



NEWSLETTER

INTERNATIONAL GENERAL COUNCIL

November/December 2014

President General's Christmas & new year message 2014/2015



My Dear fellow Vincentians,

May the Peace and Blessing of the child Jesus be with you.

Christmas is always a special occasion for people around the world and more so for Christians and especially us Vincentians. We hold very dear to our hearts the celebration of the birth of the baby Jesus which to us Christians bears a special significance. The birth of the child Jesus brings Hope and Joy in the Salvific mission of God. Jesus coming into the world gives us the opportunity of a renewal of life, to be able to have, experience and share the Love of Christ with our loved ones and especially with the poor and needy we so faithfully serve as Vincentians.

During this period of Joy and Merriment let us be thankful to God for the many blessings He has given to us and our family. However, during this time of good cheer, let us serve those under our care with Jesus's Love in our hearts and give them Hope and Joy during this season of Christmas.

Let us not forget the many poor and needy who are uncared for. The many who are abandoned and suffering from hunger, disease, cold and lonely and especially the children and the elderly. Let us pray that the Divine Child Jesus will show mercy and compassion on them and alleviate their suffering.

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As Vincentians we must continue to bear witness to Christ through our mission and vocation in serving Christ in the poor and needy and bring relief and change in the life of those we assist. As we commit ourselves faithfully to His call we shall endeavor to provide a better future to those we serve.

Let us rejoice in the greatness, love and compassion of the child Jesus as we welcome Him into our hearts this Christmas. With this Love of Jesus we look forward with Hope and Confidence towards the New Year of one of fulfilment and peace for the betterment of those we assist and also for our family and us. Let us Rejoice, Jesus has come!

On behalf of Council General International, I wish to thank all of you for the wonderful Vincentian work you have been doing during the year in serving the poor and needy and please continue with this marvelous deed in bringing happiness, hope and love to them.

My wife, Rosalind, joins me in wishing all Vincentians and their family a Joyous and Blessed Christmas and a Spirit-filled and Peaceful New Year. God bless you all.

Yours appreciatively,

Dr. Michael Thio
President General

December 2014

Territorial meeting of the SSVP in South America

The Vincentian leaders of South America approved the "Letter from Santiago" at this 2nd meeting of the countries in the America zone3.

Renato Lima - International Vice President – America 3



The 2nd territorial meeting of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul in South American was held at Santiago (Chile) between 27 and 29 November 2014. The event brought together three representatives of each National Council (National President, National Youth Coordinator and National Training Coordinator) from the 12 countries in the America 3 zone. The spiritual adviser for the meeting was Father Lorenzo Mika, Congregation of the Mission (Curitiba, Parana Province, Brazil).

The subject of the meeting, organized by the International Territorial Vice President was: "what do we want for the SSVP in South America?" The meeting included three talks, workshops on Youth, Training and Leadership, videos and presentations from countries given by the National Presidents.

Our fellow member Renato Lima, Territorial Vice-president, explained that the purpose of the event was to exchange our experiences and information in order to strengthen the work of each National Council. Renato arranged the installation of a "time capsule" in which all the participants placed a message describing the SSVP as it will be in 20 years' time. The capsule was closed and will not be opened until 2034.

Apart from these activities, the participants visited the Holy Spirit home for the elderly, the College and the Frederic Ozanam National Sanctuary, works maintained by the National Council of Chile. During the closing Mass, the "Letter from Santiago" was signed, listing 10 commitments to be undertaken by the South American countries in the coming years. This Charter will be distributed to all councils, so that every conference can

be informed of its content.

Our colleague Sebastian Gramajo (International Vice-President for Communication) gave a presentation about the Cause for the Canonization of Frederic Ozanam, with messages recorded by the current President General, our fellow member Michael Thio, and the former President General, José Ramón Díaz-Torremocha, both wishing the event every success.

A leaflet was also introduced, entitled: "How to found a conference in six preparatory meetings", the purpose of which is to help countries to develop the SSVP in their own territory.



The highlight of the event was the attendance by young Kerry Lochan, representing Surinam, a country where the International Council General will begin to establish the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, from 2015, making Surinam the 150th member country of the SSVP.

It should be noted that on the eve of the meeting, the International Council General also held a working meeting in Santiago, with Vincentian officers from North and Central America, led by John Lee (Vice-President General for the Structure). These officers also attended the 2nd territorial meeting, alongside representatives from South America.

The three Councils (Argentina, Uruguay and Ecuador) reached agreement to hold the 3rd territorial meeting of the SSVP in South America in Ecuador, in November 2016, the town to be decided in due course (probably Quito).

All the details on the discussions of the territorial assembly, as well as photos and presentations, will shortly be available on the website: www.ssvp.cl/encuentroteritorial.

Our thanks go to the National Council of Chile for the overall organization of the event.

Focus: Blessed Frederic Ozanam and the Canonization

Frederic Ozanam is recognized internationally for his charitable work, mainly through the foundation of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul in April 1833. An intellectual and a fervent Catholic, he committed his whole life and his faith to the service of those most in need. Deeply committed to justice and human dignity, he contributed during his lifetime to the development of Catholic Social Teaching. Aged only 40, he gave his soul back to his Creator in 1853, after a life full of spiritual riches, devoted wholeheartedly to the poor. His thought and his writings, still not widely known, are the subject of research nowadays, but it was above all through his exemplary life that Frederic Ozanam inspires and guides innumerable believers around the world.



