

# AN INDIRECT PATH

Fr. Salvatore Ragusa, SDS

God's intended path for us is not always direct between two points. Fr. Salvatore Ragusa, SDS, bears witness to that. He recalls attending a benediction with his dad as early as five years old. Then, standing on a pew, he proclaimed, "I want to be a priest."

He began his studies for the priesthood at the Diocese of Houston when he was 19 years old, then changed gears during his second year of graduate theology studies when he entered the Benedictine Order. "Coming from an Italian family, community and shared life were important to me," said Fr. Sal. "When I met the Benedictines, I felt drawn to the community life, the value on prayer, liturgy, and ritual."

Still, Fr. Sal wasn't sure this was his life's calling. So, he left the Benedictines for a period, eventually returning to this monastic life for final vows and ordination. "Leaving and re-entering religious life was a part of my maturing process," he said. "By leaving, I was also able to gain real-world experience as a teacher, then an accountant. In addition, I learned valuable life lessons which ultimately helped ready me to return."

He was ordained a Benedictine in 1988; he was in a good place until the monastery closed in 1990. "It was the end of a chapter for me," he said. "I thought of it as a divorce but came to see it as a death, working through anger, anxiety, denial, and finally acceptance." Fr. Sal was now a "free agent," allowing



Fr. Sal is always ready to help spread campus spirit!  
Below: With students from Holy Names University.



him time to reflect more and recognize his call to an active life as a priest. His "come to Jesus moment" happened in Santa Barbara as a Campus Minister intern. "I learned how to be a priest as a brother, servant, and foot washer," he shared. "It was a freeing experience to accompany the students on the faith journey rather than to be a 'guru' or something above them."

As a campus minister intern, Fr. Sal had an opportunity to attend a conference facilitated by Fr. Dan Pekarske, SDS. Meeting with him later, Fr. Sal shared the ups and downs of his challenging vocation journey. Fr. Dan, in turn, shared the struggles of the Salvatorian Founders, Blessed Francis Jordan, and Blessed Mary of the Apostles. "He looked at me and said, 'Salvatore, you will fit right in,' then added, 'after all, you are named Salvatore.' It was a very spiritual healing moment in my life."

A few months later, he visited the formation community in Milwaukee and learned about their Salvatorian Family of lay men and women, religious sisters, priests, and brothers. "They were developing the understanding of being 'apostles for our times,' which is how I understood my call," he said. "It felt like home."

Sal began the transition to the Society in 1991 and officially transferred his

*continue ...*

... Fr. Sal Ragusa, SDS

vows from the Benedictines in 1993. In campus ministry for 32 years, he started in Kenosha, WI, for a transition year, then served at St. Mary's College in Moraga, CA, for 25 years, and is now at Holy Names University in Oakland, CA, where he has served for the last seven years. "The fact that young people continue to seek out and want to develop their spiritual life within the context of the Catholic Church keeps me energized," he said. "Students experience that we have different gifts, but we are one body, the body of Christ, serving each other."

Noting a particular time that impacted him as a Salvatorian priest, Fr. Sal shared, "Years ago, waiting in the boarding area for my delayed flight, I began talking with a woman and shared that I worked in Campus Ministry at a Catholic college. I was not dressed like a priest, nor did I mention I was a priest. She looked

at me and asked, 'Are you by chance a priest? A Salvatorian priest?' Surprised, I said yes and asked how she knew. She said, 'Because you are so human, and that is what I remember most about the Salvatorian priests when I used to live in Milwaukee.'"

Blessed Francis Jordan trusted without fail in Divine Providence. Fr. Sal shared, "As someone who likes to be in control, this reminds me of the need to have deep faith in God's plans."

## NEWLY ELECTED



The newly elected Provincial Council for the Society was missioned June 26. (l-r) Fr. Patric Nikolas, Fr. Paul Portland, Fr. Jeff Wocken (Provincial), Fr. Raúl Gómez Ruiz, Bro. Silas Henderson, and Fr. Peter Schuessler (Vicar)

## ANGELS IN THE AIR

In the far southwest corner of Arizona, adjacent to the California and Mexico borders, is a town named Yuma, the home of Children's Safe House. This program, offered by the Catholic Social Services of Tucson, AZ, helps refugees or abandoned US children. It's stocked with various items and donations secured by Angel Heart, an organization managed by Patty Lopez, who is a parishioner at the Salvatorian-led parish of Most Holy Trinity in Tucson.

