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THE VINCENTIAN CHARISM IN THE LAITY FREDERICK OZANAM

Dr. Ambrosio Romero Carranza
*Translated by Rev. Robert Dolci, C.M.**

Today more than ever, given the obscure circumstances through which our country has passed, it is necessary and convenient to exhibit great Christian figures whose singular vision exhalts, spiritualizes, frees, and dignifies.

Great Christian figures whose singular vision shows that men and women are not mere gears of the state machinery nor beings born only to die sooner or later, but beings created in the image and likeness of God to live happily forever.

Great Christian figures whose singular vision makes understandable that human existence should be lived with intensity and joy for the immense treasures of faith, love, and hope contained in her womb, and for which the death call is the key that opens the doors of Heaven wherein it is promised that we will see God face to face.

Great Christian figures whose example permits us to transcend human trivia, pettiness, and error. Whose example incites us to live without being afraid, worried, or discouraged before the contradictions, difficulties and disgraces of this world, thus being able to raise ourselves like a live,

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burning flame and soar to the Most High with complete security.

Great Christian figures whose example helps us to fulfill the two primary commandments: to love God above all things and our neighbor as ourselves. Whose example, in conclusion, makes it possible to maintain a smile on one's lips even while suffering.

It is precisely one of those great Christian figures who, for all these reasons, being suitable to exhibit, is the one who 150 years ago founded the Society of St. Vincent de Paul: the pure and spotless figure of Frederick Ozanam.

Let us take advantage, then, of the occasion of the one-hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the foundation of the Vincentian Conferences to remember the virtues of its founder, and the originality and importance of the apostolic work fulfilled by him with much zeal and singular success.

Nevertheless, at the height of the 19th century, Ozanam's stature or greatness was not contemplated by his contemporaries. Something happened involving him that was similar to what happened to Aconcagua in the city of San Juan.That city's grandiosity cannot be contemplated because of the nearby lowlying Andine spurs that cut off one's view. And in order to see her elevated peak from the top of the nearest mountain, it is necessary to distance oneself several kilometers from the city itself.

We say that something similar occurred with Ozanam, for much of the past century his person remained semi-hidden by those individuals less important than him, but more known, heard and seen in their times by the ruckus which their actions made. On the other hand, Ozanam acted and spoke following the teaching of St. Francis de Sales: THAT WHICH IS GOOD DOES NOT MAKE NOISE, NOR DOES NOISE MAKE SOMETHING GOOD. His contemporaries, those superficial friends of resounding acclaim, high-sounding dis-

courses and thunderous ovations, could not appreciate the personal greatness of Ozanam nor the transcendance which his work achieved in silence and with humility.

Happily, in actuality, with the perspective given by history and having been distanced from the noisy personalities of the past century, we see the figure of Ozanam standing out far above the others, and we are able to appreciate that his apostolic greatness and spiritual height are due especially to two principal motives: the first, the purity of his soul and the holiness of his life; and the second, the importance and originality that Christianity had for the Vincentian Conferences.

Thus, Cardinal Manning petitioned God to raise up in all epochs and in every nation men similar to Frederick Ozanam.

Thus, Saint Pius X manifested that all those who work to give modern society a Christian orientation should have Ozanam for their leader, teacher and guide. And thus Lacordaire entitled him "the greatest layman of the 19th century."

HIS HOLY LIFE

First of all, let us remember the holiness of his life. Later on we will analyze the originality and importance of his apostolic work.

Ozanam was born in Milan, but his family was French, and, a short while after his birth, his parents moved to Lyons, the city where they lived until his death. His two brothers, Alphonse and Charles, also were French. His Lyonine home was a model of Catholicism. His father, a doctor, exercised his profession with notable unselfishness, and his mother concerned herself with helping the poor people that abounded in their city. His brother Alphonse was ordained a priest; and, when he was eighteen years old, Frederick Ozanam was sent to Paris by his parents so that he would study there and

become a lawyer, seeing that the only university existent in France at that time was that of the capital city.

When he arrived in Paris to carry out his juridical studies, the City of Lights, as it was called in 1831 and as it is still so named, was a city of staunchly anti-religious people. A few months earlier, it had just produced a political revolution that had expelled forever the French monarchy, i.e., the kings of the Bourbon Dynasty. And as those kings had been very united to the Catholic clergy after the French Revolution that had so persecuted the Church and guillotined priests and sisters, Catholics in general believed that Catholicism could not exist in France without the Bourbon Dynasty on the French throne intimately united with the French Church. That idea determined that the hatred awakened in the people and in the French intellectuals by the Bourbons, because of their pride and despotism, be also transferred to the Catholic clergy. Thus, at the same time that the last Bourbon king, Charles X, was dethroned and fled to England, the anti-Catholic mobs set fire to the churches of Paris, and the arsonists passed through the streets dressed in priestly garb carrying in their hands the crosses, thuribles and chalices that they had stolen. So it was from such a scene that, as we said, when Ozanam arrived in Paris, the City of Lights had been transformed into a city of staunchly anti-religious people.