The Cause for Canonization

In 1925, over 70 years after the death of Frederic Ozanam, the Diocese of Paris opened the procedure for canonization, with the information-gathering stage. Eleven months later (February 1926), the Cause took its first important step forward when an eighteen-month old Brazilian boy, Fernando Luiz B. Ottoni, experienced a miraculous cure from a dangerous form of diphtheria. On 22 June 1995, after a lengthy enquiry, this cure was officially recognized as a miracle through the intercession of Ozanam.

A long-expected 2nd stage was passed on 22 August 1997 with the Beatification of Frederic Ozanam by Pope John Paul II during the World Youth Days in Paris. The ceremony took place in Notre-Dame Cathedral

A process following its course

The cause for the Canonization of Blessed Frederic Ozanam is now led and promoted by a commission of the International Council General, whose members are:

- Amin de Tarrazi (Delegate to Cause for Canonization and former president general)
- Dr. Michael Thio (current President General)
- Julien Spiewak (Secretary General)
- Anne WINTENBERGER (Training coordinator)
- Sebastián Gramajo (Vice-Pres. for Communication)
- Ralph Middlecamp (CEO of the District Council of Madison, Wisconsin, USA)

The Commission has the task of maintaining relations with the Postulator for the Cause for the Canonisation of Ozanam: Fr. Shijo A. KANJIRATHAMKUNNEL, C.M. It is presently gathering the medical documents concerning a cure brought about through the intercession of Ozanam that took place in Venezuela. This case must undergo a rigorous enquiry, in order to authenticate it. The Commission follows the Postulator's instructions, to guide the work of the Venezuelan members involved. It meets for regular updates on the progress of the procedure.

A prayer, asking the Lord to allow another miracle that will lead to the Canonization of F.Ozanam, has been translated into 5 languages, and sent to Councils and Conferences to be distributed widely among the members of the Society and other Vincentians.

Lord,

You made Blessed Frederic 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 who were 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 and he instilled St Vincent de Paul's spirit of love, boldness and humility.

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

We thank you Lord, for those many gifts and we ask, if it is your will, the grace of a miracle through the intercession of Blessed Frederic Ozanam.

May the Church proclaim his holiness, as a saint, a providential light for today's world!

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

Traditions: The secret collection

The Secret Collection, as it is more properly called, is one of our most steadfast traditions within the Society. In the book "Apostle in a Top Hat" James Patrick Derum provides a wonderful description as to how this tradition came about at one of the first meetings of the little Conference. He writes:

"I suggest that we pool our charitable contributions. And use the money to buy food tickets from Sister Rosalie," continued Frederic.

"If we pool our donations, each can draw from a common supply of food tickets as many as he needs on any visiting day." "I'm for that, said Devaux emphatically, and there was general assent.

"Then, Jules", asked Frederic, turning to Devaux, "will you take up our first collection?"

"Do you supply a collection plate?" asked Devaux.

"Yes – a capacious one," returned Frederic, pointing to Devaux's hat reposing with the others on the flat-topped railing. "That will do!"

"So it will", agreed Devaux, reaching for it.

With fine consideration, he then held the hat behind him and, walking backward, made the rounds.

The students laughed, but they appreciated Devaux's thoughtfulness.

"An excellent idea!" cried Frederic. "No one excepting God and the giver will know who gives five sous and who gives five francs. Let us take up a collection this way every time."



This method of taking up the weekly collection at Society of Saint Vincent de Paul meetings has become a traditional and a universal practice.

The spirituality of the black bag collection is really a symbolic tradition about sharing ourselves and our gifts as Vincentians. As well, it represents giving of whatever of our resources we can give to help the needy. As our Vincentian prayer reads.... "Help us to be generous with our time, our possessions and ourselves, in this mission of charity."

Penny Craig, President
National Council of Canada

Blessed Frederic Ozanam: The role of the young Frederic's father and mother in his education

"A good education is the source and root of a virtuous life", said Plutarch. This comment applied most perfectly to the life of Blessed Frederic Ozanam. Source of the exceptional personality of this man, Ozanam, a brilliant intellectual, an ardent Defender of the Faith, wounded by the suffering of the poor, overwhelmed by the love of the Creator, were his parents. Although almost unknown, they it was, nonetheless who shaped the character of Blessed Frederic. We publish here extracts from the correspondence of Alphonse Ozanam, Frederic's brother, describing the role of their father and mother in the family's education. It gives us an opportunity to pay tribute to all parents who sometimes amid great difficulties, pass on the best they have themselves received.



Alphonse Ozanam speaks thus of his father: "Despite his numerous commitments, [our excellent father] still found time not only to correct our school exercises himself, but also to take us for long walks in the countryside every week, often 4 or 5 leagues (between 18 and 22km) to strengthen our health and harden us to fatigue. He knew how to make these long walks interesting, and delighting us in our tiredness by instructive conversation... In the summer, he took us to the river bank and taught us to swim". It was Doctor Ozanam again who, "every evening...led the family in prayers with his wife and children and our maid, Marie".

Also, here is what Alphonse says about his mother: "She taught [the children] to read and write. Her happiness was above all to give them their first lessons in piety and religion... To settle us to sleep, she spoke a few words to us about God, about the Blessed Virgin...and the saints. As the children grew...she supervised their little tasks, teaching them to study with order and method. The times for work, recreation, meals and sleep were regulated, just like a community. She it was who took her children to church every Sunday (and)...taught them with admirable patience to follow the mass."