Angel Heart periodically asks Fr. Tom Tureman, SDS, Most Holy Trinity Pastor, for help with donation deliveries. A member of the National Association of Priest Pilots (NAPP) and Civil Air Patrol (CAP), Fr. Tom takes to the skies to deliver pajamas, pillows, books, and more, which help make a difference in basic hygiene and quality of life for these marginalized children and refugees.



Fr. Tom Tureman (left) arrived in Yuma where volunteers collected the goods.

The one-way trip is typically a four-hour drive but a mere 90-minute flight. For these humanitarian flights, Avra Valley Flyers donate plane time, and fuel costs are covered by AVF and the Angel Heart Ministry Group.



... Fr. Simon Muema, SDS

grew up a normal person struggling with challenges of the time and his faith, but he never gave up. He was determined to make the Savior known," he said. "It's about service to others, not being served."

"Simon knows that religious life and the priesthood can be challenging. However, like our recently beatified founder, Blessed Francis Jordan, he has placed his trust in the guidance of God and the community," said Fr. Peter Schuessler, SDS, director of formation for the Society. "All his life, he has been nourished by the Eucharist, which he now celebrates as a priest. I wish him the very best as he takes this important step in continuing the mission of the Salvatorians."

## JUBILARIANS

### Profession of Vows

- 70 Years
  - Bro. Regis Fust, SDS
- 60 Years
  - Fr. Scott Wallenfels, SDS
  - Fr. James Weyker, SDS
  - Fr. Robert Wicht, SDS
  - Fr. Glen Willis, SDS
- 40 Years
  - Fr. Raúl Gómez Ruiz, SDS

### Ordination

- 60 Years
  - Fr. Hugh Birdsall, SDS
- 40 Years
  - Fr. Michael Hoffman, SDS
  - Fr. Neil Durham, SDS
- 25 Years
  - Fr. Tom Perrin, SDS



Celebrating our 2020, 2021 and 2022 Jubilarians

# HOPE



Salvatorian Newsletter Summer 2022

## STARTING POINT

Blessed Francis Jordan said, "God never tries you beyond your strength. God never sends you more than you can endure. God will always come to help you with His grace."

All of us can get busy or stressed, but when we take it out on others, we fall short of God's intentions. Snapping at someone does little for you but really can harm others. As you enjoy these summer months, I invite you to affirm your faith publicly. Let others see that you are a follower of Christ through the witness of your life and by allowing others to see God's love revealed through your actions.

In Luke 6:36, we read, "Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful." If we strive to have the same mercy on others that God has on us, more will come to know the goodness and kindness of our Savior through us. Now that radiates hope!

In the Divine Savior,

*Bro. Silas, SDS*



## NEW FATHER IN THE HOUSE

Having served as a Deacon over the last year, putting into practice lessons learned during his formation and studies at Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology (SHSST), we joyfully share that Fr. Simon Mbindyo Muema, SDS, was ordained a Salvatorian priest this past May.



Ordination of Fr. Simon Mbindyo Muema, SDS  
Photos credit: SHSST



growing up in Kenya, East Africa. He attended Catholic schools run by Irish priests and regularly volunteered alongside religious sisters at parishes near his home. He felt drawn to it but was not in a hurry to act on it. "I wanted to take time to grow in God's love and allow the call to this vocation to be realized when the time was right," he said.

As Simon began to meet Salvatorians, he related to Blessed

Francis Jordan's story. "Francis Jordan Fr. Simon when he was a young man

*continue ...*

## Please remember the Society of the Divine Savior in your will

A bequest is a wonderful way to support the mission and ministry of our Salvatorian Priests and Brothers, and is a testimony of your care and concern for them. Our legal name is "Society of the Divine Savior, Inc." and our taxpayer number (EIN) is 39-0806210.

### OUR MISSION

In the spirit of our founder, Blessed Francis Jordan, the Society of the Divine Savior was founded more than 130 years ago and is a Catholic religious community working to share the love and mercy of our Savior, Jesus Christ, through all possible means.

### SALVATORIANS

Society of the Divine Savior  
P.O. BOX 758611  
TOPEKA, KS 66675-8611  
1-800-254-4902  
sds@salvatoriancenter.org  
More at [www.salvatoriancenter.org](http://www.salvatoriancenter.org)

