

Spiritual Reflections for the month of June 2023

Please choose a reading and questions for reflection.

Reflection: On Giving Without Payment

When Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest." Then He summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and cure every disease and every sickness... Jesus sent out these twelve after instructing them thus, "... As you go, proclaim the good news, "The kingdom of heaven has come near. Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment." (Matthew 9.36-38, 10.1,.5,.7,.8)

Jesus was clearly moved by multitude of men and women crying for healing, hence the call to His disciples to reach out to others in need of help. His followers viewed the "work of harvest" not as a burden but an opportunity to bring more people into God's Kingdom. This they fulfilled abundantly without compensation.

The Gospel story yet again offers a reminder that our Vincentian vocation, as in any call of the conscience enlightened by the grace of the Holy Spirit, is one of mercy and charity. At the centre of this vocation is our acceptance to "follow Christ through service to those in need and so bear witness to His compassionate and liberating love." Blessed Frédéric Ozanam, our main founder, underscored that "charity is the cement that unites communities to God and individuals to each other, so that he who contributes to the union of hearts in a community binds it indissolubly to God." As with the apostles, we members of the Society are united in the same spirit of poverty and of sharing.

Reflection Questions

1. As a Vincentian, how have you lived up to your commitment to selflessly share your talent, time and treasure with those in need?
2. How do you prevent material things and worldly views from taking over your life?

Let us pray... Gracious Lord, may Your call gain for us a deep sense of Your greatness as Healer of the sick and the contrite, and lift us out of self-absorption. Help us to bear the responsibility of caring for our Neighbours-in-Need with openness, ingenuity and urgency.

- Vincentian Bro. Jose I. Torres, St. John of the Cross, Peel North Council

Blessed Frederic Ozanam

Blessed Antoine Frederic Ozanam was a remarkable individual with a clear-sighted vision on how to help impoverished people living in what was at that time, the slums of Paris, France. In a short life span of 40 years, dying on September 8, 1853, he inspired the Society and its service. Members remain faithful to the spirit and ideals originally inspired by Frederic Ozanam.

The two most outstanding traits in Frederic Ozanam's character:

1. The genuine sympathy which Ozanam felt for other humans was something much more than mere humanitarianism. It was an impulse of pure unselfish love that first caused God to call the world into being. Ozanam had long meditated on this fundamental truth. He radiated a glow of love and sympathy to all around him. Year by year, this love has gathered fresh strength and continued to light up the dark places of the world.

Question for Reflection:

When you have gone to visit a tired and lonely neighbor in need, did they actually console and strengthen you? How?

2. The second distinguishing trait in Ozanam's charity is his humility, modesty, and genuine spirit. Ozanam valued friendship and defended his friends no matter what the cost. He showed great tenderness when dealing with his family. He had a great reverence for his parents, and sacrificed his career in order to please them.

Question for Reflection:

Do you believe Ozanam's traits of selflessness and humility are the key attributes that endure in our minds today?

Prayer:

Turn our hearts to yourself, eternal Father, so that, always seeking the one thing necessary and devoting ourselves to works of charity, we may worship you in spirit and in truth.

Prepared by Vincentian Sr. Venera Fazio