If the populace had set the churches on fire out of their hatred for Catholicism by identifying it with the Bourbon Monarchy, the French professors and intellectuals from the University of Paris in their own time sought to destroy Catholic thought by teaching in their classes deistic or atheistic doctrines. The Sorbonne—founded by the Catholic chaplain, Robert de Sorbon, of the holy King Louis of France during the Middle Ages—was now converted into the center of a ardent anti-religious campaign.

Such was the state of the University in which Ozanam sought to study and become a lawyer. In order not to be carried along by the avalanche of this evilly orchestrated campaign, and in order to oppose it, he did not count on that city for his friends or relationships. He was just an unknown Lyonine eighteen year old student with little financial resources and who had to live on a poor pension. But if he did not possess anything that made him materially prestigious, he possessed, on the other hand, the quality most necessary to effect the spiritual fight that should be undertaken in favor of religion: he possessed that profound religious faith that is a gift from God and that gives, to the one to whom it has been granted, an incalculable treasure of love, strength and hope.

Two things imply perfect religious faith: belief in the supernatural truths such as those the Church preaches, and the life according to that faith. The majority of Catholics accept the truths of the faith without difficulty, but, generally speaking, do not live in accord with those truths or they live them very imperfectly. To many it can be said to them: You have believed in vain. For the majority, what is lacking is to work in harmony with the supernatural truths given by Divine Revelation.

Ozanam, the owner of that class of ardent faith which at the same time is belief and action, was able by that faith to realize great things in spite of being only a provincial student without temporal resources of any kind.

For the present, at the University he boarded with a group of Catholic provincial students, and with them he founded a circle of studies that was named: "Conferences of History." There, the truths referring to religion were spoken, especially those that rose to the profound study of the history of humanity in general and those of the history of France in particular. In that way, Ozanam looked to arrive at religion through history and, little by little, he was initiating by his

"Conferences" a large group of students who followed his steps.

Until one day a socialist named Jean Broet, from Saint Simon, arrived at the place where Ozanam carried on his meetings. Jean was an excellent student who had the reputation of being very intelligent and an accomplished orator. And on that day he came with a group of students who shared their ideas, not in order to listen what the History Conferences were saying, but to refute Ozanam's Christian apostolate, opposing the doctrines of Saint Simon which at that time were in vogue. Let us remember that Count Henry of Saint Simon, having renounced his claims to the nobility, supported the Jacobines during the French Revolution and wrote a series of books in which he preached a kind of socialism — without utilizing the word — in which the State, and not the people, would inherit particular fortunes and, with that money thus accessible, would proceed to distribute the riches anew, giving to each person according to his work and his needs. This mindset spread rapidly, not only in France but also in many other countries, and would eventually arrive at Argentina during the third decade of the past century.

FOUNDATION OF THE VINCENTIAN CONFERENCES

That young man from Saint Simon confronted Ozanam and his Catholic friends, telling them that they were limiting themselves to talk alone, without concerning themselves with the freedom of the workers that suffer the oppression of their bosses, while *they* were elaborating the ideas that had in mind both suppressing that oppression and replacing the saints with the scientists and industrialists and preparing for a new world, one that would be progressive and happy. Broet's discourse provoked an ardent polemic and Ozanam contradicted him eloquently. But when Broet and his comrades left, and only a group of four of his Catholic friends remained, he told them that in part Broet was correct in re-

proaching them for they were talking a lot without doing anything to promote social progress.

"What can we *do*—objected one of his friends to him on that occasion—seeing that we are only a group of poor students without any ties to the government and without any financial resources?"

And in an outburst of Christian inspiration, Ozanam answered him:

> "What can we do?" That which Jesus Christ did when he was preaching the Gospel. If our efforts in these History Conferences have not been crowned by success in the way that we anxiously desire and if many of our University companions pass over to the Saint Simon camp, it will be due, without any doubt, to the fact that our apostolate lacks something in order to be blessed by God. And that something cannot but be charity. Let us accomplish charitable works and in that way we will receive the blessing of the poor, which will be the blessing of God. Let us go, then, to the poor in order to receive that blessing, in order to convert charity into a means of sanctifying us, so that our Conferences might thus be successful.

As his idea was enthusiastically accepted by his friends, Ozanam proposed that they bring, at once, the firewood that he had in his dwelling to a poor family that he knew, for they did not have any kindling for their chimney. They carried it out immediately. That night Ozanam did not get any heat in his room, situated on the sixth floor of the building where he lived. But, in spite of the cold that made him shiver, he sang something in his heart. And he would have felt even happier if he had been able to guess that, with the firewood from his chimney, carried so generously to the home of a very poor family, he had just ignited an immense bonfire of charity destined to give light and warmth to the poor and sick of the entire world.

Thus was born, in a spontaneous and inspired way, the Society founded by Frederick Ozanam, which he named Saint Vincent de Paul for the sake of placing it under the patronage of that Frenchman whose apostolic specialization during the seventeenth century was that of protecting the poor, the sick and the encarcerated, by means of distinct charitable works. The cells of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul were called Vincentian Conferences on account of their having their origins in the History Conferences, about which we have spoken above.

