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Faithful to the Vision

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Introduction

The founding of any religious community involves a great deal of collaboration. One has only to look at the various orders founded throughout history to see examples of individuals who helped the great saints establish their communities. From the days of Benedict and his first faithful followers to the founding of the Franciscans, Discalced Carmelites, and, later, the Jesuits, each founder or foundress had early members who steadfastly remained faithful to his or her vision. Such is the case of Father Bonaventure Lüthen, SDS.

When Father Jordan founded the Apostolic Teaching Society in 1881, he had with him two other priests: Father Bernard (later Bonaventure) Lüthen and Father Frederick von Leonhardi. Thus began a partnership between Lüthen and Jordan that would span thirty years. Lüthen was firmly convinced that Jordan's plan to found a movement of priests, Religious, and laity who would "make the Divine Savior known through all ways and means that the love of Christ inspires" was ordained by God, and he fully dedicated his life to assisting his somewhat younger leader in the development of the Society. Jordan held Lüthen in high regard as well. Once, in a talk given to the community, he spoke of Lüthen's obedience:

In the beginning of the Society a man of great spirituality once asked me: "Have you won one man who lives wholly in your spirit? And there I told him, "Yes, I have one who completely submits himself to me."...The one I referred to is still in the Society, and that because he submitted him-

self. It is Father Bonaventure” (Father Leonard Gerke, SDS, *Because He Hoped in Me*, 1981, 224; DSS XXII, 13/01/1899).

Today Lüthen is viewed by members of the Society of the Divine Savior (which the Apostolic Teaching Society later became) as a saint. It is sincerely hoped that this small text will help to familiarize the reader with the life and virtue of a holy priest who chose to remain invisible so that the charism of the Founder, always focused on the Savior, could be seen by all.

In the writing of this work, the author draws heavily from several sources. Foremost is the book *Eldest Son* (1998), written by Sister Miriam Cerletty, SDS. This biography of Lüthen is a thorough examination of his life, and it is a valuable resource for those wishing to learn more about him. Without her work, this short biography would not have been possible. The *Letter Dialogue* (1997), prepared by Cerletty, contains many letters authored by Lüthen, and also demonstrates the greatness of his character. Finally, the author draws from both *The Life of Father Francis Jordan* (1930), written by Father Pancratius Pfeiffer, SDS (second Superior General of the Society of the Divine Savior) and *Because He Hoped in Me* (1981), by Father Leonard Gerke, SDS. These works are invaluable to the student of Salvatorian history.

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Lüthen's Early Years

Bernard Lüthen was born in Paderborn, Germany, to Henry and Theresia Lüthen, on May 5, 1846. His family was very religious and prayed their devotions together each day. They also attended daily Mass. Lüthen studied at a private school and decided at an early age to follow his older brother, Karl, to the seminary to study for the priesthood. He attended secondary school at the Jesuit Theodorianum and was a model student, receiving excellent grades. He was noted for his humility and piety. Upon completion of his secondary studies, he enrolled in the archiepiscopal seminary to continue his preparation for the priesthood. This was a time of tremendous trial for the Catholic Church in Germany due to the Kulturkampf, the main goal of which was to destroy all Catholic culture and influence. Aggravated by the tremendous external pressures of the Kulturkampf, Lüthen suffered severe stomach ailments which hampered his studies. Through dogged perseverance he completed his studies and was ordained to the priesthood on May 15, 1872, at the Basilica of Paderborn.

First Ministry

Following his ordination, Lüthen's Bishop assigned him to a private chaplaincy in the home of Baron von Brenken in Wewer as his fragile health and the restrictions of the Kulturkampf made a parish assignment impossible. Lüthen accepted this disappointment with grace and ministered conscientiously to the Baron's family and household staff. In time, he began to offer pastoral

care on a wider basis, founding an association for Christian mothers, which included a magazine he authored entitled *Monica*. His ministry was highly effective, and all noted the piety of this simple chaplain. One of the teachers who knew him at this point made the following reminiscence of Lüthen as a young priest:

He lived a life in accord with high ideals. "We must become saints," he said to me. He strove with uncommon energy to attain his ideals, to perfect himself in his exalted vocation. He always prepared himself for the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass by a long meditation, usually made in church. After Mass he devoted a good half hour to his thanksgiving and to meditation. For recreation he took daily walks while occupying himself in prayer and with the composition of literary works. Often he used this time to visit the sick and the poor... not one was left unaided or without a kind word of encouragement or spiritual advice (Father Winfrid Herbst, SDS, "Right Hand," *The Salvatorian*, 1964).

