



Reflecting on SSVP's Feasts

During September, we celebrate the feasts of our principal founder, Blessed Frederic Ozanam (**September 9th**) and our patron saint, St. Vincent de Paul (**September 27th**). To honour them, the National Council Spirituality committee offers our member-meeting users two reflection readings.

Blessed Frederic Ozanam: A Legacy of Love and Justice

Do not be afraid of new beginnings. Be creative. Be inventive. You who have energy: who have enthusiasm; who want to do something of value for the future; be inventive, launch out; do not wait! - Blessed Frederic Ozanam

In April 1833, Frederic gathered with a group of friends and said, *We must do what our Lord Jesus Christ did when preaching the Gospel. Let us go to the poor.* This marked the beginning of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul. Blessed Frederic Ozanam was a pioneer in many ways, and his writings laid the groundwork for Catholic Social Teaching. At just 20 years old, Frederic and his companions resolved to put their faith into action by visiting the poor in their homes and offering what help they could. They did so with love, perseverance and creativity. Blessed Frederic's example urges us to defend justice and address unjust structures to build a more dignified world for all.

Blessed Frederic's charism remains integral to the Society. As Vincentians, we are called to carry forward this spirit of humble service and deep desire for justice. During Home Visits, interactions at our Thrift Stores and numerous other ways we help, we walk alongside our neighbours in the same manner as Blessed Frederic. In a variety of situations and circumstances, we arrive to assist but so often leave with a deeper faith, renewed hope, and the grace of encountering Christ.

Nearly two centuries after Blessed Frederic first gathered with fellow university students in Paris to form what would become our Society, his vision continues to shape and inspire our mission in Canada and around the world. Vincentians have kept this original spirit alive and adapted it to diverse social contexts and constantly evolving realities.

Blessed Frederic reminds us Christ is present in the poor, and when we draw close to them as our brothers and sisters, we draw closer to God. As we experience the beauty of nature transforming around us, may we be attentive to the opportunity to learn, grow, and be transformed through our Vincentian work following the example of Blessed Frederic. Throughout September and especially on his feast day (September 9), we give thanks for the life and legacy of Blessed Frederic. We remember our work is a vocation. It is the living out of Christ's call to love our neighbours. It is a journey of transformation—for those we serve and for ourselves.

Reflection Question

1. In what ways are you being called to actively participate in building a more just and compassionate community following the example of Blessed Frederic Ozanam?

Let us pray...Loving God, as we recall the life and virtues of Blessed Frederic Ozanam, may we continue his work of bringing good news to those we encounter as we build communities of love, hope and justice. Amen.

***Carolyn Boerboom, National Spirituality Committee member
St. Basil's Conference/Brant, ON Particular Council***

St. Vincent de Paul: His Call for Humility, Honour and Humanity

Come then, my dear confreres, let us devote ourselves with renewed love to serve persons who are poor, and even to seek out those who are the poorest and most abandoned; let us acknowledge before God that they are our lords and masters and that we are unworthy of rendering them our little services.

- St. Vincent de Paul

St. Vincent de Paul taught us to see Christ in every person we serve. To honour our neighbours is to respect their dignity, listen without judgment and treat each person with compassion. Humanity calls us to look beyond a person's circumstances and see the brother or sister before us and Christ' present in them.

In his life, St. Vincent once prompted his followers that when they served the poor, they should do so with the same respect, honour and love that they would show to Christ Himself. For St. Vincent, the person in need was never simply someone receiving help, instead they were someone through whom God was inviting him to encounter Christ.

St. Vincent also reminded us true Vincentian service is never about being above those we serve, but walking beside them with humility and love. As the leaves change and fall this season, may we, too, let go of old habits, attitudes, and assumptions, making room for fresh thinking and a renewed Vincentian spirit of Honour, Humility and Humanity. As St. Vincent said, *Go to the poor: you will find God.*

Reflection Questions

1. Do I see Christ in every person I serve?
2. What do I need to let go of to serve with greater humility?

Let us pray... Lord, renew our hearts with humility, compassion, and love. May we honour every person, see Christ in our neighbour, and serve with a truly Vincentian heart. Amen.

***Willis Langford, Spiritual Facilitator, St. Mary's Conference
Brampton, ON/Peel North Particular Council***

For those interested in contributing spiritual reflections, please email jose.torres@rogers.com. Also, for reflections that may be used in your group meeting's spirituality segment, please check out: [Monthly Reflections - Society of Saint Vincent de Paul - National Council of Canada](#)