Pepsi are fighting it out.

This bottle cap hangs in my room as a reminder to me of what I learned during my year as Director of the Cuernavaca Center for Intercultural Dialog on Development: about industrialization, about

multi-nationals and their strong hold on third world countries through alliances with the elite wealthy who hold all monetary and political power in these countries, about the World Bank and International Monetary Fund and “structural adjustments” which force countries to cut social services to the poor so they can pay interest on their loans, about trade agreements such as NAFTA which create zones of slavery in factories where workers cannot unionize and no accountability exists for environmental pollution, etc., etc., etc.

This is the World in which we live, the World of the haves and the World of the have-nots. We have listed one aspect of our Salvatorian spirituality as “living the simplicity of the sons and daughters of God.” One key element from our foundational texts is to “be able to discern the signs of the times.” There is no doubt that globalization, pollution, and the growing gap between the haves and the have-nots are compelling signs of the times. I also have no doubt that we are part of the “haves” more than of the “have nots,” no matter where in the world we live. How are we responding as Salvatorians and how should we respond?

The complexity of the problem in the United States (and I presume in other wealthy countries) became clear to me this past year at a family reunion. In one room my brothers were talking about stocks and which would give the greatest yield (they should have bought into Google early on, they said). In the other room my sisters-in-law were talking about the places to buy things at the lowest possible cost. That is our life: the greatest yield on investments (which often comes at the expense of poor countries) and the lowest price for things we buy (which comes at the expense of exploited workers).

My brothers and their wives are good people, very involved in their parishes, very generous to charities: the kind of families that are the backbone of a parish. But they, like most Americans, accept without much reflection the “American way of life” that our president is so

concerned about protecting. We are a part of the “haves” in the game of globalization. And I believe many of us religious in wealthier countries have bought into the same way of life, or at least are not sufficiently counter cultural in our way of living and consuming that anyone would notice.

And in the poorer countries? I don’t have a lot of experience of Salvatorian life in poorer countries, but I would guess there are some parallels with the life of religious in México. In México, 10% of the people have most of the wealth and practically all the power. Another 10 to 20 % are “comfortable.” The rest are surviving, 30% doing Ok as long as no unexpected problems come along, the bottom 40% subsisting. Someone who joins a religious community receives the following: a house to live in usually with electricity and water, an education, food on the table, and the security that someone will get them health care and take care of them as needed. That is more than at least 70% of the population have. I remember once many years ago encountering a Salvatorian from one of the poorest countries where we serve with a very expensive camera and watch; he was on his way to visit his European benefactors, who I presume gave him those objects. Very often joining a religious community is a step up, sometimes a giant one.

And so, how do we live the simplicity of the sons and daughters of God? How do we become countercultural when we have more than many people do? I don’t know, but I DO know it is not a simple question. In my home province we have had a difficult time discussing this subject for fear of “imposing our values on someone else.” As a community we have been unable to agree to hold ourselves to any standards. Our list of things we need to live and to minister has grown with the years. Sometimes we need moving vans instead of suitcases to go from one location to another. Even when we live simply as a countercultural sign to our consumer society, we

have more than the poor people. Above all, we have security: other options, a community to fall back on.

I used to think the answer was to help the poor improve their lot in life, to live more like the middle class in industrialize nations. But I have come to realize that is not possible: the minority of the world's population in consumeristic societies are using up resources (and contaminating) faster than our planet can recover.

Does this mean the answer lies in the other direction, that we live more like the poor? We say we are called "to be one with those we serve," and my experience is that we are good at that. It is one of the characteristics of our community that people note when they are talking about Salvatorians. If we served the very poor, would we be challenged to use less? I can remember a religious sister sharing with me the experience of Mother Teresa's community setting up a ministry for the destitute sick in New Orleans. New Orleans is very hot and steamy, and the benefactors setting up the clinic and house for the sisters installed air conditioning. This sister was appalled that Mother Teresa had the air conditioning taken out when she came to visit the house; the sister believed that Mother Teresa should have taken advantage of the air conditioning for the good of the sick. Air conditioning or no? What is best?

I believe one of the biggest tensions we have in committing ourselves to serve the very poor is around taking care of our own sick and elderly. We feel we have an obligation to our members who have worked so hard in the apostolate and we need the resources to take care of them in a dignified manner. The poor feel that obligation to family members also, but don't have access to resources to do it. I wonder what Mother Teresa's community does to care for the sick and aging members?

I have very mixed feelings about letting anyone read this article. I am afraid it is too negative, for we are good people and we do good ministry, there is no doubt of that. Also, I raise issue and questions and I don't have any answers.

But these things bother me. They keep coming back to my mind when I am in SDS meetings and we are talking about other things that might not be as important. The world has to address these issues (haves and have nots, domination of poorer countries by richer countries, corruption and domination by a few in poorer countries, dwindling natural resources, contamination) in order to survive. Perhaps if we find ways to respond, we can help the world to do the same.

Meanwhile, my Coca Cola bottle top keeps reminding me...

Salvatorian Spirituality: The Centrality of the Cross

by
Sr. Jean Schafer, SDS

Introduction.

The mystery of the cross is central to Christian faith. This mystery forms one of the cornerstones in the spirituality of Salvatorians — envisioned by Fr. Francis Mary of the Cross Jordan as an important means toward purifying our apostolic motivations. When we are able to see God’s hand in all events, including the hard times we face personally or communally, we are able to go forward with confidence and zeal, believing God brings good from any struggle. This article is an attempt to explore the spirituality of the cross in various contexts of our spiritual journey, hoping this will enliven our confidence in God. Fr. Jordan’s intention was that his foundation “will be aimed especially at popularizing theological truths and so to make them accessible to the people!” [SD1. I 118 (3)] By enhancing our own insights into a spirituality of the cross we will be better equipped to offer those insights to others of our day, so they too are able to live life’s challenges with faith and thus sense their discipleship. The spirituality of the cross helps us understand how daily life prepares us for and opens us to Eternal Life. By reflecting on how the cross is revealed in our lives we strengthen our faith in the belief that God walks with us and is saving us.

This reflection offers four ‘postures’ that our lives might assume relative to deepening a spirituality of the cross:

- Walking toward the cross
(finding Life through creative fidelity);
- Carrying the cross
(freeing Life through liberation from idolatry);
- Standing beneath the cross
(choosing Life through discernment in the NOW); and
- Embracing the cross (integrating Life through reconciliation of differences).

1. Walking toward the Cross:

1. We begin by reflecting on an ancient Celtic cross, dating between 455 and 700. Its design testifies to the faith of early Christian sojourners on their life path, centuries ago.

2. The many crisscrossing lines on the shaft signify the complexities of human life, with its many ups-and-downs, intersections and dead ends. These lines also show the constraints and limitations that all human beings face in life. The design conveys a central Christian belief — life is never-ending and the twisting patterns of life are leading us somewhere. For believers, life’s constraints are not our fate, not our final destiny. Rather we see, immersed in life’s complexity, “God-with-us” — the Trinity: – The Creator (1) holds up our world.

3. – The Spirit (2) provides the light of Scripture to illumine our path.

– At the very center of our way, we see the Cross (3). But Jesus is not on that cross. Jesus is our Risen Lord! He proclaims to us that death is not

final. Our way leads toward our true destiny — Eternal Life!

