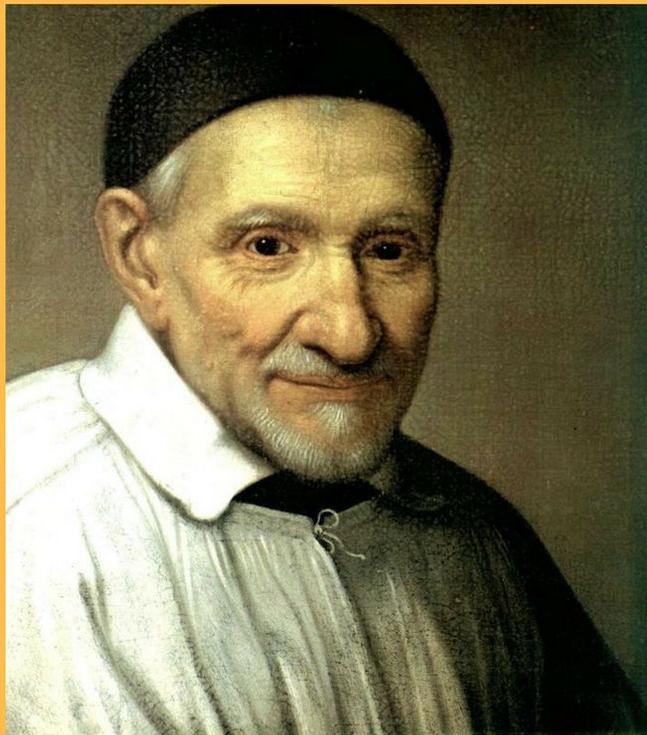


# VINGENTIANA

41th year- N° 3:  
May/June 1997



**FEATURE:**  
**Frédéric Ozanam**

## **Appointments and Confirmations by the Superior General**

---

Date	Name	Office	Province
23/05/97	Kasimierz Bukowiec	Director D.C. 1/6	Madagascar.
30/05/97	Eladio Gómez	Director D.C. (+ 3 years)	Seville.
05/05/97	Tomás Peribáñez	Director D.C. 1/6	Canary Islands.
29/05/97	Zdravko Pogorelc	Visitor 1/6	Slovenia
30/05/97	Antonio González	Director D.C. (+ 3 ans)	Venezuela.
27/05/97	Jean-Baptiste Nguyen Quoc Thu	Director D.C. 1/6	Vietnam.

# The Cause for the Canonization of the Servant of God

## **SISTER ANNA CANTALUPO, D.C.**

Fr Roberto D'Amico, Postulator General, has asked us to print in *Vincentiana* the following Edict, issued by Mgr Luigi Bommarito, archbishop of Catania. He has begun the diocesan process in the cause of Sr Anna Cantalupo, DC, and is looking for evidence.

### **EDICT**

On March 17, 1983, the Servant of God Sister Anna Cantalupo, of the Company of the Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul, fell asleep peacefully in the Lord.

She was a small Sister, over 90 years of age, most vivacious, with an apostolic, youthful, enthusiasm stemming from a heart enriched by God and alive to the needs of the poor and to live Church issues. She was like a mother, a sister, a daughter.

Her entire life was lived continuously in the light of the Pauline motto which is the programme of her religious family: "The charity of Christ urges us" (2 Cor. 5:14).

Her reputation for holiness has increased with the passing years, and a formal request has been made to begin the cause for the canonization of the Servant of God in order to bring her to the knowledge of the ecclesial community. We therefore invite the faithful, individuals or groups, to contact us directly, or to send to the Diocesan Tribunal of the Archdiocese of Catania (via Vittorio Emmanuele, 159, - 95131 Catania) any information which could in any way, for or against, affect the reputation for holiness of the Servant of God.

In accordance with the legal norms we also have to collect all writings attributed to her, so by this present EDICT we command anyone who may be in possession of writings of which the Servant of God was the writer to forward them with due care to the said tribunal, if they have not already been forwarded to the Postulator of the Cause.

We remind people that under the heading of writings come not just printed material, which perhaps does not exist, but also manuscripts, diaries, letters, or any other private writings of the Servant of God. Persons who wish to retain the originals may forward duly authenticated copies.

We order, finally, that this EDICT remain for two months affixed to the doors of the Curia, of Parish churches in the diocese, and of all houses of the Company of the Daughters of Charity of the Religious Province of Naples, and that it be published in *Vincentiana*, in *Presenza Vincenziana*, in *Echoes of the Company*, the *Bolletino Diocesano*, and the daily *Avvenire*.

Given in Catania, at the diocesan office, 17 March 1997.

+ LUIGI BOMMARITO, Archbishop

(Thomas Davitt CM, translator)

**FRÉDÉRIC OZANAM**  
**A lay saint for our times**

*by Amin A. de Tarrazi*  
*International Vice-President*  
*of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul*

The life, the work, the witness and the message of Frédéric Ozanam are so rich and diverse that it is impossible to summarise them in a few pages.

One can, however, attempt to reveal the most significant aspects of them in order to discover, to love and perhaps become inspired by them oneself, like so many generations of "Vincentians" who, from 1833 to the present time, have found a mentor, as he himself had in St. Vincent de Paul, *"a life which must continue, a heart which must restore his heart, an intelligence that must seek enlightenment, a model on earth and a protector in heaven."*

Antoine Frédéric Ozanam was born 23 April 1813 in Milan, where his parents, originally from near Lyon, were living temporarily for professional reasons during the Napoleonic wars.

His family, which was deeply Christian, gave him a love of God and of the poor from a very young age and taught him to search for and find Christ in those who carry the heaviest burden of human suffering and social injustice.

**A Happy Childhood Shaped by faith**

Young Frédéric had a happy childhood. As a pupil at the Collège Royal in Lyon he distinguished himself with a lively and penetrating intelligence, a period marked by the sort of uncertainty that sometimes leads one into contact with philosophy. But his teacher, Father Noirod, a holy priest, of whom Sarcey was able to say *"that great moulder of souls"*, soon helped him to leave behind the labyrinth of contradictory opinions and confirm him in fidelity to the Church.

Ozanam also confided, *"I knew the doubts of the present century, but all my life convinced me that there is no rest for the spirit and the heart except in the faith of the Church and under its authority."*

Out of this adolescent crisis there remained intact a great openness of heart which he made a way of life and which he expressed in a burning desire to help troubled souls to draw on the sources of the faith. This objective, to which he remained faithful all his life, was not just pressed on him by his own personal experience; events would

soon emphasise its great necessity.

On leaving the Collège Royal at the end of his secondary studies, and still attentive to his parents' wishes, he went to Paris to study Law. Ozanam is struck by a society that was in the throes of great upheaval. The revolution of July 1830 had brought dark days upon the ancient Bourbon Line that had hoped to strengthen the throne with the support of the Church.

### **The Shock of the Big City**

Scepticism predominated in the teaching of the university. Frédéric Ozanam, isolated and discouraged, wrote to his friend Falconnet on 18 December 1831, *"Paris disgusts me because there is no life, no faith, no love; it is like a huge corpse to which I, young and alive, am chained, whose coldness chills me and whose putrefaction is killing me."*

He soon rallied; in André-Marie Ampère, the great scientist whom he was pleased to call *"the Good Monsieur Ampère"* or *"Papa Ampère"*, he found a friend who showed him a fatherly care, took him from the loneliness of his small boarding house and lodged him in the room of his own son Jean-Jacques and in casual conversation each evening showed him the horizons of science, concluding with the assertion, *"Ozanam, how great God is! How great God is!"*

In this milieu Ozanam regained his confidence; he overcame the aversion which the city aroused in him; he began to hope again in a better future; he was happy to draw up the plans of the "City of God" which would rise on the ruins of the earthly Babylon and was able to write joyfully to his friend and confidant of his gloom and apprehension: *"Learning and Catholicism, these are my sole consolations!"* From then on his sense of direction was marked by an unshakeable certainty: Christianity was the only remedy for the healing of the ills of contemporary society; it was necessary to demonstrate the scientific and historical truth. It was essential to reconcile religion and learning.

Before his departure for Paris, this young man who was not yet eighteen years old, had already begun a huge work which he intended to call, *"A Demonstration of the Truth of the Catholic Religion by the Antiquity of Historical, Religious and Moral Beliefs"*. In time the title was modified, but the student, and later the professor, remained faithful to the project of the schoolboy.

### **A Thirst for Historical and Religious Culture**

Ozanam wanted to share this passion for history, the source of belief, with his friends. Not content to work fifteen hours a day learning foreign languages and initiating himself in the secrets of religions other than Catholicism, he gathered companions

from among students at the Sorbonne. With them he threw himself into endless work, responding to the Professors of the faculty who questioned their convictions, daring to refute their arguments before the whole university and bringing two of them, of whom one was Jouffroy, to justify himself or withdraw.

A witness to the truth, he felt intensely the need of his young contemporaries to nourish and deepen their faith. Also, he assumed the leadership of the delegation, which by its stubborn determination was finally going to decide Mgr Hyacinthe Louis de Quelen, Archbishop of Paris to reform preaching. After several attempts which only whetted the student appetite, the archbishop entrusted the pulpit of Notre-Dame to the Abbé Henri Lacordaire. The future Dominican gave them, *"preaching which, new in its form and grounding itself in real and disputed issues, took on and challenged the adversaries of Christianity in order to respond to the objections taught daily in public lectures and reproduced in popular form in books and newspapers."* The celebrated "Notre-Dame Conferences", of which the Lenten Lectures are now a continuation, satisfied the spiritual thirst of a number of young contemporaries.

Encouraged by the acquired results Ozanam increased his efforts, with a view to extending this intellectual and religious movement. This would not be without difficulties. Following the revolution of 1830, French Catholics were very divided. Many saw no security except in the restoration of the fallen regime. Others, including Ozanam, felt that, on the contrary, it was necessary to move beyond the regime issue and focus their efforts on the essentials: the promotion of spiritual and human values based on love and social justice.

### **Revolted by Miseries . . .**

Right from his youth, Ozanam, who was precociously gifted with intuition and sensitivity, found himself moved by the hardships and iniquities affecting those at the lowest social level. Aged just 16, or 19 years before the decree of the Provisional Government abolishing slavery in French colonies and possessions promulgated on 27 April 1848 at the proposal of the Martinique deputy Victor Schoelcher, Ozanam vigorously denounced the inhumanity in the treatment of the Blacks.

*"There is no denying the sad and deplorable condition of these unfortunate victims of European barbarism; it will unquestionably continue to be a cause for indignation and tears for the true philosopher and the true Christian, this horrible cruelty of these men who call themselves civilised and who in the name of a holy religion appear on foreign soil like thieving brigands who snatch sons from their mothers and fathers from their children.*

*Let us weep for the shame of our persecuting brothers! Let us weep for the evils suffered by our oppressed brothers! But you who are lamenting with me turn your eyes away for a moment from those calamities to find out their cause. Listen and*

*listen well to what is in a father's curse, the vengeance of almighty God from whom all fatherhood proceeds and who punishes the audacity of a guilty son to the very last generation.*

*There are sacred pages which reveal to us the primitive source of all these horrors. The spirit of light dictated them to the sacred historian for the instruction of future races."*

### **. . . and Injustices**

Twelve years before the famous manifesto of Karl Marx in 1848, he was deploring the increasing gap at the heart of society between the strong and the weak. This gave him a prophetic premonition of the terrible and unavoidable confrontations between rich and poor.

*"The question which divides men in our time is no longer a question of political systems. It is a social question: that is of knowing which will prevail: the spirit of selfishness or the spirit of sacrifice? Whether society is to be simply a great opportunity of exploitation for the benefit of the strongest or a dedication of everyone for the benefit of all and especially for the protection of the weak...."*

These ideas were those professed, notably by, the *Tribune Catholique*, a clergy gazette founded in January 1832 by Emmanuel Bailly. Its "mission statement" contained this significant phrase: *"You will not see us grow passionate about political systems, which whatever they may be are, after all, only temporary and variable"*. Connected with the Catholic Tribune was a sort of literary circle, la Société des Bonnes Etudes, whose aim was to promote among Catholics the taste for philosophical, historical and religious research.

This organisation was Ozanam's dream, a *"coming together of friends for the building up of knowledge"*, in the light of Christian thought. Along with his friends he immersed himself in it and expressed his passion for the history of religions. Ozanam spoke of Indian mythology and Lally of Islam, Lamarche of medieval architecture and Le Taillandier of religious orders. The "Société" thus became the *History Conference*, open to all and where discussion was always totally free. Young, non-believing philosophers were able to come and ask about Catholicism, its teachings and practices. By way of reply they were given an account of its history or an explanation of the scientific or social significance of the Gospel. Frequently the demonstration was so convincing that challengers admitted defeat.

### **Faith without Works is a Dead Faith**

However, this was not always the case. Sometimes Ozanam's companions, impetuous but unskilled, came off second best in the otherwise very courteous discussions for which they were ill-equipped. One challenge above all got to them. The social work

of the Church throughout the centuries was recognised as meriting esteem and respect, but at the present day was it notable for any charitable activity or institutions? Replying to this piercing question left them very embarrassed.

It seemed, therefore, to them that in order to regenerate the faith, argument would not suffice. There was an urgent need, in the words of Le Taillandier, to translate this faith into action, to evangelise like the Apostles, not merely by words, but even more through witness and through authentic charity. So much so that one winter's day, after a friendly meeting in the course of which Le Taillandier showed once more the insufficiency of merely intellectual action, Ozanam, who had remained silent until then, exclaimed enthusiastically: "*A blessing from the poor is a blessing from God... let us go to the poor*". After which, accompanied by Le Taillandier, he carried off to a neglected man in his area whatever wood he possessed to provide warmth.

### **Birth of the Saint Vincent de Paul Society**

There was now the question of developing this new concept of apostolate. Having heard the opinion of Bailly, who had always been a good advisor, Ozanam, on 23 April 1833, his twentieth birthday, brought together at the offices of the *Tribune Catholique* those of his companions who felt the same desire to serve people in deep need. Although no minutes have been preserved of the meeting, it is possible, thanks to some discreet allusions by those who took part, to reconstruct accurately what happened.

Young Frédéric and his friends agreed with moving humility that the move they had made had not yet borne the fruit they had been hoping for. And having expressed their common conviction that Catholicism should show itself in works which would bear witness to the truth far more than reasoning, they considered the society which surrounded them and sadly noted that misery and injustice were far from having disappeared from the world.

Quite the opposite, the new economic conditions multiplied the sufferings of all classes. Faced with so many anguishing situations, with so much undeserved distress, of so many families stricken by hunger, cold and sickness, these young people made a resolution to answer the call of Christ by dedicating themselves to the poor.

They asked Sister Rosalie, a Daughter of Charity of the Mouffetard quarter, for the addresses of some families in distress to whom they would bring some bread and especially a lot of friendship. Their resources came solely from their student resources. Such was the origin of the first Conference of Saint Vincent de Paul. The History Conference became the Conference of Charity.

In parallel to this, Ozanam gained cultural and professional achievements. As a Doctor in Law in 1836 he began, without any great enthusiasm, a short career as an advocate, and then occupied the chair of Commercial Law in Lyon. As Doctor of

Literature in 1839, he gained first place in the new "Agrégation" examination of the faculties of literature instituted by Victor Cousin in 1840. Supplying for Professor Claude Fauriel in 1841, Ozanam became titular of his chair of literature in the Sorbonne in 1844.

In the meantime he married Amélie Soulacroix on 23 June 1841 in the church of Saint-Nizier in Lyon. 1845 brought great joy to his home through the birth of his daughter Marie whom he was to cherish deeply.

From then on his time was shared between his family, teaching, historical research, his literary work and his various civic, social and religious engagements.

Ozanam's passion was learning. Homage has deservedly been paid to the very real literary and scientific value of his books and it was gratifying to find in his "Thesis on Dante" and in his "Franciscan Poets" and his "Germanic Studies" that restrained emotion, that apostolic flame which make for the attraction of his style. Recognition must also be given to the modern character of his method and stretching beyond his attachment to tradition, his intuition regarding the evolution of historical criticism.

### **Teaching lived out as if it were a Priesthood**

In his erudition he was also a remarkable teacher, endowed with a conscience acutely sensitive to professional duties as well as the obligations and the sacrifices which it imposes.

What first strikes one about Ozanam the teacher is perhaps his incomparable conscience. This is presented to us in a most beautiful page from Jacques Ampère who makes a very vivid sketch of the Sorbonne professor. One wonders how this fragile, frail, delicate father, sensitive spouse, scrupulous writer and professor, who had care of some of his in-laws and who gave himself body and soul to a Society which he had founded with his friends, was able to face so many weighty responsibilities.