By their visits the young students of the first Vincentian Conferences brought to the homes of the poor certificates of bread and milk, which were given to them by a holy and loving Daughter of Charity, named Sister Rosalie, whom they knew through the intercession of a Philosophy professor, Emmanuel Joseph Bailly, owner and director of a newspaper titled "The Catholic Tribune." In that daily paper Ozanam made his first journalist weapons. For Ozanam and his vincentians were not satisfied with distributing certificates for bread and milk to the needy. Moreover, during their visits they looked forward both to transmit the religious faith they possessed and personally to sanctify themselves as well.

CAMPAIGN TO FAVOR LACORDAIRE

But to Ozanam, during his years as a Parisian student, having founded the lay Society of St. Vincent de Paul was not enough for him. He had noticed that it was necessary to add to the material sustenance given to the poor an equally proportionate spiritual sustenance as an antidote against the poisonous intellectualism of the anti-religious preaching. For that purpose, he interviewed the Archbishop of Paris, Bishop de Quelen, in order to ask him, in the name of the student body of the University, that a priest ascend the pulpit of Notre Dame not to pronounce the common sermons expounding on Catholic dogma, but rather to give conferences

capable of attracting the French intellectuals. To this effect he agreed—according to what he expressed to the Archbishop—that the social truths proceeding from the Gospel should be exhibited so that the atheistic social doctrines, whose plan, based solely on scientific and industrial progress, was dragging the French people into pure materialism, be opposed by a spiritual doctrine of the Gospel that does not disdain progress, science, or industry but that gives preeminence to the commandments of the law of God over all the above material. Because, following the materialistic doctrines, *in France freedom was being converted into license*, and in the French society the law of the forest was prevailing, i.e., the law of the strongest.

Bishop de Quelen took a sufficiently long time in comprehending the novel idea that Ozanam exposed to him. He had heard him speak a lot and well, but he did not seem to be the appropriate person to be giving him lessons about the subject of his sermons. At that time, it was evident that the strength of the lay apostolate was receiving little or no appreciation and that it was not understood that the laity, being the ordinary people in the world, are the most appropriate ones to know how it is possible to raise, with the leaven of religious faith, the contemporary dough of the indifferent and the incredulous. Ozanam, on the other hand, had understood that the prejudices of the existent clergy of Paris were impeding the priests' efforts to rouse that dough that threatened to crush France, and that Latin phrases and Gospel quotations could not by themselves conquer the invading doctrines of atheism.

Also, Ozanam asked the Archbishop to let a young priest, who was as much in touch with spiritual needs as he was with French intellectuality, ascend the pulpit of Paris' Notre Dame Cathedral. That priest, who was distinguished for his classes at "Stanislaus" College, was Henri Lacordaire.

So much did Ozanam insist, and with such prudence and humility did he expound his ideas, that in the end Bishop de Quelen acceded to his request, notwithstanding the distrust that Lacordaire inspired in him on account of the friendship that he had had with the depressed Félicité de Lamennais, who had just renounced his faith and written against the Holy See. Finally, after many goings and comings, Lacordaire ascended the Notre Dame pulpit. Ozanam and his vincentians had put themselves in charge of making propoganda so that the intellectual elites and professors also went to listen to him. The old and spacious French cathedral was seen to be full, in order to listen to a young priest who spoke a new Christian language. Six thousand people had gathered, and the heterogeneity of the listeners remained evident by the fact that, while some waited for the hour of the conference by praying the Rosary, others were chatting or reading anti-Catholic newspapers. Chateaubriand, Victor Hugo, Saint-Beuve, Lamartine, Ampère, Berryer, Tocqueville, Balzac, Dumas, Eckstein, Montalembert, Considérant, and Victor Cousin were all there; i.e., the most illustrous of the French intellectuals of that era were all present. Bishop de Quelen, together with his Canons, had occupied a rostrum erected in front of the pulpit and, with amazement, observed that strange crowd which was completely filling the naves of his cathedral, naves which had been almost empty since those sinister February days of 1831 when an excited mob violated them in order to plunder and set them afire. And the Archbishop, understanding that on that morning his episcopal administration was being judged, before strangers, closed his eyes to await the proceedings. Ozanam, too, was nervous on account of the responsibility that befell him in that conference, for which he had worked and insisted so much.

Well, in the middle of the general expectation, Lacordaire ascended the pulpit of Notre Dame and, while contemplating

the immense crowd that was fixed on his glances, his eloquence was stimulated and he broke forth into an exclamation that stirred all his listeners:

> My people! My people! What have you come to look for here? Do you want to find the truth? Then I know that you do not possess it, and that you have come to this cathedral in order that she may teach you, for man, all men, need to be taught, and because all men always look for religious and social truth.

Upon hearing that exclamation of Lacordaire, which he *pronounced with great emphasis, the face of Bishop de Quelen* became very pale. But, he calmed down upon noticing that the listeners were being subdued by the words of the young priest who, with art and eloquence, went into his material, explaining how religious truth was united to social truth. Lacordaire, who knew perfectly the era in which he was living, brought his contemporaries toward religious truth by that novel path of uniting it to freedom, equality, and fraternity which the French Revolution had proclaimed in order to then establish despotism, hatred and the guillotine. Lacordaire, just as Ozanam wanted it, completely transformed the frames of reference of the traditional apologetic. Discarding ecclesiastical terminology and not making quotations in Latin, he expressed his Christian thought with modern examples and historical comparisons which were within the scope of everyone.