Living life's daily challenges is the process through which we grow in fidelity. In consciously walking into this process we discover our creativity.

2. We find life through our creative fidelity. This is a far different quality of faithfulness than perseverance. Perseverance may be only 'hanging on for the long haul' devoid of love or dedication. Creative fidelity, on the other hand, is fidelity of intensity, of intentionality. Creative fidelity matures us; through it we discover love.

Life will bring suffering. Scripture reveals how God is ever-present to those who suffer. God walks with the people in their sufferings and struggles. Jesus, our 'God-with-us', took on human suffering. He is the Com-Passionate One. Jesus intentionally walked toward the cross. We name Him "the Crucified" – a term conveying not only permanence, but also profound intentionality. For all eternity, Jesus remains "He who bears the wounds of suffering on his risen body."

Scripture also recounts how the apostles encountered struggles as they walked the roads announcing the Good News. St. Paul describes all the dangers he suffered and concludes, "I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ...." (2 Cor. 11: 23-29; 12:10) Thus Paul walked toward life's cross! The women apostles had walked toward both cross and tomb. They went to serve the One Who suffered. Through their creative fidelity they found Life and Love, and their silent service became a bold proclamation: "Jesus lives!"

Fr. Jordan trusted in Divine Providence in the face of his many conflicts and troubles. By meditating on the cross he was able to live his vocation in single-hearted and creative fidelity. He wrote in his Spiritual Diary "The whole life of Christ was a cross and a martyrdom." [SD I 189 (2)] "Whoever wishes to find grace, let him

never take his eyes from the cross, whether My providence be visiting with sorrow or with joy." [SD I 34 (2)] Fr. Jordan realized he would be able to fulfill his vocation only through walking the pathway of the Crucified One in creative fidelity and single-hearted love: "Through Him, the Crucified, in Him, the Crucified, with Him, the Crucified, begin, proceed, persevere in working for the glory of God and for the salvation of souls. Amen." [SD I 118 (2)]

The Church affirms that walking toward the cross is integral to one's lifelong vocation journey. In the Apostolic Exhortation, *Vita Consecrata*³. (VC) Pope John Paul II writes, "Their (consecrated persons') fidelity to the One Love is revealed and confirmed in the humility of a hidden life, in the acceptance of sufferings..., in silent sacrifice and abandonment to God's holy will, and in serene fidelity even as their strength and personal authority wane." (VC #24). "The Rule of Life of the Salvatorian Sisters states, "The cross of Jesus belongs to our Salvatorian vocation, for in the cross is salvation and life. We unite with Christ in our personal sufferings, in difficulties and in the daily demands of our apostolic life. Love moves us to follow Jesus in voluntary sacrifice." (RoL Art. 34).

These passages refer to living consecrated chastity. Yet, all who have consecrated themselves in marriage or priesthood or as a dedicated single person, experience similar challenges as they try to sustain intentionality and creative fidelity on their unique vocational journeys. To sustain one's love throughout the different phases of life necessitates walking toward the cross. Fr. Jordan affirms this as he speaks to all of us, "It is my most ardent wish that you all seek to penetrate deeply into the mystery of the cross, into the love of the cross, so that you may love suffering. If you do this, then I have a well-founded hope that you will all persevere, that you will obtain your crown, and that you will lead many souls to heaven." (EA4. 32 'Love of the Cross')

“This (i.e., creative fidelity in one’s daily life) is Eternal Life, to know You, the One True God, and Jesus Christ, Whom You have sent.” (John 17:3)

2. Carrying the Cross:

A second posture we might assume in living our spirituality of the cross is that of ‘carrying the cross.’ Our symbol is the empty cross. Jesus carried a cross because he was committed to the proclamation of the Reign of God. The Reign of God announced salvation to people as total liberation from all that oppressed them, from all forms of idolatry that held them captive. Jesus challenged his listeners, “Whoever does not take up his/her cross and follow after me is not worthy of me, cannot be my disciple.” (Matt. 10: 38; Lk. 14: 27). “Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself/herself, take up his/her cross, and follow me.” (Matt. 16: 24; Mk. 8:34; Lk. 9:23).

Already in the Hebrew Scriptures, God’s plan of liberation had been revealed. The writer of the Book of Wisdom spoke out against idolatry, announcing that it is God’s Power and Providence alone, which saves. This scriptural passage from Wisdom is a cross-reference to the passage we treasure as the core of our Salvatorian charism, John 17:3. “Again, one preparing for a voyage and about to traverse the wild waves cries out to wood more unsound than the boat that bears him. ...But your providence, O Father! guides it, for you have furnished even in the sea a road, and through the waves a steady path...For blest is the wood through which justice comes about;...But you, our God, are good and true, slow to anger, and governing all with mercy. For even if we sin we are yours, and know your might; but we will not sin, knowing that we belong to you. For to know you well is complete justice and to know your might is the root of immortality.” (Wis. 14: 1, 3, 7; 15: 1-3). Through wood (the cross) God was to bring about justice. Those who clung to

that wood, rather than to substitutes (idols), would find knowledge, justice and liberate Life.

As we set our hearts on God, our lives on helping to establish God’s Reign, we too begin to break from subtle forms of idolatry. Idolatry blocks us from doing justice. By carrying the cross of self-emptying, by letting-go of what might be blocking our access to God, we undergo the process of conversion of mind and heart. We gradually become interiorly free and available to God’s Reign. No longer held by threats to our reputation, to our status, no longer held by the lure of consumerism, of competition or of self-righteousness, we gradually become free to struggle against forms of idolatry in our culture and society that deny certain types of people their human rights and freedoms.

By carrying the cross that helps us know God and thereby know justice, we become free to serve others. The Church affirms this. “Fidelity to God (and to Christ’s saving presence) inspires devotion to neighbor, ...generously serving the poor and the sick, sharing the hardships of others and participating in the concerns and trials of the church.” (VC #24).

We cannot work for the Reign of God if we have two masters. As Jesus went from town to town, he taught the people, “Seek first God’s kingship over you. God’s way of holiness and all these things will be given you besides.” (Matt. 6:33) “Where your treasure is, there your heart is also.” (Matt. 6:21) “The Reign of God is like a buried treasure, which someone found in a field. S/he hid it again, and rejoicing at her/his find, went and sold all s/he had and bought the field.” (Matt. 13: 44).

When the early Rules of Fr. Jordan’s Catholic Teaching Society were being re-written by Msgr. Jacquemin in February 1886, Fr.

Jordan wrote in his Spiritual Diary, “Why are you afraid to take up the cross, which leads to the Kingdom?”

In the cross is salvation, in the cross is life...

In the cross is infusion of heavenly sweetness.

In the cross is perfection of sanctity.

Take up your cross, then, and follow Jesus, and you shall go into everlasting life.” [SD I 189 (1)] In June of 1886 Fr. Jordan received approbation of his Society’s Rule.

Blessed Mary of the Apostles also understood how fidelity in carrying the cross would eventually lead her to her mission field. On Nov. 21, 1879 she wrote in her Diary, “What is more beautiful than to work in a spirit of sacrifice, even of martyrdom, for the salvation of souls.” On another occasion she wrote, “Carrying the cross brings happiness; refusing it does not.”