After five years in service to Baron von Brenken's family, Lüthen felt that his health had improved adequately to take another assignment. In 1877, he went to Donauwörth in Bavaria to work for Ludwig Auer, a layman who ran an institute with a printing press known as the Cassianeum (located in a former Benedictine monastery). Auer printed a variety of religious materials and Lüthen was a good match for his apostolate. Auer assigned Lüthen the task of editing the *Ambrosius*, a publication for priests, as well as writing for and editing other periodicals. Lüthen believed that the current evils of the age, exemplified in the excesses of the Kulturkampf, could be corrected by the example of

holy priests. He wrote in the *Ambrosius*: “If we [priests] would really radiate the truths of the Gospel through our words and witness of life, today’s confused society would want to hear from our mouths the solutions to the world’s problems...” (Cerletty, *Eldest Son*, 19). He promoted Eucharistic devotion, meditation, and penance as a means for holiness. It was in his work at the Cassianeum that Lüthen developed his ideas that a renewed priesthood, lived in some kind of fraternal life, would play a major role in the spiritual renewal of the Church. Thus, when he encountered the diocesan priest John Baptist Jordan in 1881, who was seeking to found a movement of priests, Religious, and laity to make the love of the Divine Savior known to all, he was predisposed to enter into what became a creative collaboration of hearts and minds.

John Baptist Jordan

Jordan himself was deeply concerned about the evils that he saw ravaging Europe. He himself had had to celebrate his First Mass in 1878 beyond the border of Germany in Switzerland, and, due to the Kulturkampf, which barred him from ministry in his homeland, he was sent to Rome to continue his language studies. Jordan wanted to create a movement of many different segments of society that would “give Christ back to the people” through all ways and means. This umbrella organization would be called the Apostolic Teaching Society. He traveled to Donauwörth to meet with Ludwig Auer with the hope of establishing there a headquarters for German-speaking countries, using Auer’s press as the organ of communication. Upon meeting Jordan for the first time, Lüthen was impressed with his ideas, but did not feel immediately called to join the proposed

movement. As he listened to Jordan, however, a conviction grew within him that this was that cause to which he was to commit his life. He made preparations to leave the Cassianeum and created the initial pamphlet describing the Apostolic Teaching Society:

The Apostolic Teaching Society has taken for its object in the spirit of the Apostles to help spread, defend, and strengthen the Catholic faith in all the countries of the earth. For this purpose it makes use of the spoken as well as of the written word. It aims to send missionaries into heretical and pagan lands and to support organized pastoral work in countries that are Catholic (*The Apostolic Teaching Society, Its Nature and Its Significance*, reprinted in Pfeiffer, *Life*, 84).

Lüthen met with Jordan, von Leonhardi, and the local Benedictine pastor Hermann Koneberg in July at the Benedictine House in Ottobeuren. Together they made the decision that Jordan would return to Rome (the international headquarters of the fledgling movement), von Leonhardi would do recruitment and promotional work, and Lüthen would remain at Ottobeuren to engage in publishing the new periodical of the Society, *Der Missionär* (which replaced *Monica*). Lüthen wrote a description of the outline of the Society in *Ambrosius*:

The Society comprises three grades of membership: all are united by its one ideal and mission through striving for personal holiness and the holiness of others, as well as through common prayer. The members of the first grade—priests and laity—place themselves totally at the service of the Society as missionaries, writers, printers, etc. Members of the other two grades remain in

their respective profession: those of the second grade seek to do all in their power to defend and promote the truths of the Catholic faith through religious and professional knowledge; members of the third grade—pastors, parents, educators, masters, servants—seek to promote genuine Catholic Christian life through good example in their work and life situation (Cerletty, *Eldest Son*, 52).