Ampère affirms that those who did not attend Ozanam's courses could not realise how personal was his talent. He was not, as often among the professors of that time, a man who bluffed his way through courses. Higher studies before 1867, before the creation of the School of Higher Studies, was a teaching intended especially for the general public. The professors were brilliant, they were preparing for baccalauréats or licences, but they sometimes neglected erudite research. But, speaking about Ozanam, Ampère noted: *"It is rare to find united to the same degree the twofold merits in the professor of matter and form, knowledge and eloquence"*. Frédéric prepared his courses like a Benedictine and spoke them like an orator.

### **. . . and Total Self-Giving**

A small event illustrates this tribute. In 1852 the day after the coup d'état a sort of riot broke out at the Sorbonne. Finding the doors closed the students were in uproar (that sometimes happens at that venerable institution) shouting: *"The professors have stopped giving their courses and yet they are paid by the State."* These shouts reached the ears of Ozanam who was already seriously ill. He got up in spite of the appeals of his friends, the tears of his wife and the orders of his doctor who ordered him to stay in his room. *"I wish to honour my profession"*, he repeated. He ran to the Sorbonne and went to his rostrum. Seeing him appear paler, weaker and more worn-looking than usual, with his face showing all too real signs of illness and indeed looking almost like a ghost, the students, seized with pity and remorse, welcomed him with loud applause. This applause was repeated several times during the lesson and changed into a veritable ovation when the young professor, making a direct reply to the hurtful shouts which were upsetting him, said in an exhausted voice : *"Gentlemen, our century is reproached as a century of selfishness and it is said that this general epidemic has stricken the professors. However, here it is that we are going to overcome our disability. It is here that we are going to use up our strength. I make no complaint. Our life, my life belongs to you. We owe its last breath to you, and you shall have it. As for myself, gentlemen, if I die it shall be at your service."*

The testimony of Hersart de Villemarqué confirms that of Ampère: *"God alone knows the immense good that he did during his lessons which caused him so much labour and so much fatigue. This large youthful audience received such inspiration from him! Determination to work, resoluteness, useful tasks, fine vocations! When he was leaving, everyone rushed to have a word from him, to hear more of him. All along the pathways of the Luxembourg it was like a procession as he made his way home. He was worn out, but often he experienced joys far beyond the most enthusiastic applause"*.

### **The Fight for Truth...**

Another major characteristic of Frédéric Ozanam's behaviour in his teaching and in a more general manner in all his dealings in intellectual circles was his respect for others: tolerance.

His natural kindness, combined with his innate integrity allowed him to welcome the opinion of others with respect and goodwill, even if it was contrary to his own; *"Let us learn to defend our convictions without hating our adversaries, to love those who think differently to ourselves.... Let us complain less about the times and more about ourselves."*

### **Without Complacency for the Intolerant**

If he was severe, it was just with the intolerant, who thought they were exclusive holders of the truth. *"...those wearing the high hats of orthodoxy, the council fathers*

*in tails and long trousers, Doctors who pontificate having read the paper in a café... people for whom newcomers are always unwelcome... who make their political opinion a thirteenth article of the creed, who treat works of charity as their personal property and, putting themselves modestly in the place of our Lord say: whoever is not with us is against us".*

### **But Respectful of the Opinions of Others**

But the drive which he put into the defence of his convictions was always in tune with openness towards those who do not share them.

He never said a word which might have wounded those of his listeners who did not share his ideas. And if he was successful in his clear resolve to propose the truth and only the truth, at least he was careful to do this without being aggressive. He preferred persuasion to any other method which might have failed scrupulously to respect the opinion and the liberty of others.

This constant in his behaviour allowed him to affirm at the end of a too brief existence: *"If anything consoles me on leaving this earth before finishing what I wanted to do, it is that I have never worked for the praise of men but in the service of truth".*

### **Without Ever Relinquishing His Humility**

With the deep humility which characterised him he himself defined what life had meant for him in a letter of 14 July 1850 to his friend Dufieux: *"If God has granted me a certain enthusiasm for work, I have never seen this grace as a glittering gift of genius. Undoubtedly, in the lower rank which is my place, I wished to dedicate my life to the service of the faith, but all the while considering myself as the useless servant, the worker of the last hour whom the master of the vineyard accepts only through charity. It seemed to me that my days were well filled if, in spite of my scant merit, I was able to keep gathered around my rostrum many young people, and to build up for my listeners the principles of Christian learning, and make them respect all that they despised: the Church, the papacy, monks. I should have liked to gather these same thoughts into books more durable than my lessons, and all my wishes would have been more than satisfied if a few errant souls found in these teachings a reason to abjure their prejudices, to clear up their doubts and to return with God's help to Catholic truth. That is what I aimed to do for the last ten years without seeking a more ambitious destiny, but also without my having the misfortune to abandon the combat."*

Frédéric Ozanam's influence continued to shine out beyond the limits of the University. The foundation of the St. Vincent de Paul Conferences led him to make contact with the working class and to see the real sufferings of these workers resulting

from the industrial transformations which had taken place during the first half of the nineteenth century. At the risk of being accomplices could Christians and the Church remain indifferent to the agonising fate of the victims of the inhuman situations which they were witnessing?

He studied the problem in the minute and conscientious manner which he brought to all his work. His correspondence enables us to track his successive states of mind from 5 November 1836 when he shared with Llama his reflections on *"the social question"* right up to the moment when in a letter of 22 February 1848 to his friend Foisset he completed his thinking thus: *"I ask... that we should take responsibility for the people who have too many needs and not enough rights, who are claiming a fuller part in public affairs and guarantees in favour of work and against misery"*.

### **A Brief Incursion into Politics**

New times called for a new programme. Ozanam, with the full approval of the Archbishop of Paris, Mgr Denys Affre - who was to die on the barricades during the revolution of 1848 - busied himself preparing this programme and getting ready to apply it. It is not possible here to go into detail about his remarkably prescient intuitions. Suffice it to say that, among the social Catholics of the nineteenth century he was one of the first to come up with the idea of the "salaire naturel" (forerunner of the basic minimum wage), to demand measures against unemployment and accidents, and to ask that retirement be guaranteed to workers. His call to the voters of the Department of the Rhône on 15 April 1848 echoed these audacious and generous ideas of which a good number found their way into Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, in 1891.

A reflective man, Ozanam was also a man of action.

He wanted to see democracy established in justice and charity. From this perspective he counted on the Society of St. Vincent de Paul whose existence demonstrated a real opportunity.

From an early stage he knew how much he would be indebted to this movement that was so dear to his heart. He wrote to his fiancée, Amélie Soulacroix on 1 May 1841; *"You will know one day how much I owe to this Society which was the support and inspiration of the most difficult years of my youth"*.

More than ever he was convinced that the meeting between those who have and those who have not is the best guarantee of mutual understanding. This is why the rule of the Vincentians makes personal contact with those who suffer and direct service of the marginalised their basic work, the final objective remaining the building up of everyone, spiritually, morally and humanly.

## **A Hymn to Love**

The back-breaking work which he took upon himself and the total dedication that he gave to it quickly took its toll on his delicate health. At the end of 1852, he was forced to seek rest in Italy. The treatment did not have the desired effect and his strength continued to decline. Depressed and resigned, he felt drawn towards eternity. The thought of loved ones whom he was about to leave cast a shadow over his final weeks; it did not prevent him, however, on his fortieth birthday, 23 April 1853 in Pisa, four and a half months before his death, from composing the "fiat" by which abandoning himself to the will of God, he offered him his life:

*"This is the beginning of the canticle of Hezekiah: I do not know if God will permit that I might finish it. I know that today I have completed my fortieth year, I am more than half way through life. I know that I have a young wife whom I love very much, a beautiful child, excellent brothers, a second mother, many friends, an honourable career, efforts directed precisely to the point where they should be able to serve as the foundation of a long dreamt of work. I am, however, suffering with a serious illness, stubborn and all the more serious in that it probably hides a total exhaustion. Must I then leave all these blessings which you yourself, my God, have given me? Will you not, Lord, be satisfied with a portion of the sacrifice? Must I sacrifice my disordered affections to this? Will you not accept the sacrifice of my own literary self-esteem, of my academic ambition, of my very study where pride perhaps featured more than zeal for the truth? If I sold half of my books in order to give the money for them to the poor and satisfying myself with looking to the responsibilities of my position, I would consecrate the rest of my life to visiting the poor and teaching apprentices and soldiers. Lord, would you be satisfied and allow me the pleasure of growing old in the company of my wife and seeing through my child's education? Perhaps, my God, you do not want this? You do not accept these self-serving offerings; you reject my holocausts and sacrifices. It is me you want. It is written at the beginning of the book that I must do your will and I have said, I am coming, Lord. I am coming if you are calling me and I do not have the right to complain. You have given me forty years of life.... If I go back over my life bitterly with you, it is because of the sins with which I am tainted; but when I consider the graces with which you have enriched them, I recall my years before you, Lord, with gratitude. When you would tie me to a bed for the days of life that remain to me, they would not be enough to thank you for the days I have lived. If these are the last pages that I write let them be a hymn to your goodness!"*

## **Abandonment to the Lord**

Disembarking at Marseilles, on the way back, his condition deteriorated and his death seemed imminent. Ozanam regarded it with the greatest serenity and, like the priest who ministered to him welcomed it having faith in God, he replied simply: "Why was I afraid? I love him so much." A few moments afterwards he died peacefully, without

the least disturbance, murmuring: *"My God, my God, have mercy on me"*.

On 8 September 1853, the feast of the Birthday of the Virgin, to whom he expressed such great devotion, was the end of a life that was exceptionally full, dedicated totally to the service of Christ and humanity.

He is buried in the crypt of the church of St. Joseph des Carmes at the Institut Catholique in Paris among the student youth to whom he gave the best of himself.

### **A Radiating Holiness**

The cause for the beatification of Frédéric Ozanam, the principal founder of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, was introduced on 15 March 1925 in the diocese of Paris and on 12 January 1954 in Rome.

Pope John Paul II proclaimed him "Venerable" on 6 July 1993 by decreeing his virtues heroic.

Three years later, on 25 June 1996, he signed the decree recognising the miracle of 2 February 1926 that occurred through the intercession of Ozanam on behalf of an eighteen month old baby who was suffering from violent diphtheria. Fernando Luiz Benedetto Ottoni, who was healed, is still alive.

The Holy Father will carry out the beatification on 22 August 1997 at Notre Dame in Paris, during his visit for the World Day of Youth.

Frédéric Ozanam, already venerated throughout the world, will thus be proposed as an example to lay people, particularly young people today, seeking social, moral and spiritual guidelines.

Did John Paul II not say in his message to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in 1983, the year of the 150th anniversary of its foundation, that it was necessary *"to thank God for the gift that he made to the Church in the person of Ozanam. We are still astonished by everything that he was able to undertake during the course of his life, that was too quickly consumed, for the Church, for society, for the poor, this student, this professor, this family man of burning faith and genius in the service of charity. His name remains associated with that of St. Vincent de Paul who two centuries earlier had founded the Ladies of Charity, without the same being established for men. How could we not wish that the Church would place Ozanam among its Blessed and its Saints?"*

This wish, shared unanimously, has been heard by the Lord who sealed the destiny of this marvellous Christian with the seal of the Beatitudes, a lay saint for our time.

## Further Reading

### *Biography:*

*Ozanam. Centenary Publication.* Editions G. Beauchesne, Paris, 1913.

*Ozanam. Georges Goyeau, of the Académie Française.* Editions Flammarion, Paris, 1925 & 1931.

*Frédéric Ozanam. Léonce Celier.* Editions P. Lethielleux, Paris, 1956.

*Ozanam, un savant chez les pauvres. Madeleine des Rivières.* Editions Le Cerf, Paris, 1984.

*Frédéric Ozanam. Fr Georges Forsans, S.C.J.* Editions C.L.D., Pères de Bétharram, Lestelle Bétharram, 1991.

*Ozanam, une jeunesse romantique. Fr Marcel Vincent.* Editions Médiaspaul, Paris, 1991.

*Frédéric Ozanam. Cahiers Ozanam:* Numbers 37, 38 & 39, January-June 1974, Numbers 72 & 73, January-June 1981, Number 80, January-April 1983, Number 134, October-December 1996.

### *Correspondence:*

#### *In Five Volumes*

*Lettres de Jeunesse (1818-1840).* Editions Bloud et Gay, Paris, 1961.

*Premières années à la Sorbonne (1841-1844).* Editions Celse, Paris, 1971.

*L'engagement (1845-1849).* Editions Celse, Paris, 1978.

*Les dernières années (1850-1853).* Editions Klincksieck, Paris, 1992.

*Supplement* (1829-1852). Editions Klincksieck, Paris, 1997.

*In Two Volumes*

*Selection*. Editions de Gigord, Paris, 1925.

**The Society of St Vincent de Paul  
Worldwide since 1833**

*Continuing Growth...*

1833	1 Conference	7 Members
1883	4,000 Conferences	76,500 Members
1913	8,000 Conferences	134,000 Members
1933	13,200 Conferences	180,000 Members
1983	38,500 Conferences	750,000 Members
1995	46,650 Conferences	875,000 Members

Today there is a total of 47,200 Conferences and 880,000 Members.

***880,000 "Vincentians"...***

Men and Women of all ages

Formed into 47,200 teams

Called "*Conferences*"

Working on all Five Continents

***Hundreds of Thousands of Volunteers...***

In all parts of the World

Wherever misery prevails

Everyday meeting people in distress

Victims of Poverty

of Injustice and Exclusion  
of Racism and Violence

***Formed into Teams...***

They faithfully and with goodwill ensure  
a free and permanent service  
to those who thirst  
for friendship and respect

***Over 5,000 Pairings...***

expressing in a spirit of sharing  
solidarity between teams  
from neglected and deprived areas

***Thousands of Specialised Works...***

- X Social Services:*** Reception, Direction, Legal Advice.
- X Infants:*** Crèches, *homes* (sic), Holidays, God-Parenting.
- X Youth:*** Shelters, Clubs, Cultural Activity, Sport.
- \* Schooling:*** Schools, School and University Bursaries, Sponsorship of Pupils and Students.
- X Professional Training:*** Mechanical Training, Electrical Training, Electronics, Boilermaking, Joinery, Building, Farming, Secretarial Training, Fashion, Catering.
- \* APs (Old Age Pensioners):*** Retirement Homes, Holiday Centres, Day Centres, Leisure.
- X Women:*** Moral Support, Institutions for women in distress, deserted wives, single mothers.
- X Seamen:*** Various works and services, Shelters, Clubs.
- X Travelling People:*** Social, educational and health assistance.
- X Migrants:*** Reception, Direction and Various Services.
- X Refugees & Stateless People:*** Reception, Direction, Protection of their cultural and folk heritage.

- X*    ***Prisoners:***                    Prison visiting, Post-Release assistance, Rehabilitation of long term detainees.
- X*    ***Youth at Risk:***            Shelters, Social rehabilitation.
- X*    ***Trades:***                    Crafts, Fashion, Weaving, Printing, Typing, Manufacture of construction materials.
- X*    ***Rural Activities:***    Cultivation, Breeding, Fish Farming, Bee-keeping, Wells, Water-Conveyance.
- X*    ***Housing:***                    Programmes to assist low income families, Public Housing associations, Refurbishments.
- X*    ***Health:***                    Visiting hospitals, institutions for the physically and mentally handicapped, the blind. Support for the sick (due to cancer, drug abuse, A.I.D.S...). Care at home. Establishing hospitals, dispensaries, dental surgeries, leprosaria.
- X*    ***Solidarity:***                Help for victims of natural disasters, war, violence. Famine relief, Provision of domestic equipment, Reconstruction, Re-housing, Health and Medical Care, Schooling.

Stanislaus Brindley, CM & Paschal Scallon, CM,  
Translators.

# Frederic Ozanam: His Piety and Devotion

*Ronald W. Ramson, C.M.*

When Frederic Ozanam is canonized a saint, it will not be because he was the principal founder of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, nor because he was an outstanding professor in the lecture halls of the Sorbonne, University of Paris, nor because he was an excellent author, but because he practiced virtue in an heroic degree and lived in fidelity to God's grace (cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church #828). Men and women are declared saints by the Church because of their holiness, not for their accomplishments. They took the dual commandment of love seriously and put that dual commandment of love into practice to an heroic degree. After all, holiness is the perfection of charity. Being the founder and an active member of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, being a brilliant professor in the lecture hall, being an exceptional author, all contributed to Frederic Ozanam's holiness of life, but each one by itself did not make him a saintly person.

Each one of us has been called to holiness of life. As St. Paul says, "For this is the will of God, your sanctification." (1 Thes. 4:3). All Christians in any state or walk of life are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of charity (cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church #2013 or Lumen Gentium #40). Sanctification is God's way of preparing us for eternal life in heaven. In this life, we are much like athletes whose performance in competition depends upon how well we have mastered our skills in daily practice. Certainly this is the teaching of St. Paul.