As Salvatorians, we continue the unfinished mission of Jesus. Bringing about justice is a painful process because myriad forces of idolatry continue to hold subtle power in our world. The Salvatorian Sisters Rule states, we are to be “ready for any sacrifice even to the cross.” (RoL Art. 7) We may be misunderstood, even persecuted, by those resistant to the Reign of God. Yet, by carrying the cross of justice and service, we advance that Reign and help to liberate those who still “sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.”

“This (i.e., liberation from idolatry in daily life) is Eternal Life, to know You, the One True God, and Jesus Christ, Whom You have sent.” (John 17:3)

3. Standing under the Cross

“Standing under the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala.” (John 19:25)

The posture of ‘standing under the cross’ is a challenging one. The women disciples of the Crucified Jesus had to overcome fear in order to remain boldly with Jesus under the cross. By that posture they chose Life over death.

Standing under the cross symbolizes the spiritual posture of ‘standing in the Eternal NOW,’ that moment which joins our past and our future. NOW is the only moment we control with the gift of free will given us by God.

NOW is the only moment in which we ultimately decide everything about our lives and our mission. Our lives are a succession of such decision points, seemingly small most of the time. Yet ultimately, who we become and what we do in life is the sum of the countless decisions we make moment-by-moment — as we choose Life.

Jesus lived his life as a continual self-emptying. Despite the temptations offered by others to use divine power to overcome oppressors, Jesus chose God’s plan of humility and abandonment. “Your attitude must be that of Christ: Though he was in the form of God, he did not deem equality with God something to be grasped at. Rather, he emptied himself and took the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. He was known to be of human estate, and it was thus that he humbled himself, obediently accepting death, death on a cross!” (Phil. 2: 58; Rule Art. 22)

Father Jordan understood the significance of standing under the cross. He speaks to us of this belief, “I long for your happiness, your peace here below, your salvation, your welfare, your blessedness. And so it is my wish that you ever more and more study the cross and suffering and resignation in suffering, that you be convinced that only in the shadow of the cross do the fruits of salvation thrive.” (EA 32 ‘Love of the Cross’) Jordan repeated this theme in his own

Diary, “The works of God prosper only in the shadow of the cross.” [SD I 163 (6)]

Life’s questions — Who am I becoming? What am I meant to do? How can I best serve others? What is God asking of us? Where ought we go? — are best asked standing beneath the cross of Love. This is the posture of discernment. Assuming that posture we may be confident that God will guide us toward choosing Life through our decisions.

Fr. Jordan wrote in his Diary, “When you want to do a thing, ask yourself first of all: of what use is this for eternity?” [SD I 10 (2)] This stance — of seeking the will of God in all things — made Fr. Jordan model his life on that of Jesus, Whom he sought to proclaim. Jesus lived in a continual dialogue of love and obedience with his Father. “It is not to do my own will that I have come down from heaven, but to do the will of him who sent me...It is the will of him who sent me that I should lose nothing of what he has given me; rather that I should raise it up on the last day. Indeed, this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks upon the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life. Him (her) I will raise upon on the last day.” (John 6:38-40)

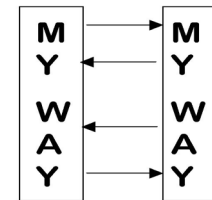
Toward the end of his life, Fr. Jordan wrote in his Diary, “Tabor – Calvary.” [23.02.1918 SD IV 39 (5)] He had come to understand the intimate relationship of sacrifice and glory. He had experienced how obedience in difficult moments led to fruitfulness. Within a few months he would pass through his final death unto Eternal Life. Fr. Jordan died on September 8, 1918. That linkage, Tabor – Calvary, is also the theme in *Vita Consecrata* (#23-24): “Consecrated persons discover that the more they stand at the foot of the cross of Christ, the more immediately and profoundly they experience the truth of God, who is love.” (VC #24).

The scriptural passage we treasure as the core of our Salvatorian charism, John 17:3, has another cross-reference that clarifies further the fruition gained by standing under the cross. “We know too, that the Son of God has come and has given us discernment to recognize the One who is true. And we are in the One who is true, for we are in his Son, Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.” (John 5: 20). Through a life of discernment, given us by Jesus, we learn to recognize Truth; we learn to choose Life. Jesus promised us, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, then you will also know my Father.” (John 14: 6-7) To stand under the cross in discernment culminates in knowing God.

“This (i.e. discernment in the NOW) is Eternal Life, to know You, the One True God, and Jesus Christ, Whom You have sent.” (John 17:3)

4. Embracing the Cross

Human life is filled with seeming dualities and opposites, and sometimes with tensions that grow into irreconcilable contradictions. The yin/yang Chinese symbol (right) expresses duality and a need



for integration. Yin – the female principal (earth, dark, cold) and yang – the male principal (heaven, heat, light) are each incomplete, inadequate without the other.

ence, whenever we are unable to realize that the contradictions we spot in others also reside within ourselves, we risk separating ourselves from those whom we do not understand or cannot accept. Often this leads to conflict and trauma. When there is no dialogue or effort to work out the tension of differences, people become imprisoned by those differences.⁵

People then attempt to employ power techniques to gain control over the other or to scapegoat the other. This creates a potentially 'diabolic' situation (i.e. one that isolates, rejects, divides and destroys). Violence, whether interpersonal or in larger social contexts, may usually be traced back to divisions that resulted from unresolved differences leading to separation, suspicion and fear.

St. Paul attested, "The language of the cross remains nonsense for those who are lost. Yet, for us who are saved, it is the power of God." (1 Cor. 1:18). This power arose from the embrace by Jesus of violence, division and conflict. An embrace is the human posture that expresses love. Jesus embraced his cross and through that posture, he destroyed hostility, reconciling all things with God.

Those who separated themselves from Jesus and ridiculed his teaching later taunted him not to embrace the cross, but to reject it. Then, and only then, would they 'believe.' "Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe." (Mk. 15:32). "He saved others; he cannot save himself. So he is the King of Israel!? Let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him." (Matt. 27: 42)

But Jesus' embrace of violence was radical and firm: "You have heard the commandment, 'You shall love your countrymen, but hate your enemy.' My commandment to you is: love your enemies, prayer for your persecutors. This will prove that you are children of your heavenly Father, for God's sun rises on the bad and the good; God

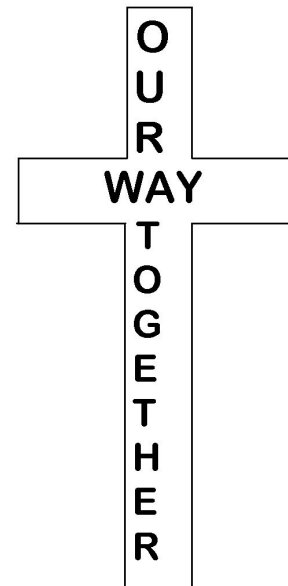
rains on the just and the unjust. ... In a word, you must be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect." (Matt. 5: 43-45, 48) This embrace re-integrated the human with the divine, sinner with God, and a community of believers was born. Differences were reconciled and there "were no more distinctions between Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female, but all of you are one in Christ Jesus." (Gal. 3: 28)

St. Paul, apostle to the Gentiles, recognized the profound power of that embrace: "But now in Christ Jesus you, who once were far off, have been brought near through the blood of Christ. It is he who is our peace, and who made the two of us one by breaking down the barrier of hostility that kept us apart. In his own flesh he abolished the law with its commands and precepts, to create in himself one new person from us, who had been two, and to make peace, reconciling

both of us to God in one body through his cross, which put that enmity to death... through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father." (Eph. 2: 13-19) The unthinkable had happened: salvation was open to all; all were one through the death and resurrection of Jesus!

