

PRAYER :

Oh, Savior of the world and Master of the Apostles,
with faith and confidence we address You with our prayer:

Awake in the Salvatorian Family the same spirit,
which animated
the Apostles to follow you.

Teach us to fulfill our tasks and apostolates as they did.
Teach us to live the Gospel, thus spreading the Good News
over all the globe.

Amen.

(Footnotes)

¹ DONALD SKWOR, *Contributions to the Discussion. Ten Years After 'A Call to Action'*, in *The Salvatorians in History and Today 1881-1981*, p. 403-420.

Nous trouvons que cette contribution est une boussole formidable pour toute étude sur le charisme.

² Peter VAN MEIJL, *Our founder – a prophet*, p. 10.

³ Peter VAN MEIJL, *Our founder – a prophet*, p. 10.

⁴ Jozef LAMMERS, *Elements of the Salvatorian Spirituality*, p. 454.

⁵ Jozef LAMMERS, *Elements of the Salvatorian Spirituality*, p. 454.

⁶ *Exhortations and Admonitions, on Unity*, p. 113.

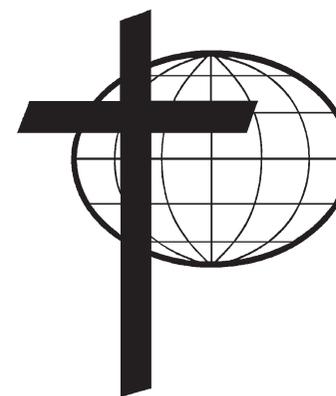
⁷ Peter Van Meyl – *Salvatorian Renaissance*, p. 8

⁸ *Charter of the Salvatorian Family*, Chapter I, §2.

⁹ Donald Skwor, *Contributions to the Discussion*, p. 406.

¹⁰ *Exhortations & Admonitions, on Living and Labouring in the Spirit of the Society*, Chap. 28 § 9.

OUR SALVATORIAN CHARISM



Joint International Charism Commision - 2008

am your salvation.”

With kindness and love Jesus looks into the heart of each of us, despite our weak faith. His love heals and saves us. His love accepts each of us in God’s project of salvation. He came to live among us. For us He died and gave up His life. He invites us to spread the Good News everywhere –into the whole world.

Under the image of Jesus is the dry earth, where the tree of salvation, Jesse’s trunk, is drying out. Jesus promises: “Who lives in me and I in him will produce abundantly” (John 15: 5). Without Jesus our life dries out and loses its flavor. But with Jesus we will bear much fruit for the greatest glory of God (John 15: 8). If we are united with Jesus, His Father, our loving Creator, will answer our prayers.

On this trunk we distinguish the images of several men and women, who lived following these texts and who bore the fruit of Eternal Life. These are the Salvatorian patron saints who inspire us – with their lives, faith and service. From them we learn about Jesus and how to live our own lives to the fullest. We address them as our intercessors and try to make God’s Kingdom visible in our world.

GROUP ACTIVITY

Each member imagines his/her image on this tree as a sign of attachment to Jesus Christ. On the basis of what was said before, we should carefully contemplate this image of the tree of life, meditate on it, and try to imagine that this tree can only continue to grow through us. Therefore, the Salvatorian charism is urging all members to fix their personal image on the tree of life, thus causing our charism to become also our daily challenge, which can be summarized in two questions: Who am I? Where am I on this tree? In other words, our charism shapes our mission, because: “The grace of God has appeared, offering salvation to all. It trains us to reject godless ways and worldly desires, and live temperately, justly, and devoutly in this age as we await our blessed hope, the appearance of the glory of the great God and of our Savior, Christ Jesus...” (Tit. 2: 11-13).

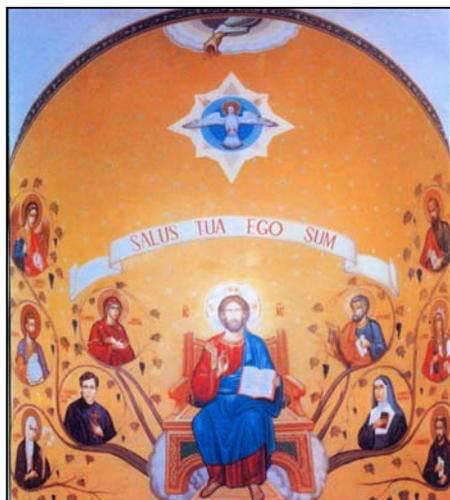
- Proclaim the saving truth of Jesus: “to live” comes to mean precisely “Jesus”
- Inclusive Universality...

Bible Texts

- Mt. 28: 19-20: The mission mandate to make disciples
- John 17: 3: Knowledge of God and Jesus Christ
- Tit. 3: 4: The goodness and kindness of God, our Savior, and His love for humankind
- Tit. 2: 11-15: The appearance of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ
- 1 John 4 : 9 : Manifestation of God’s love for us by sending His only Son

METAPHOR: THE SISTERS’ CHAPEL IN ROME

One finds a painting of the *tree of life* in the Motherhouse chapel of the Salvatorian Sisters in Rome. We call this “tree of life”, because it starts from the central trunk, which is Christ, our Source of life.



The central figure of this tree is the Resurrected Christ, our Teaching Savior, surrounded by God’s glory. Jesus is sending us back to the Only Triune God. In His hands He holds the Holy Scriptures, opened to the passage John 17:3: “Eternal life is this: to know You, the only true God and Him, whom you have sent, Jesus Christ.”

