

# THE LIFE OF FATHER FRANCIS JORDAN



**Father Francis Mary-of-the-Cross Jordan**, was born as *John Baptist Jordan*, on June 16, 1848, in Gurtweil, Germany, a small town in the Black Forest area of the southwestern part of the country, only a few miles from the border of Switzerland. Even in his youth, Jordan was known to be a devout young man and he often spent time in private prayer.

While working as a laborer and painter-decorator traveling throughout his homeland, Jordan became keenly aware of the difficult spiritual situation of the people in his homeland. Because the Church had been limited in its mission by the government (in what became known as the *Kulturkampf*) people were turning away from God and the practice of their faith. This only strengthened Jordan's faith and he began to sense a call to the priesthood. On July 21, 1878, he was ordained a priest in Freiburg, Germany, and, because he was known to have a talent for languages, he was sent to Rome by his bishop for advanced language studies. He became fluent in Syrian, Aramaic, Coptic, Arabic, Hebrew and Greek.

But Jordan was sensing that something else was in store for his future. He began thinking about ways to combat the growing disinterest in spirituality and religion. In September 1880, Jordan met privately with Pope Leo XIII in the Vatican, where he outlined his plan to begin a society devoted to spreading the teachings of the faith. The Pope gave Jordan his blessing to begin creating such an organization. On December 8, 1881, Father Jordan witnessed the Profession of Vows made by his first followers. This marked the beginning of the *Society of the Divine Savior*. After working several years with **Therese von Wüllenweber** (now known as *Blessed Mary of the Apostles* after her beatification in 1968), they founded a community of women in their shared cause, and on December 8, 1888, Jordan witnessed her Profession of Vows. She was known in the community as Mother Mary. This marked the beginning of the *Congregation of the Sisters of the Divine Savior*. Together, the members of their communities became known as "**Salvatorians**" – from the Latin word < *salvator* > meaning "Savior." The original plan of Father Francis and Mother Mary was to bring lay men and women into the work and mission of their community as well, but this didn't fit the vision of the Church at the time, so it wasn't permitted. Only after the completion of the Second Vatican Council was the dream of Father Francis and Mother Mary fully realized when, in the early 1970's, the first *Lay Salvatorians* made their formal commitment. Finally, the **Salvatorian Family** was complete.

The Motherhouse of the Society is just down the street from St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. The Motherhouse of the Sisters is nearby, atop one of the great hills of the city. Today, more than two thousand Salvatorians around the world continue the mission of Father Francis and Mother Mary: "***To proclaim the goodness of kindness of Jesus, the Divine Savior, by all ways and means the love of God inspires.***"

This year marks the **100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Death of Father Jordan**. On September 8, 1918, he died in Tifers, Switzerland, and he was buried in the local church. In 1956, his body was transferred to Rome and is now entombed in a special chapel in the Motherhouse of the Society. On March 19, 1999, Pope John Paul II visited the community and prayed at the tomb of Father Jordan.

In 2011, the Vatican published the *Decree on the Heroicity of His Virtues* and declared Father Jordan "Venerable." His cause for beatification is now in process in the Vatican, and we pray that soon the Church will be able to call him by the title "Blessed."



# THE LAST DAYS OF FATHER FRANCIS JORDAN

Because of World War I, in May 1915, Fr. Jordan and the other German-born Salvatorians left Rome to live in Fribourg, Switzerland. The government could no longer guarantee their safety had they stayed in Italy. This was a difficult move for the Founder. He didn't know it then, but he would never return to Rome.

## - 1918 -

- Toward the end of March, Fr. Jordan began experiencing severe abdominal pain. The doctor diagnosed it as stomach cancer.

- By the end of April, Fr. Jordan was bedridden. He could get up only occasionally to celebrate Mass.

- **May 27** - A telegram arrived from Rome stating that the Pope was granting Fr. Jordan his apostolic blessing.

- **May 28** - After suffering a severe and lengthy attack, Fr. Jordan was anointed.

- **June 25** - Fr. Jordan said Mass for the last time.

- **August 26** - Fr. Jordan was transferred to the hospital in nearby Tafers, under the care of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul.

- **August 31** - Fr. Pancratius Pfeiffer (*the second Superior General of the Society*) had a final lengthy visit with Fr. Jordan in his hospital room.

- **September 1** - Fr. Pancratius was told by the doctor, "There is no hope for recovery. It is only a matter now of easing his suffering."

- **September 6** - Fr. Jordan asked Fr. Pancratius and the other priests in his room to pray the Prayers for the Dying in his presence.

- **SEPTEMBER 8 - Feast of the Birth of Mary** - 8:00 PM - Fr. Pancratius, at Fr. Jordan's bedside, noticed suddenly that Fr. Jordan stopped breathing. The Founder took several deep breaths while Fr. Pancratius anointed him. He took one final breath - and he was gone. Fr. Pancratius noted the time on Fr. Jordan's watch which was on the bedside table. It read 8:02.



Francis Mary  
of the Cross Jordan

### PRAYER FOR THE INTERCESSION OF FRANCIS MARY OF THE CROSS JORDAN (1848-1918)

Lord Jesus Christ,  
Savior of the World,  
you called Father Francis of the  
Cross Jordan to be your apostle,  
to make God known and loved  
by all people everywhere,  
using all the means  
your love inspires.

You filled him with universal  
apostolic zeal, with a deep trust in  
God's loving providence, with a  
profound spirit of prayer, with a

sincere devotion to Mary, Mother  
of the Savior, and with the courage  
to follow you, even into the mys-  
tery of the Cross.

Grant also to me, his follower,  
the grace to proclaim the Gospel  
in this spirit and make me an  
effective apostle in today's world.  
Through the intercession of your  
servant Father Francis Jordan,  
I ask you for my special needs....

[Pause to recall personal intentions]

I make this prayer through  
Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior,  
you who live and reign with the  
Father and the Holy Spirit now  
and forever. Amen.

*For favors received through the  
intercession of the Servant of God,*

**Father Francis**  
*in gratitude please inform:*  
Salvatorians (in Rome),  
Via della Conciliazione 51,  
00193 Rome, Italy  
*and:*  
Salvatorians  
1735 Hi-Mount Boulevard,  
Milwaukee, WI 53208-1720



Society of the Divine Savior  
1735 Hi-Mount Boulevard  
Milwaukee, WI 53208-1720

*(with ecclesiastical permission)*