Fr. Jordan embraced the cross often in his life. One great struggle he had to embrace was that of finding a balance within the spirituality of his institute. The heavy cross of disagreement he had with Francis Streitl

In conclusion, we have many opportunities in daily life to exercise our Salvatorian spirituality of the cross and concerned whether to live apostolic poverty for the



sake of the mission or to live austere poverty for the sake of personal holiness. This struggle caused Fr. Jordan a great deal of inner suffering, as well as misunderstandings with church authorities. During this period of his life (Nov. 11, 1884) he wrote to Mother Mary in Neuwerk,

“...The Lord does all things well and does not desert anyone who puts trust in Him. Let us keep on striving to be

filled with apostolic spirit; to suffer apostolically, to pray apostolically; to work apostolically. Let us remain in intimate union with the Crucified, and never let ourselves be separated from Him...” Jordan embraced this cross as the separation of the sisters of Francis Streitel from Fr. Jordan’s institute took place on Oct. 12, 1885.

Fr. Jordan later asked Mother Mary three times, “Do you love the cross?” She answered three times, “Yes, I do!” (letter June 24, 1902). The General Statutes of the Salvatorian Sisters state, “In a spirit of conversion we willingly embrace difficulties and the self-giving required by our apostolic and community life.” (GS 8.7) Fr. Jordan treasured a spirit of collaboration

differences and work together for the salvation of souls. Just as Jesus died for all, according to the Sisters’ Rule of Life, “...our apostolic charity extends to everyone without distinction.” (RoL Art. 5) As Salvatorians strive to collaborate and extend love to everyone without distinction, we integrate salvific love into life’s daily challenges. That posture opens attitudinal ‘prisons’ by bringing the dualities, the differences, the monologues, together in the embrace of dialogue.

This is a ‘sym-bolic’ action, which opens the way to forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace. It is the way of salvation that sets people free. It integrates the tensions of life. Such inclusive love forms community and creates a family of believers, “Seeing his mother there, with the disciple whom he loved, Jesus said to his mother,

‘Mother, here is your son.’ In turn he said to the disciple, ‘There is your mother.’ From that hour onward, the disciple took her into his care.” (John 19: 26-27)

“This (integrating dualities and reconciling differences) is Eternal Life, to know You, the One True God, and Jesus Christ, Whom You have sent.” (John 17:3). to share it. We may assume various postures that draw us into the mystery of the cross as the sign of God’s Love in the challenges of our lives, personally and communally:

1. Living in single-hearted, creative fidelity (walking toward the cross);
2. Developing a poverty of spirit so as to be freed of idolatry and empowered to do justice (carrying the cross);
3. Discerning God’s will in the NOW so as to choose True Life (standing under the cross); and
4. Reconciling differences to form inclusive communities (embracing the cross).

“The language of the cross remains nonsense for those who are lost. Yet, for us who are saved, it is the power of God.... The Jews ask for miracles and the Greeks for a higher knowledge, while we preach a crucified Messiah. For the Jews, what a great scandal! And for the Greeks, what nonsense! But he is Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God for those called by God among both Jews and Greeks.” (1 Cor. 1: 18, 22-24).

“John Mary Francis of the Cross, therefore:

- the cross is your life
- the cross is your salvation
- the cross is your crown

- the cross is your glory
- the cross is your hope
- the cross is your shield
- the cross is your protection
- the cross is your portion
- the cross is your joy.

Hail O cross! Hail, O cross, (our) only hope.

It belongs to us to glory in the Cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ, in which is salvation, life and resurrection. The sign of the cross will be in heaven, when the Lord comes to judge.

Behold the cross of the Lord, flee, armies of the adversary: the lion of the tribe of Juda conquers.” [SD I 179-180]

“On the cross Jesus’ single-hearted love for the Father and all humankind reaches its highest expression, his poverty will reach complete self-emptying, his obedience the giving of his very life. Jesus on the cross prophetically affirms the absolute transcendence of God over all created things. It is in the contemplation of the Crucified Christ that all vocations find their inspiration.” (VC #23).

5. Summary:

Walking toward the cross
 Carrying the cross
 Standing under the cross
 Embracing the cross
 John 17:3
 Wis. 14: 7; 15:3
 1 John 5:20
 Matt. 5:43-45, 48

Celtic cross
 Empty cross
 Mary under the cross
 Yin/yang on the cross
 Creative fidelity;
 Single-heartedness
 Liberation from idolatry;
 Doing justice
 Discernment;
 Choosing in the NOW
 Reconciliation;
 Peace-making
 Consecrated chastity
 Poverty of spirit
 Obedience
 Community
 Finding LIFE
 Freeing LIFE
 Choosing LIFE
 Integrating LIFE

Reflection on ‘Postures’ that Help Strengthen a Spirituality of the Cross:

Walking toward the Cross: (Single-hearted search for True Life)

- What patterns in my life show my creative fidelity to Jesus?
- What patterns in our SDS life show creative fidelity in our mission with Jesus?

**Carrying the Cross:
(Liberation into True Life)**

- How has my SDS poverty of spirit helped to free me? Helped to do justice?
- How has our SDS poverty of spirit helped to free us? Helped to bring justice to others?

**Standing under the Cross:
(Obedience – choosing True Life)**

- How has my SDS life of discernment helped me to say ‘Yes’ to God? To choose True Life?
- How has our SDS life of discernment helped us to say ‘Yes’ to God? To inspire others to choose True Life?

**Embracing the Cross:
(Community – integrating Life)**

- How have I helped to bring the peace and reconciliation of Jesus into the world through my efforts to build community?
- How have we helped to bring the peace and reconciliation of Jesus into the world through our actions as a community?

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**Salvatorian Institutions:
Carriers of Our Mission**

Implementing the Key Elements

by
Sr. Grace Mary Croft, SDS

Throughout our Salvatorian history, and until today, Salvatorians have looked for, and found, simple and creative ways to respond to the needs of their time. These “all ways and means” have involved using space in our convents, rectories, monasteries or homes to conduct classes for children of immigrants or children who could not receive a place in school, to house elderly people without family, to provide day care for children at risk, to give comfort and aid to the sick, and more. In some climates, the shade of trees has provided the venue for kindergarten classes, evangelization classes, leadership development for women, etc. What these efforts have in common is that they were, and are, manifestations of our Salvatorian mission and most have in one way or another become institutionalized with the consequent demands of meeting government regulations, of organizational and long range planning, of finding financial resources, etc.

Our institutions – schools, hospitals, parishes, publishing centers, clinics - that bear the name Salvatorian are carriers of our mission. The heart of these institutions is our Salvatorian Mission with an urgency rooted in social justice, in solidarity with the poor and excluded, and in a desire to bring Life, that is Salvation, to all.