From Ottobeuren, Lüthen prepared the first edition of *Der Missionär*. The purpose of this periodical was to be a popular magazine to promote fervor among priests and laity. It was to be for many years the official publication of the Apostolic Teaching Society. Lüthen wrote in this first issue that the purpose of the Apostolic Teaching Society was to make Catholic Christians thoroughly Catholic again, to inspire Catholics to fervently defend their faith in the face of encroaching secularism, and to train missionaries for foreign lands. A requirement of membership in the third grade was to subscribe to a publication of the Society, and *Der Missionär* was its first major periodical. (*Ambrosius* was removed from Lüthen's auspices by an angry Auer, who felt betrayed by what he viewed as an encroachment by Jordan's movement.)

The Founding of the Apostolic Teaching Society

Lüthen and von Leonhardi joined Jordan in Rome in late 1881. They chose December 8 as the official founding day of the Apostolic Teaching Society. The three men attended Jordan's Mass in the Chapel of Saint Bridget (the monastery in which Jordan was renting rooms). Afterwards, they all took private vows as members of the Society. Lüthen took temporary vows for three years,

whereas von Leonhardi, soon to abandon the Society, took them for life.

Following the official establishment of the Society, which, as yet, did not possess the character of a religious community, Lüthen returned to Germany to continue to work for the expansion of the Society. It was during this time that Therese von Wüllenweber, a Baroness who had spent time in several different religious communities (though never taking her final vows), learned of the Apostolic Teaching Society. Von Wüllenweber currently lived in Neuwerk and possessed a missionary's heart. But the convents in which she had tested her vocation had never provided her with the sense that she was fulfilling God's will for her life. Already middle-aged, she had established in a former Benedictine monastery a charitable organization, the Saint Barbara Institute. The Apostolic Teaching Society appealed to her, and in the spring of 1882, she wrote and requested membership in the first grade. Lüthen, who often handled Jordan's correspondence, wrote back. He instructed her to join the third grade and wait a while, since the first grade was not yet open to women. She wrote back and offered her Saint Barbara Institute as a potential house for the headquarters of the Sisters of the Apostolic Teaching Society, should the Kulturkampf abate and Jordan wish to establish it there. Jordan visited her in the summer and sent von Leonhardi to Neuwerk in October to receive her into the first grade. From that point on, von Wüllenweber was considered a member of the Society, although her institute was not the first house of the Sisters of the Apostolic Teaching Society. (Ultimately, von Wüllenweber, together with Jordan, would found in Tivoli the Sisters of Jordan's movement after the original foundation of Sisters, headed by Sister Franziska Streitl in Rome, broke away to form the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother.)

During the year 1883, the Society Jordan founded underwent a transformation. Already in late 1882, at the urging of Church authorities, the word “apostolic” was dropped (due to its close association with the magisterial teaching authority of the bishops) and replaced with “Catholic.” On March 11, 1883, Jordan took the more significant step of making public religious vows, which transformed the Catholic Teaching Society into a religious congregation. With that act he began to wear a religious habit consisting of a cassock and cincture with four knots. Furthermore, he took a new name: “Francis Mary of the Cross.” Ten days later, Jordan invested Lüthen with the habit of the Society and gave him the name “Bonaventure.” The two men were now Religious, directly accountable to the Cardinal Vicar of the Diocese of Rome (papal approbation would come later).