In order to reach perfection, we use the strength dealt out to us by Christ's grace, so that ... doing the will of the Father in everything, we may wholeheartedly devote ourselves to the glory of God and to the service of our neighbor (cf. Lumen Gentium #40). These words from Vatican II say much to Vincentians; they could have been written by St. Vincent de Paul himself.

Our Holy Father, Pope John Paul II reminds us that:

"The call to holiness is rooted in Baptism and proposed anew in the other sacraments, principally in the Eucharist." (Christifideles Laici, #16)

Frederic Ozanam heard the call of holiness; he knew that call and the challenge to grow in the divine life which he had received when he was baptized. He pursued holiness first as a single male, then as a married man and father of a family. Frederic understood that unity with Christ Jesus depended on his willingness and readiness to choose Him at progressively deeper levels whether it be daily or during each stage of his existence. Frederic was a man of exceptional piety throughout his entire life.

Frederic was a man of passion. He was a lover \_ of God, of his parents and siblings, of his wife and daughter, of fellow Vincentians, of study and teaching, of the truth, of poverty and the poor. He burned with the fire of passion; it kept him involved; it kept him properly motivated in all facets of his life and ministry.

From the very foundation of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, it was the intention of Frederic Ozanam that membership in the Society would promote sanctification of its members. Frederic firmly believed that the mutual respect and true friendship among members would help in imitating, emulating and deepening intimacy with their Divine Model, Jesus Christ, especially by living out His mandate of loving one's neighbor in the

person of the poor and abandoned (cf. Manual of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, opening paragraphs).

The Society was seen, therefore, as a valuable means, an efficacious instrument for advancing in holiness of life because it gave members the opportunities for personal prayer and putting their faith into action by the exercise of compassionate charity toward their fellow human beings in whom Jesus Christ dwells.

Frederic says:

"The leaders of such associations should be holy, in order to draw down God's grace. That is why I, who am so wicked and so weak, often ask myself how I can venture to represent such a large number of good young men" (Baunard, p. 130).

While holiness is the goal of the Society, perfection certainly has never been a condition for membership. The Society is made up of struggling pilgrims \_ men and women, humbled by their weaknesses, but desirous of growing in holiness of life through prayer and charity (cf. Manual of the Society, opening pages).

We will now look at several components of Frederic's life which contributed to his holiness.

## **Spiritual Life**

Frederic was a man of prayer who loved the Church. If we had no other way to prove that, his letters would be enough. He writes:

"... I look at Catholicism in perhaps a more absolute way: I see formula as necessary to Christianity, just as Christianity seems to me the necessary formula for humanity. I believe the Church to be above the things of this world, but I recognize her right to mark out for herself the boundary of her intervention and power.

I also believe worship to be the expression of faith, the symbol of hope, the earthly result of the love of God. For that reason I practice it as much as I can and according to the best habits given me from childhood, and find in prayer and the sacraments the needed sustenance for my moral life amid temptations of a consuming imagination and fantasizing world" (Letter, #77, July 21, 1834).

Frederic goes on to say:

"Being a Christian, I glory in belonging to no other school than that of truth. Which is the Church ... I live by my faith, which I have from my God, and by my honor which I have from my parents. You will allow me to defend the one and the other" (Baunard, p. 63).

Frederic's spiritual growth and progress was slow, gradual and challenging. He had the burning desire to do better in his prayer life, for greater devotion in receiving the sacraments and a deeper commitment to help others. He received the sacrament of

confession and communion frequently, which was unusual for that time in the French Church. The last remnants of the heresy of Jansenism were still making their effects felt in the spiritual life of 19th century France, Jansenism which St. Vincent de Paul so rigorously opposed and fought.

Amelie Ozanam wrote of her husband:

"I never saw him wake up or fall asleep without making the sign of the cross and praying. In the morning he read the bible, in Greek, on which he meditated about half an hour. (Frederic called this his `daily bread'). In the last years of his life, he went to Mass every day for his support and consolation. He never did anything serious without praying. Before leaving for his course, he always got on his knees to ask God for the grace of saying nothing which would attract public praise to himself, but of only speaking for the Glory of God and the service of the truth" (Frederic Ozanam, Paris, p. 128).

Frederic's sentiments of Jesus were those of complete surrender, absolute confidence and total filial tenderness. He gave the Lord his life.

One of the indications of Frederic's seriousness to advance in the spiritual life was the fact that he had a spiritual director. He was Father Marduel, a priest originally from Lyon, but then living in Paris. Fr. Marduel was a very popular spiritual director and had for his directees a vast array of the famous and ordinary of Paris; Fr. Marduel was simple, wise, well-informed, prudent and a man of deep prayer and devotion. He was a most appropriate director for a man like Frederic.

Under the priest's direction, Frederic found available time for meditation and prayer even with his many responsibilities.

Frederic told his mother that Fr. Marduel "is the only intimate spiritual advisor that I have, the only one who, in kindness and wisdom, can take the place of father and mother" (Baubard, pp. 39-40).

Frederic was very hard on himself. The world thought him to be great; he saw himself as very little. The world thought him to be good; he saw himself as unworthy. He believed that he owed his status in life to hard work and the grace of God. He had no opinion of his genius; it was not a source of strength but of weakness. All this sounds as if it were coming from the lips of St. Vincent de Paul and his teaching on humility. Frederic was a man of deep humility in imitation of his patron, Vincent. Frederic saw humility as a hallmark virtue for every Vincentian and for the Society in general.

Although Frederic was hard on himself, he was soft toward his neighbor. His heart was tender and soft with compassionate love for God's poor and abandoned (cf. Baubard, pp. 342-43).

When founding the Society, he said to his fellow Vincentian Le Taillandier, "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." "The blessing of the poor is the blessing of God" (Baubard, p. 65).

To what degree must we love Jesus Christ in the person of the poor. Frederic says, "Even to martyrdom" (Baunard, p. 97). "The world has grown cold, it is for us Catholics to rekindle the vital fire which has been extinguished" (Letter #90, February 23, 1835).

These words of Frederic remind us of St. Vincent's words:

"It is our vocation to set people's hearts ablaze, to do what the Son of God did, who came to light a fire on earth in order to set it ablaze with His love" (SV, Conference #207, May 30, 1659).

Frederic says:

"It is for us to inaugurate the era of the martyrs, for it is a martyrdom possible to every Christian, to give one's life for God and for one's brothers, to give one's life in sacrifice is to be a martyr. It is indifferent whether the sacrifice be consummated at one moment, or whether slowly consuming, it fills the altar night and day with sweet perfume. To be a martyr is to give back to heaven all that one has received, health, life, our whole soul. If it is in our power to make this offering, this sacrifice. It is for us to select the altar to which we shall dedicate it..." (Letter #90, February 23, 1835).

St. Vincent says:

"May it please God, Fathers and Brothers, that all those who wish to join the Company enter it with the thought of martyrdom in mind with the desire to suffer martyrdom in it and to devote themselves entirely to the service of God ... is there anything more reasonable than to give ourselves to Him who has so generously given Himself for us all such as we are? (SV Conferences #159 and #170 to C. M.).

Frederic Ozanam practiced what he believed. His life was the life of a martyr \_ slowly consuming. He gave back to heaven all that he had received. He made the sacrifice; he chose his altar.

"Let us aid one another, my dear friend, by example and advice. Let us strive that our trust in grace may equal our distrust of nature. Let us be strong even in suffering, for weakness is the malady of the times. Let us remember that we have already lived a third of our existence, and that we have lived by the goodness of others; we must live what is left, for the good of others. Let us do without hesitation whatever good lies at our hand (Letter #160, October 5, 1837).

Suffering was part of that sacrificial offering of himself to God. His frail health was his constant cross. In his later years, he would experience intense pain. His attitude changed from one of hope for full recovery to one of resignation and acceptance.

On April 23, 1853, Frederic's fortieth birthday, he composed his last will and testament. In summary fashion, he gives us the credo of his life. He speaks not only beautifully of suffering, but gives us a glance at the depth of his spirituality.

"I know that I have today completed my fortieth year, more than half my life span. I know that I have a young and beloved wife, a charming daughter, fine brothers, a second mother, many friends, an honorable career; my work has

progressed to the point where it can serve as a basis for the undertaking that I have dreamed of for a long time. Yet, I find myself stricken with a severe and persistent illness, which only hides a state of extreme fatigue. Must I forsake all the good things that you, my Lord, have given me? Could you not be satisfied with only part of the sacrifice? Which of my prized possessions should I immolate: my literary pride, my academic ambitions, even my research projects which perhaps were undertaken more to satisfy my pride than out of a real zeal for truth? If I sold half of my books and gave the money to the poor, and if, limiting my activities to my professional duties, I spent the rest of my life visiting the poor, teaching the apprentices and the soldiers, would you, O Lord, be satisfied? Would you let me grow in years to enjoy the sweet company of my wife and complete the education of my child?

That perhaps is not what you want! You do not accept such offerings based on self-interest; you reject my sacrifice. It is my life that you are requesting. At the beginning of the Book, it is written that I must do Thy will. So I said: "Here I am, O Lord!" (Bunard, p. 386).

Amelie enveloped Frederic in her love and tenderness but, in her heart, she had come to realize that he only was getting worse physically and that it was only a matter of time. Frederic knew it as well as indicated by his words in his last will and testament.

During the remaining months of his life when he was seeking to establish the Society more extensively in Italy, he said to the conference in Florence:

"Oh, How many times, overwhelmed by some interior pain, worried about my badly strengthened health, full of sadness, I entered the house of a poor man entrusted to my care, and there, upon the sight of so many wretched people, more deserving of pity than I, I reproached myself for my discouragement, I felt stronger against pain, I thanked this unfortunate man who had consoled and fortified me through the observation of his own miseries! And how since then, wouldn't I have loved him more?" (Bunard, pp. 343-4).

These words are truly inspiring, and words to remember as we visit the homes of the poor and sick!

Frederic Ozanam, founder of our Society of St. Vincent de Paul, was indeed an extraordinary individual, a man of many talents, a man of outstanding holiness. But another remarkable quality of his character was his equilibrium, the balance, which he maintained in his life. Besides the time and energy he needed for the ordinary human necessities of life, there was his professional career of teaching (which, after all, supported him financially and, after marriage, supported his wife and daughter as well), his ministerial life primarily with the Society, his writing and publication, his social life with family, friends and colleagues, and his spiritual life. Frederic was able to hold all these components in balance.

At a recent meeting of pastors, the issue of balance was discussed in some detail. How difficult it is to keep balance in one's life as an ordained or unordained minister of the Gospel. It is easy to fall into the trap of becoming so engrossed in one's ministerial life that other areas of life suffer great negligence, e.g., health, relationships, prayer, etc.

Frederic Ozanam attained what so many search for: balance in our lives. An image for Frederic could well be that of an exceptional juggler who can keep all kinds of objects in

the air at the same time. These things have different shapes and sizes and colors; but he has them all going at the same time.

Frederic was a magnificent juggler. While he held everything in balance, while he was a man of equilibrium, we must remember that he did not give equal percentages to each segment. Maintaining balance in one's life does not mean that one's family or community gets 20%, one's work gets 20%, one's ministry with the Society gets 20%, one's social life gets 20%, one's personal needs get 20% \_ all adding up to 100%, the totality of time in a day or week.

That is one way to have balance: to divide up one's time in equal portions, but that is not the human reality. Ordinarily \_ humanly \_ certain things demand varying percentages, greater amount of time and attention; there are primary considerations in our life which are more important than others. And, of course, certain things will call for more attention and time than other things will do according to circumstances and unforeseeable demands.

For example, sometimes the family needs our undivided attention and our available time, or our employment will, or our health will call for radical changes in our life, suddenly and uncompromisingly. This is seen in the life of Frederic Ozanam, particularly during the last years of his life when his health became so frail.

How Frederic could manage his life so well. How he could move so quickly and effectively from one area to another and give his complete attention and concentration to that matter at hand!

## **Providence**

One of the prime characteristics of the spirituality of St. Vincent de Paul and Frederic Ozanam is their belief in and adherence to Divine Providence. They saw God's plan operative everywhere. They trusted that God was truly providing for them, always acting in their lives and in the lives of others \_ that God's will was being accomplished.

There is such a close connection between doing the will of God and following God's providence. We see this in Vincent's letters. He writes:

"O Monsieur, what a happiness to will nothing but what God wills, to do nothing but what is in accord with the occasion Providence presents, and to have nothing but what God in His Providence has given us" (SV III, 188).

We must "will what Divine Providence wills" (SV VI, 476) is one of the ways St. Vincent combines the two. "Perfection consists in so uniting our will to God's that His will and ours, properly speaking, form only one will and non-will" (SV XI, 318).

Vincent believed that God was truly the author of the Ladies of Charity, the Congregation of the Mission, the Daughters of Charity and all the good that he had done in the service of the poor.

Frederic writes to Mr. Emmanuel Bailly, the first president of the Society:

"Beyond doubt Providence does not need us for the execution of its merciful designs, but we need it and it promises us its assistance only on the condition

of our efforts ... carry on the work begun and work for its propagation and consolidation" (Letter #135, October 22, 1836).

Frederic says a year later:

"Our little Society of St. Vincent de Paul has grown large enough to be a providential fact" (Letter #160, October 5, 1837).

St. Vincent writes:

"Grace has its moments. Let us abandon ourselves to the Providence of God and be very careful not to run ahead of it .... and let us put our feet only on the paths Providence has marked out for us" (SV II, 453).

Frederic writes:

"Let us pray for each other, my very dear friend, let us be on our guard against our troubles, our grieves, our very lack of confidence. Let us walk simply in the path where a merciful Providence leads us, content to see the stone wherever we are to place our foot, without desiring to see the length or the windings of the way" (Bauard, p. 131).

St. Vincent says:

"A consolation Our Lord gives me ... to believe that by the grace of God, we have always tried to follow and not to anticipate Providence which knows how to conduct all things so wisely to the end Our Lord destines for them" (SV II, 456).

Frederic writes:

"Those weekly evening meetings are one of the greatest consolations Providence has left me" (Letter #169, February 7, 1838).

When Frederic was only 17 years old, he wrote:

"I hold that Providence here directs the arm of temporal power, and Providence has its own ways" (Letter #11, May 5, 1830).

Later he wrote:

"My future I leave in the hands of Providence. I shall accept willingly whatever place he will be pleased to assign me to, however lowly it may be. It will be always noble, if it be filled worthily" (Bauard, pp. 89-90).

"You see that I, too, have scruples and must spurn them in order to accomplish the will of Providence as Providence allows me to see it" (Letter #308, April 30, 1841).

Frederic has beautiful and inspiring thoughts on the role of Divine Providence in his life. He writes to his wife, Amelie:

"Three years ago, when the success of my teaching was uncertain, I did not falter, I did not listen to dictates of self-interest: I sought in my career knowledge only. I believe that it was God who thus inspired me, and made me act with a confidence that was foreign to my weak character. Then Providence led you into my path, and I offered you the sharing of a life poor, for long and perhaps obscure, but sanctified, ennobled by the cultivation of all that is beautiful: I offered you solitude far from all belonging to you, but with the tenderness of a heart which had never belonged to anyone but you" (Letter #515, October 13, 1843).

Frederic writes to his close friend François Lallier:

"Each day, revealing numerous merits in her who is mine, increases my debt to Providence..." (Letter #331, June 28, 1841)

It may well be running the risk of being too simplistic to say, then, that the Vincentian concept of Divine Providence can be summarized in several key phrases:

"We must will what Divine Providence wills.  
Grace has its moments.  
Let us abandon ourselves to Providence.  
Do not run ahead of Providence.  
Do not run behind Providence.  
Follow Providence on the path it leads without desiring to know its length or windings."

### **The Blessed Virgin Mary**

Frederic died on September 8th, the Feast of the Birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary. It was an appropriate day for his death, because of Frederic's devotion to Mary. It was he who pushed for placing the Society under the patronage of the Blessed Virgin, shortly after the founding of the Society. It was also decided to celebrate the Feast of the Immaculate Conception with special devotion. The Hail Mary was added to the prayers of the weekly meeting of the Society.

The shrine of Notre Dame de Fourvière, on the hill overlooking the city of Lyon, always held a special place in the prayer of Frederic. He had great devotion to the Mother of God. It was here at the foot of the altar of Our Lady's shrine at the age of 21 that he resolved to sanctify himself through greater sacrifice. He wrote: "I placed my intentions under the auspices of our Divine Mother, trusting for the rest to my good will" (Bauard, p. 98).