Following in the footsteps of the Savior like the apostles, we are called to live and announce God's unconditional love, continuing Jesus' life-giving work of bringing salvation to all creation and liberation from all that is a threat to fullness of life. Our personal and communal experience of Salvation is the dynamic and animating energy for our tasks.¹¹

The world of sociology and of organizational planning recognizes an institution as a “living organism” with a life of its own. Consequently, all institutions, whether multi-national corporations, small industries or family operated businesses, need to respond or react to the environment around them or they will die. And, all institutions attend to their environment through a lens that is focused on the purpose of the institution, i.e. to make a profit, to fill or create a “need”, to make people feel good or be beautiful, etc. Our Salvatorian institutions also need a lens based on their purpose. The lens through which our institutions read and reflect on the economic, social, and political reality is the lens of our Salvatorian Charism, Mission and Spirituality. We Salvatorians call that “discerning the signs of the times”.

In some areas of our Salvatorian World, our institutions are 50, 60, 70+ years old. They were founded in response to particular needs of the time. For many years, Sisters, Father and Brothers worked hard and suffered much so that the parish, school, hospital, clinic, would be a Salvatorian response to that need. Today many of these institutions are under the leadership of lay Salvatorians or our lay collaborators, professional men and women, with the expertise to guide the institutions in today's reality.

We also see that in the past few years many institutions in our Salvatorian world are just being born, perhaps operating while the bricks and mortar are still settling. They are situated in areas where

the people are very poor, and in non-Christian areas of the world. These environments are very unstable, and our Sisters, Brothers/ Fathers, or committed Lay Salvatorians who are providing the day-to-day direction and management in these new institutions are struggling for survival along with their people. While these schools, clinics, dispensaries, etc. are intent on serving the people, they also take on a *Life*, and that *Life* changes according to the needs of the time.

In every part of our Salvatorian world, we encounter great threats to life, justice and human dignity. “We are living a crisis in modern civilization, and therefore, all our institutions inserted and incarnated in the nexus of this modernity are in crisis also...However, a crisis is not always something negative, although it brings perplexity, insecurity and discomfort. A crisis is always an opportunity to take a qualitative step in our lives. This is an important moment for humanity, when God and his Spirit are strongly present in history...”²²

In all parts of the world, government regulations are constantly changing, requiring more “improvements” to our buildings and/or in our service in order to receive official recognition. In addition, all of our institutions are faced with financial constraints caused by governments' demands that increase the operating costs, by people's inability to pay for services, by competition with the public sector and by globalization in general. Our Salvatorian Institutions must therefore assume their corporate authority in order to stand as prophets and to be agents of *salvation* to the growing multitude of those left poor and marginalized, primarily women and children, as a result of globalization. This increases the imperative that the leaders in our institutions, religious and lay, need to be attentive to their reality and to attend to that reality through a Salvatorian lens.

Our personal and communal experience of Salvation is the source of our energy and motivation for this difficult mission. And, the Key Elements of Our Charism provide a perfect frame for our Salvatorian lens.

The Key Elements: A Guide for Goals, Guidelines and Mission Statements

“We Salvatorians are sent in mission to announce through our lives and actions the gospel message as contained in the key elements of the charism.”³³

The Key Elements are the perfect starting point for setting Goals, elaborating Guidelines and preparing Mission Statements for our institutions.

“To live eternal life” is the first and most important of all the key elements, as it sets our direction for LIFE – the heart of Salvation. The key elements can be easily translated to concepts/values that are recognizable by all, and can become the basis for the quality of service offered in our institutions. Some of these values are: Life, inclusion, option for the poor, justice, truth, and knowledge of a saving God, being a welcoming presence... In the form of goals, these values, could look like this: to improve the quality of life; to develop leadership; to make an option for the poor in our service; to be inclusive both in those whom we employ and those whom we serve; to create a climate of justice in our institution; to welcome anyone who comes to us, etc.

Using the Salvatorian lens, with True Life as the center, the challenge for our institutional leaders is to find ways to describe and to implement these values in ways that respond to the social, religious, political, and economic environment surrounding them. This is not an easy task, but one that

is vitally necessary if our institutions, that bear the name Catholic and Salvatorian, do not become mediocre or just like every other institution of its kind.

In their meeting in Rome, May 2004, Collaborators from Salvatorian Institutions in Europe prepared a common Mission Statement.⁴⁴ In it, they describe the Key Elements like this:

“...Our Ideal and example is the unlimited love of Jesus for human kind...We are concerned with the salvation of the whole person.”

“Nobody is excluded from our commitment for the good of humankind. We are fully committed to work for justice and peace and the good of those people who are entrusted to us.”

“In our actions we are guided by openness, as well as mutual respect and confidence.”

“The Salvatorian values of Life, faith, humanity, respect for life, justice and hope influence our work in all spheres.”

“...We are following Father Jordan’s vision and are searching for ways to collaborate with others, in order to improve the quality of life for those for whom we care...”

Following the vision of Father Jordan, and based on our Key Elements, our institutions need to be *rooted* in True Life, *grounded* in our relationship with God, and *strengthened* through collaboration and networking, uniting rather than dividing. This is no easy mission as we face the challenges and threats that surround us everyday. We are challenged to serve others through our institutions with the missionary zeal of F. Jordan.

Is not the only remedy whereby God wants to heal you a fervent holy zeal, which consumes you as you work indefatigably for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, directed by the good intention and impelled and driven by the love of God? (SDI, 138:4)

Zeal is given too little attention in the schools!

Oh, (that there were) holy apostles hastening throughout the world, evangelizing all! Oh, inscrutable zeal;...(SDI, 138:5)

Whatever you do, wherever you turn, always do it so, that you will be working for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. (SD I, 138:6)

The Key Elements: An Evaluative Lens

Good institutional operating and planning includes regular evaluation that is both qualitative and quantitative. Assuming that the Key Elements are articulated as Salvatorian Values in the Goals or Mission statement of the institution, then it follows naturally that they become the criteria for evaluation. While many values, such as those involving relationships, can best be described qualitatively, others such as our option for the poor and for inclusion, our efforts at networking and collaborating, providing professional and quality service, can be quantified, with actual data.

Our clients are able and willing to give us important information about the service we rendered. Taken seriously such evaluations can tell us much about our Salvatorian Service, especially about areas that need improvement. While questions will be shaped to meet the culture, questions could be asked to determine: if people felt treated justly and with respect; or if the service was professional and efficient; or if they felt included in the planning for their care or

their education; and how they would describe the atmosphere, both physical and relational, of the institution. Asking our clients for their evaluation is another way of practicing the key element of involving others in our mission.

Evaluation by the staff/employees and administration is critical. To the degree that all have been involved in the development of the goals and mission statement, they will take “ownership” of the implementation and the evaluation. (Again, this involvement is a basic application of the Key Elements of our Salvatorian Mission). While government regulations and financial concerns will drive some of the evaluation, our institutional response to the impact of the values of globalization, of violence and war, of a culture of death that surround us, requires that we look through our Salvatorian lens and ask, for example:

- Do people know this is a Salvatorian Institution or Parish?
- Do those whom we serve know our Mission Statement?
- How have we improved the quality of life for others?
- Have we been respectful and just with one another and with those whom we serve? This includes giving quality professional service.
- What are the signs that we work together, collaboratively, rather than in competition with one another?
- In what ways do we meet the spiritual and emotional needs of the people, as well as their physical and intellection needs?
- What signs do we have that:
 - a) We are happy and welcoming in our service?

b) Our atmosphere is peaceful and serene, indicating a certain rootedness in God as our Center?