With the transformation into a religious community, other changes occurred. Lüthen remained in Rome and became the director of the many students who had gathered in Jordan’s quarters. Furthermore, only those students serious about taking vows as members of the Society were allowed to stay. Lüthen directed them, and also began publishing a new periodical for children entitled *Manna*. In addition to these duties, he also handled the burgeoning correspondence of Jordan, communicating with Therese von Wüllenweber, who remained in Neuwerk, and with Amalia Streitel, who was invested in the habit in Rome by Jordan and took the name “Frances.” This proved to be a very delicate position for Lüthen, because Streitel, a former Franciscan Sister and Carmelite novice, had very strict views on the penitential dimension of religious life. She desired fasting, vigils, and the recitation of the Divine Office, none of which suited Jordan’s plans for the apostolic ministry of the Sisters. Attempts to meld the Rome and Neuwerk communities failed. Under the direction of Monsignor

George Jacquemin, a canon lawyer and confessor who was handling Sister Frances' transfer into the Society (her former vows as a Franciscan had never been dispensed properly), the Sisters broke away completely from Jordan. Jordan himself was unaware that such a move was transpiring, and, learning the news upon his return to Rome from Germany in September 1885, was told by the Cardinal Vicar to have no more dealings with them. Lüthen described Jordan as being crushed: "One can hardly imagine, much less comprehend, how this separation must have wounded the heart of the Founder" (Cerletty, *Eldest Son*, 93).

The task fell to Lüthen to inform Therese von Wülenweber of the developments. Since she and her one companion (Sister Ursula) were still in Neuwerk at the time of the removal, they were in no way affected by it, but Lüthen informed them that it would not be prudent to come to Rome as yet to re-establish the Sisters of the Catholic Teaching Society. He urged them to wait, confident in God and in the knowledge that they were still members of the first grade: "...it would be imprudent for you to come forward already now. It could be misconstrued. So have patience, dear Sisters. You are living under vows and have that merit" (Cerletty, *Eldest Son*, 94).

This period continued to be a time of heavy suffering for Jordan. He was accused by Jacquemin of deceiving the bishops of Germany by claiming papal approbation when there was none. (Jordan had announced in an appeal for seminary funds that ecclesiastical recognition had been given. While this was true, no official letter had been published. Adding to the confusion, in common German parlance, the word "ecclesiastical" generally implied "papal.") Jordan was mortified at the suggestion he had deliberately manipulated the truth, and he leaned heavily upon Lüthen for support. A further

suffering was the fact that the ecclesiastical approbation that the Society did receive in February 1886 included a rule written by Church authorities in place of Jordan's own rule. Fortunately, the Cardinal Vicar repealed the imposed rule when the Society's twelve members in final vows personally appealed to him for the restitution of Jordan's rule.

All the while, Lüthen continued his correspondence with Therese von Wüllenweber, urging patience: "Truly, we understand your longing. But patience, still a little longer!...Our Venerable Founder has suffered unspeakably through the whole affair....Please, do not take it amiss if our Venerable Father does not write personally now" (Cerletty, *Eldest Son*, 98). Lüthen also kept readers of *Der Missionär* informed of developments as they unfolded. The cooperation of Jordan with Church authorities, he and Lüthen's utter transparency with their readers, and the loyalty of the professed members of the Society to Jordan vindicated him of the charges made by his critics. More suffering would come, but the Society remained on firm ground.

Eventually the time was ripe for a second attempt to establish the Sisters of the Catholic Teaching Society. The Sisters from Neuwerk arrived in Rome in 1888 and, after a short visit, Jordan established their Motherhouse in Tivoli (eventually it moved to Rome). Lüthen gave them conferences in his spare time. His greetings to Mother Mary of the Apostles (as Therese von Wüllenweber was known in religion) shows the relationship between the two of them and Jordan:

Both of us are so close to our Reverend Founder, — you, his firstborn spiritual daughter, and I, his eldest son — having always served him faithfully, both together and separately. May the grace of God continue to assist us that we may remain

faithful with all our strength to his holy cause and become an example of genuine son and daughter (Cerletty, *Letter Dialogue*, 66).

Both sought throughout their lives to be unwaveringly loyal to Jordan, obedient to his authority and faithful to his vision. In time, due to the requirements of Church law, the Sisters had to become completely autonomous of the men's community in matters of administration, but Jordan and Lüthen continued to provide Mother Mary with spiritual support.