Ozanam, carried away by joy, contemplated how the doctrine of Christ was inspiring the respect of its hearers by being preached with love and wisdom. It was not strange, therefore, that, when Lacordaire finished, the enthusiastic gathering broke out in applause.

"Gentlemen!" — exclaimed Lacordaire, rising up in the pulpit and, with a hand gesture of command, ordering the ovation to cease — "the word of God is not to be applauded, but to be

listened to, believed, loved, followed and put into practice! Such is the only acclamation worthy of her and which rises up to Heaven!"

At his turn, taking the opportunity to express his admiration, the Archbishop got up from his place of honor and addressed his listeners exclaiming: "Let us all give thanks to God! Because he has seen fit to raise up in this cathedral a new prophet, a preacher whose word has become in tune with your intelligence, and has made vibrate, in the depth of your souls, that Christian fiber that had not been nor could ever be uprooted."

Lacordaire, then, remained recognized as one of the greatest sacred speakers of France, and the six thousand people, who had just listened to him, left commenting on that marvellous conference.

What no one noticed that morning was that that triumph of Christianity was due to, after God, the tenacious work of a young student who, kneeling before the main altar, thanked the Virgin Mary for the favor that such insistence, strength, and fervor over a year's time had obtained: that Lacordaire could have ascended the pulpit of Notre Dame and from there his word would mark the beginning of the rechristianization of France.

Lacordaire's success in that conference, and in the ones he continued giving afterwards in Notre Dame, confirmed in Ozanam the idea that to be in possession of the Christian Truth is not enough; nor is it sufficient to preach it in order to spread it. It is necessary, besides, to make it shine with eloquence, art and erudition. Without such, that Truth will not penetrate the spirits which are its adversaries. Thus, Ozanam was not satisfied with studying Law and graduating as a lawyer, but he also attended the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters at the same time so that his apostolic arch had two

cords: the solidity of Law and the brillance, profundity and harmony of Philosophy and Letters.

THE FORERUNNER OF THE CHURCH'S SOCIAL DOCTRINE

When he concluded his studies in those two areas of learning, without neglecting his vincentian activities, he returned to Lyons to live with his mother for his father had died. There, on the shores of the Rodano and beneath the protection of the Lyonnine sanctuary of Our Lady of Fourviere, he continued his apostolate of charity while he also exercised his legal profession and got out of debt by accepting a professorship of Commercial Law which had just been created in Lyons.

It seemed that that professorship was not the most appropriate way to develop his vocation as apostle of the Truth and Christian Charity; but, nevertheless, through it he would bring about an apostolic work of intellectual character of the greatest importance. That work consisted in that, withdrawing himself somewhat from purely commercial problems, the letters of change, the regimen of losses, the charters, etc., he gave his students clear teachings about the social problems of his time as they related on the one hand to Political Economics and on the other to the Truths of the Gospel. It is worth saying that he taught a Christian social doctrine applicable to the questions of just salaries, Sunday rest, the limitation of the workday, the association of salaried workers, work legislation, and of all those problems which, then and especially after the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* of Leo XIII, would be clarified by the social doctrine of the Church. If we keep in mind that Ozanam gave his classes in his professorship of Commercial Law in the year 1840, that is, a half century before that encyclical and eight years before Ketteler would begin his classes in Mainz, we will understand his great merit of having been one of the great forerunners of the Church's social doctrine. It was from there that his

classes, powerfully calling attention to themselves in Lyons, were well attended by such a great quantity of people that the doors and windows were breached, due to the high number of participants which exceeded the space of the room where those classes occurred.

Let us remember that the Christian social doctrine taught by Ozanam did not incite hatred, nor worker resentment, nor violence, nor class fights, nor much less the massacre of the burgesses, as Karl Marx would do a little afterward by his Communist Manifesto published in 1848. But, there already existed in France an agitator of the kind that Marx would be. He was Augustus Blanqui, and Blanquism was something very similar to what Marxism would be in that he himself preached violence, bitterness and the destruction of the civilization of his epoch.

The social doctrine of Ozanam had its foundation, just as the Church's present doctrine is grounded, on principles based on fraternal love, justice, collaboration among the distinct social classes, freedom, the subsidiary intervention of the State, the defense of the right to property, and above all, the protection of the dignity of the human person created in the image and likeness of God.

Ozanam demonstrated in his Lyonnine professorship that, while he was concerned for the poor and their material needs, his juridical and philosophical knowledge also moved him to be concerned for social justice, the common good, the freedom of citizens, the rights of the human person, and the function of the State, all of which applied to the circumstances through which his country was proceeding and to the possibilities which existed there in order to fulfill the principles of his doctrine. For he understood that social-Christian doctrine is not a technique meant to be applied strictly and absolutely on behalf of all countries and in all epochs; rather it is the Gospel ideal to be fulfilled according to the circumstances of the time

and place and in a peaceful and evolutionary way, and not with violence and bloody, catastrophic revolutions.