This is not an exhaustive list, by any means. Each institution needs to design its own specific evaluation based on our Salvatorian Key Elements and Values as articulated in its goals or Mission Statement. However, if we reflect deeply on the Key Elements of our Charism, we will discover that our Charism holds the dynamism necessary for us Salvatorians and our ministries, including our institutional ministries, to courageously move through the crises of our time. We will find in the Key Elements the heart of any evaluation of our mission. We are called to:⁵⁵

- Experience eternal life, finding God in ourselves, in others and in the cosmos. This means being in touch with the God who works in us, loving, healing and sending us to others.
- Know the One True God, and Jesus Christ Whom He sent, recognizing in all people a hunger and thirst for God that is the ultimate meaning in life.
- Follow in the footsteps of the apostles, knowing Jesus intimately and learning from Him.
- Make disciples of all nations, by allowing ourselves to be “sent” to our brothers and sisters at the service of life, journeying side by side with them, “in solidarity with the diverse agents of evangelization in the Church today.”
- “Proclaiming the universality of the message of Christ – This element is more than topical today... Salvatorian universality is not the globalization envisioned by the economic system and the media world of today. It is ... being capable of *embracing and renewing the universe* (Cf. Mother Mary of the Apostles – Hymn 22.07, 1882), and of

expressing through gestures what our founder taught us: “*For us, no nation is excluded... among us...there should be no nation. All should be our brothers and sisters.* (Father Jordan, PE 180-181).”

- Guide others to eternal truth and to justice, by reading and responding to the signs of the times, signs that often bode suffering and death to others.
- Being able to discern the signs of the times –Amid the many signs of our times, we need to train ourselves to discover where the Spirit is working today and then have the courage to move away from those situations and systems that work against life, justice and freedom of peoples.

Our Institutions bring our Salvatorian Mission to others in a particular way. In many areas of the world they are the only source of certain services, especially to the poor. In others, they provide quality service as an alternative to the public or non-religious private institutions. Our institutions stand as signs of life, of respect, of inclusion, of love. In a globalized world, where corporations use religious language, promising freedom, liberation, salvation, life, happiness and health, we are called through our institutions to make those promises come true...true as Jesus promised and true as we inherit the gift from our Founder, Father Jordan.

These words of our Founder, who was passionate that all might know the One True God and have the fullness of Life, can be addressed to our institutions as well as to each of us personally:

Be a true apostle of Jesus Christ. Do not rest until you have carried the word of God to the four corners of the earth. Be a true herald of the Most High! (SD I, 182: 2)

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. (SD II, 1)

End Notes

¹ Art. 5 from the Provisional Charter for the Salvatorian Family

² S. Therezinha Joana Rasera, SDS: General Superior Sisters of the Divine Savior: Address on the occasion of the Centenary Celebration of the Belgian Province of the Congregation.

³ Cf Key Elements Brochure

⁴ The Mission Statement was prepared in German and In English. It is published in several languages in Vol 51, no.2, November 2004, *Informationes* of the Sisters of the Divine Savior. (www.congsds.org)

⁵ Parts of the following content are paraphrases of, or direct quotes from, the above talk of S. Therezinha Joana Rasera.

The Salvatorian Mission at the Service of Education

by

Fr. Arno Boesing, SDS

Education is an important way for Salvatorians to be in mission. However education must always be understood as an instrument of that mission. It is always at the service of a greater cause which is *life*. We will continue to be involved in education as long as it clearly serves the *life-giving* focus of our Salvatorian mission.

The Salvatorian mission is broad and centers on life that is full and eternal.¹ The mission is never to be identified with one specific work or activity. On the contrary, life is its fundamental objective. Undoubtedly, this is a broad and complex objective. As a matter of fact, life is the most important goal we try to accomplish in our Salvatorian mission in the Church and the world. Any approach we take to mission must focus on it. As a Salvatorian Family, we place ourselves at the service of life. This is why we speak of education as a “pastoral work”. This is why our educative process must address foundational life values.

1. Identity Crisis

At this time in history, education suffers the consequences of a general crisis provoked above all by the weakening of human and Christian values in society. The area of education is not exempt. In this generalized crisis, life is no longer a fundamental value. In some ways, the “vocation” of the educator has been suffocated by the “profession” of the educator. We suffer the consequences of a globalized world where life is valued less so that material well-

¹ See Jn 10:10; 17:3.

being and easy profits can increase. In this atmosphere, a selfish and monolithic vision of individual rights often absorbs and substitutes for the common good.

For reasons too numerous to cite here, education suffers immensely from this generalized crisis of values. The crisis leaves deep marks not only on family life and students but also on those who teach, i.e. the pastoral agents of education. This fact augments the problem. But let us remember that any crisis, when it is duly confronted, can mean and even provoke new growth.

It is my opinion that in our case, this crisis has much to do with a lack of clear vision in relation to the objectives of a Salvatorian educational institution. If we are present in the field of education, we certainly should not be there simply to multiply the number of institutions of learning, nor to increase the list of private schools nor even the number of our own apostolates. We presuppose that if we are in the field of education, it is because we believe it to be a fertile field in which to accomplish our Salvatorian mission in the service of life. Presumably, we will have analyzed sufficiently, the basic elements of our Salvatorian mission and the fundamental reason for our presence and ongoing work in any institution or type of apostolate.

2. Our Salvatorian mission

The Starting Point

The Christian dimension of our apostolic work is its basic inspiration. We are inspired by Jesus Christ, Savior of the world, who came “so that all may have life, life in abundance”.² Indeed,

² Ibid.

the liberating action of Jesus embraces all dimensions of life. Fr. Jordan emphasized that: “*He (Jesus, the Savior) is our model*”.³

Life Witness

This is a decisive factor in the Christian life. It is not enough to transmit skills and knowledge along the line of simple factual comprehension. It is necessary to educate for life, that is, to help students live the fundamental values of life. Therefore, it is essential that, as responsible agents, we are personally convinced of the values to be transmitted and that the students see this through our transparent way of being and doing. Without powerful life witness, our actions are sterile and do not communicate life.

As a Salvatorian Family, we are called to reveal God and the divine plan of full life for everyone in the world. “*As modest collaborators of the ecclesiastical magisterium, we intend to reveal the one and triune God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit to the world. ‘This is eternal life: to know you the one true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent’*”.⁴

Explicit proclamation

Salvatorian practice ought to reflect lived values. Teaching is sharing lived experience and authentic education will always reflect lived values. We cannot be content with the simple transmission of knowledge. Rather, we must take advantage of the opportunities inherent in the educative process to communicate values.

Fr. Jordan lamented: “*Zeal is given too little attention in the schools! Oh, (that there were) holy apostles hastening throughout the world, evangelizing all! Oh inscrutable zeal; O gift of God; how often you*

³ Fr. Jordan, in Chapter Talks, 1899/02/04 *Talks of Father Francis Mary of the Cross Jordan*. 2003, Krakow.

⁴ *The Catholic Teaching Society*, 1888, DSS IV, 105. free translation.

