

2017 launches five-year celebration of Salvatorian presence in the U.S.



Each year through 2021 we'll lift up Salvatorian historical milestones, starting with the *Passion for Mercy Year* in 2017. It marks the 125th anniversary of arrival by priests and brothers of the Society of the Divine Savior. Our five-year celebration planning team includes one member each from the Society, Sisters of the Divine Savior Congregation, and the Lay Salvatorians. Representation from all three branches of the Salvatorian Family is meaningful. It reflects Founder Father Francis Jordan's vision for religious and lay women and men to evangelize the world as equals. This Q & A session with Salvatorian Sister Carol Thresher shares a bit about that vision. Sr. Carol devotes her ministry to research, writing and program development in the area of Salvatorian ongoing formation and history, since completing two terms as leader of the North American Province in 2015.

Q Was Fr. Jordan's vision for religious and lay women and men to evangelize the world as equals a radical concept in 19th Century Europe?

A Sr. Carol: I'm sure Father Jordan never thought of himself as *radical* so I hesitate to use that word. What I do see is his profound obedience to an inner call: to form an apostolic group within the Church that was on fire with desire to make God known throughout the world. Now, Jordan had no clear sense of how to structure such a group. He simply wanted to bring together anyone willing to commit to being a full-time apostle — no matter status, nationality, gender or any other difference. People often viewed his early proposals as naïve, however, we do see the Holy Spirit at work in Fr. Jordan and others at this time in history. There was a growing awareness that everyone — including lay people — is called to holiness and evangelization. But it would be many years later before the Church would clearly express this insight in documents of the Second Vatican Council.

Q If Fr. Jordan's ideas were shunned by church hierarchy of his day, how did our present-day Salvatorian Family come about?

A At first, many people he met, including Pope Leo XIII encouraged Fr. Jordan's apostolic enthusiasm. However, our Founder's first attempts to sketch out a simple structure for his vision soon ran into difficulty. His loose and rather naïve approach didn't fit into structures already in place in the official Church. Those who reviewed his promotional pamphlets were unable to imagine a Church group configured outside traditional structures. Because Fr. Jordan deeply desired official Church approval, he shifted his energies to founding two more traditional communities of women and men religious early in 1883.

Now fast forward to the mid-1960s. Vatican Council II urged all vowed religious to return to the original spirit of their founders and adapt to the changing times. Salvatorians took this call for renewal seriously. We began an earnest study of the earliest documents that had been gathering dust in the archives of our men's and women's religious communities. As Fr. Jordan's original vision emerged, it laid the foundation for the Salvatorian Family collaboration we have today.

Q How are Lay Salvatorians different from what many religious orders call associates?

A Our post-Vatican II research into early Salvatorian documents clearly revealed that lay apostles were as central to Fr. Jordan's original vision as vowed religious. As a result, the unique vocation of the Lay Salvatorian began to emerge. Explanations and rules written by or under Fr. Jordan's guidance between 1880-1883 strongly echoed the Vatican Council's universal call to holiness. Fueled by this insight, lay people drawn to the Salvatorian spirituality worked to articulate their place in a 21st Century understanding of what is now known as the Salvatorian Family.

And, the early documents were clear: Lay Salvatorians are not simply "associated" with the women and men religious Salvatorian congregations. Today, the Lay Salvatorian vocation is understood as a unique call to be lived in equality and complementarity within the Salvatorian Family.

Q How will the Salvatorian Family collaborate in the five-year celebration?

A Leaders from all three branches appointed our three-person committee to oversee plans for the *Years on Fire* celebration. Already, we've produced a commemorative perpetual calendar with inspiring quotes from our early documents, and established themes for each of the next four years that dovetail with 2017 *Passion for Mercy Year*:

2018 *Passion for Remembering*
(100th anniversary of Father Jordan's death)

2019 *Passion for Collaboration*
(planning for our future as a family)

2020 *Passion for Mission*
(125th Anniversary of Salvatorian Sisters arriving in the U.S.)

2021 *Passion for Ministry*
(50th Anniversary of the Lay Salvatorians in the U.S.)

Other plans include retreats to enhance Salvatorians' understanding of Fr. Jordan's *Spiritual Diary*, and updating materials to promote awareness about the life of Fr. Jordan among our sponsored ministries and other interested groups.



Watch for more about *Years on Fire* in future issues of the *Salvatorian News*, in our monthly eNews, and on our website at sistersofthedivinesavior.org