When Ozanam lost his mother, he resolved to leave the exercise of his legal profession in Lyons and return to Paris for he understood that, for the benefit of his lay apostolate, it was more fitting to carry out the duties of a professorship at the Sorbonne that had been offered him than to transact legal business. There, in the City of Lights, he was able to spread Christian truths with more effectiveness from the place of honor which that Parisian University post meant, than he could from a country town and by means of a professorship of Commercial Law.

AT THE SORBONNE

For all that, he accepted the professorship of Foreign Literature that was offered him, and with it he would become the youngest professor at the Sorbonne. And having been married in Lyons, he moved to Paris with his young wife and his recently born daughter.

Knowing that Ozanam had contracted matrimony, Lacordaire was greatly disgusted, for in those years he did *not understand — as we have already said — the importance of* the lay apostolate. The clergy believed that those who had the desire to spread Christian truth should be ordained priests in order to do so. Besides, Lacordaire had just entered into the Order of Preachers, founded by Saint Dominic in the Middle Ages, and was forbidden to exist in France since the French Revolution. In order to reimplant the Order in his country, he wanted to surround himself with a select group of young and intelligent Dominicans who would stand out in the pulpits of the churches in France. And he had put his eyes on the young Frederick Ozanam as one of his candidates for the group of Dominicans that he was forming and with whom he obtained, in the end, that the Order of Preachers was again accepted in France.

Because of that, Lacordaire was disgusted upon hearing of the marriage of Ozanam, although the latter had established a perfect Christian home, with an excellent wife and a not less than excellent daughter. For that, years later — after Ozanam was already dead — when he wrote in his biography, referring to his marriage, he said: "There was a trap that Ozanam did not know how to avoid." Upon reading that paragraph, Pius IX exclaimed: "I did not know that there existed six sacraments and a trap!"

In January of 1841, Ozanam began to give his classes at the Sorbonne. He was only 28 years old, and he profitted by the fact that the foreign literatures gave him a universal area of *study to make the importance of Christianity in the history of* humanity stand out. He also emphasized how civilization had been able to advance and keep on progressing with the help of religious truths and social offerings given by Catholicism. And, combatting the false doctrines of his contemporaries, he condemned them, not only by speaking negatively, but also by always affirming the dignity of man and the incomparable beauty and happiness of his hope, his love and his ultimate end.

It was curious — says one of his biographers — that during that time there was given at the Sorbonne a course in Catholicism by means of the history of foreign literatures, and that that course was received with approval in a professorship of the Voltairan State. The youngest professor of the Sorbonne defended in his classes the austere doctrines of Christianity without fearing the prejudices and biases that existed in France at that time against everything that had a Catholic bent. Ozanam did not so much owe his triumph to the fact that his words were in consonance with the pleasures and feelings of his pupils or because he flattered their passions and roused their errors. The reason for his success was solely due to the strength of the Truth that he taught and to the love

that he always professed in his professorship and to his students.

One day there appeared on the door of his room a small sign which read: Professor Frederick Ozanam—Course of Theology." When Ozanam saw that sign he respected it, but he did not do anything; he just dictated his class with his usual eagerness. Upon finishing, he only exclaimed: "Gentlemen, I do not have the honor of being a theologian but, on the other hand, I have the great happiness of being a Christian! and, by being a Christian, I am disposed to putting my whole soul, my heart and all my strength to the service of the Truth."

That valient profession of faith evoked a thunderous ovation from his students.

Eight years of peace and tranquility in the life of Ozanam passed, during which he was able to publish several books about historical themes that affirmed his fame of being a good professor. In that time, the Vincentian Conferences spread throughout France and began to reestablish the French frontier. That was so until 1848, when a new revolution burst out in Paris, disturbing his apostolate, casting it into the quicksand of politics.

OZANAM AND THE SECOND FRENCH REPUBLIC

From 1830 Louis Philippe de Orleans reigned in France. He was the son of the prince of Orleans, being called Philippe Egalité for his having fought in favor of the French Revolution, serving in the army in the Gironde Party. He was guillotined together with the representatives of the Gironde when the Jacobins triumphed, and his son Louis Philippe wandered throughout the United States, where he took in democratic ideas. For that, when Charles X was overthrown, many Frenchmen considered convening, not to declare a Republic, but to enthrone Louis as King of the French, which would be the best guarantee of the democratic liberty which

the majority eagerly desired. Although Louis Philippe, a King who twice entered into conflict with Argentina, was not a despot and his government could not be graded as tyrannical, nevertheless, he did not know how to comprehend either the needs of his time or those of his country. His motto was: "Nothing for glory," and he believed in making his subjects happy by telling them: "Make yourselves rich!"

But while the middle class got rich and Louis Philippe personally was the richest king in Europe, the working people suffered great poverty, unemployment in many cases, and lack of legal protection in their relationship with their bosses. All that had provoked various worker uprisings in Lyons. The salaries were very low, the working days very long, and even the women and children worked around the clock in unhealthy places. The so-called "industrial revolution" and the prohibition of workers' unionization had produced all these evils. From there, the social illnesses existent in France and, by that, diverse subversive and atheistic doctrines, as those of Augustus Blanqui, found acceptance among the working class. For their part, the republican intellectuals conspired to establish the republic and the universal voting process. And all those reunited efforts caused the overthrow of Louis Philippe in a few Parisian revolutionary days, even without the Army lending its help nor the outbreak of civil war.