The dread of cholera in September 1835 hovered over the city of Lyon. It was advancing within ten miles of the city limits. A large crowd gathered at the Shrine of Notre Dame de Fourvière to chant the penitential psalms. Frederic says:

"God has for the second time glorified His Blessed Mother and consoled our poor city; the hand which threatened to crush us, for the second time, extended to bless us. The name Notre Dame de Fourvière no longer brings a sneer to the lips of the impious man, who cannot help thinking that, possibly, he owed his life to her protection" (Letter September 23, 1835; Bauard, p.108).

Frederic wrote to a member of the Society:

"My dear friend, may each one of us, as he increases in years, increase also in friendship, piety and zeal to do good! May our whole life be passed under the patronage of those to whom we have dedicated our youth: Vincent de Paul, the Blessed Virgin, and Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (Letter #157, August 21, 1837).

Frederic saw much of the Mother of God in his own mother, Marie. She, like Mary, was a gentle woman, a devoted mother and wife. Frederic remembers how his mother prayed for him when he was in danger of death at age seven, and he remembered how he survived the ravage of typhoid fever at the time when he was left to the mercy of God. The Ozanams were convinced that it was truly a miracle due to the intercession of St. Francis Regis, the French Jesuit saint to whom they had a special devotion. When Frederic's daughter was born, he and Amelie named her Marie after his mother and the Mother of God.

In January 1853, in hope to recover his failing health, Amelie took Frederic to Italy. In mid-July, they settled in a home at the foot of Montenero on the outskirts of Livorno. There is a famous shrine there dedicated to Our Mother of Grace. Frederic and his family prayed there for his recovery. This was the same shrine where St. Elizabeth Ann Seton prayed during her stay in Livorno.

Two months before his death, Frederic wrote to his brother, Charles, from Burgos, Spain:

"Ah! Blessed Virgin, my Mother, what a powerful Lady you are! And in return for your poor house in Nazareth, how your divine Son caused beautiful houses to be built for you. I have know of many beautiful ones, from Notre Dame of Cologne to Saint Mary Major and Saint Mary of Florence to Notre Dame of Chartres. It was of little moment to have at your service the Italians, the Germans and the French. But here the Spanish, who pass for the least able workers in the world, leave their swords and become masons so that you will also have a home among them. Good Virgin, you who have obtained these miracles, obtain also something for us and our people. Strengthen this fragile and shattered house of our bodies; make the spiritual structure of our souls ascend into heaven" (Letter November 18, 1852 as found in Paris, p. 128).

## **Marriage**

Monsignor Helmut Moll, of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, writing in the Vatican newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano* (#35, August 30, 1995), said that the time is right to declare more married couples as saints, especially given the heroic virtues needed to keep modern marriages together. "Staying together in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health, shows an heroic degree of virtue."

The Vatican is looking for couples "whose love never faded, whose promise of mutual fidelity was never broken and who unmasked such solutions as 'trial marriage' or 'limited marriage'."

Frederic married the girl of his dreams, Amelie Soulacroix, on June 23, 1841, in the Church of St. Nizier, Lyon. Frederic was twenty-eight; Amelie was twenty. Frederic's parents were both deceased by then. His brother, Alphonse, a priest, witnessed the marriage.

Frederic's other brother, Charles, the doctor, assigned. Frederic trembled as he placed the ring on Amelie's finger. He said:

"I could hardly contain my tears, tears of joy as they were. And, I felt the divine benediction descend upon me as I heard the words of consecration" (Letter #331, June 28, 1841).

Frederic wrote to his close friend, François Lallier, in the same letter:

"Since the five days that we have been together, I have allowed myself to be happy. I count neither the minutes nor the hours. I have lost all track of time. What does the future matter? Happiness in the present is eternity. I have found heaven" (Letter #331).

Frederic never stopped singing his praises of Amelie or speaking of his love for her. He writes:

"Come, then, my well-beloved, my dove, my angel, come into my arms, against my heart, come bringing me yours so pure and generous; come and God bless you that after two years we love each other a thousand times more than on the first day!" (Letter #515, October 13, 1843).

He also spent quality time with their daughter, Marie; he taught her how to read. When Marie was two and a half, Frederic and Amelie took her with them to visit the poor on the Rue Mouffetard. She helped to give out small items to the poor, including toys from her own playthings to the children. Her parents were teaching her at a very early age to learn how to share!

Remember, he was a man of passion. Do you know of any husband who gives his wife flowers every month on the anniversary of their marriage? Frederic never forgot to give Amelie flowers on the twenty-third of each month, including August 23rd, on his death-bed.

And Amelie adored Frederic. She took the best care of him all their married life. As a daughter of an educator, she had a solid understanding of what it meant to be a professor in an institution of higher learning. When Frederic's health began declining, on the advice of his doctors, Amelie took him to Italy with the hope that the warmer climate and friends would revive him and lift his spirits. Incidentally, while there, and in bad health, Frederic still helped to found several conferences of the Society, especially in cities which had resisted their establishment. The man of passion could not overlook any opportunity to activate the Society for the alleviation of the poor.

The days in Italy were relatively peaceful. Amazingly much of his pain had subsided, but it would not last. Frederic received the Sacrament of the Sick. The priest encouraged Frederic not to fear the Lord. Frederic replied:

"Why would I fear him? I love Him so much!" (Baunard, p. 403).

Frederic fell into a coma. He came out of it infrequently. When he did open his eyes, it was to say a brief prayer, to squeeze Amelie's hand or to thank those who were taking care of him.

On September 8, 1853, he spent a peaceful day. His face reflected an unusual serenity. Toward evening, his breathing gradually became labored and louder. He opened his eyes, looked at those around him, and cried in a loud voice: "My God, My God, have mercy on me" (Baubard, p. 403). Frederic breathed his last.

### **Frederic, A Man for the Third Millennium**

Frederic Ozanam speaks to every Christian man and woman on the brink of the third millennium. He exemplifies what is most noble of the human spirit. Frederic fulfills the ideals set forth by Vatican II, particularly those found in the Decrees on the Church, the Lay Apostolate and the more recent *Christifideles Laici*. Frederic models those words of St. Paul, "I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some" (1 Cor. 9:22).

Frederic's spirituality is the spirituality that appeals to the full range of humanity: from the ordinary Christian person on the streets of a bulging city to the extraordinary person in the halls of academia or in the offices of one of the major corporations in the world.

His spirituality fulfills the dual commandments of Jesus: "love God and love your neighbor as yourself." Frederic combined these into one mandate of love, after his patron, St. Vincent de Paul. For Frederic, as for Vincent, love was love; there was one love. The human person's quest has to be a lover of one's fellow human being in imitation of Jesus, Love Incarnate. Frederic's spirituality followed the famous principle of St. Vincent: "Let us love God, let us love God, but let it be with the sweat of our brows and by the strength of our arms."

Frederic's dream was to be an apostle and martyr. In a sense, he realized that dream in his short life of loving service to humankind, although, in humility, he would never had admitted it.

But the fact remains: Frederic was an apostle \_ one sent forth \_ to alleviate the spiritual and material misery of his less fortunate brothers and sisters. He was sent by God for the service of truth. He wrote, spoke and taught the truth; he was one of the leading apologists of the Church of his day. Frederic was a martyr \_ a witness \_ to the Son of God's compassionate love for the poor and abandoned. Frederic echoed the words of St. Vincent: The poor are our masters.

Why should Christians in the third millennium be interested in or inspired by the life and spirituality of Frederic Ozanam?

Like St. Elizabeth Ann Seton and St. Louise de Marillac (two other imitators and followers of the person and spirituality of St. Vincent), Frederic Ozanam was not the recipient of apparitions, audible locutions, or supernatural phenomena associated with the higher degrees of contemplative prayer. Nor was Frederic an active agent of miracles or unexplainable events. Here, again, Frederic was matching his patron, St. Vincent de Paul.

Frederic was ordinary in the sense that he was a man of faith who truly believed and lived that belief \_ and expressed the love of God in compassionate love to God's poor, abandoned and forgotten.

The spirituality of Frederic Ozanam is that of the person in the pew who burns with the desire to love God and neighbor and who, also, wants to put into practice that love. The

spirituality of Frederic Ozanam is that of prayer and action, each supporting and fostering the other. The spirituality of Frederic Ozanam is the spirituality of humility, simplicity, mortification, meekness and zeal for souls. The spirituality of Frederic Ozanam is that of the Good Samaritan, the person who ardently practices the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. The spirituality of Frederic Ozanam is the spirituality of St. Vincent de Paul who believes and recognizes that it is truly Jesus in that person of the poor before him. For Frederic, the poor person was the Risen Jesus; for Frederic, the poor person was the sacred image of the God whom he did not see, "and not knowing how to love Him otherwise shall we not love Him in your persons?" (Letter #137, November 13, 1836). The spirituality of Frederic Ozanam is the spirituality of compassion without judgement.

### **Citations**

- 1) All references to LETTERS follow the numbering of Letters in the French Critical Edition: *Lettres de Frédéric Ozanam*.
- 2) All references to BAUNARD are found in *Ozanam in His Correspondence* by Msgr. Baunard. I do not know if the English translation follows the original French edition in its pagination. My references are to the English translation.
- 3) References to "Paris" are found in "Frederic Ozanam," translated from the French into English by Mary Ann Garvey Hess. *Cahiers Ozanam*, January to June 1974, Paris.
- 4) All other citations are specified, e.g., *Lumen Gentium*, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, *Christifideles Laici*.
- 5) References to St. Vincent's conferences are found in "Correspondance, Entretiens, Documents, Paris, 1920-1925.



# The History Of The Cause for the Beatification Of Frederick Ozanam

by Roberto D'Amico CM  
Postulator General

The Venerable Frederick Ozanam lived in the first half of the 19th century. His life, of barely 40 years, spanned a period when French and European politics, as well as the history of the Church, were undergoing upheavals which, up to then, would have seemed unthinkable. During his brief adulthood Frederick was someone who felt deeply about things, and who lived intensely. He made a notable contribution to culture, to society and, above all, to the apostolate of the laity in the Church. The effects of this have happily lasted up to the present day.

He died in 1853, venerated and respected by all who loved him and also by some who had opposed him, with obvious indications that he had a reputation for holiness. Writings honouring him and showing the sort of person he was began appearing even before his death, but naturally increasing after it. In 1855, just two years after his death, his *Oeuvres complètes* (Complete Works) were published, in view of the on-going good effects of his writings and teaching which had begun during his short life. In 1879 his brother, Mgr Alphonse Ozanam, published a fuller biography, following the short one written by the great Dominican preacher Fr Lacordaire.

In 1913 the centenary of Ozanam's birth was celebrated by the Society of St Vincent de Paul by publishing a "Centenary Book". In this work historians and men of letters stressed that our Venerable was not merely a learned man but one rich in the greatest virtues, to the point of being worthy of the title "saint".

At this stage it was felt necessary to start the ordinary [i.e. diocesan] process for beatification.

The delay was due to the obvious need for an in-depth study of someone so involved, and in so many ways, in the world of the laity, and to the unfavorable political climate in France, and to the World War.

It was not, therefore, till 10 June 1925 (72 years after the death of the Venerable) that the Ordinary Process began in Paris. This was to examine his reputation for holiness, his virtues, and any alleged miracles. It was hardly surprising that only one witness (N<sup>o</sup> 14) could claim that when he was a small boy he had known him. The other thirty gave evidence of what they had heard from those who had lived with him. Along with the oral evidence many important documents were collected, especially material written by his widow.

In September 1932 the *Informatio super introductione Causae* was ready, but the *Animadversiones* requested at that time by the General Promoter of the Faith were not ready till 1952.

In the years 1955-56 the Apostolic process was held in the Chancery Office of the

archdiocese of Paris, more than 100 years after the death of the Venerable.

All this meant that the cause would have a historical aspect, and we are enormously grateful to Fr Etienne Diebold whose tireless work produced a very important historical publication of about 1,300 pages entitled *Disquisitio de vita et actuositate Servi Dei* and subtitled *Etude critique et Documents*. Thanks to this work and to the *Positio super virtutibus -- Informatio et Summarium*, Rome 1990, the Historical Consultors on March 3, 1992, and the Special Congress of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints on December 18, 1992, gave affirmative replies to the questions concerning the historical consistency of the cause and the heroicity of the virtues of the Servant of God.

Subsequently the cardinals and bishops in an ordinary session on May 4, 1993, gave a unanimous favorable decision on the holiness of the Servant of God.

Finally, the Holy Father, welcoming and ratifying the replies of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, ordered the drawing up of the Decree on the heroicity of virtues, on July 6, 1993.

After the publication of the Decree the postulator presented to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints a case of healing, attributed to the intercession of the same Venerable, in order to have its miraculous nature recognized with a view to beatification.

The case concerns an eighteen month old Brazilian boy, Fernando Benedetto Ottoni, afflicted with "a serious form of diphtheria affecting his total physical health", who was healed at the beginning of February back in 1926 in Nova Friburgo, Brazil. This person is still alive.

At a meeting of the medical consulters on June 22, 1995, there was unanimous agreement on the inexplicability, from the natural and scientific points of view, of the healing of this little boy.

At an ordinary meeting of the theological consulters on November 24, 1995, there was unanimous agreement on the miraculous nature of the healing and on its attribution to the intercession of the Venerable Servant of God Frederick Ozanam.

At an ordinary meeting of the cardinals and bishops on May 21, 1996, there was unanimous agreement on the reliability and soundness of the proofs, and on the miracle attributed to the Venerable Ozanam.

On June 25 the Holy Father, by the Decree *super miro*, ratified the decision of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints.

On August 22, 1997, the Holy Father John Paul II, within the framework of the celebrations for the World Youth Day in Paris, will beatify Frederick Ozanam.

Thomas Davitt CM, translator

# THE MISSION

*Fr. Robert P. Maloney, C.M.  
Superior General*

"Congregation of the Mission" is our name. Popular usage, "reflecting Divine Providence," gave it to us, St. Vincent tell us.[fo1] The name makes our vocation clear: we are missionaries.

It is important to note from the start that our name is not "Congregation of the Missions." In other words, "the mission" is not to be identified with "the popular missions." St. Vincent, while always emphasizing the place of the popular missions,[fo2] makes it very clear that "the mission" can be carried out in a variety of other ways.[fo3]

Basically, Vincent was convinced that the Company is called, on its deepest level, to continue the mission of Jesus. Christ, the Evangelizer of the Poor, was, for him, the foundation for who we are, what we do, and how we do it. The Lord's words, "he sent me to preach the good news to the poor,"[fo4] were repeatedly on Vincent's lips.

*Are we not then most happy to belong to the Mission, which has for its end the very thing that induced God to become man? And if a missionary were questioned, would it not be a great honor for him to be able to say with the Lord: "He sent me to preach the good news to the poor. I am here in this world to catechize, instruct, confess, and help the poor."[fo5]*

He tells the Company in another place: "How happy will they be who can say at the hour of their death these beautiful words of Our Lord: `God sent me to preach the good news to the poor!'"[fo6]

Recently, I wrote at some length about "Being a Missionary Today." [fo7] In this article, I want to focus on the *mission itself today*. I will proceed in three steps: 1) its characteristics, 2) some contemporary ways of actualizing it, 3) some consequences in the life of the missionary.

## I. Characteristics of "The Mission"

I offer here four characteristics, though I am very conscious that there are many others. I choose these four not only because they are fundamental historically, but also because they seem to me particularly urgent in our present-day context.

### 1. *It is mobile.*

Hardly anything could be clearer in the New Testament. Jesus comes from the Father and returns to the Father,[fo8] the source of all mission. He engages in an itinerant ministry. He gives his followers a mandate: "Go into the whole world and preach the gospel to every creature." [fo9] Mission is part of the very being of Jesus himself and of the being of the Church.

St. Vincent is eloquent on the need for missionary mobility: "Let us imagine that He says to us: `Go forth, missionaries, go forth. What, are you still here? Look at the poor souls who are awaiting you, whose salvation perhaps depends upon your preaching and catechesis!'"[fo10] He holds up before the eyes of the Company the great missionaries of other communities who had gone to the Indies, to Japan, to Canada "to complete the work which Jesus Christ began on earth and never abandoned from the moment he was called." [fo11]

He was, of course, very aware that some things would hold the missionaries back, particularly the desire to have material goods, pleasure, honor.[fo12] For that reason he saw the vows as a liberating force in the life of the missionary. Those who committed their whole lives to the service of the poor in chastity, poverty, and obedience were truly free! They were mobile!

