

On the occasion of the bicentenary of the birth of Blessed Frédéric Ozanam

His Holiness Pope Francis sends heartfelt greetings to Cardinal André Vingt-Trois, Archbishop of Paris, to the members of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul and to those attending the international conference on “Frédéric Ozanam, forerunner of the Church’s Social Teaching”, and assures them of his union with them in prayer and in the life of grace.

From 1833, Frédéric Ozanam, then only twenty years old, dedicated his life to helping the most deprived people. Along with his friends in Paris, he decided to found a small society committed to relieving poverty. This group was known as the Conference of charity, and they took as their patron Saint Vincent de Paul, whose life was also entirely given to the service of charity, and saving the souls of the poor.

Pope Francis encourages the members of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul to draw their inspiration from the example of faith and love shown by Blessed Frédéric Ozanam, throughout his life from student to teacher. The Holy Father invites them to nourish their service of the poor from the source of divine love, taking Jesus Christ our Lord as their model. Let the members never fear to go out to the poor, the weakest, the little ones, with affection and tenderness to tell them that God loves them, teaching them to read the signs of his love in their lives. May they always work for greater justice in the world in the light of the social teaching of the Church.

Entrusting all those attending the celebrations for this bicentenary, and all members of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, to the intercession of Saint Vincent himself, to Blessed Frédéric Ozanam and Blessed Rosalie Rendu, with all his heart, the Holy Father sends them his Apostolic Blessing,

From the Vatican, 8 April 2013.

Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone,

Secretary of State