Even though that political change had been realized in a peaceful manner and the Republic was proclaimed without the monarch's great opposition, Catholics, in general, were afraid that the church fires, brought about during the revolution which overthrew the Bourbons in 1830, would be repeated, or that the Second Republic would declare itself, like the first, an enemy of the Church and execute priests and sisters. But Ozanam did not share in that fear; on the contrary, he considered that the times had changed and that, the

clergy's not having been strictly united to Louis Philippe of Orleans as it had been with the Bourbons, the wave of anticlericalism that existed when Charles X fell did not exist. Louis Philippe of Orleans and the Archbishop of Paris, Monseigneur Affre, had fought between themselves many times on account of various questions: "Be careful, Archbishop," the king said to Monseigneur Affre, "for many mitres have been torn into pieces."

"Many crowns, too, have fallen to the ground," the Archbishop answered him. Ozanam likewise reminded Catholics that they should not take hold of a determined form of government, for the Church admits that all possible forms of government: monarchy, aristocracy, republic, and democracy, implant the common good. But the Church does not accept all forms of State, since there exists a difference between forms of government and forms of State. The former reflects *who governs,* in that if it is one person it is a monarchy, if it a select group it is an aristocracy, and if it is all the people it is a republic or a democracy. The forms of State, on the other hand, are related to *how it is governed.* If it is for the common good, the church approves it; but the church does not approve that if it governs for the sake of a few or that it does so tyrannically, persecuting the Church and not respecting either the freedom or the dignity of its citizens.

At that time, Ozanam, with the help of some friends who shared his republican ideas, founded a newspaper titled "The New Era," in which he defended the founding of a Christian political party that trusted in the Second French Republic. And his Trust Party had its greatest success when elections were called: the moderates, the believers, and the promonarchs who yielded to the new form of republican government all won. Lacordaire and Montalembert, among other friends of Ozanam, were elected representatives.

But Blanqui and his followers were not disposed to tolerate

a democratic Republic in France: they wanted a communist Republic, and they even wanted to change the tricolor flag of the French for the red symbol of their extreme doctrines which defended a bloody and drastic transformation of the world in which they lived. Those instigative ideas of a Jacobin and anti-religious revolution concluded by provoking a bloody uprising in the streets of Paris, which were covered with barricades where the workers were entrenched to confront the military forces which the republican government, presided over by Lamartine, sent against them. General Cavaignac directed the troops, and sixteen thousand workers were left dead in the fight, and without having concluded the massacre. Then Ozanam went to see the Archbishop of Paris, Monseigneur Affre, in order to ask that he intercede to bring about the end of that fratricidal fight. The Archbishop acceded to the petition of Ozanam and, with him at his side, dressed in his episcopal vestments, marched toward the quarter of Saint Antoine where the highest and best defended barricade was raised by the workers. Without hesitating, Monseigneur Affre climbed up that terrible barricade, a full ten meters high, built with overturned carts, piled up rocks, iron, wood, doors, broken windows and all kinds of debris. It was crowned by a wide red banner, which fluttered at the impulse of the wind, and something like a human ant-hill swarmed inside it. Without becoming frightened before the dangerous crest of guns, muskets, sabers, knives, sticks, hachets and bayonets, the Archbishop, with his mere presence, caused a momentary respite in the battle which was occurring there, silenced a shouting worker, and with his strong voice was able to be heard. He asked the defenders of the barricade not to insist on continuing the fight and promised them that if they surrendered they would not be imprisoned nor shot. His words of peace and concord were achieving results when, suddenly, a gunshot, whose origin

was never known, sounded and the prelate fell to the ground covered by his own blood. A bullet had lodged itself in his backbone; the wound was mortal. "Let my blood be the last that is shed!" exclaimed Monseigneur Affre upon feeling himself dying. "The shepherd should die for his sheep. Do not exalt in what I have just done. I simply fulfilled my duty."

In the silence of the following morning, the voice of the bells of the Cathedral of Notre Dame rose gravely. In that way they were associated with the death of their Archbishop, a death that for the Church constituted both grief and glory: the shepherd had given his life for his sheep.

The sacrifice of Monseigneur Affre did not turn out to be useless: just as he had asked that his blood be the last shed, the Paris workers surrendered and that bloody class fight ended.

But those tragic occurrences in Paris of the month of June of 1848 gave a death blow to the Second French Republic, which ran, then, from its beginning until President Louis Napoleon Bonaparte, who in December of 1851 struck a blow to the State and transformed the republican government into a Second Napoleonic Empire which carried France to failure, ruin and defeat.