The men's branch of the Society also was blessed. By the late 1880s, they had grown to seventy-two professed clerics and twelve in holy orders, of whom five were priests. It was during this time that Jordan learned that the area of Assam in India was to be established as an independent mission. Even he was somewhat surprised that the Propaganda Fide approached his young Society to consider accepting the new territory. After prayerfully considering the matter with Lüthen, he applied to the Propaganda for the Society to be awarded the territory. His request, endorsed by the Cardinal Vicar, was granted, and in January, two priests and two brothers were sent out. (Tragically, Father Otto Hopfenmüller and Brother Marianus would both die by the end of the following summer.) The news that the Society had received its first mission was greeted with rejoicing. Lüthen announced in *Der Missionär*:

Circumstances—and in these the Guidance of Divine Providence is ever wont to manifest itself—have led us to make a start with the founding of an establishment in the foreign missions. The Sacred Congregation of Propaganda, which has charge of spreading the faith among heretics and non-believers, concurred most willingly with the wishes

of our Venerable Father and Superior General. On November 18, the Propaganda made the decision to give the former Kingdom of Assam, the Kingdom of Bhothan, and the Kingdom of Manipur as an apostolic prefecture to the Catholic Teaching Society, in order that it may spread there the light of Christianity (Pfeiffer, *Life*, 262-3).

Lüthen strongly supported the Assam mission and kept readers informed of developments. He called on them to support the missions with prayer, reminding them that missionary work was one of the major aims of the Catholic Teaching Society.

Lüthen continued his many tasks at the Motherhouse of the Society. He served in various capacities as formator and the novices and students viewed him as a model of religious life. He was known for his wisdom, his gentleness, and his kindness towards the students, getting to know each of them. He also served as general consultor and secretary, carrying on a heavy correspondence with all the houses of the Society. More and more foundations were established: one in Tivoli, two in Austria, one in Bohemia, one in Ecuador (which later moved to Colombia) and missions in Oregon and Wisconsin in the United States (Saint Nazianz, Wisconsin, became the U.S. headquarters in the late 1890s). With each of these houses, Lüthen served as liaison between Jordan and the membership. He once wrote:

My apostolate consists primarily in letter-writing—so very difficult, because one does not see the effects of one's words. When speaking with another, one can see what is going on with the other and accordingly tone down, etc., what one is saying. Therefore, much reflection, much prayer before and after (Cerletty, *Eldest Son*, 133).

Oftentimes there were requests for dispensations or complaints which he had to relay to Jordan and then respond. (To a superior of a local mission: “Is FB also smoking? Then you would have two! ...If it really is the only means to relieve his condition,—used temporarily—then it is a medical treatment and to be used temporarily...” Cerletty, *Eldest Son*, 141). Jordan’s faithfulness to the religious life included a uniform habit and choral recitation of the Divine Office, two factors that were not always suited for the smaller houses abroad. Lüthen was able to communicate Jordan’s mind and orders with gentleness, often soothing situations that might have resulted in greater conflict. Nevertheless, on occasion he also had to chastise members who were fomenting dissension or insubordination. He wrote to one confrere:

...I am not saying that you may not express your opinion—but not in this manner! There is a lack of humility here, of modesty, of respect. See here, I will not speak of the Venerable Father, for as Founder of our Society he ought to stand higher in your estimation! (Pfeiffer, 462).

Lüthen also maintained a connection between Jordan and the Motherhouse when the Founder traveled. Lüthen kept Jordan thoroughly informed of all that developed, and submitted all dilemmas to him for his judgment.

The years passed, and the Society continued its expansion. The year 1894 brought with it a change in the name of the community. While originally Jordan had called his movement “The Apostolic Teaching Society,” he had changed it to “The Catholic Teaching Society” in compliance with the objections of Church authorities to the use of the term “apostolic.” In 1892, Jordan had re-

requested papal approbation for the Society. It was decided that the congregation had not yet matured enough to receive this honor, but the consultor who examined the application suggested that “The Society of the Divine Savior” (“Salvatorians”) would more accurately describe the group’s ministry. Thus from 1894, the men’s branch of the community was known as the Society of the Divine Savior, and the Sisters community was known as the Sisters of the Divine Savior. Lüthen and Jordan received the name change with great joy, and immediately communicated the news to all members and supporters of the Society.

