

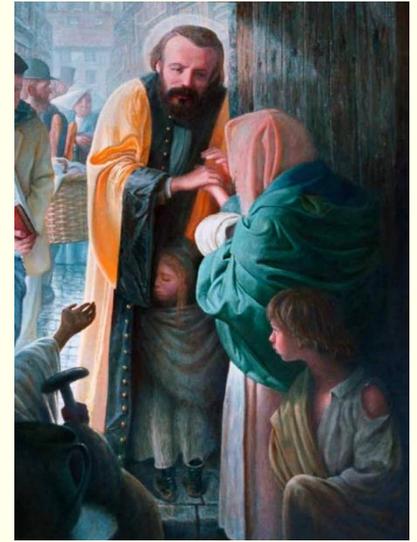
Blessed Frédéric Ozanam

Early Life

Antoine Frédéric Ozanam (commonly called Frédéric) was born on April 23, 1813 in Milan, Italy, the son of Jean-Antoine François Ozanam, doctor in medicine, and Marie Nantas, daughter of a shopkeeper. Two years later, the Ozanam family moved back to their home town of Lyon, France. Frédéric was the fifth of 14 children, only four of whom survived. In his youth, Frédéric experienced doubt regarding the Catholic faith, during which he was strongly influenced by one of his teachers at the Collège de Lyon, the priest Abbé Noïrot.

Education

Ozanam received the degrees of Bachelor of Laws in 1834, Bachelor of Arts in 1835 and Doctor of Laws in 1836. Although he preferred literature, Frédéric worked in the legal profession in order to support his mother, and was admitted to the Bar in Lyon in 1837. At the same time, he also pursued his personal interest, and in 1839 he obtained the degree of Doctor of Letters with a thesis on Dante that influenced many of his writings. A year later he was appointed to a professorship of commercial law at Lyon, and in 1840, at the age of 27, assistant professor of foreign literature at the Sorbonne. His lectures were successful, and focused on Christianity as the primary factor in the growth of European civilization, unlike most of his colleagues, who shared in the predominantly anti-Christian climate of the time. Upon the death in 1844 of Claude Charles Fauriel, Ozanam succeeded to the full professorship of foreign literature at the Sorbonne. The remainder of his short life was extremely busy, attending to his duties as a professor, his extensive literary activities, and visiting the poor.



Founding of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul

While still a student, Frédéric Ozanam and his friends led a discussion group called a "Society of Good Studies." At one meeting during a heated debate, one voice issued the challenge, "What is your church doing now? What is the church doing for the poor of Paris? Show us your works and we will believe you!" From this, Frédéric created a group called the "Conference of Charity," composed of pious friends, who joined works to their words. The first meeting took place on April 23, 1833 near the Saint-Sulpice Church, chaired by Emmanuel Bailly who became the group's mentor. The Conference was placed under the patronage of Saint Vincent de Paul, Apostle of Charity. The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul grew rapidly and focused on two areas: visiting the poor families of Paris, and nurturing the spiritual life of its members.

Death

Frédéric's naturally weak constitution fell prey to consumption, which he hoped to cure by visiting Italy, but on his return to France, he died in Marseille on September 8, 1853 at the age of 40 of Tuberculosis. At that time, the St. Vincent de Paul Society was active in 29 countries. Frédéric Ozanam was buried in the crypt of the church of St. Joseph des Carmes at the Institut Catholique in Paris.

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul today

In 2013, the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul celebrated the bicentennial of the birth of Frédéric Ozanam, and its 180 years of existence. Despite the difficulties of practising faith in some countries, the Society and its members remain faithful to the spirit and ideals originally inspired by Frédéric Ozanam: Go towards the poor, go and meet them in their homes, in respect and brotherhood.

The Cause for Canonisation

In 1925, the Diocese of Paris opened the procedure for canonisation of Frédéric Ozanam. In February 1926, an 18-month old Brazilian boy experienced a miraculous cure from a dangerous form of diphtheria. On 22 June 1995, after a lengthy enquiry, this was officially recognized as a miracle through the intercession of Frédéric Ozanam. The 2nd stage was passed on 22 August 1997 with the Beatification of Frédéric Ozanam by Pope John Paul II. A video of the event is available at <https://vimeo.com/126410405>.

Prayer for the Canonization of Blessed Frédéric Ozanam

Lord, you made Blessed Frédéric Ozanam a witness of the Gospel, full of wonder at the mystery of the Church.

You inspired him to alleviate poverty and injustice and endowed him with untiring generosity in the service of all those suffering.

In family life, he revealed a most genuine love as a son, brother, husband and father.

In secular life, his ardent passion for the truth enlightened his thought, writing and teaching.

His vision for our society was a network of charity encircling the world inspired by St Vincent de Paul's love, boldness and humility.

His prophetic social vision appears in every aspect of his life, together with the radiance of his virtues.

We thank you Lord, for these many gifts. May the Church proclaim his holiness, as a saint, a providential light for today's world!

We ask this prayer through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.