This text contains our Salvatorian inspiration. As Salvatorians we dedicate our lives to intimately know God and to share this Good News with everyone. Jesus announces throughout all centuries “*Salus tua ego sum*”; “I

OUR SALVATORIAN CHARISM¹

The Salvatorian Family is an expression of the charism, the gift of the Spirit given to Father Jordan for the Church (Charter I,2). His vision was to unite all the apostolic forces in the Church to love and proclaim Jesus as the Savior to a world in need of God. (Charter (I,1).

Commenting the Theme

At the beginning of this work, it is important to mention that – all through the history of our Salvatorian life – the description of our Salvatorian charism has often been quite complicated. Why? A tentative reply could be that we always tried to compare it with other religious charisms. Our major concern is that we are not able to define our charism in one single word, such as “poverty” for the Franciscans or “youth” for the Salesians. This difficulty was already pointed out by the Salvatorian Fathers of the Congolese Province during the General Chapter in Steinfeld: “*As a Society we are still searching for our own spirit, for the proper goals of Father Jordan. All worked hard and employed all means, but never on the basis of our Salvatorian Charism*”² And the report continues: “*The slogan: ‘Our reason of being specific is not having any specificity’, caused more damage than good, because it relieved us from verifying if we were on our right way. It also causes a lack of unity in our action.*”³ This Congolese report depicted an image of not feeling well in our “skin” as Salvatorians. In fact, the report is definitely putting on the table the basic question of our commitment in the Salvatorian Family: what is our charism?

It is interesting to know that this question already was around in the founding period of our Rev. Father Francis Jordan. Fr. Jozef Lammers makes the following observation: “We often hear this complaint: ‘We do not know what we want, because we want to embrace everything.’”⁴ Consequently, the question turns up again: “What is the Salvatorian charism?” This question is as old as the foundation of the Society, because it already troubled the members during our Founder’s time. At that time, Father Pancratius Pfeiffer, the successor of our Rev. Father, tried to reply by taking our Founder himself as a witness: “To all, who think that the specificity of our Society is to do and embrace everything – because we say *omnibus rationibus et mediis, quae*

caritas Christi inspirat - I would like to reply that the Rev. Founder told me one day that a dignitary of the Holy See once remarked: ‘*Ma Lei vuol fondare una seconda Chiesa!*’ (But you wish to found a second Church!) His reply was: ‘we are using all means to reach our only goal, i.e.: ‘Eternal life is to know you, the only true God, and him whom you have sent, Jesus Christ’. Thus, this sentence is indicating the specific nature of the Society.’”⁵

Our Founder was so deeply imbued by the particular charism of his lifework, that he refused any possible attempt to push him to be more specific. And it was precisely the Salvatorian spirit of John 17:3 that he wanted us to inherit, so that we could transmit it faithfully to future generations. In this sense the Salvatorian charism is a special gift which the Spirit of God gave to our Venerable Father for the good of His Church and the world. Burning with the constant desire not to deviate from the original spirit, the Venerable Father formulated one admirable exhortation to his fellow brothers and disciples on the basis of this marvellous metaphor: “Each Institute has its own spirit; and just as soon as one deviates from it, he finds himself on the wrong road. An apple tree is not a pear tree. And, a Franciscan is not a Dominican ; a Jesuit is not a Trappist. It is the practice of the Church that, after the death of a founder, she points to the spirit of the founder.”⁶ This is the great spiritual heritage, which we have to dearly observe and treasure, in order to point out the specific nature of Salvatorian works.

On the other hand, Fr. Peter van Meil reminds us of the following:

“The founder is no longer the subject of history or research, he is the bearer of a message, of a ‘vision’. His life and his works are not simply something interesting or boring; they become the place where the spirit is acting. And he becomes a gift (the charism) of the Spirit to the whole Church.”⁷

Therefore, being members of the Salvatorian Family, we are bearers of the vision of our Founder for our times. Inspired by our Founder, the first chapter of the Charter, paragraph 2, says:

“The Salvatorian Family is an expression of the charism, the gift of the Spirit given to Father Jordan for the Church. We trace our

*common roots back to the Apostolic Teaching Society, founded by Father Jordan on 8 December 1881 in Rome. Diocesan priests were its first members. Therese von Wünnenweber (later Blessed Mother Mary of the Apostles) omitted herself to this Society in 1882. Large numbers of laity of all ages joined this foundation.”*⁸

More explicitly, Fr. Donald Skwor was of the opinion, that “*the charism is at the same time a gift of God and a call to serve.*”⁹

With regard to our vocation, the Salvatorian charism is neither a compilation of doctrines nor a list of rules to be learned by heart, but more like a way of life, or even more precisely something to be lived, witnessed, announced and shared with others. In light of John 17: 3, the Salvatorian charism could be expressed by the convincing words of the Apostle of the Gentiles: “To me, life means Christ” (Phil 1, 21) or in other beautiful words said by St. Paul to the Galatians: “... and the life I live now is not my own; Christ is living in me.” (Gal. 2: 20a). The Salvatorian charism to “live for and with Christ” thus becomes the solid foundation of our vocation and Salvatorian mission. In order to encourage his members to live and act in the spirit of the Society, our Venerable Father exhorted them to grow in zeal for it, that it may grow strong within and without, especially through the self-sanctification of the individual members. Referring to Luke 12: 31 “Set your hearts on his Kingdom ...,” he recommended keeping the following three points as goals:

- the greatest possible glory of God;
- the greatest possible self-sanctification;
- the salvation of the greatest possible number of souls, by the grace of God.

And our Founder concluded: “I would like to set up those three points as a sort of motto for our Society.”¹⁰

Some Key Elements

On the basis of what we have read, we can underline some important points:

- Know the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom He has sent...