

Beatification of Frederick Ozanam
Paris
August 22, 1997

By P. William Sheldom

The beatification of Frederick Ozanam on August 22, 1997 was a memorable event for the Vincentian Family. For some the beatification may have seemed like one event among many others marking the World Youth Day; yet the beatification very fittingly took place at this time.

Frederick was in his early twenties when he inspired the foundation of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul to deepen the knowledge of the faith among his fellow Catholic students at the Sorbonne. Our Holy Father alluded to this in his homily at the Mass of Beatification, when he spoke of the path of holiness followed by Frederick. *"It is necessary that all these young people, nearly your own age, who have gathered here in Paris from all the countries of Europe and the world, should recognize that this path is also theirs."*

The beatification had its own rhythm. There was careful, detailed preparation for the liturgical celebration on August 22nd, and follow-up. On Thursday, August 21st, the night before the beatification, a Vigil organized by the Society of St. Vincent de Paul at the Hall de la Pinede du Parc Floral de Paris/Vincennes gave the Vincentians an opportunity to talk, sing, dance, eat, pray and rejoice together. It began about 3:00 p.m. and concluded just before midnight. The president, César Augusto Nunes Viana, gave a keynote address to those assembled, setting the tone for the celebration. Mr. Amin de Tarrazi, who diligently supervised the many details for the actual beatification, spoke of the figure of Ozanam. Folk singers led the audience in delightful song. *Frédéric*, a drama by Daniel Facerias, a play /ballet, presented the life of Frederick in ten scenes – excellent entertainment for an appreciative audience. Readings from scripture and the writings of Frederick served for prayerful reflection. Excerpts from the film, *Monsieur Vincent*, recalled the spirit of St. Vincent, patron of the Society. A video depicted the works of the Society in different parts of the world, showing this spirit alive today. Members from 100 different countries brought grams of flour which was received on stage, then mixed together and baked into bread. The bread was distributed to the participants as they left the hall at the end of the evening – a gesture reminding them of the need to give and share bread with their neighbor. The evening concluded with a blessing by Bishop Terry J. Steib, SVD, bishop of Memphis, Tennessee, and National Episcopal Advisor for the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in the United States.

The actual Mass of Beatification was impressive, beautiful and prayerful for all who participated. The setting was magnificent, Notre Dame Cathedral, where St. Vincent

and Blessed Frederick had prayed, where Abbé Lacodaire had delivered the Lenten sermons, for which Frederick paved the way, "*with the goal of permitting young people to receive an updated religious instruction regarding the great questions confronting their faith.*" The Holy Father's moving homily urged the Vincentians: "*Dear disciples of St. Vincent de Paul, I encourage you to join forces so that the poor, as he who inspired you always wished, may be loved and better served, and that Jesus Christ be honored in their person.*" Moving also was his discourse when speaking of the Conferences of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, "*I myself, as a student, before the Second World War, was a member of one of them.*" – a Vincentian speaking to Vincentians! Although only 2500-3000 could be accommodated in the cathedral itself, the 9000 outside on the parvis participated in the ceremonies via television monitors. Priests who distributed communion were able to concelebrate, entering the cathedral for the Eucharistic Prayer and for communion.

On Monday, August 25th, a Mass of Thanksgiving was concelebrated in the Church of Saint Sulpice, another place dear to Frederick and the Society. Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger, the Apostolic Nuncio, Msgr. Mario Tagliaferri, and many priests concelebrated, along with Vincentian Bishops attending the beatification and the World Youth Day, Msgr. Henny Bomers, Vicente Zico, Tadeusz Goçowski, and Benjamin De Palma.

Before, during and after the beatification, one encountered members of the Vincentian Family at different locations in Paris – at the Maison Mère, the Rue du Bac, the international offices of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, the Sorbonne, the tomb of Frederick in the Eglise des Carmes and at the tomb of Sr. Rosalie in the cemetery of Montparnasse, in the section Mouffetard, where both Frederick and Sister Rosalie encountered and served the poor. Prominent among them were some 2,500 Young Vincentian Marian Youth, who had special Vincentian sessions at Villebon outside Paris, animated by Father Maloney, Mother Juana, Father Lloret, and many confreres, Daughters and lay people. The youth participated in the sessions of the World Youth Day and those connected with the beatification.

God blessed the events surrounding the beatification of Frederick Ozanam. May they inspire us to increase our knowledge of and devotion to Frederick, help us to make him known, lead to continued prayers for his canonization, and make the Vincentian Family work together to serve Jesus in the poor as did Frederick and Vincent.