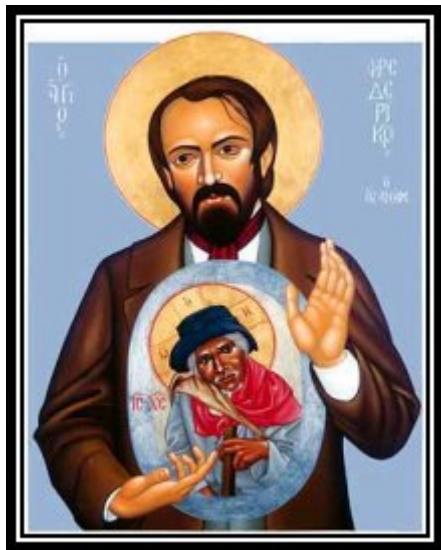


Vinspiration

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.

Frederic's words...

"Help them not with alms which humiliate, but with social and ameliorative measures which will free and alleviate them ..."

Spirit of Youth Resource Kit

"The order of society is based on two virtues: justice and charity. However, justice presupposes a lot of love already, for one needs to love a man a great deal in order to respect his rights, which limit our rights, and his liberty, which hampers our liberty. Justice has its limits whereas charity knows none."

<http://www.vincenter.org/res/word/fowords.html>

"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."

(Baunard, Correspondence, p.65)

"The knowledge of social well-being and of reform is learned, not from books, nor from public debate, but in climbing the stairs to the poor man's garret, sitting by his bed-side, feeling the same cold that pierces him, sharing the secret of his lonely heart and troubled mind." *(Baunard, Correspondence, p.279)*

"The problem which divides people today is not a political problem; it is a social one. It is a matter of knowing which will get the upper hand, the spirit of selfishness or the spirit of sacrifice; whether society will go for ever-increasing enjoyment and profit, or for everyone devoting themselves to the common good ... Many people have too much and still want more. Others do not have enough, or do not have anything at all, and they want to take by force what is not being given to them. A war is threatening between these two groups. On one side, the power of wealth, on the other the force of desperation. We must get in between these two groups, at least to reduce the impact if we cannot stop it. Because we are young; because we are not wealthy, we can more easily fill the role of mediators."

<http://www.vincenter.org/res/word/fowords.html>

FEAST DAY
September 9

BEATIFICATION
August 22
1997

Pope John Paul II

DEATH
September 8
1853

"You have felt the emptiness of material pleasures, you have felt the hunger for truth crying out within you; you have gone for light and comfort to the barren philosophy of modern apostles. You have not found food for your souls there. The religion of your forefathers appears before you today with full hands; do not turn away, for it is generous. It also, like you, is young. It does not grow old with the world. Ever renewing itself, it keeps pace with progress, and it alone leads to perfection."

Blessed Frederic Ozanam

Society of St Vincent de Paul

International Logo of the
Society of St Vincent de Paul



WORKS OF MERCY

About the Society ...

- Inspired by Gospel values, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, an International Catholic lay organization, started in 1833, leads women and men to join together to grow spiritually by offering tangible and spiritual support through prayer and person-to-person services to the needy and suffering in the tradition of its founder, Blessed Frédéric Ozanam, and patron, St. Vincent de Paul.
- "No work of charity is foreign to the Society. It serves persons in need regardless of race, creed, colour or religion."
- "It might seem that NGOs, whose essential task is to alleviate human misery in all those areas where governments can't seem to be able to do so, are a rather recent social phenomenon. Nevertheless, the SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL ... has been active in this respect since its foundation in 1833 in Paris.

It exists today in 142 countries where it identifies the basic needs of the population and carries out poverty alleviation as well as relief projects in areas of disaster, implemented through the efforts of over 700,000 volunteers."

President General: José Ramón Díaz-Torremocha

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?

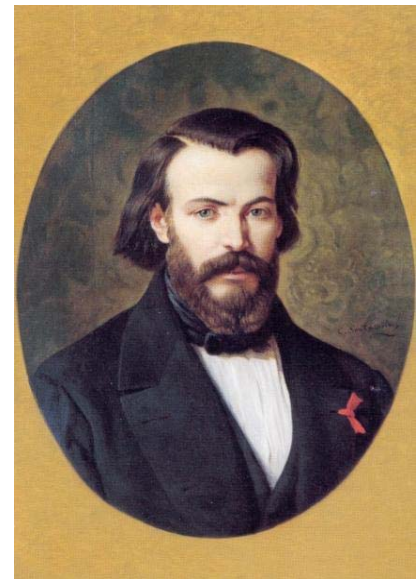
Where is the "battlefield" in which I am called to witness to the truth?

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

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