*have been contemned and suppressed with the excuse that you are meant for the select few!”*⁵

Our mission demands that we form disciples of the Divine Savior: *Go, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them ...and teaching them to observe all that I have taught you”*.⁶

Methodology

Our way of teaching and transmitting both knowledge and experience is based on the methodology used by Jesus. He attended to everyone, even the multitudes that sought him. However, at the same time, he paid special attention to the formation of the disciples. Therefore, Salvatorian methodology, which we see reflected in the Divine Savior, is characterized in a special way by leadership formation. This feature is very characteristic of Fr. Jordan’s life and work and should be present in each and every Salvatorian activity. Leadership development is of special significance in Christian education. It involves the formation of future leaders for family, Church and social-political life. Leaders from our schools should be able to take responsibility for life and place their ability to lead at its service. They will make choices to increase the fullness of life (eternal life) for all persons and especially for those segments of society most in need of life.

Fr. Bonaventure Lüthen, faithful collaborator of Fr. Jordan, expressed it in this way: *“The Apostolic Teaching Society places great stress on the lay apostolate: it reminds leaders, teachers, parents, [and] persons of high rank of the obligation of their apostolate”*.⁷

⁵ Francis Mary of the Cross Jordan, *Spiritual Diary* (SD) I 138.

⁶ Matt 28: 19-20.

⁷ *The Apostolic Teaching Society*, 1881 DSS IV, 17-34. Translation in *Mailings* I-C-1 p.15.1979, Rome, Salvator Mundi. Also see Matt 28: 19-20; Dan 12:3.

Inclusive Love

The Salvatorian mission will happen only when we are moved by the saving love of God which desires fullness of life, eternal life, for all. God’s plan is that everyone experience full and eternal happiness. This kind of love is apostolic and universal. It overrides all ethnic and geographical frontiers. It breaks through social barriers by using all possible ways and means to secure dignified life conditions for everyone. This why we work with intellectuals as well as with people whose lives are marked by many needs. We work with people who are well off in life but this apostolate is always focused through a special concern for those who have less.

Fr. Jordan expressed it this way: *“Serve the members carefully and wisely in the Lord, through example, the written and spoken word and all the ways and means which the love of Christ inspires, in order to manifest to all and glorify everywhere God the Father, his Son Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit...”*.⁸

Fr. Jordan’s *Spiritual Diary* emphasized: *“Press on with indefatigable strength and vigor, so that the youth of every nation possible receive a good Christian upbringing ...”*.⁹

Fr. Jordan also pointed to the command of Jesus, our exemplar to: *“Go and announce the Gospel to all creation!”*.¹⁰

3. Basic criteria for a Salvatorian school

The above reflection on the Salvatorian mission allows us to suggest some important criteria for the mission of a Salvatorian school.

⁸ Rule of 1886 DSS I, 49-50 free translation.

⁹ SD I 58.

¹⁰ Mark 16:15.

Evangelizing Context (Environment)

The whole atmosphere of the school is important and should be characterized by a friendly and helpful environment. This demands competent pedagogy. The administration, teachers and staff all must be aware of and take as their own the values they teach and witness to the students. *“Verba Volant, exempla trahunt – Words fly away, example attracts.”*¹¹

Unified Message

The school needs to make accurate information (knowledge) available but, above all, it should provide a good formation (values and convictions). Therefore, both of these tasks must be done by systematically applying a methodology of involvement. Only in this way will the school achieve its fundamental objective which is ultimately to transform reality through the integration of theory and practice. Such an aim requires agreement around the primary objective of the school as well as a unity among all those involved in every aspect of the educative process. Communication of values depends on the impact of the witness given by the educational agents involved in the process. By far, the greatest challenge we have is to live and act in keeping with the Salvatorian identity.

Involvement and the unification of efforts (one message).

All those serving the institution should be speaking the same language. In other words, they should transmit one and the same message. If this is not happening, one agent will tear down what the other has built. All the educational agents who serve in the institution should know the objectives and methodology of the school. This will allow them to speak the same language. Everyone associated with the

institution should be aware that they are educators. They should also know what type of education is supposed to be offered at the school. Beyond the administration, teachers and staff, it is also necessary to involve the parents and the students themselves. They all need to be involved as agents of the educational process. Along this line, it is also important to create growth groups within the institution. These could be groups of children, adolescents and youth as well as groups of staff and teachers. The biggest challenge here is to gain the commitment of everyone and also to select teachers and staff with the mission in mind.

Conclusion

In conclusion, let us affirm that we are speaking about a difficult task. Nevertheless, if we want to save the school as a true instrument of the Salvatorian apostolate, it is necessary to decisively commit ourselves to the revitalization of the Salvatorian mission in the service of education. This demands a very open spirit and the ability to dialogue. It will be a slow and ongoing process.

Consequently, we must enter into a process which presupposes conviction, firm will and patient work so as not to become discouraged in the middle of the journey. In other words, this task requires much love, willingness to work for the cause and an openness to dialogue. If we are not seriously committed to paying this price, sooner or later, we will be obliged to shut the doors of our educational establishments. It is worth it to save this important way of expressing our Salvatorian mission.

¹¹ *Exhortations and Admonitions of Father Francis Jordan* 1998 English Edition p. 179-180.

Educate Toward the Fullness of Life

by
Dianir Clari Mariani, Lay SDS

“Press on with indefatigable strength and vigor, so that the youth of every nation possible receive a good Christian upbringing...” SD I 58

“Teach the children in such a way with all morally allowed means of instruction, that they never fall into wrongdoing out of ignorance.” SD I 213

“(Classical) secondary schools, etc., are very important, also private secondary schools!” SD II 25

“The education and instruction of youth, also in the elementary schools where it is necessary, is our task.” SD III 24

Father Francis Jordan, *Spiritual Diary*

We can see how important the mission of the Salvatorian educator should be in today’s world when we go back to the orienting principle of all education – “the full realization of human potential.” This mission should not be underestimated because through it we bring the Good News to children and young people. It is the Good News of the dignity of all God’s children; the Good News of the hope which daily nourishes the incessant search for God’s Reign; the Good News of the faith that sustains us in the journey toward the expansive experience of full and abundant life.

As Father Jordan says, *“This is our task.”* *“Press on with indefatigable strength and vigor toward a good Christian education for youth.”*

“Teach the children through every means ... so that they do not fall into wrongdoings....” (See introductory citations)

Are not these quotations appropriate for the 21st Century characterized, as it is, by technology, mass communications, power, individualism, war, assassinations, addiction and criminality? Might it not be for lack of a *good Christian education* that our world is as it is today? *It is our task* to help change this picture. Let us ask the question from a Salvatorian perspective. How do our schools instruct and form youth so that they have *greater and more abundant life*? Are we utilizing all the ways and means that Christ inspires in order for students to experience the Reign of God in this world? In this article, I would like to make reference to the Four Pillars of Education for the Twenty-first Century that have been described in a report by UNESCO’s International Commission on Education. The report speaks of four learnings that I believe can help us in our work toward the full development of our students’ human potential.

Learning to know – Learning to learn:

This kind of learning opens the doors of self-understanding and comprehension of the world around us. It facilitates the formation of independent choices and the ability to discern. It drives forward the development of our ability to produce, survive, communicate and love. Fr. Jordan spoke words of wisdom when he said in his *Spiritual Diary* “ [the one] *who refuses to learn ends up badly.* (SD I 178) Making his words my own, I would add that refusing to learn leads us into dark, solitary and asphyxiating cellars of ignorance. We are locked up within ourselves and thereby closed to the world, the other and certainly God.