SICKNESS AND DEATH

All those events distressed Ozanam, who had placed his great hopes in the Second French Republic. And a nephritis, which had imposed itself on him some time before, became worse that year, thus preventing him from giving his classes. As his students complained about his absence, he got up to give his last class. "Gentlemen!" Ozanam finished telling his students,

> ...have faith in the era in which you are living. If you see that the old wall of Christian civilization falls down, destroyed, trust that new, solid parapets will be raised for

> your protection and defense. For this civilization, which has cost a great deal for the martyrs, saints and Popes to build, will never perish. With these words of hope, I bid you goodbye. And I consider that I have not wasted my time, nor my health, nor my life if I have contributed to your believing in progress through Christianity, and if I have reanimated in your young spirits the feeling of hope that is the beginning of the good, the beautiful and the truthful.

A resounding applause signaled the end of that class, Ozanam's last.

"Your class has been masterful," said a professor who had listened to him, "and you could not have been more eloquent."

"The thing is that I may be able to sleep this night," answered Ozanam.

And so it was that: the effort he put out weakened him, and the fever and the cough did not let him sleep that night. He was coming down with a grave case of pleurisy. For two years his health declined from bad to worse, and not even a long stay in Italy to enjoy resting by the sea could bring about his recuperation. Feeling that he was dying, he asked to be allowed to die in France. When he landed at Marseilles, together with his wife, his daughter and his brothers, he died on the 8th of September, 1853. Before he died, his wife asked him what he considered to be the best gift which God had given him, and he answered her without hesitating: "The inner peace which enables one to handle everything."

Ozanam's body was carried to Paris and, through the expressed wish of his wife, was interred in a crypt of the Carmelite Church which actually pertained to the Catholic University of France. Today, behind the urn where Ozanam's mortal remains lie, some frescoes representing the Good Samaritan have been painted on the wall of that crypt. And the face of the good samaritan who aids the traveler assaulted by bandits, who cures his wounds and lifts him up, putting him

on his horse to take him to an inn where he asks that they let him stay, at *his* expense, until he recovers, is that of Ozanam. In that way and with those frescoes new generations can remember that he fulfilled the commandment of loving his neighbor in the way that Jesus Christ explained it vividly with that parable.

Yet, if September 8, 1853 extinguished the life of love of Frederick Ozanam, his vincentian work did not die; it expanded throughout the entire world. His lay apostolate continues being an example for us lay Catholics, and his social message has not lost its present impact; it continues to have its effect.

The Bishop of Andrea said: "In this hour in which we should influence the world to draw closer to God and establish the religious and social Truths, we possess, for that purpose, the Gospel doctrine as the supporting factor and the threefold apostolate taught and lived by Frederick Ozanam as the institutional lever: that of justice, fraternal love and freedom...."

THE ORIGINALITY AND IMPORTANCE OF THE APOSTOLIC WORK OF OZANAM

After having narrated the life and death of Ozanam, we will analyze, as follows, the originality and importance that the founding of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul had for Christianity.

For the first time in the world, Ozanam founded a Catholic organization whose lay apostolate had a universal and permanent existence.

Laymen who had carried out Christian apostolates have existed since the beginnings of Christianity. But that kind of secular apostolate was always exercised individually, momentarily and circumstantially, and never organized into a purely lay association, whose existence would be international and centennial. It is also true that laymen have

vows, nor special devotions, nor a determined life-style. Also, it was directed not by the clergy, but by laymen who wanted to evangelize those who did not know religious faith, and who also looked for their own personal perfection by the exercise of charity without abandoning the world in which they lived their lives. Charity was the means used by a lay apostolate destined to evangelize a disbelieving world, through which the unbelievers looked with sympathy and admiration on those who voluntarily and gratuitously helped the needy, the sick and the imprisoned. And, at the same time, the vincentians themselves were becoming perfect while personally imitating Jesus Christ's steps in the world.

"Evangelize," here is the word that was always on the lips and in the heart of Ozanam and his companions. We repeat, then, that he did not found the Society of St. Vincent de Paul only to organize visits to the needy, the sick and the imprisoned, but also with the end of going beyond the temporal to the heavenly by giving faith, love, and hope. In a word: he sought to constitute a lay instrument capable of expanding the consoling Good News of the Salvation of Humanity realized by Christ Our Lord. And Ozanam gave the example of not limiting oneself to helping the needy; besides, he affected the Christian apostolate of the spoken and written word by means of the professorship of Foreign Literatures which he exercised in the Sorbonne and by his books on Medieval History, the Franciscan poets, Dante and the Philosophy of the fourteenth century, St. Thomas Becket, etc.

Precisely one hundred and ten years after the death of Ozanam, the Second Vatican Council proclaimed the urgent need of that apostolate initiated by Ozanam and the vincentians, saying in the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* and in the *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity:*

> The laity are called by God so that by exercising their proper function and being led by the spirit of the Gospel they

can work for the sanctification of the world from within, in the manner of leaven. In this way they can make Christ known to others, especially by the testimony of a life resplendent in faith, hope and charity. Laymen are closely involved in temporal affairs of every sort. It is therefore their special task to illumine and organize these affairs.

In married and family life there is found the practice and an excellent school of the lay apostolate, for through it Christianity pervades a whole way of life and ever increasingly transforms it. In such a home, husband and wife find their proper vocation in being witnesses to one another and to their children of faith in Christ and love for Him. The Christian family loudly proclaims both the present virtues of the Kingdom of God and the hope of a blessed life to come. Thus by its example it enlightens those who seek the Truth.