As the community grew, so did the workload. Quickly the Society established foundations in Switzerland, Belgium, Sicily, Hungary, England, Croatia, Poland, and Brazil. These foundations placed additional pressures on Lüthen, especially in regard to correspondence. Furthermore, the Motherhouse was filled with students, many of whom could not pay, creating heavy financial difficulties. The role of treasurer was difficult to fill, and Lüthen often found himself being the one to calmly reassure nervous members who served in the position. In the end, the Vatican appointed an Apostolic Visitor whose role it was to supervise and guide Jordan in order to ensure that the Society remained viable. One of the restrictions the Visitor placed upon the Society was that they were no longer able to accept students unable to pay full tuition through ordination. This led to a drastic decline in the number of students and caused Jordan great anguish. Lüthen offered his support to him as he was able.

Lüthen also proved to be a pillar of strength both for Jordan and for the Society during the press attacks of 1905. A series of articles began to appear in German newspapers attacking Jordan and the Society. The charges were greatly exaggerated, but Jordan was deeply

wounded. According to the anonymous author (a disgruntled former member of the Society), Jordan was an inept autocrat whose main goal was to remain in control of the Society at all costs. Furthermore, he constantly introduced legalistic practices into community life that hampered the apostolate and led to division. The author charged that the only reason why the Assam mission had been accepted was to gain resources for other works of the Society. Finally, he maintained that the students of Jordan's Society were poorly trained and ordained without appropriate academic preparation. The articles, though widely circulated in Germany, produced no lasting effect. Lüthen published one response and then followed the advice that public debate would only lend credence to the claims. He also sent a letter to the various houses assuring them that all was well:

As most of you are aware, our Society, and especially our Venerable Founder, are being attacked by odious articles in certain periodicals, which combine perversions of the truth, exaggeration and even insolent calumnies...Let us persevere in the present trial and keep our eye on the right way, the way of union with authority (Cerletty, *Eldest Son*, 145).

The response at the Second General Chapter of the Society in 1908 was to unanimously re-elect Jordan as Superior General, although all of his consultants, including Lüthen, were replaced. There were those among the members of the chapter who felt that Lüthen as First Consultant (Vicar) did not challenge Jordan enough on matters where Jordan needed guidance. Lüthen accepted the decision of the chapter with great dignity. With the support of the chapter, he remained at the Motherhouse as Jordan's personal advisor and counselor until

his own death in 1911. The chapter, out of esteem for Lüthen, declared that Lüthen would be subject only to Jordan himself. Lüthen requested of Jordan that he no longer ask him officially for advice on governance of the Society, but Jordan, in need of his strong support, often turned to him when his weakened nerves and scrupulosity demanded it.

Death of Mother Mary of the Apostles

A great sadness for Lüthen was the death of Mother Mary of the Apostles. It was he who had so often conveyed to her Jordan's decisions. Just as he was a strong support for Jordan, so was Lüthen a source of encouragement for Mother Mary. It was he who wrote to her frequently during the conflicts regarding the first foundation of Sisters, urging her to be patient. He also encouraged her to take care of herself, as this letter of October 1899 demonstrated:

You may not travel by water anymore. Please take the train back... Try to plan everything now so that you have some vacation, even if you come back later. Do everything so that your health is not harmed further and that you can arrive back in the Holy City physically renewed. I entrust you to the protection of the holy angels (Cerletty, *Letter Dialogue*, 102).

Lüthen and Jordan's last visit to Mother Mary was on September 11, 1907. Her health was rapidly deteriorating. She died on December 25, 1907. Lüthen wrote in her obituary: "She was an example of patience and full submission to the will of God. During her illness, she often kissed her crucifix, saying, 'This is my best Friend;'

or, ‘Everything as God wills it—so it is good.’” (Cerletty, *Letter Dialogue*, 154).