*Those who become detached from the desire for worldly goods, from the longing for pleasure, and from their own will become children of God. They enjoy perfect freedom. For it is only in the love of God that real freedom is found. They are people who are free, my brothers, who know no law, who fly, who go left and right, who fly still more. No one can hold them back. They are never slaves of the devil nor of their own passions. O, how happy is the freedom of the children of God! [fo13]*

2. *It is global.*

As Karl Rahner often pointed out, it is only in the 20th century that Catholicism has truly become a "world-Church".[fo14] Living here in Rome I experience this dramatically, since we have rapid communication with almost all of the provinces throughout the world. One sees striking differences and varied "faces" in the worldwide Congregation; e.g., the diminishing number of vocations to the priesthood in Western Europe and the United States; the increasing number of vocations in Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America. At the same time, with the opening of new missions in remote places like Tanzania, the Solomon Islands, Albania, the Altiplano of Bolivia, Mozambique, China, Charkib in the Ukraine, and Siberia, the Congregation is becoming even more international.

Whereas in the period immediately after Vatican II there was significant emphasis on *provincial* identity, government, and norms, today there is a revitalized awareness within the Congregation of our global missionary nature. This is very much the way St. Vincent envisioned the Congregation. In an era when travel was difficult and most people died within a few miles of their birthplace, he sent missionaries to Poland, Italy, Algeria, Madagascar, Ireland, Scotland, the Hebrides, and the Orkneys. He himself in his old age longed to set out for the Indies.[fo15]

3. *It is evangelizing.*

The core of our mission is evangelization, which, in the Catholic tradition, has always been a broad, inclusive concept.[fo16] As Paul VI pointed out: "Evangelization is a complex process made up of varied elements: the renewal of humanity, witness, explicit proclamation, inner adherence, entry into the community, acceptance of signs, apostolic initiative. These

elements may appear to be contradictory, indeed mutually exclusive. In fact, they are complementary and mutually enriching. Each one must always be seen in relationship with the others."[fo17]

St. Vincent told us that we must first do and then teach. Evangelization, for him, involves not just preaching but action too. Again and again, therefore, he spoke of evangelization by "word and work." He calls both the Vincentians and Daughters of Charity to serve the poor "spiritually and corporally." When speaking to the members of the Congregation, he warned us:[fo18]

*If there are any among us who think they are in the Congregation of the Mission to preach the good news to the poor but not to comfort them, to supply their spiritual but not their temporal wants, I reply that we ought to assist them and have them assisted in every way, by ourselves and by others... To do this is to preach the gospel by words and by works.*

In a similar way, but coming from the other direction, he tells the Daughters of Charity again and again that their works must be accompanied by words of faith.[fo19]

First, do. Then, teach. That is St. Vincent's rule for "effective" evangelization. In other words, St. Vincent sees human promotion and preaching as complementary to one another, and as integral to the evangelization process.

In light of St. Vincent's teaching, our evangelization will be fully alive when we proclaim the good news:

- a. through the language of works:[fo20] performing the works of justice and mercy which are a sign that the kingdom of God is really alive among us: feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, helping to find the causes of their hunger and thirst and the ways of alleviating it;
- b. through the language of words: announcing with deep conviction the Lord's presence, his love, his offer of forgiveness to all;
- c. through the language of relationships: being *with* the poor, working *with* them, forming a community that shows the Lord's love for all.

4. *It involves organizing and forming others in the service of the poor.*

St. Vincent was adamant about this. The missionaries were to establish the Confraternities of Charity wherever they went.[fo21] Few saints are as concrete as Vincent de Paul. He realized that effective evangelization of the poor would require organization. To accomplish this end, Vincent founded two communities and formed numerous lay groups.

He brought the same organizational skills to the formation of the clergy, which St. Vincent depicted sometimes as "almost equal"[fo22] and sometimes as "equal"[fo23] to that of the mission. He felt that the poor would be served well only if there were good priests to minister to them, and, to that end, he organized retreats for ordinands and priests, as well as the Tuesday Conferences, besides founding 20 seminaries.

Nor he did not stop there. He marshalled all of the resources he could find in the service of the poor: clergy and lay, young and old, men and women, the rich and the poor themselves. The seeds of his organizational gifts continued to spread even after his death.

A recent study[fo24] points out that over 165 groups share in the Vincentian charism. At present there are 250,000 members of AIC (Ladies of Charity), 900,000 members of the Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul, 200,000 members of various Vincentian Marian Youth groups, with 46,000 in Spain alone and 7,000 in Mexico.

## II. Actualizing the Mission today

The mission of every group must be "actualized" in every era;[fo25] otherwise, the group remains static, and eventually it withers and dies.[fo26]

Changing circumstances in society make it necessary for the Church to adjust its missionary vision and practices continually. Recent popes, particularly Paul VI in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* and John Paul II in *Redemptoris Missio*, have reminded us of the new challenges that face those engaged in an evangelizing mission. They speak of:

- ☐ the "new areopagi";[fo27] that is, new sectors in which the gospel must be proclaimed – such as the world of communication, science, and international relations – particularly as the Church seeks to promote peace, human development, and the liberation of peoples.[fo28]
- ☐ new means of communication which are available to the evangelizer in catechizing, preaching, and teaching, but which also form part of a new "information culture" which is itself badly in need of evangelization.[fo29]
- ☐ new forms of poverty, different from those of other eras, which challenge missionaries as they attempt to give flesh to the Church's preferential option for the poor.[fo30]
- ☐ a new evangelization, new in its ardor, its methods, and its expression.[fo31]

St. Vincent himself provides us with the key for actualizing our own mission. In fact, he repeats it again and again: *he sent me to preach the good news to the poor.*[fo32] Our Constitutions state the same foundational principle with utter clarity: "The purpose of the Congregation is to follow Christ, the Evangelizer of the Poor." [fo33] Whatever we do must be done in this light. All actualizations, directly or indirectly, should be expressions of that basic constitutional statement.

Article 12 of our Constitutions, the Lines of Action of the General Assembly of 1986, and

the document, "The Visitors in Service of the Mission" (n. 16), propose to us a very demanding pastoral methodology as we preach the good news to the poor:

- to work within the world of the poor, not just with isolated persons (Lines of Action, 4 and 11);
- to work on the level of structures, not just in responding to particular situations (Lines of Action, 6 and 11);
- to work to confront injustice, not just to meet the needs of individual poor people (Lines of Action, 4 and 11);
- to work with groups (small communities), so that the poor person is a subject, and not merely an object, of evangelization (Lines of Action, 5 and 11).[fo34]

Let me reflect briefly upon some of the principal contemporary ways of actualizing the mission.

### 1. *Giving popular missions*

Even if, as pointed out above, it is important to avoid the mistake of identifying "the mission" with "the missions," nonetheless St. Vincent regarded the work of the missions as "the primary and most important of our ministries to people." [fo35] Today, in some countries, popular missions have less appeal, and apparently less efficacy, than in former times. In much of the world, however, they are still an effective evangelizing tool. It is therefore important that this work be renewed in the Congregation. There have already been some very creative efforts in this regard within the worldwide Congregation. [fo36] These renewed missions have several distinctive characteristics:

- a) a time of significant preparation (the pre-mission),
- b) the organization and training of a mission team, often involving a large number of priests, deacons, sisters, brothers, and lay men and women,
- c) an extended time period within the area of the mission (the time varies),
- d) catechesis and reflection on the word of God within small groups,
- e) involvement of the *local* clergy and laity in the mission itself,
- f) organization of works of charity within the mission area,
- g) follow-up.

### 2. *Formation of the clergy*

St. Vincent was utterly clear in seeing this as part of our mission. "At the beginning," he told the confreres on December 6, 1658, "the Company was occupied only with itself and the poor, but in the fullness of time he called us to contribute to the making of good priests..." [fo37]

In recent years, with changing circumstances and the diminishing number of vocations in Western Europe and the United States, this work has suffered considerably. Nonetheless, there are still many possibilities for taking part in it:

- a) ministering in diocesan seminaries in one's own country,
- b) forming "national" teams to staff diocesan seminaries in other countries,
- c) forming "international" teams to staff diocesan seminaries in other countries,
- d) providing spiritual directors and confessors for seminaries or for dioceses,
- e) giving retreats for seminarians and for priests,
- f) offering programs of ongoing formation for priests.
- g) offering hospitality

### 3. *Engaging in foreign missions*

There are few topics on which St. Vincent was more eloquent. He told the members of the Congregation of the Mission: "Let us ask God to give the Company this spirit, this heart, this heart which will make us go everywhere, this heart of the Son of God, the heart of Our Lord, the heart of Our Lord, the heart of Our Lord..."[fo38]

Today, within the Congregation, many provinces sponsor a foreign mission or share that responsibility with other provinces.[fo39] There has also been a resurgence of interest in foreign missions, with many confreres volunteering to take part in the new international missions.

One of the major challenges in the missions *Ad Gentes* today is enculturation, which the Daughters of Charity have chosen as the theme of their next General Assembly. Missionaries must seek ways to foster fuller enculturation of the gospel, so that Christianity and local cultures interact with one another at a deeper level, both enriching and purifying each other. This will demand of the missionary the ability to listen and dialogue as he attempts to discern the values resident within various cultures, as well as those cultural tendencies that work against the integral promotion of the human person.

Enculturation will also raise significant questions within our own formation programs. In our foreign missions, where frequently there are numerous vocations, those responsible for formation must, in dialogue with mature Christians within the local culture, concretize how simplicity, humility, gentleness, self-sacrifice, and zeal are expressed in that culture. Formation programs must also come to grips with the ways in which our vows can be presented and lived out within local cultures.

### 4. *Ministering to the Daughters of Charity*

St. Vincent was adamant that this was part of our mission:

*Did not the Son of God come to preach the gospel to the poor, to ordain priests, etc.? Yes. Did he not consent to have women associated with him? Yes. Did he not guide them toward perfection and toward helping the poor? Yes. If then Our Lord, who did all things for our instruction, did that, shall we not think that we are doing what is right by following him?*

The Congregation exercises this ministry especially by providing good Provincial Directors and spiritual directors[fo40] for the Daughters of Charity. We are also frequently

called upon to provide preachers for their retreats. Since the Daughters of Charity are a huge force in the service of the most abandoned, our ministry to them can bear significant fruit in the lives of the poor. Helping in the formation of the Daughters of Charity (and other groups that serve the most abandoned), while an indirect service of the poor, can be a very effective way of multiplying and enriching the energies of those who serve directly the spiritual and corporal needs of the poor.

5. *Organizing groups, especially the young, to serve the poor.*

As mentioned above, St. Vincent had wonderful skills as an organizer. I urge the Congregation to organize as he did.

Ministry to the young is extremely important today. They are the Church of the future. Several recent studies point out that young people seek:[fo41]

- ☐ explicit religious goals
- ☐ intense community life and solidarity
- ☐ explicit and worldwide service to the most needy.

I want to encourage members of the Congregation of the Mission throughout the world to gather young people together in order to share our Vincentian mission in the service of the poor. This can take the form of Vincentian Marian Youth groups, or other forms, depending on the local culture and its possibilities, but I urge all to make this one of the contemporary actualizations of the mission. Just as "the charities" spread throughout France in St. Vincent's time, let Vincentian youth groups of various kinds flourish where the members of the Congregation of the Mission and the Company of the Daughters of Charity serve.

Likewise, we should be among the first to organize local units of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and the International Association of Charity (AIC) wherever we may be, and to offer them the formation and spiritual accompaniment they so often eagerly seek from us.

6. *Organizing basic christian communities among the poor*

St. Vincent recognized the importance of communities of faith. For the various groups that he founded, he was careful to provide a rule, a way of life that under girded their works.

Today, as has been evident since the time of *Evangelii Nuntiandi*,[fo42] and even before,[fo43] basic christian communities have a special place in the evangelizing activity of the Church. They are the beneficiaries of evangelization and, at the same time, evangelizers themselves. Such communities can be a primary locus for hearing and reflecting on the word of God as well as for organizing the means of practical charity that will be of help in confronting the real needs of the poor.

7. *Missionary parishes – some questions*

I trust that the reader will forgive the Superior General's folly in raising significant questions about a work in which so many confreres are engaged.

I have no doubt that there are, within the Congregation, genuinely missionary parishes, which are truly an actualization of "the mission." Nonetheless, Statute 10 lays down a number of conditions for verifying whether parishes are really a manifestation of our mission: a) that the apostolate which we exercise there is in accordance with the purpose and nature of our institute, b) that the small number of pastors in the area requires our presence, c) that the parish consists, for the most part, of the really poor, or, d) that it is attached to a seminary where the confreres give pastoral formation.

A recent study in the United States makes this observation:

*The increasingly widespread insertion of members of religious orders into diocesan and parochial positions, to the point where such commitments take precedence over involvements in the lives of their congregations, is a growing phenomenon in the United States. This trend, which is known as parochial assimilation, has had a dramatic effect on most religious orders.... It easily can lead to a compromise of the prophetic role of members of religious life.[fo44]*

This phenomenon is not restricted to the United States. Our most recent statistics note that 1074 confreres are engaged in parish ministry, a very high percentage (31%) of our total membership. In comparison, the number of Vincentians involved in such foundational works of the community as popular missions and seminaries is small.

This leads me to ask whether it is legitimate for the Congregation of the Mission to be so heavily engaged in parish ministry and whether or not a significant number of our parishes actually do meet the criteria set out in Statute 10.

Let me suggest the following characteristics as a basis for evaluating whether a parish is truly "Vincentian" and "missionary:"

- a. it is among the really poor;
- b. the diocesan clergy lack the resources to staff it;
- c. our commitment there is temporally limited (hopefully, by a clear contract);
- d. we have definite missionary goals to be realized within that time frame;
- e. among these is the preparation of ongoing pastoral care in the future, particularly through training leaders in various ministries;
- f. organized works of practical charity are functioning in the parish in the service of the needy;
- g. Vincentian lay groups are being formed (Vincentian Marian Youth Groups, Society of

- St. Vincent de Paul, AIC, the Miraculous Medal Association, etc.);
- h. systematic instruction on the social teaching of the Church is offered;
  - i. the "style" of ministry is simple and humble;
  - j. it is an *evangelizing* parish, with strong emphasis on the word of God.

### **III. Implications for the Missionary**

Basically, St. Vincent says that our mission is the same as that of Jesus, who "described himself as the Evangelizer of the Poor." [fo45] This involves a whole spirituality in which the evangelizer himself is first evangelized. [fo46] In the introduction to the Common Rules he states: "My idea was that those who are called to continue Christ's mission, which is mainly preaching the good news to the poor, should see things from his point of view and want what he wanted. They should have the same spirit that he had, and follow in his footsteps." [fo47] In other words, he wants us to have Christ's mind and heart.

In one of his letters, St. Vincent writes that Jesus' mind and heart are caught up in two all-consuming directions, "his filial love for the Father and his charity toward the neighbor." [fo48] I was very struck recently as I read a contemporary Christological study. The authors stated: "We have seen that Jesus' relation with his Father was the center of his being. Nothing else competed for his allegiance. The closest thing to a rival for his love of God was his concern to help his fellow human beings, especially those who were suffering." [fo49] This is precisely St. Vincent's insight into the gospel. Let me suggest that these must be the all-consuming directions in the life of the missionary.

#### 1. *A filial relationship with God*

"Let us give ourselves to God," St. Vincent says repeatedly to the Vincentians, as well as to the Daughters of Charity. [fo50] He has deep confidence in a loving God, into whose hands he can place himself and his works. The journal written by Jean Gicquel recounts how Vincent told Frs. Alméras, Berthe, and Gicquel, on June 7, 1660, just four months before his death: "To be consumed for God, to have no goods nor power except for the purpose of consuming them for God. That is what Our Savior did himself, who was consumed for love of his Father." [fo51]

St. Vincent wanted love for God to be all-embracing. He writes to Pierre Escart: "... I greatly hope we may set about stripping ourselves entirely of affection for anything that is not God, be attached to things only for God and according to God, and that we may seek and establish His kingdom first of all in ourselves, and then in others. That is what I entreat you to ask of Him for me...." [fo52]

The missionary's filial relationship with God shows itself in two ways especially:

a. *devotion to providence*

For St. Vincent, God loves us deeply as a Father and as a Mother.[fo53] He exercises a continual providence in our lives. In a letter to Bernard Codoing, Vincent emphasizes the need to abandon ourselves to God's action in our lives: "The rest will come in its time. Grace has its moments. Let us abandon ourselves to the providence of God and be very careful not to run ahead of it. If it pleases God to give me some consolation in our vocation it is this. That I think, so it seems to me, that we have tried to follow his great providence in everything...."[fo54] Likewise he writes to Saint Louise de Marillac: "My God, my daughter, what great hidden treasures there are in holy Providence and how marvelously Our Lord is honored by those who follow it and do not kick against it!"[fo55]

In the life of the missionary, trust in providence shows itself in the ability to see beyond particular events to a larger picture, in patient waiting, in perseverance. But providence is also honored, as St. Vincent pointed out,[fo56] by using the means that God places at our disposal for accomplishing his goals. If a missionary is tempted to interpret St. Vincent's teaching on providence too passively, he might recall the founder's words to Edme Jolly:[fo57] "You are one of the few men who honor the Providence of God very much by the preparation of remedies against foreseen evils. I thank you very humbly for this and pray that Our Lord will continue to enlighten you more and more so that such enlightenment may spread through the Company. He tells Marc Coglée in 1652, that he likes to follow the maxim "that all licit and possible means should be used for the glory of God, as if God were not supposed to help us, provided we expect everything from his divine providence, as though we had no human means."[fo58]

b. *faithful prayer*

St. Vincent also calls his followers to stand constantly before God in prayer. Prayer, for Vincent, is the source of all good that the missionaries do: "Give me a man of prayer and he will be capable of everything."[fo59] Vincent recognized that Jesus, in the midst of his missionary activity, is always united with his Father,[fo60] who is the author of all the good that Jesus does.[fo61] Jesus constantly seeks his will.