Even when they are preoccupied with temporal cares, the laity can and must perform eminently valuable work on behalf of bringing the Gospel to the world. Therefore, let the laity strive skillfully to acquire a more profound grasp of revealed truth, and insistently beg of God the gift of wisdom.

For their part, let sacred pastors recognize and promote the dignity as well as the responsibility of laymen in the Church. Let them willingly make use of their prudent advice. Let them confidently assign duties to them in the service of the Church, allowing them freedom and room for action. Further, let them encourage the laity so that they may undertake tasks on their own initiative. Attentively in Christ, let them consider with fatherly love the projects, suggestions, and desires proposed by the laity. Furthermore, let pastors respectfully acknowledge that just freedom which belongs to everyone in this earthly city.

Christ fulfills his prophetic mission not only through the ecclesiastical Hierarchy which teaches in His name and with His power, but also through the laity, whom He constitutes as witnesses, prepares so that the virtue of the Gospel might shine in their daily, family and social lives.

All these teachings about the lay apostolate are found in Chapter IV, entitled "The Laity," of the decree *Lumen*

Gentium of the Second Vatican Council, which, in her *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity (Apostolicam Actuositatem)* adds:

> Modern conditions demand that the laity's apostolate be thoroughly broadened and intensified.The constant expansion of population, scientific and technical progress, and the tightening of bonds between men have not only immensely widened the field of the lay apostolate, a field which is for the most part accessible only to them.These developments have themselves raised new problems which cry out for the skillful concern and attention of the laity.
>
> An indication of this manifold and pressing need is the unmistakable work of the Holy Spirit in making the laity today even more conscious of their own responsibility and inspiring them everywhere to serve Christ and the Church.
>
> Just as is the case in our times that women participate more actively in all kinds of social activities, so it is in their highest interest that they also have greater participation in the area of the Church's lay apostolate.
>
> Laymen should not limit their cooperation to the parochial or diocesan boundaries but strive to extend it to interparochial, interdiocesan, national, and international fields.
>
> Laymen should add to the testimony of life the testimony of their speech. It is here in the arena of their labor, profession, studies, residence, leisure, and companionship that laymen are more apt than priests to help their brothers. For many people can listen to the Gospel or know Christ only through their own secular neighbors.

All that we have just transcribed about how the apostolate of the laity came about and of its importance in the modern world was embodied 150 years ago by Frederick Ozanam in his founding of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. He realized it all through his own initiative, extending the area of his apostolate and that of his companions beyond his parish, his diocese and his country.

Thirty years ago, a group of us vincentians, of whom only

two survive, met together in France with the president of the High Council, who at that time was Doctor Ernest Padilla, in order to take part in the activities celebrating the centennial of Ozanam's death. Then, in Marseilles, where Ozanam died—in Lyons, where he lived his infancy and adolescence, exercised his legal profession, taught his professorship of Commercial Law and contracted matrimony—and in Paris, where he founded the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, was the youngest professor of the Sorbonne, his daughter was born, and where he wrote his multiple historical, religious and literary books—we were able to observe the great force and permanence of vincentian apostolate. For, in all the actions realized in those three French cities, we established fraternal communion with vincentians who were American, European, Algerian, Japanese, Vietnamese and even New Zealanders who loved Ozanam, followed his apostolic example and were imploring his canonization.

In that journey we could also know the Ozanam family, who were as religious as he was; we could receive Communion from the hands of his great grandson, Fr. Laporte, and we could go down to the crypt of the Church of the Carmelites where his tomb is found.

Thus, today, thirty years later, after having experienced that journey, we can continue to notice what we have verified:

*that his personality far surpasses those of the other laymen of his time;
*that the Holy Spirit animated his apostolic work;
*that he knew how to defend and spread Christian principles both successfully and fervently;
*that in his married life he was able to emphasize the virtues of the Christian family;
*that living in the world and in the century that he did, he acted as leaven for the sanctification of his neighbor;

*and that, in the end, he awakened in many human beings the hope of future glory with the help of continuous religious dialogue and the marvelous, lasting secular structure that he founded through his own initiative.

When the centennial of the foundation of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul was being carried out there existed in the world some 13,800 Vincentian Conferences with 750,000 members.

Provided God be glorified, it little matters whether it is by means of this or that person. If God shall ever grant us the favor of being in heaven, we will see that under the reign of perfect charity there will be no mine, nor thine.

St. Vincent de Paul

External actions, even though in behalf of the poor, cannot please God nor merit a reward if they are not united with those of Our Lord Who always labored with a view to His Father.

St. Louise de Marillac

Oh! What a priceless treasure is a good Missionary. He must be called into being and be fashioned by God. He is the product of God's omnipotent and infinite goodness.

St. Vincent de Paul

If we wish to give satisfaction to our good God, we must not stop to consider what we would like to do, but rather what He wishes us to do. Our Lord will know where to find you when He intends to give you other work to do.

St. Louise de Marillac

Our God is God! All is as He pleases. I am the happiest creature in the thought that not the least thing can happen but by His Will or permission—and all for the best.

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton