

INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION-SOCIETY OF ST VINCENT DE PAUL

Speech for Bicentenary Anniversary Celebration of Blessed Frederic in Paris on Friday, 19 April 2013

Your Eminence & Excellencies, Rev. Fathers, Rev Sisters, Distinguished Guests, Vincentians and Friends,

BONJOUR! I wish all of you well (In French ...

Vincentians here in France and all over the world are celebrating this very special event of the 200th Anniversary Celebration of the Birth of Blessed Frederic Ozanam, the principal founder of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. Our hearts are filled with Joy and Jubilation to be part of this celebration and we welcome you and thank you for joining us on this very auspicious occasion. We are very honoured with the presence here this morning of 13 members of the Ozanam Family with Didier & Charles Ozanam and the other cousins. Merci Beaucoup.

As we remember and honour Blessed Frederick, let us also remember his dear wife, Amelie, who was so fully supportive of him in his works and life.

Blessed Frederic was a special gift of God to the poor in the world and to us. He was an extraordinary man, a person of deep Faith and Spirituality who believes and trust in God, a man of vision and wisdom and with tremendous charisma, a great and capable leader who was able to inspire, motivate and influence people. Through the grace of God, Blessed Frederic along with his six companions co-founded the Society 180 years ago in 1833 here in Paris. I'm sure all our French Vincentians and friends feel very proud and honoured at this distinction.

It would be befitting to remember and mention the other early co-founders in Emmanuel Bailly, who was the first President and a fatherly figure of the younger members, Francis Lallier, who was the Secretary and largely responsible for the initial Rule of the Society, Jules Devaux, the Treasurer, who initiated contact with Blessed Sr. Rosalie Rendu, the devoted Daughter of Charity, who provided tremendous advice and assistance to our early founders, then we have Paul

Lamache, Augustine le Taillandier and Felix Clave who made up the seven. We are deeply grateful to them.

Blessed Frederic dare to Dream Dreams and one of his dreams was to “encircle the whole world in a network of Charity”. From One conference in the beginning, the Society is today in 148 countries, with over 70,000 conferences, 780,000 members, 1.3 million volunteers and assisting over 30 million poor. His dream has been realized many times over through God’s grace. This is truly amazing.

Blessed Frederic tried to imitate not the exact same works of St. Vincent so much as his spirit of Charity. Both St. Vincent and Blessed Frederic found ways of serving Christ in the poor. If one of their charisms was to care for the poor people, the care of souls was always an important part of their mission. Blessed Frederic reminded members that material aid was not the most important part of our service to the poor. He stressed that **“through the members Spirituality and their loving Christian action in witnessing to God how many Christians have been brought back to the Faith and how many non-Christians were evangelized. This is one key aspects of our Vincentian Spirituality.”** This draws parallel to the words of Emeritus Pope Benedict XVI in this year’s Lenten message who said **“Faith enables us to recognize the gifts that the good and generous God has entrusted to us and Charity makes them fruitful”**.

The Society has come a long way since our humble beginnings and is one of the most respected, well known, flourishing and inspiring Catholic apostolate of Charity in the world. We are part of this legacy that all Vincentians along with the Council General International(CGI) will continue to grow and perpetuate the Vincentian vocation, mission and values as servants of Christ and the poor. We have been accredited by the United Nations as an international NGO with “Special Consultative status” of ECOSOC. This recognition affirms our Society’s standing as an international Charity organization of high repute. All Vincentians are instrumental in contributing to and maintaining the dynamism, vibrancy and growth of the Society and you have a part in subscribing to it and so you should be proud of it.

In responding to the call of St. Vincent and Blessed Frederic, the Society is engaged in Charitable and Humanitarian activities in a Christian way or dimension and are witnessing to Christ in the poor and needy we serve. We can encapsulate

all such activities into the virtues and practice of the Gospel values of **Faith, Hope and Charity**. This exemplifies our zeal, commitment and love in our mission and vocation in our Vincentian apostolate.

I'm happy to announce that we launch today the English version of the **Book of the Sick** from the original adaptation of the book in the French version. I would encourage Vincentians to own and read this book and feel and live the spirituality of our beloved Blessed Frederic who had been such an inspiration to his co-founders and the Vincentians of his time and also to this very day.

We have also distributed today, a joint-prayer leaflet for the Canonisation of Blessed Frederic Ozanam and Blessed Sr. Rosalie Rendu. This is a supplementary prayer in addition to the main prayer of Canonisation that each of us, SSVP and DC, are advocating and promoting.

I wish to thank the Organising Committee of the Bicentenary Celebration for arranging the event over 3 days. It takes a lot of work, effort and time. The Committee comprises of representatives from the Council General International, National Council of France and the Paris Council and chaired by Jean Cherville, Secretary General of the Council General. Lets show them our appreciation.

We thank the Lord for this very special celebration and may He continue to shower His abundant blessings on all of us.

Let us Dare to dream dreams, like Blessed Frederic, with Jesus in our hearts.
Lets us want to Live A fulfilling, loving, peaceful Christian life align with the Gospel values.

Let us want to Contemplate ... to meditate and discern

Let us want to SERVE CHRIST and Mankind.

“Let your light shine before men that they may see your good works and give glory to our Father in heaven”. Mt. 5:16

JESUS LOVES YOU. Thank you and GOD BLESS YOU ALL.

Dr. Michael Thio
President General

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