

Vinspiration

Blessed Frederic Ozanam

Frederic Antoine Ozanam was born on April 23, 1813 in Milan, Italy. He was the fifth child of fourteen children, however, eleven died in infancy or youth. His parents were ardent French Catholics of middle class. When Milan fell to the Austrians in 1815 the family moved to the city of Lyons where Frederic spent his early years. Frederic became a day student at the Royal College of Lyons where he became editor of a college journal, The Bee.

During a time of revolution, in society and in the Church, Frederic and his fellow student friends decided to have Conferences of Literature, History and Philosophy.

Distraught by a world that, little by little, renounced Christianity, they came together with the desire to support each other in their faith and to grow together in their faith.

It is here that he established the Conference of Charity with other students not only to discuss and defend the faith but also to engage in practical works of charity.

They quickly saw the need to translate their faith into action. In 1835 the Conference was officially named the Society of St Vincent de Paul. They placed themselves under the patronage of St Vincent de Paul and they had no other ambition but to walk in his steps: to pray, reflect and act.

Emmanuel Bailly provided them a place to meet, counsel and example. When they decided to seek out and meet the poor Bailly sent them to be mentored by Sr Rosalie Rendu, Daughter of Charity. Frederic and his companions were inspired by Sr Rosalie who served the poor and needy.

In 1841 Frederic met Amelie Soulacoix whom he married in 1844. A daughter, Marie, was born to them. A loving husband and devoted father, Frederic achieved greatness as a gifted scholar, dedicated teacher, a generous Christian and a gentle reflective reformer.

True to the example of St Vincent de Paul, he creatively sought to respond to the needy with sensitive charity and to replace class struggle with just relationships. Frederic recognised the responsibility and the potential of the Church to be a true leavening force within society.

He called his associates to works of charity and justice.



FEAST DAY
September 9

BEATIFICATION
August 22
1997
Pope John Paul II

DEATH
September 8
1853

Frederic's words...

"You are our masters, and we will be your servants. You are for us the sacred images of that God whom we do not see, and not knowing how to love Him otherwise shall we not love Him in your persons." (Dirvin, trans. and ed., *Letters*, p.96)

"Charity is a tender mother who keeps her eyes fixed on the infant she carries at her breast, who no longer thinks of herself, and who forgets her beauty for her love." (Dirvin, trans. and ed., *Letters*, p.63)

"Help honours when the bread that nourishes it adds the visit that consoles; the advice that enlightens, the friendly shake of the hand that lifts up the sinking courage." (O'Meara, *Life and Works*, pp.176-177)

"We must do what is most agreeable to God. Therefore, we must do what our Lord Jesus Christ did when preaching the Gospel. Let us go to the poor." (Bauard, *Correspondence*, p.65)

"Sons of Vincent de Paul, let us learn of Him to forget ourselves, to devote ourselves to the service of God and the good of men. Let us learn of Him that holy preference which shows most love to those who suffer most." (Bauard, *Correspondence*, p.273)

"Let us learn, first of all, to defend our belief without hating our adversaries, to appreciate those who do not think as we do, to recognise that there are Christians in every camp, and that God can be served now as always!" (Bauard, *Correspondence*, p.304)

"We must respect the earth as the workshop of Providence." (Bauard, *Correspondence*, p.423)



International Logo
of the Society of
St Vincent de Paul

Blessed Frederic Ozanam

Society of St Vincent de Paul

Within Australia the Society has 40 000 members and volunteers who work to assist people in need, and work towards social justice for all. On the international level the Society operates in 130 countries with over 950 000 members and volunteers.

VINNIES



The Society in Australia is affectionately known as Vinnies. The Conferences can be found in parishes or are school-based groups of people reaching out to others in need within the local community.

The first Australian Conference was founded in Victoria by Fr Gerald Ward at St Francis' Church, Melbourne, on 5 March, 1854.

The members and volunteers live out their faith by visiting people in their homes to provide support, friendship and material assistance.

WORKS OF MERCY

Frederic heard the call of Jesus: to be merciful. He saw that the works of mercy as calls to action. He believed that if he genuinely wanted to serve the poor and others, he had to direct his works of mercy to the moral and spiritual betterment of individuals, not only to the alleviation of their physical distress.

The essence of Frederic's spirituality, which is mainly Vincentian spirituality, is the identification of Christ with the poor. The Scriptural foundation for this is the last judgement scene as described by Jesus in Matthew 25: 31-46. Here Jesus specifies the works of mercy and identifies himself with the person who is hungry, homeless, naked, sick, imprisoned.

"Lord when did we see you hungry and feed you; or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and make you welcome; naked and clothe you; sick or in prison and go to see you?I tell you solemnly, in so far as you did it to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me."

Something to think about ...

Reflect on the questions below ... share your thoughts with others ... or take some time to write down your thoughts and offer them to God.

Would my character suffer from too much wealth? Too much poverty?

Whom can I serve and relate to most easily because of my life situation?

Who are the mentors in my life today?

Does heroism necessitate selflessness?

Where do I find indifference and hopelessness in the world today?

Do I have a passion for truth? Do I have any scars to prove it?

Where do I stand on duplicity, fabrication and hypocrisy?

Where is the "battlefield" in which I am called to witness to the truth?

Is faith a sacred fire for me?

What am I doing for those in need in my world?

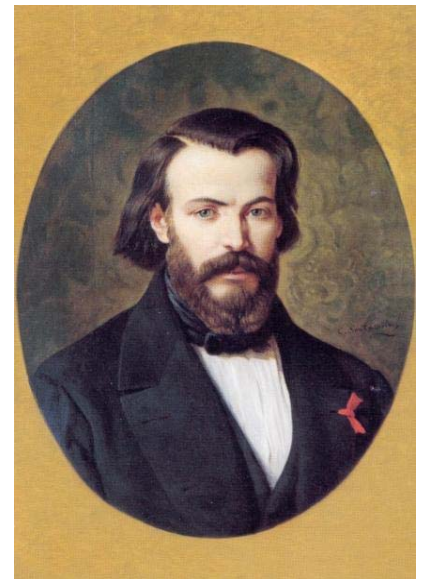
Can I say that I have an attitude of mercy?

In what areas am I not living by faith?

Let us Pray ...

O God, you favoured Frederic Ozanam with gifts of grace as husband and father, educator, defender of the faith, as founder of the Society of St Vincent de Paul. Through his example and prayers may we too be faithful in following the path in which you have called us.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.



Web Resources

www.famvin.org

www.vinnies.org.au

www.filles-de-la-charite.org

www.secretariadojmv.org

www.ozanet.org/ssvpcgi

Bibliography

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