In that light, St. Vincent tells the Daughters of Charity, "... Our Lord was, above all, a man of prayer."[fo62] In his Rule for the missionaries, he states: "Although we cannot perfectly imitate Christ our Lord who spent whole nights in prayer to God in addition to his daily meditations, nevertheless we will do so as far as we are able."[fo63]

Vincent is utterly convinced of the importance of the union of action and contemplation that he sees in Christ. He tells his followers that vocational stability and the on-going vitality of their works depends on prayer.[fo64] The missionary spirit therefore involves, in the words of the Constitutions and after the example of St. Vincent himself, being "a contemplative in action and an apostle in prayer."[fo65] For St. Vincent, this is the only path to apostolic effectiveness: "Let us give ourselves fully to the practice of prayer, since through it all good comes to us. If we

persevere in our vocation, it is thanks to prayer. If we succeed in our work, it is thanks to prayer. If we do not fall into sin, it is thanks to prayer. If we remain in charity, if we are saved, all that is thanks to God and thanks to prayer."[fo66]

## 2. *His charity toward the neighbor.*

The love of missionaries is to be both "affective and effective." [fo67] They will minister to the poor "spiritually and corporally." [fo68] Vincent's view of Jesus' evangelizing activity is very broad. [fo69] This is clear in the mandates that he gives to the various groups he founded: the Confraternities of Charity, the Congregation of the Mission, and the Daughters of Charity. Today, the unity between evangelization and human promotion, so much a part of St. Vincent's spirit, is one of the linchpins in the Church's social teaching. [fo70]

But the "Vincentian way" of loving also has its own particular characteristics. In their evangelization and promotion of the poor, the missionaries are to be marked, St. Vincent teaches, by five virtues: [fo71] simplicity, humility, gentleness, self-sacrifice, and zeal.

In his conference of August 22, 1659, St. Vincent tells the members of the Congregation of the Mission that these five virtues are to be "the faculties of the soul of the entire Congregation." [fo72] In his conferences to the Daughters of Charity, he likewise focuses on simplicity and humility, in addition to charity itself. These missionary virtues are so important that one could dedicate an entire article to each. [fo73] Here I will touch on them only briefly, as St. Vincent saw them in Christ and as he held them up before those giving their lives to God in the service of the poor.

### *a. Simplicity*

Jesus, [fo74] the missionary of the Father, is utterly simple. He speaks the truth. [fo75] He says things as they are, [fo76] without concealing or hiding anything. [fo77] He refers things to God alone. [fo78] St. Vincent is so convinced of the importance of simplicity, as he finds it in Jesus, that he calls it "my gospel," [fo79] "the virtue I love most." [fo80] "Do you know where Our Lord dwells?" he asks. "It is among the simple." [fo81]

Today, just as in St. Vincent's time, simplicity means speaking the truth. It is an extremely important quality for a missionary. It is also a difficult discipline, especially when our own convenience is at stake or when the truth is embarrassing. But such genuineness, or transparency, remains very attractive to the modern men and women whom we are called to serve.

Simplicity also has a number of related meanings. It includes witnessing to the truth, or the personal authenticity that makes the missionary's life match his words. It involves seeking the truth as a wayfarer rather than possessing it as an "owner." As in St. Vincent's time, simplicity also means purity of intention, practicing the truth through works of justice and charity, developing a simple life-style, and using simple language, especially in preaching.

### *b. Humility*

Jesus,[fo82] the missionary of the Father, teaches us humility "by word and example."[fo83] Humility entails our recognition that all good comes from God.[fo84] It involves an acknowledgement of our own lowliness and faults,[fo85] accompanied by exuberant confidence in God.[fo86] Vincent urges the missionary to contemplate "that admirable model of humility, Our Lord Jesus Christ."[fo87] He marveled how the Son of God "emptied himself" (Phil 2:7).[fo88]

Today, as in St. Vincent's time, humility means that we recognize our creatureliness and our redeemedness, both being gifts of God's love. It shows itself in our gratitude for gifts, seeing all things as grace. Humility is concretized in the missionary's development of a "servant's attitude," a willingness to undertake even menial tasks in the service of the poor. It is also manifested in our willingness to be evangelized by the poor, "our lords and masters," as St. Vincent put it.

### *c. Gentleness*

Jesus himself tells us that he is gentle, St. Vincent writes.[fo89] This missionary virtue, for St. Vincent, is the ability to handle anger,[fo90] by tempering it and by finding ways of expressing it appropriately,[fo91] in a manner governed by love.[fo92]

Today, as in St. Vincent's time, gentleness enables the missionary to handle anger positively. Since anger is a natural energy that arises spontaneously within us when we perceive something as evil, it can be used well or badly. Those dedicated to the service of the gospel experience the ambiguous power of anger, just as do all other men and women. But St. Vincent assures us that anger can be transformed and expressed well. His own outrage at the plight of the poor was a powerful force in moving him to establish the Confraternities of Charity, the Vincentians, and the Daughters of Charity.

The gentle, St. Vincent is convinced, are approachable and affable.[fo93] They know how to combine love and firmness.[fo94] He writes to St. Louise de Marillac on November 1, 1637: "If the gentleness of your spirit needs a dash of vinegar, borrow a little of it from the spirit of Our Lord. O, Mademoiselle, how very well he knew how to find a bitter-sweet remark when it was needed."[fo95]

Vincent's example also demonstrates that the missionary can grow in developing gentleness and approachability. He confesses that his personal bent was somber, but that "I turned to God and earnestly begged him to change this irritable and forbidding disposition of mine, and to grant me a kindly and benign spirit. And with the grace of Our Lord, by giving a little attention to suppressing the turbulent impulses of my nature, I have been partially cured of my gloomy disposition."[fo96]

### *d. Self-sacrifice*

Jesus is the exemplar of self-sacrifice for the missionary. "Let us never lose sight of the mortification of Our Lord, seeing that, to follow him, we are obliged to mortify ourselves after his example."<sup>[fo97]</sup> Vincent defines mortification, or self-sacrifice, as the subjection of passion to reason.<sup>[fo98]</sup> It finds a very prominent place in his conferences, where he describes it in considerable detail.<sup>[fo99]</sup> To motivate his missionaries to engage in it, he cites many of the New Testament sayings recommending it.<sup>[fo100]</sup>

Today mortification tends to be misunderstood, and is consequently rather unpopular, perhaps because of distortions in the way it was proposed by some spiritual writers. But it is a very important missionary value. Contemporary "functional asceticism"<sup>[fo101]</sup> emphasizes that mortification is the renunciation of one good thing for the sake of another. It involves defining our missionary goals and channeling our limited energies toward them. Concretely, it can involve such things as: responding promptly to the calls of the community, particularly in accepting a mission; being faithful to the demands of the mission and giving them preference when they conflict with other more pleasurable pursuits; working hard in the service of the poor; rising promptly in the morning to support the community in prayer; being sparing in obtaining or accepting material possessions; being moderate in eating and drinking; employing a critical sense in using television, radio, movies, and other media; withholding critical and divisive words; being slow to ask for privileges; seeking to be with those who are less pleasing as well as with those to whom we are more attracted; giving generously of our time in order to take part in contemporary decision-making processes.

#### *e. Zeal*

Zeal is the burning missionary love that fills the heart of Jesus. "Let us ask God to give the Company this spirit, this heart, this heart which will make us go everywhere, this heart of the Son of God, the heart of Our Lord ...."<sup>[fo102]</sup> This fire of love enables the missionary to go anywhere and to do everything.<sup>[fo103]</sup> "The love of Christ drives us on"<sup>[fo104]</sup> is the motto for the mission of the Daughters of Charity.

Zeal is the virtue of missionary action. "If the love of God is the fire, zeal is its flame. If love is the sun, then zeal is its ray."<sup>[fo105]</sup> It aims "at extending the kingdom of God."<sup>[fo106]</sup> It is love in practice. "Let us love God, my brothers," Vincent de Paul cries out to the missionaries, "let us love God, but let it be with the strength of our arms and the sweat of our brows. So very often many acts of love of God, of resting in his presence, of benevolence, and such interior affections and practices, although very good and very desirable, are nevertheless to be suspected if they do not reach the practice of effective love."<sup>[fo107]</sup>

Today missionary zeal shows itself in "disponibility," a willingness to go anywhere in the service of the gospel. It is a love that is "inventive, even to infinity,"<sup>[fo108]</sup> and is therefore creative, persevering, faithful. As a consequence, especially in these rapidly changing times, the zealous missionary is ready to engage in ongoing formation in order to adapt to new works, or to new circumstances, or to new "ages" in life (like a "second career" or "retirement"). Zeal, since it is infectious and spreads, also manifest itself in an eagerness to seek other laborers for the

harvest.

One final word. The mission, if it is to remain fully alive, must on the one hand be firmly rooted in the Vincentian tradition and at the same time be continually renewed and inculturated in each historical era. The concrete forms in which the mission is embodied may, and at times should, vary significantly from age to age. For that reason the Congregation must, by faith-filled meditation on the gospels and creative attentiveness to the needs of the poor and those who serve them, remain in a state of continual renewal.[fo109]

*fo1 - Common Rules XI, 10 (henceforth, CR): "The name Missioners, or Priests of the Mission, clearly indicates that the work of the missions is the primary and most important of all ministries to people."*

*fo2 - Ibid.*

fo3 - SV XI, 135; XII, 85ff.

fo4 - Lk 4:18.

fo5 - SV XI, 108.

fo6 - SV XI, 135.

fo7 - Robert P. Maloney, *He Hears the Cry of the Poor*, (Hyde Park, New York: New City Press, 1995) 118-125.

fo8 - Jn 16:28; cf. Jn 1:1, Jn 14:28.

fo9 - Mk 16:15.

fo10 - SV XI, 134.

*fo11 - Ibid.*

fo12 - SV XII, 367.

fo13 - SV XII, 301.

fo14 - Karl Rahner, "The Abiding Significance of the Second Vatican Council," in *Theological Investigations XX*, 90-102; cf. also "The Future of the Church and the Church of the Future," in *Theological Investigations XX*, 103-14.

fo15 - SV XI, 402.

fo16 - Cf. Avery Dulles, "Seven Essentials of Evangelization," in *Origins* 25 (# 23; November 23, 1995) 397-400.

fo17 - *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 24.

fo18 - SV XII, 87.

fo19 - SV IX, 59; IX, 593; XI, 364; XI, 592.

fo20 - Cf. SV II, 4.

fo21 - CR I, 2.

fo22 - CR XI, 12.

fo23 - SV V, 489; VII, 561.

fo24 - Betty Ann McNeil, *Monograph 1: The Vincentian Family Tree*, to be published by the Vincentian Studies Institute.

fo25 - For an interesting reflection on this matter, cf. A. Sylvestre, "Priest of the Mission for what purpose?" *Vincentiana* XXXIV (# 6; November-December 1995) 363-73.

fo26 - A number of business corporations are learning this lesson the hard way. Even some which were once thriving concerns are now experiencing death pangs because they did not adjust to rapidly changing economic circumstances.

fo27 - *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, 57.

fo28 - *Redemptoris Missio*, 37.

fo29 - *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 45; *Redemptoris Missio*, 47.

fo30 - *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, 51; *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 42.

fo31 - John Paul II, Discourse at the 19th ordinary assembly of CELAM, Haiti, March 9, 1983; discourse given in Santo Domingo, October 12, 1984; cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 63; *Centesimus Annus*, 5; *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, 45.

fo32 - Lk 4:18.

fo33 - Constitutions 1 (henceforth, C).

fo34 - Cf. *Vincentiana* XXXIV, 41.

fo35 - CR XI, 10.

fo36 - In recent times, mission teams with as many as 1000 members have been trained to focus on an entire diocese or even a country, with considerable success. Cf. T. Sendlein, "An experience of the Vincentian Spirit in the Panamanian National Mission," *Vincentiana* XXXIX (1995) 311-24.

fo37 - SV XII, 84.

fo38 - SV XI, 291.

fo39 - For a full listing of the foreign missions of the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity, cf. José Ignacio Fernández, "La extensión misionera actual de ambas congregaciones: Congregación de la Misión y Compañía de la Hijas de la Caridad" in *San Vicente Y La Misión Ad Gentes* (Salamanca: CEME, 1995) 253-287.

fo40 - C 17.

fo41 - Cf. Albert di Ianni, "Religious Vocations: New Signs of the Times," *Review for Religious* 52 (# 5; September-October 1993) 745-763. Also, D. Nygren and M. Ukeritis, *The Future of Religious Orders in the United States* (Connecticut: Praeger Press, 1993) 251.

fo42 - *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 58.

fo43 - Medellín, "Conclusions," 6.13, 14; 13.33.

fo44 - D. Nygren and M. Ukeritis, *op. cit.*, 250.

fo45 - SV XI, 32. While a given reader may doubt that this text (calling Christ "the Evangelizer of the Poor"), attributed to St. Vincent by Abelly, his first biographer (1664), convey the *ipsissima verba* of the saint, the idea itself, nonetheless, seems to me indisputable, given St. Vincent's repeated recourse to Luke 4:18.

fo46 - Cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 15.

fo47 - CR, Introduction.

fo48 - SV VI, 393. The French reads: "... religion vers son Père."

fo49 - Denise Lardner Carmody and John Tully Carmody, *In the Path of the Masters* (New York: Paragon House, 1994) 119.

fo50 - For a striking statement of St. Vincent's attitude before God, cf. SV XII, 133-134, 146-147.

fo51 - SV XIII, 179.

fo52 - SV II, 106.

fo53 - SV V, 534; VI, 444; VIII, 55, 256; X, 503.

fo54 - SV II, 453.

fo55 - SV I, 68; cf. III, 197.

fo56 - SV V, 396: "Let us wait patiently, but let us act, and, as it were, let us make haste slowly ...."

fo57 - SV VII, 310.

fo58 - SV IV, 366.

fo59 - SV XI, 83.

fo60 - Cf. Jn 7:29, 7:33, 17:13, 17:21. Jesus' special relationship with his Father is also a Lucan theme; cf. 2:49, 3:22, 9:35, 10:21-22, 23:46.

fo61 - SV XII, 109.

fo62 - SV IX, 415.

fo63 - CR X, 7.

fo64 - SV XI, 83: "Give me a man of prayer and he will be capable of everything. He may say with the apostle, 'I can do all things in him who strengthens me.' The Congregation will last as long as it faithfully carries out the practice of prayer, which is like an impregnable rampart shielding the missionaries from all manner of attack." Cf. also, SV III, 535; IX, 416; X, 583.

fo65 - C 42.

fo66 - SV XI, 407-408.

fo67 - SV IX, 475, 592, 599; XI, 40.

fo68 - SV IX, 59, 593; XI, 364, 592.

fo69 - Cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 30-39; Congregazione per la Dottrina della Fede, *Istruzione su "Libertà cristiana e liberazione,"* (March 22, 1986) 99. While Vincent was very aware of the need to meet the social problems of his day with structured, institutionalized solutions (e.g., through the societies he founded), he was, nonetheless, like most of his contemporaries, largely unaware of what today we might call "sinful social structures." For the most part, he accepted the existing political and social order as it was (as did St. Paul, for instance, in regard to slavery). Still, within that context, he saw the need for political action as he addressed the needs of the poor and used his influence in court and on the Council of Conscience to that end. Cf. Luigi Mezzadri, *San Vincenzo de Paul* (Edizioni Paoline: Milan, 1986) 69-79, 83-86.

fo70 - Cf. Synod of Bishops, 1971, *Justice in the World*, in AAS LXIII (1971) 924: "... action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world are integral elements in the preaching of the gospel." Cf. also, *Centesimus Annus*, 5.

fo71 - SV XII, 302: "Look at the force and power of the evangelical maxims, among which, since they are many in number, I have chosen principally those which are more proper to missionaries." Besides looking at the events in the life of Jesus, St. Vincent sees in the New Testament a series of maxims or sayings, of which Jesus is the "author." He asks his followers to do what Jesus did and to practice what he taught, either by direct command or through these maxims.