Sickness and Death of Father Lüthen

Throughout his life, Lüthen had suffered from serious digestive problems that caused him a great deal of pain. Consequently, his heavy correspondence load had to be carried out while standing up. He regularly wrote while pacing back and forth in his room, using a book in his arms as a writing surface. In his final years, his health continued to deteriorate. Common prayer and the celebration of Mass became difficult for him. This was a heavy cross for one who had always been so faithful to the rule. His suffering increased after an accident in 1901 in which he had been hit by a bicyclist and suffered a leg injury. He developed problems with his circulation, and he had to keep his legs bandaged due to excess swelling. This limited his mobility. It became important enough for him to take breaks away from Rome periodically for his health, which he did. His absences always caused Jordan difficulty, for he relied heavily on Lüthen, who always was able to soothe his own shattered nerves.

Early in December 1911, Lüthen suffered from rheumatic fever. He spent several days in bed. He then tried to continue with his regular tasks, but this proved to be too difficult, and he returned to his bed. On the evening of December 10, after spending much of the day in his room, he appeared briefly at recreation. He asked a question, smiled, waved, and then returned to his room. Later, the infirmarian checked on him and found him to be in a very serious condition. With the assistance of other members of the community, they helped him onto his bed. While one of the priests gave him the Last Rites, Father Pancratius Pfeiffer ran to Jordan’s room

and summoned him. The two immediately returned to Lüthen's bedside, where Jordan called out his name three times, but received no response. He was dead. Jordan, visibly distraught, quoted sadly the words of Job: "The Lord has given. The Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord" (Pfeiffer, *Life*, 461). Jordan later wrote to all the confreres:

It has pleased the dear God to call our beloved confrere, Very Reverend Bonaventure Lüthen, from this life....Just as the departure of our beloved deceased fills us with sadness, may we be consoled by the thought that he was an exemplary Religious whose fervent life edified everyone and who worked and suffered unceasingly for the welfare of the Society (Cerletty, *Eldest Son*, 180).

Lüthen was laid to rest in a temporary plot until a section of graves was purchased in the Campo Verano cemetery in Rome.

To speak of the death of Lüthen as a sadness for Jordan would be an understatement. For Jordan, Lüthen was a rock, a constant reassuring presence. Jordan, great in his own faith, had such a desire to please God, that he often suffered from severe anxiety and scrupulosity. Lüthen was the only one who was able to calm his fears, helping him to set aside any unnecessary concerns. Especially in Lüthen's final years, Jordan could not bear for him to be away for long, so much did he require his presence for peace of mind. Lüthen, who understood Jordan better than anyone else, also was able to help other members of the community to have patience with Jordan when he was deliberating over a problem or was too preoccupied with anxiety to make a decision. Following the death of Lüthen, Jordan never found another who could assist him in quite the same way as

Lüthen. It was a death that was keenly, painfully felt, but one that the Founder bore with great courage.

The Holiness of Bonaventure Lüthen

Without question, Bonaventure Lüthen was a man of God, a true Salvatorian, whose sole purpose in life was to make the love of the Divine Savior known to all persons, using all the means that Christ's love inspires. He never served in a parish, and yet his words touched the hearts of many through the printed media and through the many lives he shaped as assistant to Jordan and formator in the Society. From the time he took private vows with Jordan in 1881, he never strayed from the path to which he had pledged himself. Jordan, a deeply holy and spiritual man, would never have been able to accomplish all of the great works to which God's providence called him without Lüthen to support him. His zeal to spread God's love was evident in all he did. He wrote in an article of *Der Missionär* in 1882:

May God help us to learn to love each other and to save not only our own souls, but also many, many others. So be up and doing! All for the salvation of souls! (Herbst, "Right Hand").

Bonaventure Lüthen was a model of the priestly and religious life, and remains for all Salvatorians, Religious and lay, an example of holiness.



Quotes of Bonaventure Lüthen

(Taken from *Eldest Son*)

If we would only listen to and assimilate the words of the living God, who speaks to us from the tabernacle (20).

The more we priests grow in holiness, the more we will influence others to holiness. The more we allow God's grace to permeate us, the greater will our influence be on today's society (25).

I offer myself anew to you, O God. Show me your paths; may your servant fulfill whatever you entrust to him (74).

Always have the greatest reverence, both interiorly and exteriorly toward our Reverend Father! (96).

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