*“This is eternal life, to **know** You the one True God and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.”* (Jn 17:3) This kind of knowledge comes

through tireless study, unwavering faith and an experience of God in our daily lives while in communion with the world and others.

Once more we ask ourselves the Salvatorian question: How do our schools orient the acquisition of knowledge? Is it at the service of community, justice and life? What kind of life does this knowledge promote? Is it full and abundant? Do our lives as educators really witness to an openness to learning and a willingness to life-long learning? Are we more concerned with a storehouse of facts rather than with the application of truth? And, how do we apply this truth? Fr. Jordan responded to this with a question: *“Of what use would all knowledge be to you if you cannot apply it to your highest goal, but it has to lie there like a closed library.”* (SD I 54) What is the highest goal of knowledge? It is essential that we know how to convert scientific knowledge into living wisdom.

Learning to do –

“Work and do good with unbounded trust in God, and always do what you consider to be the best and most useful; go quietly forward trusting in the Lord, but have in mind at all times only God’s glory and the salvation of souls.” (SD I 184) Knowing and doing are dependent on one another. Knowledge takes flesh in our capacity and ability to communicate, to work, to manage and to resolve conflicts in favor of life. True knowledge is active when we nurture human qualities and stable, effective personal relationships.

“Do good...” Yes, how can we, the Salvatorian Family, respond to this call to build a different future? How can we act upon the environment around us and transform it? Does this spirit breathe upon and feed our educational works? Is this the spirit which moves us? Do we really accept the word *Salvatorian* for what it means, that is, the one who rescues and saves human beings? Fr. Jordan shows us various ways to do good. *“We need to accustom ourselves*

to doing our ordinary actions well, even the most common ones.” (SD I 33) *“A Society to help the sick and the poor, the lapsed and the like of a particular parish or of the whole world!”* (SD I 140) *“Begin in such a way that you feed about 12 poor people daily at noon, at the same time joining some instruction to it.”* (SD I 156) *“Teach the children”* (SD I 213) *“Renew the good intention before all your actions and constantly refer all to God....”* (SD I 22)

We could add many more of the Founder’s words that call us as individuals and as a group to what is best. These words show us the importance of the educator’s role in *learning to do* so that the world today and in the future is a little bit better. The education transmitted in our schools ought to minimize the inequalities that arise from poverty and discrimination. It is fitting here to speak of the need for projects in our schools that work with the civic community toward integrating the marginalized and excluded.

For example, in 2005 Divine Savior School (Jundiaí, São Paulo, Brazil) created a volunteer program for its students, parents, teachers, staff and friends. It is called SEIVA: Friends-Together Volunteer Service. The program’s objective is the civic formation of our children and youth so that they are open to accept those who are different from themselves. It also helps them to look out for the needs of others, to develop their social skills, and to place their talents at the service of people who are often not even recognized as human. In addition, we also “adopt” groups of needy children, families and elderly for whom we organize various activities such as: drives, recreational field trips, handicrafts, sales, tutoring, home visits, talks and courses. This is just a seed which we hope will grow vigorously. With Fr. Jordan we are bold to say, *“O Jesus, You give the desire and the fulfillment.”* (SD I 119)

Learning to Live Together –

This is humankind's greatest challenge. How do we gradually discover the value of other persons and accept them within their own culture and spirituality while living in a world of violence, prejudice, competition and unrelenting pursuit of individual success? This challenge also arises within an educational institution. The most difficult thing is for the students to learn to live together. First of all, it demands self-knowledge and self-understanding in order to be open to understanding the other. Our Salvatorian schools ought to provide limitless opportunities and favorable conditions for the growth of healthy relationships throughout the total school community. We must welcome any struggle to lessen hostilities and rivalries. Fr. Jordan comes to our aid more than once in this regard. *"Fall in with the mood of the person with whom you are speaking."* (SD I 15) Certainly he knew the value of empathy – to put yourself in the place of the other in order to understand them better. He said: *"...especially in regard to your neighbor be kind..."* (SD I 152a) *"To love one's neighbor as one's self is a greater thing than all holocausts and sacrifices."* (SD I 95) *"Brotherly love, that divine cement, without it nothing can hold together."* (SD IV 4)

Dialogue is indispensable in order to live together well. Conflicts, which in themselves are not bad because they contribute to our growth, can only be resolved through dialogue and negotiation. In turn, dialogue and negotiation can work miracles in daily relationships. *"In dialogue, we resolve our differences and create an educational community in solidarity."* (*Pedagogical Plan for Divine Savior School, p 7*)

Learning to be –

Let us remember here the Shakespearean affirmation which has become quite popular: *"To be or not to be, that is the question."* Fr.

Jordan wrote in his diary, *"to be or not to be..."* We can also add the apocalyptic saying, *"...because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am about to vomit you out of my mouth."* (Rev 3:16)

But what does it mean *to be*? God's self-description is revelatory. *"I am who am."* (Ex 3:14) For our happiness, God produces a great work of art and freely gives us our *being*. *"Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness."* (Gen 1:26) With the psalmist, we continue to look for an answer to the question: *"What are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?"* (Ps 8: 4)

What does it mean *to be*?

Creature – image and likeness of the Creator. Herein lies the essence of BEING.

Learning to be means becoming aware of our finiteness and our "unfinishedness" as a creature dependent on our Creator. Learning to be implies an unending search to become like God who is Whole, Unique, Immense, Strong, Holy, Good, Merciful, Just, Savior, Father and, above all, Love.

How can our Salvatorian schools help young people learn how to truly reflect the Creator? How do we teach students to become more whole and complete in the realization of their own individuality within the whole? How do we become instruments that build autonomy, discernment and critical thinking in favor of just and holy causes?

How do we teach integrity and mercy?

How do we instruct students in the responsibility of taking care of themselves so that can take care of others?

How do we help them understand that only love upholds life?

The school has much to do ... and it will find its true reason for existence only by offering the students conditions to develop all of their human potential. Encouraging their capacity to: think, choose, decide, act, transform, transcend, communicate, express themselves, be sensitive and above all, love. Therefore, it is urgent that we begin a deep and critical reflection about *which* values are decisive for *being* and *doing* within an educational institution. We remember Paulo Freire who believed that without *example taking flesh* it is impossible for anyone to be a vehicle of witness to *life and fullness of life*. This is the life that Jesus Christ desired, proclaimed and upheld.

Fr. Jordan in his *Spiritual Diary*, once again gives his advice about learning to be. “Always be joyful, praise God constantly, come what may.” (SD I 11) “Always observe perfect modesty in your language and in your relationships with others.” (SD I 53) “Be a strong man, efficacious in word and action for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.” (SD I 58) “...be humble, peaceful, modest and edifying.” (SD I 16) “Be a strong man...” (SD II 58) “Be most prudent in admonishing.” (SD I 140) “...be loving...” (SD I 133)

Undoubtedly we could cite many other references here to show how much we need to work with our being in order to learn how to be.

**Learning to know, learning to do,
learning to live together, learning to be –**

This is unfinished learning. It needs to continue throughout life for everyone. This kind of learning has one objective: **the realization of a full life for the greater honor and glory of the One who is the Way, the Truth and the Life.**