fo72 - CR II, 14; SV XII, 309.

fo73 - For some interesting information on this same subject, as well as further bibliography, the

reader may wish to consult: J.-P. Renouard, "L'Esprit de la Congrégation: Les Vertus Fondamentales," *Vincentiana* XXVIII (1984) 599-615; cf. also T. Davitt, "The Five Characteristic Virtues," *Colloque XIV* (Autumn 1986) 109-120. Cf. also Christian Sens, "Comme Prêtre Missionnaire," in *Monsieur Vincent, Témoin de L'Évangile* (Toulouse, 1990) 133-151, esp. 140f; R. P. Maloney, "Five Characteristic Virtues: Yesterday and Today," in *The Way of Vincent de Paul* (New York: New City Press, 1992) 37-69. Cf. also, B. Häring, *Timely and Untimely Virtues* (London: St. Paul's, 1993).

fo74 - SV IV, 486.

fo75 - CR II, 4; SV XII, 172.

fo76 - SV I, 144.

fo77 - SV I, 284; V, 464.

fo78 - CR II, 4; SV, 172.

fo79 - SV IX, 606.

fo80 - SV I, 284.

fo81 - SV X, 96.

fo82 - SV XI, 56-57.

fo83 - CR II, 7.

fo84 - SV I, 182; VII, 98-99.

fo85 - CR II, 7.

fo86 - SV III, 279; V, 165.

fo87 - SV XI, 394.

fo88 - SV XII, 109.

fo89 - CR II, 6.

fo90 - SV XII, 186.

fo91 - SV XII, 187.

fo92 - SV XII, 188.

fo93 - SV XII, 189.

fo94 - SV VII, 226.

fo95 - SV I, 393-94.

fo96 - Abelly III, 177-178.

fo97 - SV XII, 227.

fo98 - SV X, 56.

fo99 - SV IX, 23; X, 59, 151, 246, 248, 280, 399; XII, 215.

fo100 - Cf. SV IX, 170; X, 61, 398.

fo101 - K. Rahner, *Theological Investigations* III, 54.

fo102 - SV XI, 291.

fo103 - SV XI, 204: "Yes, the Congregation of the Mission can do all things because we have within us the germ of the omnipotence of Jesus Christ...."

fo104 - 2 Cor 5:14.

fo105 - SV XII, 262, 307-308.

fo106 - SV XII, 307.

fo107 - SV XI, 40.

fo108 - SV XI, 146.

fo109 - C 2.

## "THE BEAUTIFUL ACARIE"

*Fr. Robert P. Maloney, C.M.  
Superior General*

Almost no one has heard of Barbe Avrillot; few recognize the name Madame Acarie, as she was later called. But, in Paris at the beginning of the 17th century, she was widely acclaimed and stood at the center of a great spiritual revival. Her admirers described her as "la belle Acarie," since by all accounts she was stunning, with fair skin, chestnut brown hair, and striking green eyes. This name followed her down through the centuries and became the title of one of her principal biographies.<sup>i</sup>

Henri Bremond, the noted French historian, describes her as the most important religious figure in the period from 1590 to 1620. "What?" I asked myself upon reading Bremond, "not Francis de Sales, whose books were not only famous then, but have remained classics to this day? not Pierre Bérulle, the 'founder' of the French school of spirituality? not Benedict of Canfield, 'the teacher of teachers'<sup>ii</sup>?" "It is not too much to say," Bremond responds, "that, of all the spiritual hearths kindled in the reign of Henry IV, none burned more brightly or equally in intensity than that of the Hôtel Acarie."<sup>iii</sup> This extraordinary woman, mother of six children, wrote little (and burned most of that as worthless!), but she exercised an enormous personal influence during her lifetime. She spearheaded the introduction of St. Teresa's Carmelites into France; at her death, the community already numbered 17 houses on French soil. She was a driving force in the development of the Ursulines. The reform of the Benedictine Abbeys owed much to her. But most of all she knew, encouraged, and directed almost all the leading religious figures of the day. Among her keenest admirers were Benedict of Canfield, Pierre de Bérulle, André Duval, Michel de Marillac, and Francis de Sales.

In 1791 she was beatified as Marie of the Incarnation, the name she took when she joined the Carmelites in later life. Today she is almost completely forgotten. I write this essay in an attempt to revive her memory for the members of the family of Vincent de Paul. He knew and admired her, as did Louise de Marillac, whose uncle was one of Madame Acarie's greatest devotees.

Vincent's friend and advisor, André Duval was her first biographer. "She had the gift, no small one," wrote Duval, "of impressing souls seriously."<sup>iv</sup> Duval's life of Madame Acarie ran into seven editions in the six years after her death and soon spread throughout Europe.

### **HER EARLY YEARS**

Barbe Avrillot was born in Paris on February 1, 1566. Her father, Nicolas Avrillot, was chancellor of Queen Marguerite of Navarre and financier to the Chamber of Paris.<sup>v</sup> Her mother, also from a good Parisian family, was Marie Luillier, who appears to have been a rather harsh, even sometimes violent woman. The family was very Catholic, very royalist,

and very rich. As a child, Barbe felt most at home with one of her aunts, a religious at the Abbey of Long champs on Mont Valérien, where her mother sent her for her education. At school she showed herself lively and intelligent and soon expressed the desire to become a religious of the Hôtel Dieu in Paris. But her mother disagreed. Marie Luillier was determined that her only child should marry, willingly or unwillingly. So, at 16½, on August 24, 1582, Barbe married Pierre Acarie, whom Bremond describes as one of those husbands who are "hotheaded, intimidating, indolent, teasing, passing from coarse laughter to anger with disconcerting rapidity, by turns the delight and terror of their neighbors...."<sup>vi</sup> Like his father-in-law, Pierre soon got involved in the *Ligue*,<sup>vii</sup> a conspiracy against the king, and suffered exile after the victory of Henry IV.

Barbe became very well-known and much esteemed in Parisian society in spite of her husband's misfortunes. She gave birth to three sons and three daughters and raised them with great care and love. She was very careful and orderly as the head of a large household and had good sense in handling money. This proved indispensable when her family fell on bad times as her husband and her father both went into exile. While raising her children, managing her household, mixing well in Parisian society, and dealing with the crisis caused by her family's political intrigues, she prayed daily and developed a deep interior life.

During Pierre's absence, people at high levels in Paris were quite struck by her dexterity in handling his affairs. Even Henry IV, who had sent her husband into exile, and his wife, Marie de Medici, were among Barbe's ardent admirers. Ultimately, she was able to use her influence with the king to get Pierre permission to return home after 18 months.

## **THE INITIAL MYSTICAL EXPERIENCES**

Her biographers relate the beginnings of Barbe's mystical experiences in this way. Pierre, finding Barbe engrossed in a novel one day, reproached her and gave her a pile of pious books which his confessor had recommended. This same confessor, Monsieur Roussel, pointed out to her a sentence in one of the books: "Too greedy is the person for whom God is not enough." The words had a thunderbolt effect in her life. Afterwards, she seemed to have a new heart and a new understanding of life.

Around 1588, when she was 22 years of age and had already borne three children, Barbe had the first of her many ecstasies. She found her experiences very strange. Her confessor and advisors were of little help to her. As a result she hardly knew what to think of the continual ecstasies she was "enduring," so to speak.<sup>viii</sup> During this perplexing time in her life, she had three more children.

Her experiences were at times quite awkward. One Sunday morning, for instance, she went to Mass in her parish church. When evening came she had not yet returned home. At nightfall her friends found her, still in the church, in ecstasy. When she came out of it, she asked if Mass was over yet. Such ecstasies were usually accompanied by acute sufferings and later by clearly marked stigmata, which she kept rather successfully hidden. As her mother-in-law began to observe the state Barbe was in, she called in doctors who bled her, but this accomplished nothing. Finally, Benedict of Canfield, the day's foremost authority on mysticism, was consulted. He assured Barbe that her experiences were from God and that she should allow him to work in her without being afraid.

Her puzzled husband gave Barbe further books on mysticism, but she showed little interest in them. In fact, she tried to avoid ecstasies and to hide them from the public. Like many of her advisors, she regarded mystical experiences as peripheral to genuine holiness and tended to be skeptical about such phenomena both in herself and in others (in fact, Duval states: "She tried harder to prevent them than some others did to seek them or bring them about").

Saying the rosary with her children, looking at a crucifix, reading a book, or even conversing, Barbe would sometimes be caught up in ecstasy. It appears that her children became quite used to this. In later years, when she was with her daughters in the Carmelite monastery, they used to kid her publicly about the "pauses" that her ecstasies caused at home!

## **FAMILY LIFE**

While Barbe was experiencing God in this new way, she raised her family, carried out many social obligations, and engaged in formidable religious activities, such as the establishment of the Carmelites in France.

Life in her household was surely not easy. André Duval, who is more sympathetic toward her husband than most other writers, describes Barbe's situation at home in this way: "As Monsieur Acarie did not wish to trouble himself about domestic affairs, it was she who bore the burden, not only of daily business, but of all that concerned the children, boys as well as girls, and the numerous male and female domestics."<sup>ix</sup> During his years of connection with the *Ligue*, Pierre Acarie dissipated an immense fortune. His wife, by her ingenuity, managed to keep the household together, satisfy his debtors, and pay her husband's ransom when he was captured by a band of robbers. Duval recounts that one day while she was at dinner, bailiffs came and seized everything in her house down to the plate in front of her.<sup>x</sup>

Personal suffering also entered her life during this period. Returning from one of her visits to Pierre in exile, Barbe fell from her horse, caught her foot in one of the stirrups, was dragged a long distance, and broke her hip. The doctor set it badly, so it had to be re-broken. The following year she fractured her thigh by slipping on a step during a visit to her eldest son at school. Shortly after recovering she fell again while leaving the parish church at Ivry, breaking her thigh once more. She was lame for the rest of her life. With all this, she still remained incredibly active, though she used a cane and was never able to stand for very long.

We have very reliable information about how she raised her children, since her three daughters shared their reminiscences with Duval as he was writing Barbe's life. They also testified before the commissioners during the process of her beatification; in fact her son Pierre was the first to promote her cause, in 1622. The children affirm that she was a patient listener who encouraged them to come and talk. They also "felt that she penetrated to the depths of their soul by a simple look."<sup>xi</sup> She loved the truth and therefore had very strong reactions when her children lied. "If you were tall as the rafters," she told her daughters (she was quite tiny herself), "I would hire women to hold you down rather than let one lie pass without punishment."<sup>xii</sup> She combatted vanity in her children and was careful that they treated the servants warmly and humbly. Her eldest daughter states: "She was very gentle

with us, but, mingled with her gentleness, was so solemn and imposing a seriousness that it seemed impossible not to do what she wanted." Her youngest adds: "She was always anxious to keep me humble but did it so charmingly that I never resented the lesson thus given to my love of self. When obliged to punish me, she so did it that it never occurred to me that she was correcting me unreasonably and her corrections never made me angry with her."

Barbe's three daughters all became Carmelites. Marguerite entered in 1605 and Geneviève in 1607. The former became a celebrated personality, known as Mother Marguerite of the Blessed Sacrament, and played a leading role in the reform of religious life at that time. Her eldest daughter, Marie, who was quite beautiful like her mother, entered last. Barbe was eager not to push them in any way regarding their choice of religious life. In fact, in Marie's case, Pierre and Barbe attempted some matchmaking, were delighted with one of the prospects for a marriage, and even began a discussion with the young man's parents about the dowry that Marie could offer. Marie, however, finally decided to enter the Carmel and was accepted in March 1608.

Her eldest son Nicolas studied law and married when he was 22. He seems to have inherited some of his father's impetuosity and, despite having Francis de Sales as a guide, caused his mother and father considerable anxiety. He and his wife had two children, so Barbe found herself a grandmother at the age of 42.

Pierre, her second son, joined the Jesuits but left them before his mother's death. He studied theology, obtained a doctorate at the Sorbonne, joined the clergy of Rouen, and became a canon of the cathedral and vicar general of the diocese.

We know little about her youngest son Jean. Apparently, after at least some preparation for the priesthood, he became a soldier, went to Germany, and married. There is some question about whether he might actually have become a priest and then fled to Germany in order to marry, but the evidence is not very clear. What is clear, however, is that Barbe had great concerns about him, whatever might have been their root. We also know that he and his wife gave her another grandchild.

One must not get the impression that things were rather "mystical" in the Acarie household. Barbe bought her children lots of toys and loved to play with them.<sup>xiii</sup> Despite her husband's variable moods, political problems, and economic failures, she and Pierre lived a happy married life for 31 years.

## **THE SALON**

Little by little the Acarie home on rue des Juifs became a much frequented place of conversation. In a way, all Paris resorted to her. She kept the country's conscience, so to speak. When a rumor spread about the king, he sent a priest, Père Coton, to Madame Acarie to assure her that it was false, since "he held her in such high esteem that it sufficed him if the saint did not give credit to the calumny."<sup>xiv</sup>

To the salon came a formidable line of men and women in whom, one might say, Madame Acarie "liberated grace." What is striking is that many of those who surrounded her were quite critical in their judgments about mystical experiences and extraordinary

phenomena. None of them, however, seems to have doubted that Barbe was the genuine article. She herself was very reserved about her experiences. In fact, she discouraged curiosity steadfastly, even in her most intimate friends. She spoke freely about her experiences only with three confessors, Benedict of Canfield, Pierre de Bérulle, and Père Coton. Francis de Sales admits that, though he often heard her confession, he never had the courage to ask about her experiences and she herself never volunteered anything about them. Duval, who knew her very well, gathered most of his information from personal observation and from the comments of those surrounding Barbe. Actually he had plenty to observe, since he often saw Barbe in the midst of her mystical experiences.

But what made the salon such an important center was Madame Acarie's gift for spiritual direction. She had a singular capacity for "discernment of spirits." The long list of eminent people who arrived at the Hôtel d'Acarie consulted her on the most delicate matters. Many of them had first come to know her while working with her in the organization of various charitable and religious undertakings, but they were soon drawn to speak with her about their own spiritual needs and those of others. Well-known spiritual directors presented difficult cases to her because they trusted that she had the capacity to distinguish genuine holiness from its counterfeit forms. She seems to have been able to read people's hearts readily. Père Binet, provincial of the Jesuits, stated: "What she told me was known to God alone. She showed me all the consequences which (my) business might entail, and nothing could have been truer."<sup>xv</sup>

Her relationship with these important people was extraordinary. Michel de Marillac, who saw her almost every other day, says of Barbe: "On her side all was virtue and grace; on mine, the workings of grace reflected from her."<sup>xvi</sup>

The Acarie home became the gathering place for discussions on the spiritual life. Religious and lay people met there in increasing numbers to learn more about the new reform movement that was sweeping Paris. Some of the most important decisions affecting the renewal of religious life in that period were made in Barbe's home. Several of her greatest admirers came there almost every day. They found her, on the one hand, a humble, gracious hostess and, on the other hand, a woman with remarkable gifts of discernment who was ready to support all worthwhile projects directed toward the reform of the Church or the service of the sick and the poor.

## **BRINGING THE CARMELITES TO FRANCE**

In the midst of all her spiritual direction and charitable works, Barbe became involved in another far-reaching project: the reform of various communities of nuns. Duval writes:<sup>xvii</sup>

*Although ordinarily women religious do not willingly defer to married women, at least in matters regarding their interior life, yet God had bestowed upon her for that purpose such special grace, and she behaved with such humility and tact, that they had no difficulty in opening their hearts to her wholly and declaring their inmost thoughts to her. Though there are very many convents in Paris and the environs, she went everywhere, stimulating some to a better life and the conquest of their desires, prompting others to undertake the reform of their houses.*

She had a huge influence on the life of many communities, but she is best known for introducing Teresa of Avila's reformed Carmelites into France.

The story of the coming of the Carmelites to her country is long and complicated, involving delicate negotiations with the Spanish government, the Carmelite superiors, the Holy See, and the King of France. The whole matter began with a vision in which St. Teresa told Barbe that the reform which Teresa had brought to Spain should now be brought to France. It appears that this was Barbe's first vision. It left her quite confused, but of course also struck her forcefully. Her spiritual director at the time, Dom Beaucousin, encouraged her to go forward step by step. But resistance was strong, especially at the top.

At a time when the relationship between the two countries was particularly bad, the King was not at all anxious to bring Spaniards into France: "Can't you find nuns of holy enough life in the convents of this country who could be set at the head of the new foundation?" But Barbe was not to be denied. Francis de Sales interceded in Rome. Bérulle undertook a difficult mission to the Carmelite authorities in Spain, and Barbe had one of her friends, the Duchess of Longueville, speak personally with the King of France. The king eventually gave way and on July 18, 1602 authorized the establishment of a convent of Carmelite nuns in Paris.

Ultimately Bérulle brought back six Carmelites from Spain, two of whom had been close companions of St. Teresa herself. Their experience in France was difficult (all but one left for the Netherlands within five years!), but this small seed had incredible growth. Fifty-five Carmelite monasteries were founded in France over the next 40 years!

In preparation for this new beginning, a number of women gradually began to live as boarders in the Acarie household and came to establish a semi-official community under the name of the *Congrégation de Sainte-Geneviève*. Since negotiations were moving ahead in Rome for the coming of the Carmelites, ecclesiastical superiors in Paris were happy to have this little group on hand for amalgamation with the Spanish sisters upon their arrival. They commissioned Madame Acarie to form these women and examine the vocation of each. She had remarkable sureness in this regard.

Extraneous considerations carried no weight with her at all when discerning vocations. A number of churchmen recommended a young woman who was ready to offer a very substantial dowry toward the building of the first Carmel. In the first interview, Madame Acarie said that she had no vocation. "I do not trouble myself at all about the money needed for the material building," she stated, "but solely about the living stones which will build up the spiritual edifice."<sup>xviii</sup>

With his house becoming crowded and busy, Pierre Acarie seemed utterly perplexed that people of every description, great and small, women and men, religious and secular, were coming to speak with his wife, who was also receiving letters from all quarters. At times he refused admission to guests, at times he was overly inquisitive with them, at times he made himself a nuisance. Many of the guests learned to humor him and get him to tell stories about his adventures in the *Ligue*.

A pretty novice named Lejeune, from Troyes, who lived at the Hôtel d'Acarie, decided that she must laugh and dance with Pierre in order not to put him off. One day Pierre

said to his wife: "All your devotees are so stiff; my little Troyenne alone is sensible!" Barbe said nothing to Pierre, but took the young novice aside and spoke with her about her excessive familiarity. The young woman naively explained the difficulty of behaving otherwise: "Madame, what can I do? Monsieur Acarie is my host and I can't say no to him!" The pretty Troyenne developed into a very good Carmelite.

## **HER SPIRITUALITY**

We possess very little of what Madame Acarie wrote, but her life, her works, and the comments of her intimate friends reveal to us a number of things about this fascinating woman's spirituality.

1. She had a wonderful capacity for combining very active charitable works with deep contemplative prayer. Looking back, one suspects that this capacity is what convinced those around her that her mystical experiences were genuine. Throughout her life she was engaged in works among the poor and the sick and was very generous with her material possessions. During the siege of Paris in 1590 she distributed food to the hungry from her own family's supplies and took care of the wounded in the Saint-Gervais Hospital as well as the sick poor at the Hôtel-Dieu. She frequently spent time with the dying in the hospitals helping them to prepare for the end. At the same time, this very active woman was clearly a contemplative. She had a deep sense of her dependence on God and of his providence in her life. She experienced God's presence vividly and drew from that experience a great clarity of vision which she succeeded in communicating to others.

2. Barbe was very conscious of the need for reform in the Church. Strikingly, many of the people who flocked to her were themselves reformers. As previously mentioned, she herself spearheaded the Carmelite renewal in France and played a most influential role in that of the Ursulines and the Benedictines. She also had significant links with the reform of the secular clergy through her contacts with Bérulle and his Congregation of the Oratory, with Olier and the priests of St. Sulpice, with Bourdoise and the foundation of a community of priests and the seminary of Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet, and probably with Vincent de Paul, who was later a driving force in the renewal of the clergy.

3. Love of the truth lies very close to the center of Barbe's spirituality. As mentioned earlier, this stood out in her children's mind when they recalled their upbringing. For Barbe, it was also a crucial criterion in vocational discernment. She rejected a candidate who had been warmly recommended by Duval, telling him: "She is not frank. Her lips do not agree with her heart. The Spirit of God does not dwell in a person like that. If she became a religious she would soon leave, or if she did not leave she would be the source of all sorts of trouble."<sup>xix</sup> On the other hand she urged the reception of a young woman who recognized her many failings. "Her spirit is simple and open," Barbe commented, "that is what is needed in a religious."<sup>xx</sup>

4. She was also strikingly humble. As one might imagine, her mystical experiences aroused much curiosity in others. People stopped to point her out on the street at times. Others praised her in her presence. She found all of this trying, since her own evaluation of extraordinary phenomena was quite sober. In addition, a long line of people came to consult her on all sorts of spiritual matters. She seems to have borne all this with considerable

equanimity, though at times with some embarrassment. Her daughter Marguerite testified: "I could not help admiring my mother who, after being visited by very many distinguished people, which happened every day, would return to her household duties with as calm a mind as if she had merely seen members of her own family. That always gave me a vivid impression of her holiness." Another friend, Madame de Meignelay, noted: "Neither the honors paid to her on all sides nor the marks of esteem that were shown to her by high-placed persons in the state, nor even the dependence on her counsel shown by illustrious prelates and the most famous Church people (for they consulted her on the most difficult matters) were ever the cause of her forming a good opinion of herself."

5. Barbe was convinced, as she often remarked to Duval, that God gives special light to people to see the obligations of their state in life and, having seen them, to carry them out. She was very faithful to her duties as a mother, giving them preference over all the other activities in her life. Pierre and her children came first. Her husband sometimes did not share her enthusiasm for her many charitable causes, but he regarded her as a wonderful wife. Barbe, for her part, believed deeply that God spoke to her principally within the context of the life she had chosen. Fidelity to the obligations of her state in life became a keystone in her spirituality. She lived joyfully and faithfully as a wife and mother during the 31 years of her marriage to Pierre. Likewise, she was quietly faithful in her four years in the cloister.

## **THE FINAL YEARS**

After Pierre's death in 1613, Barbe joined the Carmelites as a lay sister. At her own request she worked in the kitchen (though people continued to flock to her for spiritual direction, at times to the delight of her superiors and at times to their chagrin!). She was sent first to the community at Amiens, and then to Pontoise. But these final years were not without difficulties.

In 1616 a newly elected prioress in Amiens, Anne de Viole, caused her considerable suffering, humiliating her publicly on a number of occasions and forbidding her to offer direction to sisters who were seeking her out. Barbe bore this with calm and courage. The situation was ironic in that, though she was a lay sister, Barbe herself had been proposed by the sisters to be the prioress. But André Duval had refused to confirm her election, to her relief, and only then did the lot fall to Anne de Viole.

A second trial came in her increasingly strained contacts with Bérulle, who had been one of her closest collaborators (and was also her cousin). Shortly before her death, their relationship broke down irreparably (a similar rupture occurred, at about the same time, in Bérulle's relationships with André Duval and Vincent de Paul). The break between Barbe and Bérulle, which culminated a long series of events, came when he attempted to impose a fourth vow, of slavery to Our Lord and to the Blessed Mother, upon the Carmelites. Barbe believed that the vow had very little to do with the spirituality of Teresa of Avila and had much to do with that of Bérulle. She was very firm in opposing it. Bérulle became furious at her reaction, and though Barbe was quite sick, he said very harsh things to her, telling her that she had a petty mind and had bungled everything that she had ever undertaken. A few days later she entered her last illness.

Madame Acarie died on April 18, 1618, at the age of 52, much loved by her children, her Carmelite sisters, and her friends.<sup>xxi</sup> Bremond expresses this appreciation of her:

*Her ecstasies were but signs, as a light hung out for travelers seeking their way at night. Their attention was caught at first by such extraordinary phenomena, but they soon learned from her truths far simpler and of quite different import. Her message consisted of a sentence from the gospel, the full sense of which only mystics realize, "The Kingdom of God is within you."<sup>xxii</sup>*

- 
- i Bruno de Jésus-Marie, OCD. *La Belle Acarie, Bienheureuse Marie de l'Incarnation*. Paris and Bruges: Desclée de Brouwer, 1942.
- ii Benedict of Canfield, an English Capuchin, named William Fitch (1562-1611), having been converted from Puritanism, took refuge in France. He had enormous influence on his contemporaries and was a much sought-after spiritual director. Bremond states that his *Rule of Perfection* was the manual for two or three generations of mystics, calling him "the teacher of teachers." Cf. *Histoire littéraire du sentiment religieux en France* (Paris, 1916 and 1928), II:155-58, as well as VII:266. Bremond's work also appears in an English translation, which will be used for all further citations. Cf. H. Bremond, *A Literary History of Religious Thought in France: From the Wars of Religion Down to Our Times. Vol. II: The Coming of Mysticism (1590-1620)*, translated by K. L. Montgomery (London: SPCK, 1930). Cf. also T. Davitt, "An Introduction to Benet of Canfield," *Colloque* 16 (1987) 268-82.
- iii Bremond, *A Literary History*, 145.
- iv André Duval, *La Vie Admirable de la Servante de Dieu, soeur Marie de l'Incarnation, connue dans le monde sous le nom de Mlle. Acarie* (Paris, 1621, 1893) 63. All page references are to the 1893 edition.
- v Nicolas Avrillot became involved with the *Ligue* and was subsequently ruined because of his connection with it. After the death of his wife, he became a priest.
- vi Bremond, *op. cit.*, 151.
- vii He was nicknamed, by his critics, as the *Ligue's* "lackey."
- viii Cf. Duval, *op. cit.* 21-22.
- ix Duval, *op. cit.*, 346.
- x Duval, *op. cit.*, 77.
- xi Duval, *op. cit.*, 45.
- xii Duval, *op. cit.*, 50.
- xiii Duval, *op. cit.*, 44.
- xiv Duval, *op. cit.*, 549-550.
- xv J.-B. Boucher, *La Vie Chrétienne de la Vénérable soeur Marie de l'Incarnation* (Paris, 1800, 1893) 190.
- xvi Boucher, *op. cit.*, 159.
- xvii Duval, 102-103.
- xviii Boucher, *op. cit.*, 238-240.
- xix Lancelot Sheppard, *Barbe Acarie* (London: Burns, Oats and Washbourne, 1953) 106.
- xx *Ibid.*
- xxi Just as I was finishing this article, I received a copy of a paper by Lawrence Cada, SM, entitled "Madame Acarie," prepared for a symposium on the "French School of Spirituality." Cada gives a rather complete biography. The interested reader might wish to consult: Bremond, Henri. *A Literary History of Religious Thought in France*. Volume 2, "The Coming of Mysticism" (1590-1620). London: SPCK, 1930; de Broglie, Emmanuel. "Acarie (Barbe)." *Dictionnaire d'histoire et de géographie ecclésiastiques*, vol. 1, cols. 254-59. Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1912 and *La Bienheureuse Marie de l'Incarnation: Madame Acarie (1566-1618)*. Collection "Les Saints." Paris: Victor Lecoffre, 1903; Florin, V. "Marie de l'Incarnation, bienheureuse (1566-1618)." *Catholicisme*, vol. 8, cols. 640-41. Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1980; Houssaye, Michel. *M. de Bérulle et les carmélites de France (1575-1611)*. Paris: Henri Plon, 1872; Marduel, M. *Madame Acarie et le Carmel français*. Lyon and Le Puy: Xavier Mappus, 1963; Marie-Thérèse de Saint-Joseph. "Marie de l'Incarnation (bienheureuse)." *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, vol. 10, cols. 486-87. Paris: Beauchesne,

---

1980; Mellot, Jean-Dominique. *Histoire du Carmel de Pontoise*. Volume 1 (1605-1792). Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1994; Menzies, Lucy. "Madame Acarie, 1566-1618." Chapter (pp. 229-57) in *Mirrors of the Holy: Ten Studies in Sanctity*. London: A. R. Mowbray, 1928; Morgain, Stéphane-Marie, OCD. *Pierre de Bérulle et les Carmélites de France: La querelle du gouvernement 1583-1629*. Paris: Cerf, 1995; Rapley, Elizabeth. *The Dévotes: Women and Church in Seventeenth-Century France*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press: 1990; Salmon-Malebranche, A. R. *Madame Acarie: Bienheureuse Marie de l'Incarnation*. Pontoise: Carmel de Pontoise, 1977. Reprinted with new illustrations by Association du Vert Buisson (Pontoise, 1987); Sheppard, Lancelot C. *Barbe Acarie: Wife and Mystic*. New York: David McKay, 1953.

xxii Bremond, *op. cit.*, 193.

# Vincentian Bibliography

**LUIGI CHIEROTTI, C.M.**

***Federico Ozanam (1813-1853)***

***Uno dei fondatori delle Conferenze di Carità***

Published by Cooperazione Vincenziana, Genoa, Italy, 1997 (57 pages)

This little work presents for the general public, in a global manner and illustrated with pictures, the fine figure and work of this lay Catholic and friend of the poor. It should be noted that several years ago Fr. Chierotti had already published for Cooperazione Vincenziana a much more developed work on Ozanam bearing exactly the same title (2nd edition in 1993).

**MADELEINE DES RIVIERES**

***Ozanám***

***Un sabio entre los pobres***

Published by CEME, Salamanca, Spain, 1997 (226 pages)

This is a translation from the French by Máximo Agustín, C.M. of the book entitled *Ozanam, un savant chez les pauvres*, published by Bellarmin (Montreal, 1984). The work recounts the life and apostolate of one of the principal founders of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, situating the person and his activity in the political, social, and ecclesial context of the time.

**FRANCISCO SAMPEDRO NIETO, C.M.**

***San Vicente de Paúl***

***La espiritualidad de la acción***

Published by the C.M. Province of Chile, 1996 (136 pages)

This book, written by the Visitor of Chile, offers a valuable guide for the formation of Vincentian laity, future Daughters of Charity, our young in formation, as well as many others. After presenting the person and work of St. Vincent and situating him in his era, the author takes up the question of Vincentian spirituality and insists on a spirituality of charity. In an appendix, in connection with St. Vincent, he touches on some themes like evangelization and ecumenism, the Vincentian Family, and Marian spirituality.

**JEAN-MARIE ESTRADÉ, C.M.**

***Aïna \_ La Vie***

***Mission, culture et développement à Madagascar***

Published by Harmattan, Paris, France, 1996 (303 pages)

The author, a missionary in Madagascar for the past 26 years, is presently director of

Aïna, a development center in a disadvantaged suburb of Manakara. He shares his experience with us. As a theologian, philosopher, and ethnologist, Fr. Estrade proposes for us a deep reflection in three parts. **Seed:** the beginning of the mission... and of colonization, a century ago. The arrival of the first sons of St. Vincent and the beginning of the visits to the bush. **Culture:** a reflection on Christianity and colonization, mission and evangelization, traditional faith and Christian faith, inculturation, faith, and development. **Life:** the arrival of the first buds and the first fruits, the ripe fruits of life and hope. Belief makes for growth. It is an enlightening and valuable witness about a country where so many of our confreres and sisters work today.

**JOSEPH BENOIT, C.M.**

*Le peuple des pirogues  
et le diocèse de Farafangana*

Published by Harmattan, Paris, France, 1997 (190 pages)

The author, a former missionary in Madagascar where he worked for almost 30 years, knows that country well. He recounts its history from the origins of its population to the present. He spends much time on recent history, both political and social, as well as religious, giving special attention to the history of the Diocese of Farafangana, where so many of our own gave of themselves and continue to do so. We find throughout these pages the remembrance of numerous missionaries of the Congregation who worked or presently work in this area. This book is a fine contribution to the history of the Congregation on the Great Island.

**JEAN-YVES DUCOURNEAU, C.M.**

*Una semilla de eternidad*

*San Juan Gabriel Perboyre*

*Sacerdote de la Misión, mártir. Primer santo de China.*

CEME Publications, Salamanca, Spain, 1997 (150 pages)

This is the translation from the French by Victor Landeras, C.M. of the book *Une semence d'Eternité, Jean-Gabriel Perboyre*. See the summary: *Vincentiana* 1996/6, p. 488.

## General Bibliography

\_ ELIXIO RIVAS QUINTAS, C.M., *Millo e Hórreo. Legumia e Cesto*. Published by Laivento, Santiago de Compostela, Spain, 1996 (528 pages)

\_ VEREMUNDO PARDO ESCUDERO, C.M., *La Iglesia alma y Vida del orbe en el tercer milenio*. Burgos, 1996 (151 pages)

\_ ROBERTO GELIO, C.M., *L'ingresso di Davide in Gerusalemme capitale. Studio letterario storico e teologico su II Sam 5, 6-8; 6, 1-23*. Published by San Paolo, Cinisello Balsano (Milan), Italy, 1997 (210 pages)

\_ GIOVANNI BURDESE, C.M., *L'anelito a Cristo. Itinerari vocazionali seguendo le tre cose che rimangono. Lectio Divina*. Presentation by Cardinal Giovanni Saldarini. Published by Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997 (181 pages)